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NOWRUZ AND CONSUMPTION: EXAMINATION OF CONSUMPTION RITUALS OF NOWRUZ CONCERNING GENERATION GROUPS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the consumption behavior in the ritual situation of Nowruz according to the three generational groups of the 30s and 40s(50s and 60s, 70s and early 80s(according to the solar calendar).The research method is descriptive case study.The data collection method is interviews with 13 participants (8 females and 5 males) from three different generation groups who were selected using the snowball method.Then, the interview data were analyzed using the theme analysis method.The findings of this study showed that despite the changes in this ritual in recent decades, according to the criteria of survival of the ritual, it is living and dynamic and has a variety of ritual values.Also, differences in the performance of Nowruz sub-rituals were identified among different generational groups.In addition, consumption behavior related to the collection of Nowruz rituals was analyzed.The results of this study show that the study of Nowruz as a ritual consumption situation, due to the diverse range of its sub-rituals and its impact on consumption, requires more attention by marketing and consumer behavior researchers.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, researchers in consumer studies have begun to focus their attention on consumption related to ritual situations (such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Passover). The idea of ritual was introduced in the paradigm of consumer research by Rook (1985) essay. Dennis Rook (1985)'s definition of ritual as one of the most referential definitions refers to meaningful and symbolic activity that is made up of several behaviors that occur in a fixed and episodic sequence and tend to be repetitive over time. Ritual behavior is dramatically scripted and acted out and is performed with formality, seriousness, and inner intensity.” (Rook, 1985, p. 252; Torloket al., 2019). In studies of consumer behavior, ritual, describes those aspects of symbolic consumer behavior involving action, as distinguished from a focus on the symbolic content of objects (Holt, 1992, p. 214). Holt (1992) discusses three conceptions of ritual in consumer behavior—one which examines behavioral traits associated with ritual, one which considers ritual as sacred experience, and one which considers ritual as symbolic action. Ritual experience relies on four tangible components: ritual artifacts, A ritual script, Ritual performance role(s), and a ritual audience. Ritual artifacts may often have the form of consumer products (Douglas and Isherwood, 2002; Magnani, 2018). A ritual text advocates a consumption paradigm that may involve the widespread or relatively limited use of products. The performance of a ritual role by an individual can be extensive, limited, or non-existent. It can also be passive or active. Finally, a ritual may be aimed at a larger audience beyond those individuals who have a specified ritual-performance role. It is easy to identify the target audience for many rituals. In certain household rituals, the audience does not typically extend beyond the immediate family, while other rituals the identity of the target audience may be more uncertain (Rook, 1985, p. 253). In general, ritual behaviors involve the extensive exchange of goods and services, often used in dramatic, ceremonial, or even formal situations. Gifting, for example, is a prominent element of many exchange rituals. Also, food preparation and consumption are often associated with specific ritual events (Rook, 1985, p. 252; Torlak et al., 2019). The power of ritual as an analytical category for consumer research is two-fold. First, it describes a system of which consummatory behavior is an important component. As such, ritual provides an analytically tractable microcosm within which the consumption systems of the larger culture are condensed and brought into relief—thus facilitating their identification and analysis. Second, ritual emphasizes the integrated nature of psychological and social structural phenomena (Tetreault and Kleine, 1990, p. 34). The study of rituals in Iran is mainly limited to sociological and anthropological studies, and despite the fact that marketing researchers in the world have been studying the relationship between different rituals with consumption and consumer behavior for decades, in Iran this issue has been taken into less consideration. The study of Nowruz as an Iranian ritual can be considered in two aspects. Although Nowruz is the most important shopping season for many products and services in Iran and has a great commercial importance, it has not been sufficiently studied in terms of consumer behavior. On the other point of view, Nowruz can be considered as a kind of transitional ritual, the transition from the old year to the new year, and like other transitional rituals, the use of consumer goods can

prepare a person psychologically for a new situation. Therefore, according to the psychological effects of this ritual on people, more accurate knowledge and study of its meanings in the consumer's mind, will help to better apprehension. Therefore, in this study, we intend to analyze and study the consumption behavior in the ritual situation of Nowruz according to generational groups.

THEORETICAL LITERATURE OF RESEARCHS AND PREVIOUS STUDIES

Nowruz Rituals

Among the many national and local celebrations and rituals of ancient Iran, only a few remain, undoubtedly the most prominent of which is Nowruz (Fazeli, 2007). In general, Nowruz rituals can be divided into three main categories: pre-Nowruz rituals, Nowruz time rituals, and post-Nowruz rituals. The pre-Nowruz rituals are the rituals that take place before the transition to the New Year and generally in March and before the beginning of April, the most important of which are: Nowruz messengers and bunches, Samanou-cooking ceremonies, House cleaning, new and clean clothes, pilgrimage of cemeteries on the last Thursday of the year, the Fireworks Wednesday ritual, which itself includes various rituals such as spooning (making sound with hitting the spoon on the pot), jug-breaking ritual, Eavesdropping and untying, scarf-removing-ritual. The rituals of Nowruz time are: setting the Haft-Sin table and holding the New Year ceremony, holding special celebrations on the first day of Nowruz, Nowruz visits and tourism. The last Nowruz ritual is "sizdah be dar (nature day)" which is still held vigorously throughout Iran.

Consumption rituals

Consumption behavior in Nowruz can be analyzed based on McCracken (1986) meaning transfer model and his classification of consumption rituals. Grant McCracken (1986) presents a structuralist theoretical model called the "Meaning transfer model" in which he examines the relationship between culture and consumption in the Western world. It includes the notion of the creation of meaning involving individuals, objects, and associated rituals—all key components of this event.

Consumer meanings move in a one-way trajectory between three locations: the culturally constituted world; Consumer goods; and the individual consumer (see Figure 1 below). By reviving the Trickle-down theory, McCracken shows how advertising and fashion systems serve as instruments of meaning transfer from the world to goods, while four types of consumption rituals (Possession; grooming; exchange; and divestment) transfer cultural meanings from goods to individuals. These rituals, described in Table 1, represent ways in which goods are used by consumers to position and define themselves within a socio-cultural context (McKechnie and Tynan 2006). McCracken Classification of Consumer Rituals for The classification of Nowruz consumer rituals is the basis of this research.

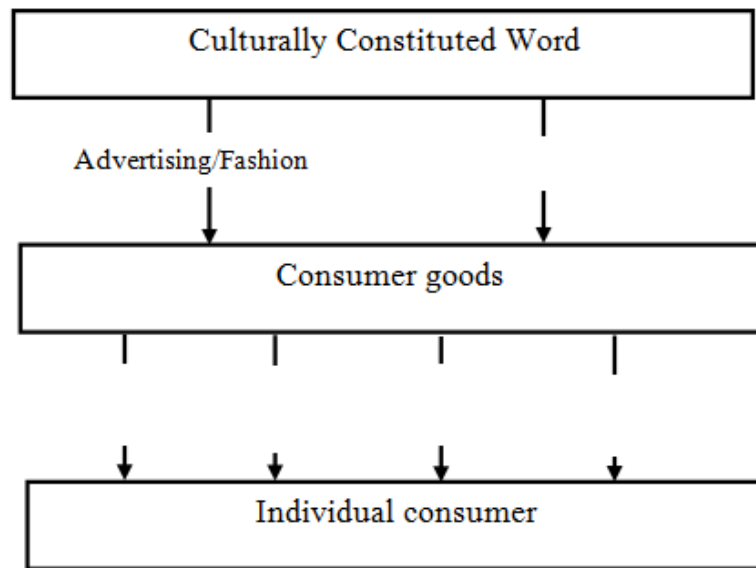


Figure 1. The Movement of Meaning (McCracken, 1986, p.72)

Table 1. Instruments of Meaning Transfer from Consumer Goods to the Individual Consumer (McCracken, 1986, pp. 78-80)

Possession rituals	Taking a purchased good to the place of consumption and claiming its possession as one's own; involves activities such as cleaning, discussing, comparing, reflecting, showing off, and photographing personal possessions.
Exchange rituals	Gift giving and receiving as a means of exercising interpersonal influence; Involves choice of gift that possesses certain symbolic properties that giver wishes to see transferred onto the receiver.
Grooming rituals	Situations where cultural meanings have to be drawn out repeatedly due to the perishable nature of some of the special properties of goods; involves grooming the consumers as well as grooming the good.
Divestment rituals	Used by consumers to relinquish meaning associated by previous owner for second-hand goods, or to erase any personal meaning attached to a good being disposed of.

Previous Researches

Afflerback et al. (2014) in a study entitled "Rituals of consumption in the transition to motherhood", argued the use and arrangement of consumer goods during the transition to motherhood, Afflerback place in a ritual style through two conventional consumption rituals, nesting (meaning Preparing a place for the infant) and gifting (through consumer rituals such as baby baths). The findings of this study show that rituals create and facilitate a sense of control and preparation for a new role and motherhood, play an important role in strengthening the child's gender, and allow mothers to create a sense of connection between their own interests and those of their child.

McDonald and Karg (2014) in a study examined the ritual behaviors of spectators of professional football teams. The main findings of this study show

that ritual behaviors are very common, highly developed by spectators, and can be formed quickly. A positive relationship was found between ritual behavior and outcomes such as satisfaction, team identification, cost for commercial products (spectators buy team products) and attendance at the game (going to the stadium to watch the game). Individual longitudinal tracking of spectators showed that participation in ritual behaviors leads to an increase in other behaviors, not the other way around.

Duman Kurt and Ozgen (2013) in an article have investigated the meanings and rituals of consumption patterns of Eid al-Fitr and New Year celebrations in urban and rural areas of Turkey. The findings of this study indicate six main themes related to the celebration of New Year and Eid al-Fitr, which are: social meanings, positive emotional meanings, neutral or negative meanings, cultural meanings, self-centered meanings and nostalgia. All of these themes, with the exception of the theme of "neutral or negative meanings" for Eid al-Fitr, have been observed more strongly than the New Year celebration. Also in rural areas, Eid al-Fitr is celebrated with stricter rituals, while these consumers do not show much enthusiasm for the New Year celebration. Urban consumers displayed Westernized rituals, especially for New Year's celebrations, and consumption patterns were different for urban and rural areas.

Gentina et al. (2012) in an article examined the use of cosmetics as a ritual in adolescent girls. The data from this exploratory study suggest that makeup is a ritual that plays an important role for adolescent girls in separating them from their childhood. Also in the process of make-up, evidence of ritual dimensions (repetition, symbolic, codification, and dramaturgy) was found. The data of this study further suggest that the traditional rite of passage associated with primitive societies is useful in identifying ritual teenage girls' makeup consumption in modern society, although with differences.

Karaosmanoglu (2010) in a study investigated Ramadan festivals in Istanbul. The findings of this study show that the Ramadan feast, in addition to being an opportunity for consumption and an occasion for display, has become a "Heterotopic site" where a variety of people of all ages, religions, categories, and ethnic backgrounds groups unite to celebrate a common event. As a result, Ramadan seeks to create an atmosphere in which "Islamic" and "secularist" debates take place, as well as where an ideal future is shaped by a hypothetical past.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive (theoretical) research in terms of the type of purpose, as it leads to a deeper understanding and insight into the national ritual of Nowruz. Also, the present study is a qualitative research in terms of data type. According to the research problem, which is the discovery of meanings and the study of a socio-cultural event in its real context, the strategy or research method of descriptive case study was used. On the other hand, according to the classification of Yin (2003) of the types of case study designs (holistic or embedded single-case study, holistic or embedded Multiple-case study), it can be said that our study is Embedded single-case study; It is single because our study includes one case (a ritual are examined),

it is embedded because the case contains more than one unit of analysis; This means that within the case, the unit or sub-units (individuals) are also considered.

The study is based on a sample of 13 male and female participants (8 females and 5 males) selected using the Snowballing technique, which is usually used in qualitative research to purposively and appropriately select the sample. Targeted participants were selected from three different generational groups (three from the generation group of the 30s and 40s, five from the generation group of the 50s and 60s, five from the generation group of the 70s and early 80s according to the solar calendar). and this, in addition to facilitating the examination of effect of generational groups on Participants consumption behavior, increases the likelihood of gaining insight into a range of Nowruz-related experiences.

Despite many studies in the field of genealogy in the field of sociology, there are no precise and operational criteria for classifying generations. Therefore, the classification of generations in the present study according to the researchers and the frameworks presented in previous research, has been done according to Table 2 (2020 is the basis year).

Table 2.Generational classification

	The first generation	The second generation	The third generation
The age range	50 to 69	30 to 49	17 to 29
Date of birth	30s and 40s	50s and 60s	70s early 80s

In this study, interview was used as a case study source. Among the various interview methods, a Focused interview (semi-structured) was selected, during which the respondent was interviewed in an informal setting for an average of one hour. The audio of each interview was recorded and then transcribed word by word.

Among the analytical methods proposed for the case study, the application of a general case description strategy, and the use of sub-unit analysis method through interviews with individuals seemed appropriate for the present study according to the research questions. Therefore, we begin the work with a description of the sub-rituals of Nowruz and a brief description of them. Centralized (semi-structured) interviews were then used to answer the questions. Theme analyse method was used to analyze the interviews using Max QDA software (a software for qualitative data analysis).

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In the following, we will analyze the most common Nowruz rituals based on insightful interviews with thirteen participants from the three generation groups of the 30s and 40s, 50s and 60s, 70s and early 80s.

1) Handsel

In Nowruz people give gifts to each other. The type of gift has changed in each era, based on people's lifestyles. It has been a tradition to give new banknotes as an festal for decades. In the following, we will analyze the participants' answers about this ritual.

Handsel as a Ritual Experience

The ritual of handsel during Nowruz visits is such that the host gives new banknotes that were inside the Quran as festal during the convoy of guests, often to children, especially young people and newlyweds who have just entered the family. This is in accordance with the episodic nature and the fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985), so handsel can be called a ritual experience. All participants mentioned participating in the ritual.

Handsel as an Exchange Ritual

The handsel ritual is an exchange ritual that according to McCracken (1986) is one of the means of transferring cultural meanings from consumer goods to individuals. In the exchange ritual, one side selects, buys and offers consumer goods to the other. Most givers choose a gift because it contains meaningful assets that they hope will be transferred to the recipient. The gift exchange ritual is a powerful tool of interpersonal influence. The ritual of handsel can be considered as the gift exchange ritual at Christmas. The amount of money given as handsel, whether the banknote is new or old, and the non-verbal (tone and mood) and verbal communication of the person giving and receiving the handsel, and also how to handsel, all have social and cultural meanings that are conveyed in this exchange. In addition, handsel is a social obligation for close family members, although individuals have choices about how large that group can be or how much handsel can be. The amount and type of handsel becomes more important when it is linked to a new family member through marriage or when the families are expanded. The amount of handsel given (if it is money) or the financial value of the gift given or even the type of gift given affects the social image of the person giving gift. The participants of this study, in addition to referring to concepts such as social coercion and economic problems in the performing this exchange ritual, also mentioned the exchange of commercial gifts.

Handsel as a Symbolic Experience

As Cazeneuve (1971) suggested, Rituals are expressive and symbolic activities, providing emotional significance to the participant (as cited in Gentina et al., 2012, p. 118). Handsel ritual was associated with positive emotional meanings for almost all participants. Concepts such as the resurrection of ancient customs, presage, and blessings were also mentioned.

The Connection between Ritual and Sacredness

Belket al. (1989) described gift-giving as a means for sacralizing an object. When people buy things as gifts, they are involved in a process of sacralization. This is especially true about handsel. In general, in Iranian culture, gift-giving on the occasion of the New Year is due to blessings and good fortune. The host gives the gift he has prepared to the guest, especially

children and teenagers. In addition, as mentioned, money and cash have been replacing other gifts for more than half a century now. Belk et al. (1989) have suggested that both beneficent and evil sacred things have the power to contaminate through contact. The act of giving cash as handsel is such that new banknotes are already prepared from the bank and within the Qur'an pages is to be blessed. In fact, in this way, money, which is considered an profane object, contaminated with sacredness through contact with a sacred object, which is the holy book of Muslims, the Qur'an.

2) Ritual of Nowroz(or Eid) Shopping

Nowroz shopping as a Ritual Experience

New clothes are bought to welcome the New Year every year before Nowruz. Parents go to the market with their children and buy new clothes to prepare for the new year, which is corresponded with the episodic nature and the fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985), so shopping for Eid can be an ritual experience. As Afflerback et al. (2014) suggest, both rituals and consumption are culturally accepted ways of guiding people through difficult transitions through identity building, gaining social status, and increasing a sense of community and continuity. In the case of Nowruz, which is a kind of transitional ritual (from the old year to the new year), Nowruz purchases give the person a sense of participation in a collective ritual and connection with the general public who participate in this ritual. Also people psychologically are prepared for the transition from the old year to the new year.

Eid Shopping as a Symbolic Experience

Interviewees in the study provided evidence that they experience a sense of refreshing by shopping for the New Year and pretermittting old items, shopping as a way to feel the vicissitude.

Avoiding Impulsive Buying

Nowruz shopping is largely kindled by advertising and fashion systems. Therefore, impulsive buying occur more in March than in other months of the year. Interviewees mentioned avoiding impulsive buying and overdoing shopping, and the need for cost management.

Reluctance to Eid Shopping

Some interviewees stated that they were reluctant to buy for Eid, citing reasons such as overcrowded stores and the poor quality of goods in market at this time of the year (market-related factors), a bad shopping experience, and not having enough time to shop (individual factors). Some participants also criticize this ritual, due to economic and psychological pressure on the family head, the prevalence of a consumerist culture, and keeping up with each other.

3) The Ritual of Visiting in Nowruz

Visiting as a Ritual Experience

Visiting relatives and acquaintances on Nowruz is one of the ancient and important rituals of Nowruz. The performance of this ritual begins on the first day of the new year by gathering in the house of grandparents or head of the family and usually continues until the end of the Nowruz holiday. Visiting is performed every year with special etiquette and in a fixed manner, which is in

accordance with the episodic nature and with a fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985), so we call visiting a ritual experience.

Ritual Changes

The ritual of visiting as an important social activity is one of the most pivotal rituals of Nowruz, which unfortunately has lost its importance and position in recent years, especially among the younger generation, due to changes in lifestyle. Commitment to performing this ritual and giving importance to it was observed in the generation group of the 30s and 40s more than other generation groups and it can be said that for the generation of the 30s and 40s, visiting relatives is their most important social activity in Nowruz. In addition to some of the younger participants in this study, they mentioned the unpleasantness of visiting, the tendency to see close relatives, and the postponement of visits to the end of April or May due to Nowruz trips. Also, all participants acknowledged that there were fewer visits on Nowruz than in the past.

4) Haft Sin Tablecloth

Haft-Sin Table as a Ritual Experience

The HaftSin tablecloth is spread every year with special etiquette and in a fixed manner, which is in accordance with the episodic nature and with a fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985). Therefore, we call spreading the Haft-e-Sin table a ritual experience.

Haftsin Table as a Symbolic Experience

The Haft-Sin table is considered as a symbol of Nowruz. Perhaps the Haft-Sin table can be compared to the Christmas tree, which is universally considered a symbol of Christmas (McKechnie and Tynan, 2006). Also, each of the elements of the Haftsin table is a symbol of great concepts. The arrangement and decoration of the Haftsin table is a public announcement by the woman who is the head of the family. In general, it can be said that the Haftsin table contains individual and social meanings. Each of the elements of the Haftsin table, the way it is decorated and arranged, is a sign of the taste and art of the housewife. The Haft-e-Sin table is usually kept for thirteen days during Nowruz, and at the end of this cycle, on the thirteenth day of Nowruz, the green is soaked in water.

Changes in Ritual

Somewhat ironically, given the elevated place of money in contemporary society, the most general way the sacred is desacralized is to turn it into a salable commodity, and thus desingularize it (Belk et al., 1989, p. 23); since money can be desecrated, it loses its sacredness when something sacred can be bought and sold. This can be clearly seen in the Haftsin table. In recent years, due to changes in the lifestyle of people, especially women who are responsible for decorating the Haftsin tablecloth at home, some components of the Haftsin tablecloth that were previously made at home are now ready to be purchased from the market. For example, in the past, the celebration of "samanupazan" (cooking saman) was held as a local ritual before Nowruz. The cooking of Samanu was accompanied by special ceremonies and relatives were invited to eat Semno (Sazmand, 2014, p. 63). But today, the performance

of this ceremony is not taken place, especially in big cities such as Tehran, and usually Samanu is prepared ready from the market. This is also true for grass and other components of the Haftsin table, and it can be prepared from the market. The conversion of the components of the Haftsin tablecloth into tradable goods indicates that it has become commoditized and that its sacredness has been lost or diminished. In recent years, fashion and advertising systems for Haftsin tablecloths have also been activated. Every year, new sets of tableware for Haftsin tablecloths, special tablecloths and new decorations for Haftsin tablecloths are presented, which are promoted and advertised by chic decors which is featured in magazines, TV shows, and retail stores. This is an evidence that indicates Nowruz is becoming more commercialized. In addition, environmental concerns that have arisen in recent years about the goldfish of Haftsin table have affected it. The use of artificial fish instead of real fish or the removal of goldfish from the Haftsin table is a consequence of this. Popular movements in recent years to prevent the purchase of goldfish on social media have increased public awareness of this issue.

5) Fireworks Wednesday (Čahâr-šanbe Suri) ritual

Fireworks Wednesday is one of the Iranian festivals that is held from the evening of the last Tuesday of March (Esfand according to the solar calendar) until midnight of the last Wednesday of the year, and its main feature is lighting and jumping over the fire.

Fireworks Wednesday as a Ritual Experience

Different generational groups have different ritual experiences from Fireworks Wednesday. Younger people often attend street parties with friends. This ritual experience, in addition to being different for different generational groups, also differs between men and women in the ritual experience. Street festivals and bonfire are more favorable for men than for women, which is originated in Islamic-Iranian culture. Basically women are inherently less likely to do risky work than men. In the case of the generational groups of the 1330s and 1340s as well as the 1350s and 1360s, in addition to celebrating Fireworks Wednesday with family celebrations, they remember sweet nostalgias for the ancient Fireworks Wednesday rituals.

Fireworks Wednesday as a Symbolic Experience

The Fireworks Wednesday ritual evokes contradictory concepts and feelings for different participants. For some of the interviewees, Fireworks Wednesday evokes positive emotions, for some it is associated with negative emotions, and some do not have any special emotions. For people in the generation of the 30s and 40s, as well as people in the 50s who have many memories of performing this ritual in the old style, Fireworks Wednesday has different meanings.

Ritual Changes

Among the side rituals of Nowruz, Fireworks Wednesday has changed, distorted and transformed more than others in recent decades, and has moved far away from what was customary in the past, so that the new generation does not have much knowledge about the sub-rituals of Fireworks Wednesday (such as spooning, jug-breaking ritual, Eavesdropping and ...). The memories and

associations that the generational group of the 30s and 40s, as well as the generational group of the 50s and 60s of Fireworks Wednesday and its sub-rituals have, are very different from what the generational group of the 70s and 80s. Participants in the study noted the obsolescence of some Fireworks Wednesday rituals, changes in the way they were performed, and the unpleasantness of Fireworks Wednesday in a new style, the influence of foreign culture on Fireworks Wednesday rituals, and the impossibility of performing Fireworks Wednesday rituals due to apartment living. Due to the changes in the Wednesday ritual in recent decades, the feelings and associations of the generation group of the 70s and 80s are completely different from the previous generation groups.

Negative Dimensions of the Ritual

In recent decades, the use of incendiary materials (some of which are handmade and very dangerous) as well as explosive materials, which are generally imported from China, has become very common and has replaced the beautiful ancient ritual. Therefore, this night has always had lots of injuries and sometimes casualties. Today, the celebration of Fireworks Wednesday is accompanied by noise pollution, damage to the city, and the creation of a violent and tense atmosphere, so that the police takes special action to ensure the security of citizens on this night and the working hours of malls, shops and stores are reduced at this night. In recent years, the Iranian media has been paying close attention to the potential dangers of using incendiary and explosive materials. Most of the interviewees in this study stated that they avoid going out on the streets at night of Fireworks Wednesday, and sometimes this ritual, which should bring joy and happiness, creates horrible memories for people.

6) The Ritual of House Cleaning

House cleaning is one of the rituals of Nowruz that is still held today. In this ritual, all the house and its furniture are dusted, washed and cleaned before Nowruz.

House Cleaning as a Ritual Experience

House cleaning is performed every year with special etiquette and in a fixed manner, which is in accordance with the episodic nature and with a fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985), hence we call house cleaning a ritual experience. House cleaning ritual according to McCracken (1986) is an example of Household possession ritual (because it involves cleaning activities) as well as redecorating. All participants in this study mentioned the performance of this ritual before Nowruz and for some of them, performing it was prominent.

House Cleaning as a Symbolic Experience

House cleaning is not just about cleaning the house, it is also associated with positive and sometimes negative feelings for participants. Also for the participants of this study, house cleaning is associated with concepts such as sacredness, washing away the impurities of the soul, cleanliness and neatness to welcome the new year and preparing to receive guests. The interview shows that the rituals of adornment and ownership that occur during the ritual of

house cleaning are different from the cleansing activities that are performed during the year in normal situations and also have a sacred aspect because it is related to Nowruz and has a ritual aspect (Belk et al., 1989).

House Cleaning is a Female-focused Ritual

House cleaning is considered as a typically feminine ritual in which women play a pivotal role, and in fact the responsibility for performing this ritual is taken by the woman who is in charge of the house.

Ritual Changes

House cleaning, like some other Nowruz rituals, has changed in recent decades. Services such as carpet cleaning or house cleaning were not very common three decades ago, but today, due to changes in lifestyle (especially changes in Iranian women lifestyle) and apartment living, the use of these services, especially in the middle and Prosperous urban level, has become quite common.

7) Traveling in Nowruz

In Iran, the Nowruz holiday is usually accompanied by a high volume of tourist trips. Thee fundamental change in the pattern of Nowruz towards modernization can be seen more than anything else in this phenomenon of "Nowruz travels" (Fazeli, 2007, p.137). Rooholamini suggested that in the past, travel was not a part of the Nowruz rituals and it was customary for people to stay at home (Ebrahimzadeh, 2003), but as we get closer to the modern era, Nowruz travel and people's desire to go away increases and every year, we see an rise in the percentage of Nowruz trips, so that we can see a clear change in the pattern of Nowruz ritual from "family visiting celebration" to "sightseeing celebration" (Fazeli, 2007, p. 137). The statements of the participants of this study also show that people belonging to the generation group of the 30s and 40s are less willing to travel on Nowruz than other generation groups and prefer family visits to travel. Of course, besides not wanting to travel, there are other reasons for not traveling in Nowruz, Which can be referred to such things as congestion on the roads, hotels, accommodation and tourist places, busy jobs (especially for some jobs that are not closed on Nowruz), economic problems and.... that some of the interviews mentioned them.

8) The Ritual of the Last Thursday of the Year

One of the ancient rituals before Nowruz is remembering the dead, washing graves, offering flowers and asking for forgiveness on the last Thursday of the year on their graves. On this day, people go to the cemeteries and shrines of the martyrs and bring Nowrouz greenery and vases of spring flowers to remember their deads.

The Ritual of the Last Thursday of the Year as a Ritual Experience

Pilgrimage the cemeteries on the last Thursday of the year is performed every year with special etiquette and in a fixed manner, which is in accordance with the episodic nature and the fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985). Therefore, we call the last Thursday ritual as ritual experience. Evidence presented in the interviews shows that people belonging to the generation group of the 30s and 40s and somehow to the generation group of the 50s and 60s are more

constrained to perform this ritual, but for the generation group of the 70s and early 80s and basically the younger ones, performing this ritual is not very important and some of them are not even familiar with it.

The Ritual of the Last Thursday of the Year as a Symbolic Experience

Going to the cemetery on the last Thursday of the year evokes different emotional meanings for the participants. Most participants consider the ritual to a remembrance of the dead.

9) Year Delivery Rituals

The Time of the Year Delivery as a Sacred Time

Belk et al. (1989, pp. 9-12) argue that time is part of potentially sacred consumer domains, and that time is separated into sacred and profane periods. They argue that the sacred past is recoverable through rituals such as the New Year celebration. Sacred times occur cyclically during the day, week, month, and year. The time of the Year delivery is an example of sacred times that occur during the year and show the renewal of nature. As with entry into sacred places, purification rituals may accompany entry into sacred time to separate it from profane time. Special clothing, fragrances, prayers, utensils, and foods may accompany sacred time (Farb and Armlagos, 1980; Leach, 1961; Wallowski, 1977, as cited in Belk et al., 1989, p. 10). Therefore, the time of the Year delivery is accompanied by purification rituals such as wearing clean clothes, taking the bath, performing ablutions (a type of Islamic ritual purification), cleaning and tidying the house, as well as going to sacred places (shrines, mosques, etc.) is what makes this time different from other profane times. Also praying and the reading Qur'an are among the rituals of the Year delivery among Muslims, and these special behaviors give a more sacred aspect to the time of the Year delivery and distinguish it from the profane times. In addition, cooking special dishes for Nowrouz night or the first day of Nowruz (such as vegetable pilaf with fish, noodle soup (Ash-Reshte), etc.) shows that this sacred time is different from other times. Belk et al. (1989) suggested that myths often surround the sacred. Boolokbashi (2002, p. 70) mentioned that Iranians, wherever they are, trying to get home before the time of the Year delivery and be present at the Nowruz table with the rest of the family. Because they believe that if someone is not at home at the beginning of the new year, he will be away from home and family until the end of the year (as cited in Sazmand, 2014). Some of the participants in this study also mentioned some of these old myths and beliefs about the time of the Year delivery. For instance whatever they are doing at the end of the year, affects their fate throughout the year (they will be doing the same thing until the end of the year).

The most important evidence among the interviews that indicates the time of Year delivery is a sacred time for Iranians is that almost all participants from different age groups communicate with God at this time by praying and reading the Qur'an, and supplications.

Year Delivery Rituals as a Ritual Experience

Year delivery rituals are performed every year with special etiquette and in a fixed manner, which is in accordance with the episodic nature and with a fixed

sequence of mirrors (Rook, 1985), so we call the Year delivery rituals a ritual experience. Cooking special food, gathering around the Haft-e-Sin table with the family, visiting sacred places, praying, congratulating in Nowruz, eating sweets, hand-selling, etc. are among the rituals of the Year delivery. In recent years, communication through social networks for New Year greetings has become common, and it has replaced face-to-face communication for greetings to colleagues and friends or people who are away from family. Iran Telecommunication company arrangements to respond to the requests for calls and SMS at the beginning of the New Year is a confirmation of the statement, and most of the interviewees also mentioned that they congratulate their friends and acquaintances on the New Year via SMS or social networks.

Year Delivery Rituals as a Symbolic Experience

The time of the Year delivery and its rituals evoke different emotional meanings for the participants. For some, this moment is special and evokes positive emotions in them, and for some, it is normal and insignificant.

10) The Ritual of Sizdah be Dar

The ritual of Sizdah be Dar (Nature day) is one of the Nowruz rituals that is still held vigorously throughout Iran. Honari (1353, p.77) mentioned that in Iran on this day, all people go on a picnic and head to the mountains and plains and take the portent of thirteen to the desert (as cited in Sazmand, 2014). Today, however, in large cities, those who can not go out of town, spend this day in the city's parks and gardens. The tying of the grass on 13th of Farvardin is the tradition from ancient times. Sabani (1999, p.87) have mentioned that according to this custom, in the evening of that day, the girls tie the grass together to hope that their life will be connected with the person they love (as cited in Sazmand, 2014). It is also customary to cook noodle soup (Ash reshte) in the evening of the thirteenth day. In addition, the green of the Haft-Sin table is thrown into the water at the end of the day as an example of divestment rituals.

Sizdah be Dar as a Ritual Experience

The ritual of Sizdah be Dar is performed each year with special rituals and in a fixed manner, which is in accordance with the episodic nature and with a fixed sequence of rituals (Rook, 1985), hence we call the Sizdah be Dar a ritual experience. The two key ritual values emphasized in Sizdah be Dar are family (being together) and nature (going to nature).

Sizdah be Dar as a Symbolic Experience

Sizdah be Dar and its rituals evoke different emotional meanings for the participants. For some people it is accompanied by positive emotions and for some it is accompanied by negative associations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

According to Rook's (1985) classification of rituals, Nowruz is a cultural ritual whose primary source of behavior is cultural values. Nowruz is also a public cultural ritual, and as Leach (1968) and Moon (1973) suggested, many public rituals are widely viewed as contributing to social cohesion (as cited in Rook, 1985, p. 255).

As Campbell (1972) have suggested rituals make symbolic statements about the social order by dramatizing cultural myths (as cited in Rook, 1985, p. 255) and as Durkheim (1912) suggested link the present with the past (as cited in Rook, 1985, p. 255). The link the present with the past can be clearly seen in the rituals of Nowruz, and the antiquity of the rituals of Nowruz reinforces this sense of linking with the past. Nowruz rituals are also very effective in creating social discipline and bringing different ethnic groups and generations together. In addition, within a family, rituals strengthen communication and strengthen participation in household activities (Rook, 1985, p. 255). This is comprehensible in the rituals of Nowruz as well. The house cleaning ritual, although mostly is a woman-centered ritual, requires the participation of all family members. Most Nowruz rituals, such as Year Delivery rituals, visiting and Sizdah be dar rituals, are formed within the family. The conclusion of the study in different parts are as follows:

Changes in Nowruz Rituals

The results of this research confirmed that some of these rituals, such as the last Thursday of the year, are unfamiliar to some of the participants in this study, especially the younger generations. In addition, the trip in Nowruz can be considered as an example of new emerging rituals that, as the participants in this study also pointed out, sometimes replace Nowruz visits. Also, the memories that the generation group of the 30s and 40s, as well as the generation group of the 50s and 60s of Wednesday's firework and its sub-rituals have, are very different from what the generation group of the 70s and 80s of Wednesday have in their mind. Also, for many participants, especially the generation group of the 30s and 40s, performing the Wednesday's firework ritual in a new style is meaningless, which, according to Rook (1985), reduces the likelihood of the ritual vitality. In recent years, due to changes in people's lifestyles, some of the components of the HaftSin table, which were previously made at home, are being prepared from the market. The conversion of the components of the Haftsin tablecloth into goods that can be bought and sold, indicates that it is commoditized and as a result its sacred place is lost or diminished. In recent years, fashion and advertising systems for the Haftsin tablecloth have also been activated. This is a proof that Nowruz is becoming more commercialized. Also, not using goldfish due to environmental concerns is another change in Nowruz ritual artifacts.

Differences in the Performance of Rituals based on Generational Groups

In this study, differences in the way of performing Nowruz rituals were observed from the perspective of generational groups, which was mentioned in the description of each of the sub-rituals of Nowruz, and here we will summarize these differences. Regarding Nowruz visits, the commitment to participate in this ritual was more observed among the members of the generation group of the 30s and 40s than other generation groups. For younger generation groups, participation in other social activities and the tendency to see close relatives, stems from the fact that Nowruz visits are less important to them. Also, the decrease in family visits, which is rooted in various social, cultural and economic factors, has caused the Nowruz ritual and visits not to be performed the same as the past, which is well acknowledged in interviews, especially with the participants of the generation group of the 30s and

40s. Regarding to the pilgrimage of the cemetery on the last Thursday of the year, the evidence presented in the interviews shows that people belonging to the generation group of the 30s and 40s and some individuals in generation group of the 50s and 60s are more committed to perform this ritual, but for the generation group of the 70s and 80s and basically the younger ones, the performance of this ritual does not matter too much. The generation group of 70s and 80s were more eager to follow the grooming rituals. Perhaps buying clothes for Nowruz can be interpreted based on this theory. The participants' emphasis on the priority of buying clothes for children is a confirmation of the fact that personal grooming rituals are more important for adolescents and young people, which stems from their psychological need to beautify their appearance and gain social approval.

Since Nowruz is the most important Iranian holiday throughout the year, it has a variety of nostalgic memories for people. However, this was observed among the generational groups of the 30s and 40s and also in the 50s and 60s, more than the generational groups of the 70s and 80s, which is due to previous research showing that the generational group over 30 years are more exposed to this phenomenon (SeyedJavadin and Esfidani, 2012, p. 213). Women in their 30s and 40s are more committed to plant greens for the Haftsin table than to buy them ready from the market. This indicates that new generations have become more consumerist. Different generational groups have different ritual experiences from Fireworks Wednesday. The generational groups of the 30s and 40s, as well as the 50s and 60s, in addition to celebrating Fireworks Wednesday with family, they have pleasant nostalgias for the old Fireworks Wednesday rituals in mind. Fireworks Wednesday has changed, distorted and transformed more than any other ritual in recent decades, and has been changed a lot from what was in the past. Accordingly, the new generation doesn't have much information about Fireworks Wednesday's subrituals (such as the ritual of spooning, eavesdropping, breaking jugs and...). The memories and associations that the generational group of the 30s and 40s, as well as the generational group of the 50s and 60s of Fireworks Wednesday and its subrituals have, are very different from what the generational group of the 70s and 80s of Fireworks Wednesday has in their mind. This ritual experience also differs between men and women. Street festivals and bonfires are more common for men, which is less common for women the cause of which is Iranian Islamic culture, and also women are instinctively less likely to do risky actions than men.

Nowruz Commercialization

In general, Nowruz rituals have been changed in recent decades; becoming more commercialized is one of these changes, which is somewhat apparent in all the customs related to this ritual. From Haft-e-Sin table to Fireworks Wednesday, House Cleaning, trip and.... Today, many products and services related to Nowruz are offered and consumed that did not exist in the past. For example, in the case of House Cleaning that is performed before Nowruz, services such as carpet washing or house cleaning, were not very common three decades ago, but today, due to changes in lifestyle and apartment living, the use of these services, especially in the middle and prosperous class are increasing. Another example is the Fireworks Wednesday ritual, which

has been completely changed in content and form of the performance. Today there are some products that are related to the Fireworks Wednesday, which were not common in the past. Also, the Haftsin tablecloth, which in the past was arranged and decorated with the things that were in the house, today the shape and method of arranging it has become fashionable and all its components and accessories can be prepared from the market. We can also mention the trip in Nowruz, which was not a part of Nowruz in the past but has been an inseparable part of Nowruz for several decades, and itself causes the consumption of a range of products and services. In addition, wearing new and clean clothes on Nowruz, which is one of the old traditions of Nowruz, is now associated with personal grooming rituals and the use of a wide range of products and services, especially among women and the younger generation. The ritual is about purifying the human soul at the beginning of the new year, but the rituals of personal grooming have become opportunity for fashion, keeping up with each other, and the promotion of consumerism. All of this, along with the advertising and fashion systems that encourage consumers to buy and consume new and more products related to Nowruz every year, shows that Nowruz, like Christmas and similar rituals, is becoming an increasingly important event for consumers. This shows the need for more study by marketing and consumer behavior scholars.

Analysis of Consumption Behavior Related to Nowruz Rituals

Consumption behavior in Nowruz can be analyzed based on McCracken (1986) model of meaning transfer and his classification of consumption rituals. As mentioned earlier, in this model, four types of consumption rituals (Possession; grooming; exchange; and divestment) are being explained. In the following, we will analyze Nowruz rituals in the form of these consumption rituals.

Exchange Rituals

Handsel is a exchange ritual in which one side selects, buys, and offers consumable goods to another. Of course, money has replaced gifts for decades, but it is still common to give gifts on the occasion of Nowruz. This event is potentially a movement of meaningful assets. The gift giver often chooses a gift because it contains meaningful assets that he or she hopes will be transferred to the recipient.

Possession Rituals

Consumers spend a lot of time cleaning, discussing, comparing, reflecting, visualizing and even photographing their assets. The ritual of House Cleaning, which includes cleaning and decorating the house to welcome the New Year, is a special occasion for the process of "personalization" the house, which is used specifically as an opportunity for further comparison, reflection, and discussion. These activities have an obvious function, that is to allow the consumer to claim the assets as his own assets. This process of claiming is not a simple claim of ownership through acquisition. Claiming is also an attempt to extract attributes from an object given to it by the marketing forces of the commodity world (McCracken, 1986). Arranging the Haftsin tablecloth (the components of which are often ready-made from the market) and decorating it is another good occasion for the process of claiming as well as

personalization. In addition Display of goods purchased for Nowruz or goods that have been cleaned and re-decorated for Nowruz is another opportunity for displaying. This is why the interviewees pointed out that if they are going to buy a home appliances, they prefer to get one on the threshold of Nowruz. Since possession rituals allow the consumer to own the meanings of a consumer good, these rituals help to complete the second stage of the cultural meanings transfer. Using possession rituals, people transfer cultural meanings from their goods to their life's. If cultural meanings are conveyed, the consumer is able to use the goods as an indicator of time, space and position. Consumers use the ability of these goods to distinguish between such cultural categories as class, social status, gender, age, occupation, and lifestyle (McCracken, 1986, p.79). An example of extracting meaningful assets from consumer goods in Nowruz rituals can be seen in Nowruz shopping and Nowruz trips when consumers, impressed by fashion and advertising systems, try to buy goods that reflect their social class and lifestyle. Nowruz trips are also a way to display lifestyle and social class. The tourist destination in Nowruz trips, accommodation, way of transportation and even the length of stay varies according to the financial capacity of families and their social class, and as some research participants stated, Nowruz trips are both an opportunity for showing off and keeping up with each other.

Grooming Rituals

Grooming Rituals is one of the tools by which people influence a transfer of symbolic assets. In grooming rituals, meaning transfer from consumer goods to the individual. Grooming rituals help to extract cultural meanings from these goods and invest them in the consumer (McCracken, 1986, pp. 80-79). The custom of wearing new and clean clothes, and being adorned during Nowruz visits are examples of grooming rituals. That is why buying clothes, hairdressing and adornment on the threshold of Nowruz is especially important.

Divestment Rituals

Divestment Rituals are used for two purposes. When people buy a product that already belongs to someone else, such as a house or a used car. This ritual is used to erase the meaning associated with the previous owner. The second reason for using divestment rituals is when people want to abandon a product, either by throwing it away or by selling it. The consumer will try to erase the meanings invested in the commodity by the association ((McCracken, 1986). An example of this ritual can be seen in throwing away the greens and fish on the Haft-sin table. Since these elements carry deep associations and feelings, they are also discarded with special etiquette and customs in order to erase the meanings in which the consumer has invested in them. Freeing goldfish in rivers or lakes or keeping it until next year, and taking out Nowruz greens on the Sizdah-Be-Darday with especial customs (for example, putting them on the hood of a car) and throwing them in running water, are customs for expropriation of personal meanings.

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