

# The evolving landscape of Istanbul's coffee shops: Navigating disruption in a changing urban environment

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## Abstract

During the final quarter of the last century, Istanbul experienced rapid population growth with increases in income, an expanded free trade economy, and the influence of greater globalization. Together, these stimulated an increase in the demands for new services. One of these demands was answered by an influx of coffee shop chains, and this effected both the growth patterns of traditional coffee houses and introduced a new lifestyle. Despite the closure of many businesses due to economic crises, coffee shops are increasing in number. This paper investigates the spatial distribution of coffee shops with respect to the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of several selected districts by using regression analysis. The number of coffee shops is taken as the dependent variable and the social life index and the proportion of the population aged over 65 are used as independent variables. These were chosen through an evaluation of several characteristics of the districts under discussion. According to the results, the location of coffee shops in Istanbul is affected more by a district's social life index and by the proportion of its population which is aged over 65 than the other characteristics of the districts. The impact of the multi-center development on the distribution of coffee shops is explained. the balanced distribution of coffee shops with respect to other small businesses is suggested for further research.

**Keywords:** coffee shops, third places, globalization, spatial distribution, Istanbul

## 1. Introduction

Coffee shops provide places for people to meet, relax and develop connections. However, the growing presence of coffee shops in the urban landscape has meant that they increasingly take on a wider range of roles, becoming spaces of both leisure and work—but also providing spaces of sociability in which people (Ferreira et al., 2021). Furthermore, prior studies strongly suggest that the intersection of global brands and local cultures produces cultural heterogeneity (Thompson, 2004). As a result of the growing demand for third places, the number of coffee shops is rapidly increasing, and these include local, international and heterogenic coffeehouse types. Already existent coffeehouse culture, together with a degree of envy for a western lifestyle has contributed to the success of both local and international coffee shop chains. In the Istanbul case, little research has been done to investigate the spatial distribution of these coffee shops. The present study concentrates on the relationships between the number of coffee shops and the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the districts in Istanbul where they can be found. As an answer to the loneliness feelings in the growing cities, third places such as bars, restaurants, and coffee shops exist outside of home and work and host regular, voluntary, and informal gatherings of people who enjoy one another's company (Lofland, 1998). several researchers have found that loneliness often encourages consumers to form commercial friendships with employees in such service establishments (Goodwin, 1997; Goodwin & Lockshin, 1992).

There have been many studies into the growing emphasis given to these third places. Rosenbaum (2006) suggests that some consumers patronize third places to satisfy not only their

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consumption needs but also their needs for companionship and emotional support. These needs are prevalent in older consumers who often experience events that diminish the number of their relationships and who may turn to their 'commercial friendships' in third places for support. The data reveals that as the frequency with which consumers obtain companionship and emotional support from their commercial friendships increases, so too does their loyalty. Another study by Rosenbaum et al. (2007) introduces a theory that attempts to explain how deficits in social support motivate customers to replace lost social resources by forming relationships with customers and employees in commercial 'third places'. Their model supports the existence of a linkage between commercial social support and a customer's sense of attachment to a third place that provides it. The results reveal that customers obtain social support in a third place to the extent to which they lost it elsewhere. In essence, the third place functions as a remedy for the negative symptoms associated with isolation. Rosenbaum also demonstrated that third-place friendships, in general, are relatively weak social ties in terms of perceived closeness, which supports Granovetter's (1983) theory regarding their durability.

There are several reasons that can account for the loneliness that drives people to seek companionship in third places. One is the loss of a spouse; bereavement, divorce or separation may cause people to seek emotional support, companionship and instrumental support from their third-place relationships (Lofland, 1982). Another reason for loneliness is that people who experience a chronic illness or disability are susceptible to companionship losses (Gordon & Benishek, 1996). Moreover, retirees and empty nesters often face loneliness since retirement lessens the frequency with which people interact with co-workers, and thus may seek companionship in third places (Rosenbaum, 2006). for this purpose architectural space of the coffee shop is targeted to social interaction (Chadios, 2005).

Frequency of visits to a third place can be explained by satisfying consumers' desire for food and/or beverages, by fulfilling their need for a home type environment, or by offering a new lifestyle (Seamon, 1979). in addition, third places are not just another gathering place. there is a significant history associated with them as they have been places responsible for shaping world's history. the french and italian revolutions, for instance, started from coffee shops (Chadios, 2005). as another example, in london, some coffee shops were most closely associated with science and they were frequented by the members of the royal society.

Third places deliberately encourage inter-customer and inter-employee socialization and employ comfortable seating arrangements for this purpose (Waxman, 2006). Customers who seek support in third places and who visit these places on a regular basis include the elderly, the lonely and those belonging to marginalized groups. A key benefit that regular customers may receive from patronizing a third place is consistent access to their commercial friendship (Goodwin, 1997). There are also studies which demonstrate a strong positive association between gentrification and post-industrial policing (Ianiyonu (1918).

Although there are several studies (Greaves, 1653; Mikhail, 2007; Komecoglu, 2005; Karababa & Ger, 2011) that analysis the functions and the social and politic roles of the coffeehouses in Ottoman culture, studies into the modern coffee culture of Istanbul and its socio-economic aspects have been largely overlooked. since sociologists seem to take granted its location and characteritics of its environment as important factors for its significance (Chadios, 2005), the present paper is an attempt to rectify this situation through an investigation into the growth and location of coffee shops by considering the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the districts in which they are found and their spatial distribution across Istanbul.

The organization of the paper is as follows: in section one, the general development of coffee shops and related reserch is given.the historical development of coffeehouses and transformation of their function in the urban structure under the influence of globalization is given in Istanbul in the second section. The regression analysis of the relationships between the number of coffee

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shops and the characteristics of the various districts of Istanbul is given in the third section. The final section is devoted to a conclusion and suggestions for further research.

## 2. Background

In around 600-800, coffee was first used by Ethiopians and later spread to the Arap world. Around 1300, Yemen was the first country where coffee was first cultivated. In 1536, the Ottoman Turks conquered Yemen and shortly the coffee beans became a vital export through the Ottoman Empire. Then, the Dutch started to cultivate in Indonesia (Allen, 1999) and coffee use spread to Europe. In 16th century Istanbul, coffeehouses emerged as a principal part of the public sphere, as a channel and site of public communication, and as an arena linking the socio-cultural with the political (Ellis, 2011). At that time, rumor and gossip were the primary means of communication and of spreading news, especially in the semi-literate parts of society (Kapferer, 1990). Initially, there were attempts to ban coffee under religious state law because of its stimulating effect, but these were ineffective, and coffee became widely consumed (Komecoglu, 2005). According to Dufour (1685), during the period of Selim II (1566-74) and Murat III (1574-95) there were 600 coffeehouses in Istanbul. During his rule, Murat IV (1623-1640) imposed a very strict ban on coffeehouses in 1633 but following his death they were soon reestablished. In relation to that ban, in the 17th century, the first coffee shop was opened in London by a migrant from Istanbul, later in the other European countries (Chadios, 2005).

The major characteristics of coffeehouses as public places were that they included different social groups with different educational, economic and ethnic backgrounds but were restricted to male members of society (Dallaway, 1799; Salzman, 2000). According to Perry (1743), coffeehouses (Fig. 1) were places frequented by people who had nothing to do other than to talk and pick up news. However, they sometimes became a literary forum where poets recited their poems and entered into discussions with the public (Hattox, 1996). Another visitor, a young Polish count, expressed his admiration for the diversity of topics and the politeness and the refinement in the coffeehouses of Istanbul (Potocki, 1999). During this time, coffeehouses played a remarkable role in the facilitation of public debate, and according to Chardin (1724) the degree of freedom of speech that was allowed in the coffeehouses of the Orient was unique. In addition, they were called 'school of the wise' because of people could learn and do many things in coffee shops.



Figure 1 A historical coffee shop in Istanbul in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (<http://blog.milliyet.com.tr/kahvehane-kiraathane/Blog/?BlogNo=350843>)

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, coffeehouses continued to be social integration centers in Istanbul (Faroqi, 1995). According to White (1845), the city had at least 2,500 coffeehouses, and these held not only literary, religious and political discussions, but also leisure activities such as games (chess and backgammon), performances, story-telling, puppet-shows, shadow plays, and music. According to

a European observer, the storytellers fulfilled almost the same function as the journalists in Europe (Juchereau de Saint-Denys, 1819). In Ottoman Istanbul, coffeehouse society played a significant role in the formation of the public sphere and in shaping the individuals within it (Komecoglu, 2005). During this period, a Westernization movement started as a result of the integration of the Ottoman Empire with the capitalist system which affected its social, economic and cultural life. While the growth in the number of traditional coffeehouses within local neighborhoods continued, Parisian and Viennese style coffeehouses were established in the higher income and more westernized neighborhoods of Beyoğlu (Dokmeçi & Ciraci, 1999, 1988). Coffeehouses were frequented by authors, artists and other well-known people, and throughout the century, several well-known European authors visited Istanbul and described the cultural life to be found in the coffeehouses of different districts (Gautier, 1904; Loti, 1927; Nerval, 2002; De Amicis, 1938).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the role of coffeehouses within society decreased due to technological developments in communication and entertainment, such as movie theaters and TV, and the overall modernization of the society. Traditional coffeehouses continue to exist, however, and these are usually locally owned, small-scale and independent establishments that are operated by people who seem to know everyone in their neighborhood. In addition, such coffeehouses are usually patronized by a group of regular customers who often transform them into their second homes, a practice that can also be witnessed in other countries (Oldenburg, 1990, 2001). During the first half of the century, authors continued to frequent the coffeehouses in Beyoğlu in order to discuss their literary subjects, while people from different professions came together in different coffeehouses at central locations to find work. After the 1950s, as a result of rapid urban growth, these coffeehouses became dispersed throughout the city.

According to a survey conducted in 1971, there were 5082 coffeehouses in Istanbul. Beyoğlu, which had been the Western style entertainment center in the city since the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dokmeçi & Ciraci, 1999), had the highest number of coffeehouses (1133). The districts at the periphery had fewer. For example, Beykoz was found to have 139 coffeehouses (Birsnel, 2001). At that time, Kadikoy was ranked fourth in the list of coffeehouses, but nowadays it has the most. This is because it has become the most preferred district for higher income people due to the multi-center urban development that arose from the construction of the bridges over the Bosphorus and the construction of the peripheral highways (Dokmeçi & Berköz, 1994, 2000) (Fig. 2).



**Figure 2** Coffee shops from Kadikoy, Istanbul

After the 1980s, Istanbul experienced a population growth from 8 million to 15 million. Increasing number of high-rise housing buildings together with the impact of globalization caused the decline of traditional neighborhood life. The free time that people could now devote to entertainment increased the importance of third places, such as coffee shops. This development has been exploited by coffee shop chains, and these have been instrumental in modernizing the services offered by local coffeehouses. The number of establishments increased from 6,392 in 2011 to 7,958 in 2017 (Suzer, 2017), of which 500 belong to coffee shop chains. A similar growth pattern was observed in the number of restaurants (Ayatac & Dokmeçi, 2017). Despite an economic crisis and closure of many businesses, the number of coffee shops is increasing, and because of their higher prices, they are mostly located in higher income neighborhoods.

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Nowadays, coffee shops possess new multiple meanings for their customers, and are like laboratories in which new ways of experience can shape society (Hetherington, 1997). The new forms of sociability observed in coffee shops offer the customers the opportunity to establish friendships according to their level. according to Chadios (2005) there are six reasons that coffeeshops are unique and vital places within the city. sociologists analyse coffeeshops in order to understand the way people interact. artists and musicians use them to expend their social environment, historians emphasize their role on shaping world’s history, politicians use them to increase their influence, urban planners and designers benefit from them to stimulate public life. therefore, research on coffee shops is within the interest of several groups.

### 3. Model

In this study, the relationship between the number of coffee shops and the characteristics of the districts that might offer suitable location choices were analyzed for the years 2012 and 2017. Data obtained from 20 districts was used in this study. Another 19 districts were considered, but it was not possible to obtain an accurate total of establishments within them. The distribution of coffee shops at the district level is as follows (Table 1, Figure 3).

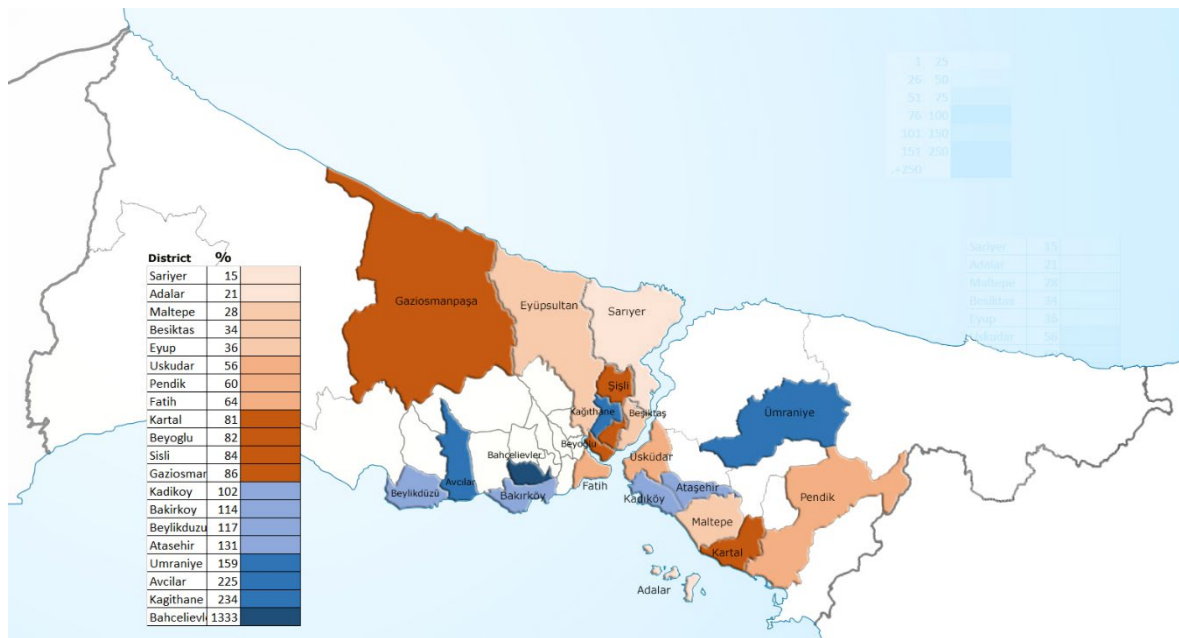


Figure 3 Location of 20 districts for which data were provided and growth of their numbers between 2012-2017

Table 1 Number of Coffee Shops, Their Growth Rates, Population Aged 65+, Social Life Index for the Years 2012, 2017 and 2022 in the 20 Districts

District	NCS_12	NCS_17	NCS_22	G_12-17	G_17-22	G_2012-22	P65_12	P65_17	P65_22	P65_23	SLI_12	SLI_17	SLI_22
Adalar	43	52	157	21	202	265	1986	2706	3700	3837	-0.78105	0.275	0.023
Atasehir	105	243	593	131	144	465	20158	29526	36895	38036	0.35748	0.375	0.281
Avclar	83	270	390	225	44	370	17983	26065	32613	32985	-0.53981	0.6	-0.18
Bahcelievler	9	111	553	1333	398	6044	30615	39044	45420	45635	0.22614	0.275	0.012
Bakirkoy	159	341	752	114	121	373	27488	31497	35142	35359	1.58582	0.575	0.681
Besiktas	404	541	699	34	29	73	25645	27490	28622	28661	1.98188	0.9	0.915
Beylikduzu	66	143	462	117	223	600	10647	20005	30165	31615	-0.44398	0.313	0.156
Beyoglu	287	522	999	82	91	248	15284	16843	18961	19245	2.17645	0.775	0.158
Eyup	119	162	464	36	186	290	18564	24458	30715	31638	0.18995	0.513	-0.011
Fatih	348	571	1141	64	100	228	40359	43050	43774	43592	1.02761	0.613	0.198
Gaziosmanpasa	35	65	405	86	523	1057	21975	28528	35248	36046	-1.00286	0.275	-0.391

Kadikoy	408	823	1219	102	48	199	84386	85528	94149	94447	2.0289	0.888	0.98
Kagithane	53	177	466	234	163	779	19345	22967	27316	27867	0.18191	0.475	-0.078
Kartal	59	107	613	81	473	939	26545	36353	44409	45502	-0.49357	0.363	0.159
Maltepe	155	199	672	28	238	334	33897	45544	54575	55871	-0.22351	0.225	0.317
Pendik	144	230	771	60	235	435	25757	36316	46814	48240	-0.27176	0.438	0.168
Sariyer	168	193	723	15	275	330	19665	28159	34739	35765	0.86678	0.65	0.505
Sisli	174	321	960	84	199	452	27699	28664	30849	31113	1.93468	0.675	0.537
Umraniye	150	388	1071	159	176	614	24267	35380	46700	48476	0.69054	0.338	0.166
Uskudar	250	390	1144	56	193	358	40351	50052	57706	58753	0.09212	0.375	0.57

The spatial distribution of coffee shops shows that central districts such as Kadıkoy, Besiktas, Uskudar, Beyoglu, and Fatih account for higher numbers of coffee shops. This can be attributed to their historical background and their being more attractive and more easily accessible situation. In addition, seashore amenities also contribute to life quality in these districts. Although poorer areas such as Umraniye, Kagithane, and Bahcelievler had fewer numbers of coffee shops at the beginning of the study period, they recorded a higher growth rate and a more rapid increase in their number due to improvements in living standards. This is the consequence of the multi-center development of the city, the partial suburbanization of higher income groups and an increase in consumption services on account of multiculturalism arising from globalization.

Social life index covers the ratio of the total hall (theater, cinema) capacity in the district to the district population. Total park and garden area, total park and garden area per person, total sports area and sports area per person are also covered by this category (Seker, 2011; Seker et al., 2018).

As a result of this analysis, social life index and population aged 65+ are found to be significant and the results are given below (Table 2).

**Table 2** Model Results

	NCS_2012	NCS_2017	NCS_2022
P65_2012	0.003 *		
	(0.001)		
SLI_2012	72.391 **		
	(17.864)		
Intercept	56.170		
	(31.372)		
P65_2017		0.005 **	
		(0.001)	
SLI_2017		635.881 **	
		(112.012)	
Intercept		-203.467 **	
		(67.051)	
P65_2022			0.007 *
			(0.003)
SLI_2022			340.022 *
			(159.585)
Intercept			346.123 *
			(120.216)
Number of observations	20	20	20

\*\* p<.01, \* p<.05

The results illustrate that these variables explain 65% of the result for 2012. As expected, the social life index has a greater effect (0.610) than the population aged 65+ (0.358) on the number of coffee shops throughout the districts. This is in parallel according to the views of the previous authors that there is a bidirectional relationship between the location of a coffee shop together with its environment and its social importance (Chadios, 2005) which in fact stimulates the increase of their numbers.

The variables explain 76% of the result for the year 2017 (Table 4). The social life index (0.661) has a greater effect more than the population aged 65+ (0.45) which means that the effects of both variables on the number of coffee shops increased during the period in question. Especially, in the wealthy districts such as Kadikoy, along boulevards similar to Paris (Graf, 2009) and Besiktas located in the center, the number of coffee shops increases at the expense of small businesses which is also a disadvantage for their customers.

**Table 3** Results for Model

NCS_2012	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
P65_2012	0.003	0.001	2.382	0.029	0.000	0.005
SLI_2012	72.391	17.864	4.052	0.001	34.700	110.081
_cons	56.170	31.372	1.790	0.091	-10.020	122.360

**Table 4** Results for Model 2

NCS_2017	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
P65_2017	0.005	0.001	3.867	0.001	0.002	0.008
SLI_2017	635.881	112.012	5.677	0.000	399.557	872.205
_cons	-203.467	67.051	-3.035	0.007	-344.933	-62.002

**Table 5** Results for Model 3

NCS_2022	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t	[95% conf. interval]	
P65_2022	0.007	0.003	2.282	0.036	0.001	0.014
SLI_2022	340.022	159.585	2.131	0.048	3.327	676.717
_cons	346.123	120.216	2.879	0.010	92.490	599.756

Another impact on the number of coffee shops is the growing number of old people all over the city as well as in the districts which are taken into consideration during the time period of the study. The number of old people per coffee shop was higher in the squatter areas than the other districts in 2012 since there were fewer coffee shops in these areas. Although during the study period, both the number of coffee shops and old people were increased, the number of old people per coffee shop was decreased such as 32 people in Beyoglu and 50 people in Besiktas.

Another result of the study supports the transformation of life styles of middle aged women for their afternoon gathering in the coffee shops rather than at home as in the old days in the wealthy districts. Also, growing level of loneliness of old people in the society increases the frequency to the coffee shops. To increase the number of cultural centers in the city can be an answer to the unnecessary growth of coffee shops by contributing to the meaning of their lives rather than spending time in the coffee shops.

#### 4. Conclusions

The importance of coffee shops as social places, and their relationship they have with the city's civic structure, makes them a good case study for examination of the changes of urban form, land use and public space. Therefore, in this paper, the development of coffeehouses in Istanbul was investigated and explained with respect to socio-economic, cultural and technological factors, and foreign influences, and its impact on the transformation of urban structure. Although traditionally coffeehouses were part of social life for several centuries, they experienced two important transformations: first, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by increasing the number of services they offered under the influence of westernization; second under the influence of incoming coffee shop chains as a result of globalization. People no longer need to go to coffeehouses for entertainment or to get news due to the proliferation of communication technology such as TV and the internet. However, a new coffee shop type was developed in order to alleviate some of the loneliness people

experience in the modern world, and global coffee shop chains have been able to expand due to this need. After the introduction of a free trade policy in the 1980s, the spread of coffee shop chains in Istanbul influenced the function and services offered by local coffeehouses. While some people go about their business in such places, others meet their friends or look for new friendships as a solution for their loneliness. At the beginning of the study, the spatial distribution of coffee shops according to district for the years 2012 and 2017 were evaluated. In 2012, coffee shops were concentrated mostly in historical districts, but by 2017 they were also dispersed throughout the periphery. This is the consequence of the transformation of the city from the monocentric to the polycentric, the suburbanization of higher income groups, improvements in living standards in poorer areas, and an increase in consumption services as a result of multiculturalism arising from globalization. This paper analyzed the factors which effect the spatial distribution of coffee shops by the use of regression techniques. The results reveal that social life index and the population aged over 65 were found to be significant for an overall increase in the number of coffee shops in the districts of Istanbul. As an example, Kadıköy, wealthier district of the city, has the highest number of coffee shops and they take place mostly along the new boulevard, similar to Paris. In a sense, inside oriented old coffee shops moved to the boulevards, not only aimed to integrated social life within them but also provide opportunity to watch people who make promenade along the side walks of boulevards. This offer an animated public space which is one of the characteristics of post-modern urban life.

There is also a negative impact of coffee shop increase, especially, at the expense of small businesses. This situation disturbs balanced distribution of land-use within the city and also, sometimes their bankruptcies themselves. Therefore their numbers should be controlled by the municipal governments in order to provide economically successful environment together with enjoyable public space. Istanbul, another reason of extra growth of coffee shops in certain districts can be the lack of sufficient cultural centers. Development of new cultural centers according to the needs of society can not only provides their social integration but also more meaningful modern social life what they need.

Such businesses and facilities should be supported and encouraged through economic development programs. Policy makers need to be sensitive to both existent and new third places and value them for their social attributes. The results of the study can be useful for investors, urban planners and policymakers. Investigation by conducting a social survey to analyze usage and location is suggested for further research.

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## Resume

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