The Influence of the Consumption Ritualization on Buying Behaviors

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Recently, consumer researchers have been interested in consumption ritual that expressed condensedly the consumption system in a culture. From various disciplines this study examined the 'ritual' and 'ritualized behavior' which are unique to human beings and analyzed the relation of ritualization of consumption experience and buying behavior. According to the degree of ritualization, consumers were categorized into four types - ritualized, habitualized, involved, and non-ritualized consumers. In the empirical study, the relation between ritualization of "dressing-up (i.e. to put on the clothing with the intention of wearing displaying them publicity)" and buying behaviors related to clothing was explored through in-depth interviews and a questionnaire survey with 434 married Korean women. Through statistical analysis, research questions were identified in an empirical study: as the consumption experience becomes more ritualized, the purchasing frequency, ongoing involvement, brand loyalty, and opinion leadership will increase as part of clothing buying behavior. Herein, the implications of the study and further research issues are discussed.

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Numerous rites of passage occur in a human lifetime (Van Gennep 1908), and our lives are full of ritualized behaviors (Rook 1985). Researchers in consumer studies have been interested in the types of consumption associated with ritual occasions such as Christmas (e.g. Belk 1989; Sherry and McGrath 1989), Thanksgiving (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), Halloween (Belk 1990; Levinson et al. 1992), and rites of passage (Ozanne 1992; Escalas 1993; Fischer and Gainer 1993; McAlexander et. al. 1993; Noble and Walker 1997; Park 1997). Rook (1985) noted that these occasions are worthy of study because consumers often devote much time and effort to the purchasing of goods and services that enable them to participate fully in these events. Tetreault and Kleine III (1990) suggested that the power of ritual as an analytical category for consumer research is twofold. First, it describes a system in which consumption behavior is an important component and thus provides an analytically tractable microcosm within which the consumption systems of the larger culture are condensed and brought into relief. Second, ritual emphasizes the integrated nature of psychological and social structural phenomena. Ritualized behavior leads to ritualized consumption that is patternized and symbolic. For example, there are special goods to be consumed in festival or folk rituals like greeting cards on Christmas, chocolates on Valentine, turkeys on Thanksgiving, etc. If a consumer behavior is ritualized, it would be easy to