



## From Charity to Hashtag: A Sociological Analysis of the Cultural Representation of İzmir Lokma through the Lens of Bourdieu

*Hayırdan Hashtag'e: İzmir Lokmasının Bourdieu Ekseninde Kültürel Temsili ve Sosyolojik Çözümlemesi*

### ABSTRACT

This study examines how İzmir Lokma, a traditional dessert associated with religious and communal rituals, has been transformed into a commercialized and aestheticized product within modern consumer culture. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical framework—particularly the concepts of habitus, capital conversion, and field struggle—the research analyzes how a sacred and collective culinary practice has been turned into a symbolic tool of class distinction in the digital age.

The study first defines the historical and cultural significance of İzmir Lokma as a gastronomic tradition rooted in social solidarity and spiritual capital. The emergence of the “new generation lokma,” characterized by gourmet fillings, visual appeal, and high prices, has led to the dessert's transformation into a symbol representing economic, aesthetic, and symbolic capital. Through an analysis of cultural representations and class-based consumption patterns, it is shown that upper classes redefine traditional tastes through “cultural taste,” while forms associated with the lower class are trivialized. The spread of Lokma on social media through hashtags such as #yeninesillokma contributes to its empowerment as symbolic capital, turning a collective ritual into an individual performance.

The commercialization of İzmir Lokma provides a concrete example of Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion and illustrates the transition from collective solidarity to class-based cultural differentiation. While the study offers a comprehensive theoretical analysis, it also acknowledges the lack of empirical data. Therefore, it recommends that future research employ qualitative methods—such as in-depth interviews with traditional producers and new-generation consumers, along with ethnographic fieldwork—to more thoroughly uncover the micro-dynamics of habitus and capital transformation.

**Keywords:** İzmir Lokması, Cultural Capital, Bourdieu, Food culture studies, Food Sociology

### ÖZET

Bu çalışma, dini ve toplumsal ritüellerle bağlantılı geleneksel bir tatlı olan İzmir Lokması'nın, modern tüketim kültüründe nasıl ticarileştirilmiş ve estetikleştirilmiş bir ürüne dönüştüğünü incelemektedir. Araştırma, Pierre Bourdieu'nün kuramsal çerçevesini—özellikle habitus, sermaye dönüşümü ve alan mücadelesi kavramlarını—kullanarak, kutsal ve kolektif bir mutfak pratiğinin dijital çağda sınıfsal ayrımcılığın sembolik bir aracına nasıl dönüştüğünü analiz etmektedir.

Çalışma, öncelikle İzmir Lokması'nın tarihsel ve kültürel önemini; sosyal dayanışma ve manevi sermayeye dayanan bir gastronomik gelenek olarak tanımlar. Gurme dolgular, görsel çekicilik ve yüksek fiyatla öne çıkan “yeni nesil lokma”nın ortaya çıkışı, bu tatlının ekonomik, estetik ve simgesel sermayeyi temsil eden bir sembole dönüşmesine yol açmıştır. Kültürel temsiller ve sınıfsal tüketim kalıpları üzerinden yapılan çözümleme ile üst sınıfların geleneksel tatları “kültürel zevk” yoluyla yeniden tanımladığı; alt sınıfla özdeşleşen biçimlerin ise önemsizleştirildiği gösterilmektedir. Lokmanın sosyal medyada #yeninesillokma gibi hashtag'lerle yayılması, onun simgesel sermaye olarak güçlenmesini sağlamakta; kolektif bir ritüeli bireysel bir performansa dönüştürmektedir.

İzmir Lokması'nın ticarileştirilmesi, Bourdieu'nün sermaye dönüşümü kavramını somut bir örnekle ortaya koymakta ve kolektif dayanışmadan sınıfsal kültürel ayrılmaya geçişi göstermektedir. Çalışma, kapsamlı bir kuramsal analiz sunmakla birlikte, ampirik veri eksikliğini de kabul etmektedir. Bu nedenle, gelecekte yapılacak araştırmaların, geleneksel üreticiler ve yeni nesil tüketicilerle yapılacak derinlemesine görüşmeler ve etnografik saha çalışmaları gibi nitel yöntemler aracılığıyla habitus ve sermaye dönüşümünün mikro-dinamiklerini daha ayrıntılı biçimde ortaya koyması önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İzmir Lokması, Kültürel Sermaye, Bourdieu, Gıda Kültürü Çalışmaları, Yemek Sosyolojisi

Melih İçigen <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Öğr. Gör., Kapadokya Üniversitesi, Uygulamalı Bilimler Yüksekokulu, Gastronomi ve Mutfak Sanatları, Nevşehir, Türkiye. ORCID: 0000-0002-4173-505X

## INTRODUCTION

Food is not merely a physical necessity; it also functions as a complex narrative space where social identity, cultural memory, and class affiliations are shaped. Among the most symbolic and ceremonial components of this realm are desserts. Traditional sweets, particularly those associated with rites of passage such as funerals, religious commemorations (mevlit), and weddings, play a fundamental role in the transmission of collective memory and the maintenance of cultural continuity (Bourdieu, 2015; Douglas, 2003; Van Gennep, 1996). Culinary traditions have increasingly become a central element in the quest for national identity. Although nutrition fulfills a basic human need, food culture is now widely recognized as a significant indicator of local identity. Beyond its physiological dimension, the expression “we are what we eat” is increasingly understood to carry meaningful psychological and sociological implications (Richards, 2002; Akgündüz, Koba & Alkan, 2024).

Food culture encompasses not only what is consumed, but also how, why, and by whom that consumption takes place; thus, it reflects broader social dynamics related to food. Culinary culture, on the other hand, more specifically focuses on the preparation of food, the tools used, and cooking techniques, and therefore has a narrower scope compared to food culture (Kara, 2015). Culinary culture includes not only the dishes prepared in the kitchen, but also cooking methods, kitchen utensils, eating practices and rituals, foods prepared for special occasions, and the historical relationships a region or community establishes with the past (Ağlamaz Susup, 2018; Çakmak, 2022).

İzmir lokma, a dessert native to Turkey’s Aegean region, holds significant religious and socio-cultural value. In recent years, alongside the traditional version distributed freely in public spaces, “new generation lokma” varieties have emerged in boutique establishments, reinterpreted with various fillings and modern presentation styles. This transformation can be seen as a reflection of class-based distinctions and struggles for cultural legitimacy articulated through food (Bourdieu, 2015).

This study is a compilation that analyzes the transformation of the İzmir Lokma tradition—originally rooted in religious and communal solidarity rituals such as votive offerings and thanksgiving—within the framework of Pierre Bourdieu’s sociology. It specifically examines this process through the concepts of cultural capital, habitus, and field struggle. The aim is to explore the sociological meanings of this transformation by thematically analyzing the theoretical and empirical studies available in the literature.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### An Overview of Pierre Bourdieu’s Sociology

Before it became a core component of Bourdieu’s sociology, many thinkers had employed the concept of habitus. The term appeared in Durkheim’s lectures (1904–1905), in Weber’s writings (1918–1919), and in Mauss’s works (1934). However, none of these scholars attributed as much theoretical significance to habitus as Pierre Bourdieu did (Güney Çeğin, Göker, Arlı, & Tatlıcan, 2007).

*Habitus* is one of the central concepts in Bourdieu’s sociology. The designation of Bourdieu’s school of thought as the “sociology of habitus” in the literature clearly reflects the weight he placed on the concept. To prevent its conflation with the notion of *habitude* (habit), Bourdieu offers the following clarification:

“Although the concept of habitus may appear to be related to the term ‘habit,’ it in fact diverges from it significantly. Habitus is not merely a feature permanently acquired by the individual. ‘Habit’ implies repetition, mechanical movement, and automatism—it is a result produced, not a productive source. In contrast, I argue that habitus is inherently generative. It functions not only as a mechanism producing the objective logic of forward-directed action, but also as an enabler of transformation. It constitutes a space containing the transformative tools that allow us to generate personal productions. The transition from understanding products to grasping their conditions of production is neither a simple nor a mechanical process. For this reason, habitus is not a completely predictable or predetermined structure” (Bourdieu, as cited in Ünal, 2007).

According to Bourdieu (2015), *habitus* is “a system of durable and transposable dispositions (schemes of perception, evaluation, and action) produced by specific social contexts that function as a fundamental and structuring principle in the generation of practices and representations.”

Habitus constitutes a framework of dispositions that guides actors through a universe of possibilities. It establishes a link between the organization of social relations and societal culture. As a source governing behavior, it is defined as a system of perception, cognition, valuation, and modes of action. Simultaneously, habitus operates on multiple levels of meaning and is accepted as a metaphor for belonging to a community based on intellectual and aesthetic thinking (Jenks, as cited in Ölçer, 2020). “Essentially, habitus appears as the totality of an individual’s unique

behavioral tendencies. The individual gains the ability to perform roles suited to their status; however, habitus goes beyond this understanding—it represents the intersection of institutions and embodied existence” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2016).

Habitus refers to the enduring dispositions—such as class, gender, and language—internalized by social agents through experiences acquired in specific social contexts. However, “as is sometimes misconceived, habitus is not a predetermined fate.” As a historical product, habitus forms a system of dispositions that is continuously open to new experiences and their effects. This system is resilient but not immutable (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2016).

Practical knowledge, like habitus, is a form of tacit understanding based on an individual’s existing accumulation, helping them adapt to varying conditions in distinctive ways. Considering that Bourdieu’s concept of habitus also incorporates the notion of “capital”—representing both conscious and unconscious inclinations and efforts toward goal attainment—habitus includes not only practical consciousness but also unconscious drives. Schultz’s notion of “projects” and Giddens’s idea of “discursive consciousness” are reflected in this broader understanding (Güney Çeğin et al., 2007).

While Marxist sociology treats capital as an economic foundation, Bourdieu redefines capital in social terms. For Bourdieu, social capital refers to the resources enabling individuals to access a particular social field and derive specific advantages from the competition within that field (Palabıyık, 2020). Therefore, capital is one of the foundational concepts in Bourdieu’s theory. He approaches capital not solely from a Marxist standpoint but emphasizes various forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—and their interrelations in class analysis (Karadağ, 2009).

The acquisition and preservation of capital primarily result from behavioral chains shaped by habitus and instilled by institutions such as family and school (Palabıyık, 2020).

In *Distinction*, Bourdieu argues that habitus determines “cultural tastes” and serves to reproduce existing class structures. He provides the example of caviar, which remains unaffordable for the working class, thus perpetuating class distinctions (Yel, 2007).

Among the four forms of social power Bourdieu examines, the first is economic capital—material assets such as money. The second is cultural capital, defined as knowledge of values esteemed within a society. Often acquired through education or credentials, cultural capital helps explain why children from middle-class families tend to succeed in school while those from working-class families may not. The third form is social capital, which results from membership in social groups. It refers to reliable networks of individuals from whom support can be sought and is essential for understanding social mobility.

The distribution of economic and cultural capital shapes the structure and relational dynamics of the social space. The fourth form—symbolic capital—includes attributes such as appearance, prestige, honor, and manner of speech. It reflects moral qualities ascribed to upper-class individuals through charitable acts enabled by their wealth and time. Symbolic capital, according to Bourdieu, is closely linked to habitus (Palabıyık, 2020; Göker, 2007). “One of the most original and significant aspects of Bourdieu’s theory lies in his analysis of the distinctions among forms of capital and the dynamics of their transformation.”

Capital conversion carries multiple meanings. For instance, affluent individuals investing in elite and costly educational institutions for their children exemplifies the conversion of economic capital into cultural capital (Calhoun, 2007). In the case of academic achievement—which functions as a mechanism for upward social mobility—Bourdieu contends that cultural dispositions and practices inherited from the family are inherently more influential than economic factors. With this view, he departs markedly from traditional sociological interpretations of culture as a shared expressive medium. Bourdieu asserts that cultural habits and tendencies constitute a form of capital that can be transferred across generations under favorable conditions (Weininger & Lareau, as cited in 2007; Dursun, 2018).

Unlike cultural capital, which requires a long-term process of internalization to be transmitted, economic capital can change hands multiple times throughout one’s life. Bourdieu suggests that lifestyle differences are rooted in struggles over one’s position within the social space and reflect structural tensions at its foundation. This implies that conflicts among class fractions are essentially symbolic. Such a proposition underscores Bourdieu’s efforts to synthesize the concepts of “class” and “status” (Wright, 2014).

Bourdieu emphasizes that understanding the positions of individuals who share the same system of ownership—especially similar types and volumes of capital—offers the highest explanatory power. He highlights the

importance of analyzing the context and specific social field in which an individual's capital was produced, as each field possesses its own distinct logic and values (Bourdieu, 2015).

Bourdieu asserts that notions of “good” and “bad” are defined by the dominant class within the hierarchical structure, which endeavors to disseminate its class-based judgments and cultural capital throughout society (Bourdieu, 2015). Taste is monopolized; the pursuit of high status is monopolized by this class through “education, cultural capital, and class-based disposition—habitus” (Arun, 2014).

At both the individual and societal levels, intra-community interactions—termed social capital—are essential. According to Putnam, social capital is a feature of a culture or society. It plays a fundamental role in fostering trust among individuals involved in shared activities within the same community (Putnam, 1993).

For Bourdieu, social capital emerges as a result of individuals' group affiliations, cultural endowments, and innate habitus, ultimately contributing to social inequalities. The continuity of social capital depends on individuals' maintenance of social relationships. It cannot be entirely possessed, as sustaining relationships requires active engagement with others (Yarçı, 2011).

An individual's economic, cultural, and symbolic capital is largely contingent on the expansion of their relational networks. Two key concepts arise here: social networks and relations of material and symbolic exchange. The size, value, and mobilization potential of these ties are critical for social capital (Yarçı, 2011).

Since our behaviors are exhibited within fields, habitus is directly linked to them. Bourdieu maintains that different types of capital correspond to different fields, and these fields are shaped and defined by the nature of the prevailing habitus (Çabar, 2022). Habitus is both related to and constitutive of the field. Bourdieu defines *field* as the structured social space in which agents occupy positions. Authority is shaped in fields such as economics, politics, art, language, and science according to their own rules and logic. Bourdieu also argues that each field constitutes a *field of power*, where actors struggle to preserve or transform the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2016; Çabar, 2022).

Pierre Bourdieu's sociology offers powerful tools for analyzing how cultural production, consumption, and class structures are interconnected. While *habitus* represents behavior patterns shaped by an individual's social position, forms of capital—economic, cultural, social, and symbolic—serve as the determinants of that position. The concept of *field* refers to the social spaces in which these capitals contend. The evolution of *İzmir Lokma* from a traditional charitable practice to a symbolic object of modern consumption can be analyzed through the intersection of these three concepts.

## METHODOLOGY

This study aims to compile and analyze academic works on the cultural representation of *İzmir Lokma* within a sociological and theoretical framework. The review is based on a qualitative literature analysis, adopting a non-systematic yet thematically focused approach.

## Data Sources

The literature review covers Turkish and English sources published between 2010 and 2024. The main databases searched include: Google Scholar, TR Dizin, YÖK Thesis Center, JSTOR, Taylor & Francis, and DergiPark. Keywords used in the search included: “İzmir lokma,” “dessert culture,” “mass culture,” “sociology of food,” “Bourdieu,” “habitus,” “cultural capital,” “symbolic capital,” and “class-based taste.”

## Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The studies included consist of peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and theses that directly address topics such as *İzmir Lokma*, traditional desserts, symbolic consumption, and class representation. Excluded materials comprise popular media articles, social media commentary, and non-scholarly blog content.

## Thematic Classification

The collected studies were classified into six main themes based on content analysis:

1. Traditional Dessert Culture and Ritual
2. *İzmir Lokma* and Gastronomic Heritage
3. Consumer Culture and Aestheticization
4. Analyses within the Framework of Bourdieu's Sociology
5. Class Representation and Capital Conversion



## 6. Social Media and Digital Cultural Performance

The following presents a thematic, theoretical, and content-based summary of the compiled studies.

**Tablo 1: Literature Map and Thematic Analysis**

Thematic Area	Representative Works	Theoretical Approach
Traditional Dessert Culture and Ritual	Gürsoy (2013), Arıkan (2016), Van Gennep (1996)	Cultural anthropology, rites of passage
İzmir Lokma and Gastronomic Heritage	Çakmak (2022), Yentürk (2018), İzmir Provincial Directorate of Culture	Local history, intangible heritage
Consumer Culture and Aestheticization	Alyakut (2020), Dikmen Öymen (2008), Richards (2002)	Media sociology, mass culture
Bourdieu's Sociology (Habitus, Capital, Field)	Bourdieu (2015), Calhoun (2014), Göker (2007)	Class sociology, cultural capital
Class Codes and Transformation through Lokma	Arun (2014), Sünnetçioğlu (2020), Ölçer (2020)	Bourdieu-oriented class and taste analysis
Representation of Desserts on Social Media	Jourdain & Naulin (2016), Ölçer (2020), Putnam (1993)	Symbolic capital, digital habitus

**Tablo 2: Thematic Summary of the Literature**

Author/Year	Topic	Approach	Theory	Key Findings
Alyakut (2020)	New-generation lokma	Media analysis	Baudrillard	Aestheticization, Instagram performance
Akgündüz et al. (2024)	Gastronomy of İzmir	Qualitative analysis	Bourdieu	Emphasis on cultural heritage
Çakmak (2022)	Culinary culture in İzmir	Cultural assessment	Cultural anthropology	Identity and culinary memory
Sünnetçioğlu (2020)	Consumer review analysis	Content analysis	Bourdieu	Product perception, class representation
Arun (2014)	Cultural inequality	Theoretical analysis	Bourdieu	Taste and cultural distinction
Richards (2002)	Gastronomy and tourism	Conceptual discussion	Consumer culture	Cultural and economic dimensions of food

## RESULTS

### On İzmir Lokma

Desserts hold a significant place in Turkish cuisine. From the opulent dishes of the Ottoman palace to everyday home cooking, desserts have always been an indispensable element. Historically, Turkish desserts have been prepared using ingredients such as sugar, honey, and molasses—products not originally native to Anatolia and often imported from Egypt. Turkish sweets can be categorized according to their methods of preparation (Arıkan, 2016). Proverbs such as “Let’s eat sweet, speak sweet” and “Sweet words can lure a snake from its hole” reflect the symbolic and cultural significance of desserts in Turkish society. In this context, *lokma* functions as a social tool that symbolizes sharing and community solidarity, playing a unifying role in both mourning and celebration.

Following the Turks' adoption of Islam and their subsequent migration to Anatolia, they established amicable relations with various ethnic and religious groups, which fostered mutual cultural exchange. For instance, Orthodox Christians distributed semolina halva (*koliva*) at funerals and offered fried dough or halva to neighbors on holy nights. Over time, these traditions evolved: Turks sweetened fried dough and refined its form into *lokma*, distributing it in memory of the deceased (Gürsoy, 2013, p. 59).

*Lokma* is a traditional dessert with roots in Arabic, where the word *luqma* denotes “a bite,” “a piece,” or “a portion” (Yentürk, 2018). Although widespread, it has become particularly associated with İzmir, where it is categorized as a street food. Its historical origins date back to the Karakhanid era (Çelik & Kuzumoğlu, 2020). İzmir *lokma* is distinct for its syrup-soaked presentation and its donut-like hole in the center. Variants that lack this hole, and are denser and rounder, are referred to as *palace lokma* (*saray lokması*) (İzmir Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2016).

Having gained popularity during the Ottoman era, *lokma* is now regarded as an element of local gastronomic heritage. It is often distributed as charity in the Aegean region and sold commercially in other settings. In this regard, *lokma* is a food with both cultural and spiritual significance, typically distributed in neighborhoods, outside mosques, and on streets. Preserving this cultural value is therefore essential. In recent years, a new generation of *lokma* vendors has emerged, offering innovative versions under the same name but using different ingredients and branding. The number of these vendors continues to grow (Sünnetçioğlu, 2020). Although similar desserts with different names are found from Greece to Saudi Arabia, *lokma* has become an inseparable part of İzmir’s cultural identity.

The traditional recipe involves frying a dough made from flour, yeast, water, and salt, then soaking it in syrup. In İzmir, it is usually served with syrup, although in some areas it is presented dry—similar to fried bread (*pişi*)—and may even be served with cheese. While *İzmir Lokma* is recognized by its ring shape with a central hole, *Palace Lokma*—historically known in İzmir as *Meşe Lokması*—has a smaller, plump, round shape (Yentürk, 2018). On religious and cultural occasions such as circumcision ceremonies, holy nights, commemorations (*mevlit*), and funerals, *lokma* is commonly prepared and distributed on street corners. This practice is locally referred to as *lokma dökmek* (to have lokma made/distributed) (Türkiye Kültür Portalı, 2020).

There are regional variations in *lokma* practices. In the Aegean region, it is typically distributed to households during the Ramadan Festival and on the Night of Power (*Kadir Gecesi*). In some areas, it is offered after the birth of a child. Over time, *lokma* has become a defining element of İzmir's cultural identity. Its preparation and public distribution on significant days have become routine practices. Two primary varieties exist in İzmir: *İzmir Lokma* (round and ring-shaped) and *Palace Lokma* (spherical). There are also regional adaptations such as *bırtlak*, produced in Ayaş, Ankara (Sevimli & Sönmezdağ, 2017).

Although known under different names and recipes across various geographies, *lokma* has been distinctly embraced and integrated into İzmir's cultural fabric. Closely tied to the city's religious and cultural practices, *lokma* is now a spiritual symbol and a form of intangible cultural heritage transmitted across generations. On August 13, 2016, İzmir Lokma was registered under geographical indication protection by the Turkish Patent Institute, as announced in Official Gazette No. 29800, and was officially recognized on March 21, 2017.

According to its registered recipe, İzmir Lokma is made by fermenting a dough of wheat flour, water, salt, yeast, and granulated sugar. After shaping, the dough is deep-fried in refined vegetable oil and immersed in syrup. Its ring shape with a central hole distinguishes it from other regional types. The dough is kneaded for 10–12 minutes until smooth and fermented for 1 to 1.5 hours at 28–32°C. It is then shaped into hollow-centered spheres. Traditional frying involves fully immersing the dough in refined sunflower oil heated to 160–180°C. The syrup consists of water, sugar, and lemon juice (Turkish Patent Institute, 2016).

Today, *lokma* production is widespread across Turkey. Specialized machines have been developed in recent years, and private vendors now offer mobile services for events and charitable occasions (Güldemir, 2016).

Historically, *lokma* was prepared and distributed in palaces and homes to express collective joy or grief, often as a charitable offering. It also served a religious function, a role it continues to fulfill today—albeit transformed by mass culture. The first indicator of this transformation lies in the site and agents of production: *lokma*, once homemade, is now primarily produced outdoors by professionals using mobile equipment. Consequently, traditional methods have given way to industrial production, with entrepreneurs adopting modern technologies to take part in this evolving food sector.

The second major shift is observed in production methods. Traditional techniques passed down through generations have been replaced by machinery. Today's *lokma* is produced more efficiently, ensuring consistency in taste and hygiene, and appealing to consumers through reduced time and labor demands.

Within the context of mass culture, traditional *lokma* has undergone two key transformations: in flavor and presentation. Modern *lokma* is now visually enhanced with creams, chocolate, or fruit sauces, reimagined to suit contemporary palates. It is considered fashionable and luxurious, emerging as a symbol of mass consumer culture. Initially marketed in affluent and educated urban districts, new-generation *lokma* gained symbolic value and status once embraced by elite consumers (Jourdain & Naulin, 2016; Dikmen Öymen, 2008). Vendors capitalized on this trend, and as the middle class began seeking access to this trendy product, its exclusivity diminished, leading to its widespread popularization.

Today, modern *lokma* has become an easily accessible and commonly consumed item. Its rise is linked to features of mass culture such as transience, affordability, media appeal, and convenience. Typically served in disposable containers with plastic utensils, it is easy to consume and generates minimal waste. This practicality has contributed to its popularity. As a ready-made, low-effort, and budget-friendly product, *lokma* appeals to a broad spectrum of consumers, including the middle class.

In conclusion, the case of new-generation *lokma* illustrates how mass culture and traditional culture intersect to transform Turkey's dessert heritage. Turkish desserts, historically rooted in cultural and religious traditions, are now being redefined through consumerism and popular trends (Alyakut, 2020).

## Data Sources

### Visual and Digital Content Analysis: Socio-Cultural Representations of İzmir Lokma





Figures 1 & 2. Traditional İzmir Lokma

As shown in Figure 1, the presentation of İzmir Lokma takes place during a public charitable event, in line with its traditional context. The *lokma*, prepared in a large cauldron, is distributed freely to people in the surrounding area. This image clearly illustrates how *lokma* is embedded in a ritual of religion, solidarity, and collective identity. Its plain appearance, lack of decorative elements, and outdoor setting point to its origins within the traditional cultural practices of the working class. In this context, *lokma* is not merely a dessert, but a symbol of spiritual capital and social belonging.

Figure 2 displays İzmir Lokma in its most traditional, simple, and original form.



Figures 3 & 4. New-Generation Lokma

### Class Codes of İzmir Lokma

İzmir Lokma is more than just a dessert; it may also be understood as a marker of class affiliation, cultural capital, and symbolic distinction within the societies it inhabits. Its consumption patterns correspond closely with Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital conversion.

In the Aegean region especially, *lokma* has evolved as an essential component of religious and cultural rituals. Its distribution in public spaces, free of charge and for charitable purposes, associates it with collective identity and the values of sharing. In this traditional context, *lokma* acquires the qualities of "spiritual capital" for working-class communities.

The rise of the "new-generation *lokma*" concept in recent years, however, has prompted a significant transformation in its cultural meaning. These new forms, often filled and topped with chocolate or fruit sauces, are marketed as gourmet desserts in urban centers and high-income districts. This shift indicates a redefinition of *lokma* through the lens of symbolic capital. In this process, economic capital (high pricing), aesthetic capital (presentation), and media capital (Instagram posts, influencer content) converge to reinforce *lokma*'s new position of social legitimacy.

Table 3: Class-Based Representations of İzmir Lokma

Category	İzmir Lokma
Origin and Historical Context	Deeply rooted in Ottoman palace and folk cuisines; traditionally distributed as charity in Anatolia



Category	İzmir Lokma
Traditional Meaning	A ritual dessert carrying spiritual value, distributed freely
Contemporary Consumption	Transformed into symbolic capital through new-generation <i>lokma</i> vendors
Class Representation	Expansion of symbolic meaning from lower to upper social classes
Relation to Cultural Capital	A symbolic value that shifts from traditional to popular culture
Reflections of Habitus	Social belonging, collectivism, and traditional values

### Conceptual Diagram: The Transformation Model of İzmir Lokma

This conceptual table illustrates the transformation process of İzmir Lokma from its traditional ritual context into a commercialized and digitalized cultural representation, explained through Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, forms of capital, and field.

**Table 4: The Transformation Model of İzmir Lokma**

İzmir Lokması		
⇓	⇓	⇓
Traditional Meaning ( <i>ritual, charity</i> )	New-Generation Use ( <i>aesthetic, gourmet</i> )	Digital Domain ( <i>#yeninesillokma</i> )
⇓	⇓	⇓
Spiritual Capital ( <i>Habitus</i> )	Economic/Symbolic ( <i>Capital Conversion</i> )	Class Performance ( <i>Instagram, visibility</i> )
⇓	⇓	⇓
Cultural Memory ( <i>Douglas, Van Gennep</i> )	Field Struggle ( <i>Bourdieu</i> )	Symbolic Violence ( <i>Bourdieu</i> )

### CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The transformation of İzmir Lokma can be interpreted not only as a gastronomic shift but also as a socio-cultural process of reconfiguration. When analyzed through the lens of Bourdieu's concepts, the practice of lokma has evolved from a collective ritual into a performative field associated with individual taste, visual aesthetics, and symbolic status. A symbolic legitimacy conflict has emerged between traditional lokma producers and new-generation entrepreneurs, turning the meaning of lokma into a site of struggle between social fields. Especially on platforms like Instagram, lokma has shifted from a representation of cultural value to a visual signifier of the consumer's social status.

Originally a traditional dessert served collectively during religious ceremonies and charitable events, İzmir Lokma has been aestheticized and commodified under the "new-generation lokmacı" model. In this way, it has become a class-based object of consumption embedded with economic, cultural, and symbolic capital. This commercialization exemplifies Bourdieu's concept of capital conversion. Furthermore, this shift has weakened lokma's socially egalitarian function, transforming it into a symbol of cultural distinction for those with greater economic capital.

Media and social networks have played a decisive role in this transformation. By reimagining the aesthetic presentation of desserts and circulating them as visual content on digital platforms, such products have become loaded with symbolic meaning, moving beyond their role as mere food items. In this sense, the present study offers a concrete example of Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital transformation and habitus within contemporary gastronomic practices.

While the geographically registered version of İzmir Lokma is protected by a standardized recipe that legally defines its traditional method of production, "new-generation" variations have stretched these definitions to legitimize commercialization. This situation exemplifies what Bourdieu terms a "field struggle": a symbolic contest for legitimacy between traditional producers with a religious/social habitus and commercial entrepreneurs with an economic habitus. Social media hashtags like #yeninesillokma have reduced lokma to a "shareable" image. This digital performance reflects Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital: images that garner likes do not signify the dessert's cultural value, but rather represent the consumer's social position. The collective essence of the traditional ritual has been replaced by an individualized performance.

An example of this is the chocolate-filled "boutique lokma," which diverges from the syrup-based version traditionally consumed by the working class—both in appearance and price. Here, Bourdieu's theory of distinction gains relevance: the upper class refines and appropriates tradition, while the working class's version of lokma is perceived as inferior. This reveals how cultural capital can function as a tool of class-based domination.



Despite the nationwide expansion of “new-generation lokma” vendors, it is noteworthy that many residents of İzmir continue the tradition of commissioning lokma for charitable distribution on significant religious days. This indicates that the spiritual habitus still persists strongly within certain segments of society.

Nevertheless, the study has several limitations. First, no field research was conducted, and digital media content or consumer experiences were not directly observed. Therefore, the analysis presented here is a conceptual interpretation based on literature and secondary sources. Future studies collecting qualitative field data on how different social classes experience and interpret this dessert could provide deeper insights into how cultural capital manifests in everyday practices.

In conclusion, İzmir Lokma is not merely a sweet treat; it functions as a sociological medium of cultural transmission, class representation, and symbolic meaning-making. Bourdieu’s sociology offers a powerful theoretical framework for understanding the evolution of this dessert within class-based habitus. The narratives told by these desserts on the plate are intimately connected to social status, cultural taste, and symbolic domination.

This review-based study has examined the cultural and class-based transformation of İzmir Lokma through existing literature and has shown how this transformation can be interpreted through Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital, and field. However, certain gaps in the field remain noteworthy.

#### Gaps in the Literature

- ✓ There is a scarcity of empirical, qualitative data on İzmir Lokma.
- ✓ Analyses of digital performance and symbolic status through social media remain limited.
- ✓ There is a lack of cross-sectional comparisons exploring how different class, age, and gender groups interpret this dessert.

#### Theoretical Scope and Limitations

- ✓ While Bourdieu’s theory strongly explains the influence of class structures on cultural production,
- ✓ Supplementing the framework with thinkers like Baudrillard or Bauman may better address contemporary phenomena such as postmodern consumption, digital visibility, and ephemeral cultural circulation.

#### Suggestions for Future Research

- ✓ Social media analysis: Visual content analysis of lokma representations via hashtags like #yeninesilokma on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok.
- ✓ Class-based consumer profiling: Mapping the class, age, and educational profiles of new-generation lokma consumers.
- ✓ Ethnographic fieldwork: Conducting interviews with traditional lokma producers and observing production and distribution practices to reveal the micro-dynamics of capital transformation.

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