

Türk Evlilik Ritüellerine Yönelik Tüketim Motivasyonlarının İncelenmesi Üzerine Nitel Bir Araştırma

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Öz

Çok sayıda kültürel öğeler barındıran geçiş ritüellerinden biri olan evlilik ritüellerini anlamak incelenen toplum hakkında bilgi edinmenin anahtarını sunmaktadır. Bu bağlamda ilgili araştırmanın amacı kültürel değişim ve etkileşimin günümüz evlilik ritüellerini nasıl şekillendirdiği ve bu durumun evlilik tüketimine ne ölçüde yansıdığını ortaya koymaktır. Bu araştırma hedef örnekleme belli bir zaman diliminde toplanan değişkenlere dair verileri analiz eden deneysel olmayan kesitsel bir alan araştırmasıdır. Yapılan araştırmalar neticesinde evlilik ritüelleri ve tüketime yansıyan halini ortaya koyan bir ölçüğe rastlanmamıştır. Bu nedenle literatürdeki kavram ve bulguların ardındaki mekanizmaları derinlemesine açıklayabilmek adına bu araştırmanın yöntemi nitel yöntem olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmanın örnekleme maksimum çeşitlilik örnekleme yöntemine göre belirlenmiştir. Bu yöntemle göre belirlenmiş olan örnekleme 2022 yılı içerisinde evlenecek olanlar ile beş yıl öncesine kadar evlenmiş olanlar ve kayınlıdeler oluşturmaktadır. Tematik analiz neticesinde kategoriler; tanışma, evlilik teklifi, isteme-söz-nişan, bohça, kına, gelin alma, nikah ve düğün, fotoğraf çekimi, alışveriş, takı paylaşımı, maddi olarak etkilenme, pandeminin etkisi ve ritüel tüketiminde sosyal medyadan faydalanma olarak tespit edilmiştir. Kategoriler incelenerek temalar tespit edilmiştir. Evlilik ritüelleri, evlilik ritüelleri tüketimi, takı, pandemi ve sosyal medya tespit edilen temalardır. Araştırma sonuçları evlilik ritüellerinin kültürel koruma ve kültürel adaptasyon arasında bir köprü görevi gördüğüne işaret etmektedir. Ritüeller yalnızca sosyal rolleri doğrulamakla ve yaşam geçişleri sırasında belirsizliği azaltmakla kalmamakta aynı zamanda kendini ifade etme ve kimlik inşa etme fırsatları da sunmaktadır. Gelenek, modernite ve tüketiciliğin bu kesişimi, çağdaş toplumda evlilik ritüellerinin artan karmaşıklığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Ritüel Tüketimi, Evlilik Ritüelleri, Evlilik Tüketimi, Tüketici Davranışı, Kültür

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Consumption Motivations in Turkish Marriage Rituals: A Qualitative Insight

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Abstract

The main aim of this study is to reveal how cultural change and interaction shape today's marriage rituals and to what extent this situation is reflected in marriage consumption. This study is a non-experimental cross-sectional field study that analyzes data on variables collected over a period of time in a target sample. As a result of the study conducted, no scale that reveals marriage rituals and their reflection on consumption was found. For this reason, in order to explain the mechanisms behind the concepts and findings in the literature in depth, the method of this study was determined as qualitative method. The sample of the study was determined according to the maximum variation sampling method. The sample includes individuals planning to marry in the upcoming year (2022), those married within the past five years, and mothers-in-law. As a result of the thematic analysis, the categories were determined as; meeting, marriage proposal, asking for the girl's hand in marriage - betroth- engagement, bundle, henna night, to fetch the bride, marriage and wedding, photo shooting, shopping, jewelry sharing, material effect, the effect of the pandemic and using social media in ritual consumption. Themes were identified by analyzing the categories. Marriage rituals, consumption of marriage rituals, jewelry, the pandemic and social media are the themes identified. This study concludes that marriage rituals act as a bridge between cultural preservation and adaptation. Rituals not only validate social roles and reduce uncertainty during life transitions but also serve as opportunities for self-expression and identity construction. This intersection of tradition, modernity, and consumerism underscores the growing complexity of marriage rituals in contemporary society.

Keywords

Ritual Consumption, Marriage Rituals, Marriage Consumption, Consumer Behavior, Culture

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Introduction

Marriage, as a kinship institution, has been a fundamental aspect of social organization since the early history of humanity. For centuries, marriage has regulated individuals' roles within the economic and political hierarchies of society. Each society performs the marriage event by following certain rules and patterns in accordance with its own cultural pattern. Culture, as a human construct, encompasses both tangible and intangible elements, shaping societal norms and individual behaviors. What is meant by human beings creating culture is that culture is not found in nature, it is not a manifestation of mental equipment, it is only a value added by people. Culture shapes life, provides order, and provides unique cognitive mapping for people. Culture is a by-product of human choices and actions. Because usually people do not act to create a culture, they just do what they want to do. But when they do, they effectively create culture, and when they finish, they leave a culture behind (Bradley, 2004, s.189). Cultural elements are transmitted from generation to generation not biologically but orally, in writing and visually. For this transfer to work smoothly, especially cultural memory must be alive. Every information in the individual's memory will be transferred to the new generation and the past will be shared with the future. The rituals that come into play at this stage, with their repetitive structure, keep the social memory dynamic and ensure its transfer to new generations (Murtezaoğlu, 2012, s.345). Marriage rituals have an unwritten form. Acts repeated through rituals in social memory play an important role in cultural transmission.

Culture is a concept that in which members share various psychological commonalities, assumptions, beliefs, values, social identities and motives and conform together to a set of norms (House et al., 1997). Culture is the sum of learned beliefs, values and traditions that regulate the behavior of members of a society. It is through culture that people are taught how to adapt to their environment. Beliefs, values, traditions and customs are the behavior guides of individuals and guide them in choosing among alternatives in daily life. Culture forms the framework for what and how people communicate, what they approve and disapprove of, what they want and don't want, and how they express it. It is necessary to develop an understanding of culture in order to understand consumer behavior, which has become quite complex today.

Marriage, which is characterized as the stage in which a person transforms from "I" to "we", is instrumental in the establishment of family unity, which forms the basis of a society. In Turkish society, the processes in which traditions and customs are exhibited in their simplest and most realistic forms manifest themselves in marriage rituals. Culture maintains its weight as an important force that affects and is affected by marriage rituals. Parties engage in a number of consumption activities to fulfill marriage rituals. It is becoming increasingly difficult to predict consumer behavior in the consumption of marriage rituals.

This study aims to provide a new perspective on the consumption of marriage in light of advances in consumption research and the consequent opening up of new areas of exploration, such as the commodification and consumption of special occasions. This study is a study of new commercial marriage rituals that addresses key issues in sociological theory and consumer culture literature. Marriage rituals and cultural changes have attracted the attention of sociologists, folklorists and anthropologists, and many studies have been conducted in this field (Mahiroğulları, 2005; Murtezaoğlu, 2012; Yılmazçoban, 2016; Gökalişer and Saaticioğlu, 2016; Özkan, 2018; Park, 1997; Boden, 2003). Some studies in the literature reveal that apart from language and religion,

norms and values, traditions and customs, history, literature and economy, especially material and non-material cultural elements have an impact on marriage rituals (Balaman 1975; Örnek, 1995; Çopuroğlu, 2000; Özcan, 2016; Tacoğlu, 2011; Türkan and Atahan, 2017). In the literature, it is seen that there are few studies with different limitations on the relationship between marriage ritual consumption and culture.

1. Marriage Rituals

Ritual is a social phenomenon that continues from the past to the present through transmission and social participation, and is expressed through standardized rhythmic movements and symbols. They have an important place in terms of being passed down from generation to generation and being social memory. Rituals provide individuals with stereotyped ready-made behaviors that will show how to act in society. Thus, individuals do not search for new things for every event and strengthen their emotional ties with their past (Karaman, 2010, s.235). The cultural identity of a society can be expressed by observing and analyzing daily life, common activities, rituals and celebrations. All these forms of behavior show how community members use cultural membership to build community with each other (Collier, 1997, s.42).

The first stage of the construction of the family institution is marriage ceremonies and rituals. Marriage affects the institution of the family, the family affects the construction of the cultural structure, culture affects traditions, and all of these affect daily life. The phenomena of marriage and family, which are sub-elements of culture, have become traditional and have become an important factor in daily life. The formation of marriage and family institutions, which are important elements of human behavior, is a reflection of culture. Culture continues its existence by changing all phenomena according to itself. Culture is a historical phenomenon that is learned and has continuity. In its abstract nature, culture is a system of idealized norms, it has variable qualities that meet needs, and it is an element that feeds tradition and is fed by tradition (İlhan, 1998, s.73-74).

The family institution, which arises from social needs and is shaped according to cultural characteristics, is an important part of the sociocultural structure such as daily life. Practices within the family, which is formed through the bond of marriage, are influenced by sociocultural elements and also affect the sociocultural structure. This mutual interaction continues in the changes in the life process of the family. Marriage is recognized as one of the unique and special rituals in human life. Therefore, the marriage process involves certain processes and rules. These processes involve the acceptable performance of rituals, costs, consumption of goods and services. One of the big plans in people's lives, the marriage process plans require healthy planning and good preparation of structures such as traditions, customs, norms, religion, history, economy, social media. Goods and services, food, gifts, clothes, flowers, jewelry, designs, concepts and everything planned are inherent in marriage consumption.

The importance of marriage consumption dates back to primitive times and is not a new phenomenon. Today, what idealizes the marriage process as a special event is the changing consumer preferences and behaviors. Fairytale-like weddings, concepts that strive to be different from each other, unlimited and high expenditures, the high importance given and the time allocated for long periods of time point to the increasing importance of consumption behaviors in marriage. In short, consumption and consumption behaviors are closely related to marriage processes and rituals in these processes and allow us to examine the

social, cultural and economic dimensions of marriage from a consumption perspective (Rastegar et al., 2014, s.130-135).

Consumption is a tool that consumers use to construct personal identity. Marriage consumption is seen as a way of reformulating the couple's relationship and creating a new identity as a couple (Boden, 2003, s.129). Marriage is seen as one of the most costly events in a family's life. The parents or couples who make the expenditure are often saddled with some debt. These costs, which are more than three times the annual income of a family (TUIK; Gelir ve Yaşam Koşulları Araştırması, 2021), cover the costs of rituals starting from the introduction to the wedding. However, since all these costs stimulate and satisfy people's desire to be visible, they do not create regret as they provide an opportunity for self-realization and connection with others. In the consumption of marriage rituals, people have the opportunity to showcase their tastes in the best possible way. Looking at other rituals in life, it is thought that marriage consumption is the most visible event where pleasure can be displayed. From start to finish, marriage rituals are of great importance in terms of aesthetics and style. Which hairdresser to go to, choice of dress, colors, models, halls, concept, timing and all such details play a leading role in making the most stylish and best choice among the available alternatives. Glorious ceremonies, concepts established with organizations, high expenditures in shopping, great energy and time allocated also allow for more consumption in marriage rituals (Rastegar et al., 2014, s.133).

Marriage rituals, each of which are important rituals, are usually planned months in advance and attention is paid to even the smallest detail. Marriage rituals start with introductions and end with weddings and honeymoons. Rituals, each of which is related to consumption, are usually performed among the community. Rituals have strong traditional elements that are of great importance to community members. A community is a non-physical social structure, but the existence of a community is determined by physical means. Each community has its own way of acting, thinking and believing. Communities allow people to create their own social selves. Rituals are symbolic acts used to confirm the existence of a community and to construct the identities of individuals (Hurwitz, 2002, s.26). In rituals during the marriage process and inconsumption to fulfill these rituals, identity-expressive actions such as who one is, which communities one belongs to, and material expenditures are made. Like other rituals, there are many material elements in marriage rituals, and each choice makes the ideas of the couple and their families and the identity they want to create visible to everyone involved.

2. Research Methodology

2.1. Purpose of the Study

One of the most comprehensive studies on differences in cultures belongs to Hofstede (2001), who defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes members of one group or category of people from another". "Mental programming" refers to the patterns of thinking, feeling and potential actions shared and learned by members of the same culture. These are manifested in values, rituals, heroes and symbols. Values represent preconceptions about what is desirable or undesirable. Rituals refer to basic social activities performed in a predetermined way, heroes are living, dead or even imaginary people who serve as models for elements of that culture, and symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects to which members of a given culture attach a special meaning (Hofstede et al., 2002).

With the phenomenon of globalization, similarities in different cultures and therefore in the elements that make up the culture are visibly increasing. In reaction to this situation, those who do not want to join the caravan of similarity protect the local culture. However, one of the sub-objectives of this study is to reveal whether the new local style created while trying to protect local cultural elements is influenced by different cultures.

Social media serves as a platform for sharing experiences, expressing opinions on products and brands, and fostering interactions centered around wealth, status, and social networks (Odabaşı, 2017). Social media, which gives us the opportunity to be more curious about the lives of others and consequently compare our own preferences, is an effective tool to strengthen the social environment and social ties. Another sub-objective of this study is to reveal whether social media, which opens its doors to everyone, affects people's preferences while performing marriage rituals.

Understanding marriage rituals, which are one of the rites of passage that contain many cultural elements, is tantamount to putting the key to gaining information about the society under study in our pockets. In this context, the aim of this study is to reveal how cultural change and interaction shape today's marriage rituals and to what extent this situation is reflected in marriage consumption. In line with this main objective, answers to the following study questions will be sought.

1. What do marriage rituals mean for people today?
2. What is the relationship between old and new rituals?
3. To what extent do the parties adhere to their own cultural values in marital consumption?
4. How do parties adapt to new cultural values in marital consumption?

2.2. Research Design and Method

This study is a non-experimental cross-sectional field study that analyzes data on variables collected over a period of time in a target sample. This field study provides insights into key psychological and behavioral phenomena, offering an opportunity to explore potential causal relationships within the context of marriage rituals (Reis and Gosling, 2010). As a result of the research conducted, no scale that reveals marriage rituals and their reflection on consumption was found. For this reason, in order to explain the mechanisms behind the concepts and findings in the literature in depth, the method of this study was determined as qualitative method. The qualitative findings of the study are intended to provide an in-depth examination of the relationships between the variables subject to the research. In the study, qualitative data were collected and analyzed first. Semi-structured interviews were employed, a widely recognized method in qualitative research for uncovering participants' perspectives and experiences. Interview is a frequently used data collection method in qualitative research. The reason for this is that it is very effective in terms of revealing the data, opinions and experiences of individuals and is based on speech, which is the most common form of communication (Yıldırım ve Şimşek, 2013).

Within the scope of the study, data were collected through in-depth interviews. Qualitative data were analyzed by interview analysis method. The sample of the study was determined according to the maximum variation sampling method,

which is one of the purposeful sampling methods that involves selecting various situations in terms of providing information in line with the purpose of the research in order to conduct in-depth research and aims to reflect all different situations within the universe (Büyüköztürk et al., 2008). The sample, which was determined according to this method, consists of those who will get married in the next year (2022), those who have been married until five years ago and mothers-in-law. Participation in the study was completely voluntary. Interviews were conducted with individuals selected among those who agreed to participate in the study until they reached a certain saturation point. With 15 participants, online and face-to-face interviews were conducted through question and answer, and audio recordings were taken with the permission of the participants in one-to-one interviews. No identifying and recording information was obtained from the participants at the end of the informed consent and interview recordings process, and the participants were identified only by the participant name to be used for the study. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the participants in the qualitative study. Consisting of 9 women and 6 men, the average age of the participants was 36 years and 6 of them were bachelor's degree, 3 were postgraduate, 2 were associate degree, 3 were high school and 1 was middle school graduates. Among the participants, 3 were civil servants, 3 were workers, 2 were housewives, the others were physiotherapists, specialists, teachers, retired, academicians, technicians and unemployed. 4 of them are mothers-in-law. Of the remaining 11 participants, 3 were engaged, 7 were in their first marriage and 1 was in her second marriage. Interviews were conducted with the participants for an average of 36 minutes.

Table 1. Information on Qualitative Research Participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Marital Status	Education	Profession	Income (TL)	Interview Duration (Min:Sec)
Participant 1	Woman	25	Engaged	Postgraduate	Academician	6000	38:13
Participant 2 (Mother-in-law)	Woman	60	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Retired	4000	30:47
Participant 3 (Mother-in-law)	Woman	56	Married	Associate Degree	Civil Servant	8000	33:34
Participant 4	Male	28	Married	High School	Worker	3600	47:25
Participant 5	Male	39	Married	Middle School	Technician	5000	36:42
Participant 6	Male	27	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Unemployed	2000	42:43
Participant 7	Male	31	Married	High School	Worker	3800	24:16
Participant 8	Male	28	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Expert	3200	26:32
Participant 9	Male	30	Married	Associate Degree	Worker	6000	23:37
Participant 10 (Mother-in-law)	Woman	55	Married	Bachelor's Degree	Civil Servant	6000	41:31
Participant 11 (Mother-in-law)	Woman	56	Married	High School	Housewife		37:56
Participant 12	Woman	31	Married	Postgraduate	Civil Servant	6000	50:02
Participant 13	Woman	24	Engaged	Bachelor's Degree	Housewife		55:01
Participant 14	Woman	27	Engaged	Bachelor's Degree	Physiotherapist	4000	49:16
Participant 15	Woman	28	Married	Postgraduate	Teacher	6500	35:45

A semi-structured interview form was used to collect the study data. In accordance with the nature of qualitative studies, open-ended questions were preferred in the data collection process with the aim of enabling participants to think independently, and semi-structured one-on-one interviews were

conducted to enable additional questions to be asked when necessary. Interviews help us define and understand phenomena in phenomenology (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018).

2.3. Data Analysis

The interview transcripts used in the research were subjected to content analysis. With this analysis, it was aimed to make sense by reducing the data and to reach concepts and relationships that would support the participants to explain the data collected. The main themes of the research were identified using an inductive approach to analyze the collected data-. Content analysis started with the coding of the data. The data set was read more than once and the sections that formed meaningful wholes within themselves were coded. With the coding analysis, the data transferred to the writing environment were examined and the data were divided into parts by preserving the integrity of meaning. Based on the codes that emerged in the second stage, categories were found by considering the commonalities between the codes. Categories of the same type formed themes and the data under the themes formed a meaningful whole. The resulting categories can explain the data obtained within the scope of the research in a meaningful way. Due to the nature of qualitative research, it is not possible to get the same results even if it is repeated (Gibson and Brown, 2009, s.59). For this purpose, various studies have been conducted to ensure validity and reliability in the research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) used the criteria of credibility, transferability, consistency and confirmability to test the reliability of a qualitative research. In order to ensure the credibility criterion, attention was paid to the duration of field research and interviews, and the consultant made a secondary evaluation in the evaluation of the results obtained. To ensure the transferability criterion, each step of the research was explained in detail and care was taken to refer to the original texts at each step while analyzing the data through categories and codes. No editing (regular sentences, spelling mistakes, etc.) was made on the participants' statements. References to participant statements were used to ensure internal validity by proving the accuracy of the information. Open-ended questions were directed in a certain order to ensure consistency. Additional questions were asked to the participants in some sections in order to obtain detailed information. Consultant evaluation was taken for confirmability. Table 2 shows the results of the thematic content analysis.

Table 2. Content Analysis Results

Theme	Category	Subcategory	Concepts
	Meeting	Meeting of Families	-Casual conversation at the first meeting of families -The bride or groom meeting the families in advance before the families meet each other
		Meeting of The Spouses	-Meeting at work or school -Trying to get in touch via social media after laying eyes on him/her - Friend recommendation

Marriage Proposal

- Organized proposals at dinner
- Proposing marriage by kneeling and ritual of solitaire ring
- If there is no marriage proposal, there is definitely a solitaire ring

Asking for The Girl's Hand In Marriage, Betroth, Engagement

- Mostly all together
- If the families are from different towns, the request for the girl's hand is made on the first day. On the second day, the betrothal and engagement take place.
- Bringing sweets, chocolates and flowers
- Agreement with the organizing company
- A request for a bracelet or gold, etc., to be completed in lieu of the engagement because it was not performed
- During the pandemic, have difficulty meeting

Bundle

- Separately for mother, father, siblings, if any grandparents
- Attire, towel, bath washcloth, cover set, prayer rug, scarf
- To tip for the bundle
- Send it decorated

Henna Night

- If the bride and groom are in different cities, the henna is on the girl's side (like a wedding ceremony) and the wedding is on the boy's side
- Putting gold in the palm of the bride's hand
- Putting gold in the palm of the groom's hand

"Gelin Alma" (To Fetch the Bride)

- If there is a death in the neighborhood, village or relatives, there is no drum and zurna
- Getting the bride in the morning and going to the hairdresser from the mother-in-law's house in order not to spoil her make-up

Marriage and Wedding

- Agreement with the organization company
- Marriage and wedding in one
- If one of the spouses is appointed, a marriage is performed immediately

Photo Shooting

- Often on a different day than the wedding
 - There are also those who still do it on the same day, if they do not want to wear it out economically
-

Consumption of Marriage Rituals	Shopping	Financiers	-Families -The bride and groom themselves
		Who's with whom	-The bride and groom themselves -Mother, father, mother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter- in-law
	Material Effect		-There are those who are still paying their loans (but no regrets, they would do it again) -Total cost between 150.000 -250.000 TL
Jewelry	Jewelry Sharing		-Leaving it all to the bride and groom -Two separate boxes to share between in-laws -Covering the cost of the wedding hall -Jewellery other than bracelets is given to families
The Pandemic	Effect of The Pandemic		-Shopping is mostly done online -Honeymoon after a year -It is thought to affect the number of participants -Health concerns
Social Media	Using Social Media in Ritual Consumption		-Sharing photos during rituals consumption -Sharing photos while bundling -Majority Instagram posts -Browsing concepts and shopping ideas on social media

AAs a result of the thematic analysis, the categories were determined as; meeting, marriage proposal, asking for the girl's hand in marriage - betroth- engagement, bundle, henna night, to fetch the bride, marriage and wedding, photo shooting, shopping, jewelry sharing, material effect, the effect of the pandemic and using social media in ritual consumption. Themes were identified by analyzing the categories. Marriage rituals, consumption of marriage rituals, jewelry, the pandemic and social media are the themes identified.

3. Result and Discussion

Under the theme of marriage rituals, it is seen that rituals such as meeting, marriage proposal, ask for the girl's hand in marriage - betroth- engagement, bundle, henna night, to fetch the bride, marriage and wedding and photo shooting rituals take place. The importance attached to the marriage proposal ritual is confirmed by the following statements that emerged from the interviews.

Participant 4: *"I made my marriage proposal on the Bosphorus in Istanbul, which coincided with the July 15th Martyrs' Bridge. I couldn't enter the bridge, I didn't enter the bridge anyway, there is a space on the right side at the entrance of the bridge, such a wide area, but the gendarmerie is there. My sister was in the car. There was my wife and my nephew. I pointed to my nephew and when he got out of the car I said, "Go to the gendarmerie, tell the police that I have a 15-minute job in traffic." After that I stopped and let my wife out, she wasn't expecting it. I knelt down, there was a solitaire, I had bought a solitaire, I made such a marriage proposal."*

Participant 6: *"I proposed on her birthday. I arranged the garden, I arranged fireworks, I hired an organizer and so on. On the way to the garden, I said her need to close your eyes, you shouldn't see this place. I took him blindfolded for 6 kilometers. Then I entered the garden and when I opened her eyes, there were decorations and confetti, then there was a volcano and so on. Solitaire ring was already ready out of necessity. We made a heart with her brothers and sisters and candles, and I got down on one knee and proposed marriage."*

Participant 12: *"It was a nice marriage proposal, it was at the venue, anyway, things are very limited in Ardahan, the opportunities are very limited, you know, there are very few restaurants and such things. At the place of a brother we know, the food, balloons, roses, and then it was nice. There was a solitaire stone ring, actually sometime there were balloons like this. There was a string hanging from the balloons and a solitaire stone ring on the end. He took it and then knelt down, will you marry me? After I said yes, we collected those balloons, made a wish and flew them somewhere upstairs."*

From the past to the present, the ritual of asking for a girl's hand in the marriage process continues with changes in form. Today's marriages take place in the form of meeting families after meeting through various methods and deciding to marry, and holding the ceremony of asking for a girl. In traditional marriages, the elders of the family find the spouses, and if the young people meet and like each other, the process of asking for a girl begins (Akkaya, 2018, s.161) Traditional procedures are applied in such marriages, which are still ongoing. Participant 7's statements *"Let me put it this way, she was working at the supermarket at the time, we met through a neighbor, it's like an arranged marriage. First I went to the supermarket, we met, then my family went to the village, they talked, and then it happened."* and *"There was no marriage proposal, we didn't have a marriage proposal anyway, even when we were engaged, it was like an arranged marriage."* and Participant 9's statement *"Let me put it this way, we were already seeing each other for a serious purpose, and since we were moving in that direction, there was no need for a marriage proposal. I don't like this kind of thing anyway."* These statements show the existence of those who do not want to fulfill modern rituals and behave more traditionally.

After meeting, which is the first stage on the way to marriage, the asking for a girl's hand in marriage stage is passed. Asking for a girl's hand in marriage, one of the first and most important stages, is a ritual that usually takes place at the girl's house by deciding on a suitable day. After the asking for a girl ceremony, a promise-cutting ceremony is held at an agreed time with a small number of the closest people from both families. This ceremony is like a stage where the two families plan the marriage process. At the end of the ceremony, sweet food and drinks are served and this ceremony is also called "mouth sweetness". At the end of this ceremony, rings are exchanged and in some places this ceremony is accepted as an engagement ceremony and a separate engagement ceremony is not held (Esen, 2019, s.27-29). *"First it was ask for the girl's hand, then it was an*

engagement." (Participant 1). "Then it was decided to come again after 3 days. Then, 3 days later, we went to ask for a bride. A promise ring was put on there. That's how our adventure started." (Participant 5). In line with the statements of the participants, it was concluded that the rituals of asking for the girl's hand, betroth and engagement are usually performed together.

The boy's side and the girl's side start to prepare the bundle in the later times. The research findings show that in addition to those who see bundling as a tradition (Participant 7: "*Such a custom exists everywhere, the girl side brings it to the boy side and the boy side brings it to the girl side. That is, it exists everywhere.*"), as well as those who want to be visible on social media with new ways of preparing bundles (Participant 14: "*For the groom's bundle, my mother had friends and they came to the house. They packaged these bundles we prepared. They made bows. Then, when I put them side by side, they looked very sweet, so I shared them on Instagram. I mean, I shared them because it looked sweet to me for a moment. It looked nice.*") points to its existence. It is also seen that even those who do not favor the idea of a bundle are bundled as a matter of custom and tradition (Participant 6: "*Well, since we don't like such things much, my husband and I don't like them much, you know, a small bundle was given to the bride for her first feast.*").

According to Arnold Van Gennep's (1960) transition ritual approach, henna night rituals, which constitute cultural and social behaviors, are ceremonies that symbolize the transition from the bride's bachelorhood and farewell to the father's house (symbolizing this approach with the ceremony of burning henna at the threshold) to a new situation with the burning of henna. The lighting of henna is also perceived as a symbolic sign of marriage. Participant 15 said, "*Of course, in the henna ceremony, an open-air place was hired, you know, it was the pandemic period. You know, we hired a place with beautiful flowers. An agreement was made with the organization company. After that, a different part of the venue was arranged for the men, and the men chatted there. With us girls, such families and acquaintances, of course, an entertainment was organized together with an organization company. My husband also came with drums and we had things like that.*" "I mean, I think they should of course be for fun, I think it is not appropriate to be too ostentatious, but they happen once in a person's life, it is thought that let's have a good time." The statements of the same participant show that they accept marriage rituals and related consumption as a necessity of the age. Again, the same participant said, "*First of all, you know, the hairdresser is already arranged. I went to the hairdresser around 12, more precisely around 10. After I got ready, we had arranged a photographer for the exterior shoot. We did the exterior shoot. I came home after the exterior shoot. After that, the men's side came and went upstairs accompanied by drums and zurna, and there was a prayer. After that, we went upstairs and there was crying and so on, classic of course.*" Her statements indicate that the bride taking ritual still continues. Participant 10's statement "*The bridal reception (to fetch the bride) was like this, the girl's friends said that before the hairdresser, if you do the bridal reception afterwards, you cry a lot when you leave the house, all your make-up and so on will be ruined, before going to the hairdresser, you know, the bridal reception should be done in the morning, from the mother-in-law's house to the hairdresser and then to the wedding salon. We did that because her friends said so. You know, we told very close people, it was not written on the invitation card, and then we went and got the bride from her house, we did the bridal shower and brought her to us, and an hour later she went to the hairdresser, and from the hairdresser she came to the hall.*" These statements show modern preparation ritual sensitivities.

Marriage and weddings are public announcements of the beginning of marriage. Therefore, weddings represent a rite of passage for two people who want to legally establish their relationship in the eyes of the law and everyone around them (Appadurai, 1997). The wedding is a manifestation of the emotions of the bride and groom, who are consumers in this process, and thus of consumer behavior and internal emotional processes related to products (Mullen and Johnson, 1990). One of the factors affecting consumer behavior is sociocultural factors and consumers make their decisions under the influence of these factors. During the wedding process, the bride and groom and their families, friends, social circles, followers, etc. receive advice or opinions from other members of society. It can be said that this social influence affects the purchasing decision process of the consumer (Baron and Byrne, 1981). However, the study data indicate that there is an indecision in terms of marriage and wedding rituals. This situation is understood from the following statements of Participant 1: *"Sometimes it can be really boring and unnecessary. For example, wedding seems ridiculous to me. There should not be a wedding. Okay, engagement can happen, but I think the wedding is overdone. It should end with a civil wedding. Asking for a girl can also be a way for families to meet. But actually the engagement is also unnecessary. Yes, engagement is also unnecessary. I think asking for a girl should end with a civil wedding. Henna night is also okay. They can do something among themselves."*

Marriage and wedding ceremonies are special times in a couple's life when the most unforgettable moments take place. Many marriage rituals during this process are perceived as a memory. This memory is created for both couples and their families, relatives and social circles. In order to preserve and share this memory, these most beautiful and exciting moments are recorded in the form of videos or photographs. The participants' statements about the photo-taking ritual are as follows:

Participant 6: *"You prepare for photo shoots the same way you prepare for a wedding. It is a very costly period financially. I had my bridal head done 4 times."*

Participant 11: *"They went to Samsun for a photo shoot. One week before the wedding. They got ready again. The hairdresser and the photographer there had already arranged."*

Participant 13: *"No, I think about the photo shoot before the wedding because it is difficult on the same day. Since there are a few shootings I go to, you know, it is a process that takes almost the whole day. You go to different places, of course, that is a bit optional, but the photographer has certain shooting locations. You know, it takes almost the whole day to get to and from those places, the shooting process and so on. That's why I'm thinking about it probably 2 days before the wedding on the same day with its fatigue, because it will be difficult. I'm thinking of having it done 2 days before the wedding in that way."*

Participant 14: *"We made preparations here and went there by car. Photographers also went there. It happened in Terme in Samsun. Then we had a photo shoot there. It took quite a long time, it was in a place by the sea."*

Participant statements show that couples attach a high level of importance to the photo shooting, make preparations as if they were preparing for a wedding, and want to be in places that reflect the nature of the marriage they dream of.

Marriage is an important part of every cultural tradition in the world. With its increasing importance, couples and families seem to be in an effort to perfect the marriage process. This effort makes the parties buy almost everything regardless

of their needs and wants. The romantic dimension of the marriage process increases the expenditures and at the same time leads them to turn towards popular trends. Participant 4 stated, *"The sources of finance are me and my father. They bought the white goods. The cupboards, only the stove, there was no built-in set, so I bought that and my father bought the others. I bought all the rest together with my father."* "No, we always had that logic, we said it would happen once, let's buy whatever is the best in our lifetime.", Participant 6's "I would do it, I would do it again today, I would make that expense because it is a very different feeling that every person understands when they experience it. That process, the stress you experience, the fun and so on, I think it is very nice. I think everything is number ten, I would do it again if it happened again." and Participant 11 said, *"The expenses belonged to the boy and us. His father put money in the boy's pocket and the boy spent it. But our daughter spent a lot, now we have God."* "You have to put your hand in your pocket a lot. If you do it or not, of course no one says why don't you do it, but it's only once, it's a 'murat'. I am also in favor of doing it and I like such things." The statements reveal that there is no regret about the increased expenditures and that they consider these costs necessary.

Marriage rituals provide good opportunities for public display, and consumers use them as a way to increase their prestige in society. This consumption is so powerful in terms of personal visibility that consumers turn to this type of consumption before meeting other important needs. Participant 2 stated that "... I bought everything for my daughter-in-law, my daughter's (daughter-in-law) diamond set, diamond set, gold set, I mean we bought it, my wife and me. There was no financial burden on the children. I did everything according to the Tokat method. I also did the bathhouse, my daughter-in-law did not want it, but thank God she did not break us." The statements of Participant 3 as follows: "...I bought a Trabzon set, I wore it to my bride, I wore the diamond set, I wore the five pieces of gold them together." "...They already admired everything we bought. They liked everything I brought very much. I believe that we did everything properly without them needing to ask for anything." and Participant 10 "...they didn't need to ask for anything extra. Because I did it all anyway. I bought three bracelets between 18-20 grams, one of them was a bracelet with a space way ring, we bought a watch, I had a pearl set made, I had the clips made of gold, and after that, I said, "It's not much, but I didn't want it to be something random. But the set was heavy." The statements of Participant 10 reveal that the participants like to make ostentatious and modern expenditures in fulfilling the jewelry ritual.

The romantic dimension of the marriage process increases expenditures and at the same time leads to popular trends. Trends change from year to year and even month to month, making it difficult to keep up. In this situation, in order to realize the rituals of their dreams, the parties follow the changing trends from their social circles and mostly from social media, and even get clues about what will be popular in the coming days. Social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook and X have started to dominate the current culture. People can access their friends, family and social circles through social media whenever they want. Regarding social media sharing, Participant 14 said, *"My mother had friends for the groom's bundle and they came to the house. They packed these bundles that we prepared. They made bows. Then, when I put them side by side, they looked very sweet, so I shared them on Instagram. I mean, I shared them because it looked sweet to me for a moment. I mean, it looked nice."* The statements indicate that what looked nice was shared during the marriage process.

Conclusion And Recommendations

With marriage, couples transition to a new life and complete the construction of the family, the building block of society. The marriage process starts with the idea of becoming a family coming to life in the minds of couples and their families. It continues with saying goodbye to social life as single and rejoining it as married. The rituals in this transition process legitimize the couple's relationship in the eyes of society (Genç, 2018, s.55).

One of the main aims of this research is to understand what marriage rituals mean to people today. For individuals, the transition to marriage is often surrounded by uncertainties. These may include uncertainty about the partner chosen, uncertainty about the desire to marry, uncertainty about what life will be like after marriage, and uncertainty about the ability to fulfill responsibilities in the new role. This research argues that rituals during the transition to marriage can help reduce this uncertainty. The more elaborate and socially practiced the marriage rituals are, the more their decision is validated by their social environment. By creating an audience to witness their decision, couples can increase their commitment to each other and to their new roles. In this way, couples reduce the uncertainties mentioned at the beginning. Moreover, individualization and secularism today are diminishing the traditional value of marriage and changing the way rituals are practiced. In short, it is thought that greater uncertainty about future marital roles makes the function of rituals more important, and that people elaborate rituals in order to gain social approval for their role transition. Marriage rituals seem to have a role reinforcing function like other transition rituals.

Considering the relationship between old and new rituals, it is thought that each individual designs a marriage process by taking into account the previous ceremonies organized in their group, but in the meantime, they want to capture the most unique among them. The results of the research reveal that there are groups that do not practice the marriage rituals that were important in the past, continue the ones that are not very old, or adapt the past to the present. Some people perceive rituals related to marriage rituals as traditions and customs. They feel obliged to follow the traditions and want them to be carried out perfectly. They believe that not following traditions will have negative consequences and try to follow all traditional practices. This traditional group will reinforce their adherence to their cultural values by adopting an attitude of cultural integration or separation, considering the continuity of cultural identity and traits to be valuable. Others are very far from traditional. It is thought that they find the traditional outdated in order to emphasize the modern in the identity they want to create. This group, which does not make an effort to maintain its own culture, will either assimilate into another culture or exhibit an attitude of marginalization. However, those who do not want to go against tradition combine tradition with the future and present the modern. There is also a group that performs rituals just because they are supposed to and does as they are asked because they do not have an opinion. This group, which is undecided whether to maintain its own culture or adopt the dominant culture, will exhibit an attitude of marginalization. However, it is not possible to assume that marriage rituals will remain constant for long periods of time. One of the reasons for this change, and the most important one, is the mass media and images of popular culture.

When we look at all these rituals, it is possible to say that people construct identities through rituals, and therefore society forms itself in and through ritual. However, rituals are not static and change over time. These changes generally

reflect the changes that occur in society in general. Again, it is clear that consumption is involved in each ritual. When it comes to consumption with rituals, it is not just a matter of possessing a good or service. It is an expression of a lifestyle, a sign of symbolic order. Consumption is the driving force behind creating meaning through ritual.

For many individuals around the world, marriage marks the first steps towards the beginning of a union that they hope will last forever. Couples perform a series of rituals to celebrate their love and respect for each other and the journey towards a new life together. This process is seen as a time for couples to realize their dreams. In order to realize these rituals, which have been dreamed of for a long time, it is necessary to create a good budget. The results of the research reveal that the participants do not regret the high cost and consider this amount necessary. This situation is based on the fact that the participants, who want to do the best of everything, do not spare any cost and want to give a strong message to their environment through symbols and create their new identities through this message. This is because marriage rituals offer the opportunity to perform the most important ceremonies in life. Couples and their families therefore strive to do their best. At the same time, because they believe that there is no room for error, couples make great efforts and incur heavy expenses in order to perform well in the ceremony. People who interpret marriage as a spectacle organize their actions and choices with this in mind. This idea of proving that they are separate from others is highly related to the concept of identity. People benefit from behaviors in constructing their identities. The social context of behaviors has an impact on identity. Society provides indicators of what people should do and how they should behave, and what expectations they should have when occupying a place (Jenkins, 1996). In other words, although personality and psychological characteristics are the elements that constitute identity, environmental factors and therefore the culture in which one lives play an active role in identity formation. In other words, the form of the ceremonies determines the identities of the bride and groom. Couples and families introduce themselves to others through the way they perform ceremonies. Freed from the structural constraints that define their identities, people can create the person they want to be through the various options facilitated by the market. While this symbolic, self-expressive, communicative explanation of identity through consumption is attractive in many ways, it tends to overly individualize consumption (Dittmar, 1992, s.73). Consumers use the meaning of consumer goods to express their culture, norms and principles, to create and maintain lifestyles, to construct selves and to create social change (McCracken, 1990, s.11). Through consumption, individuals form their cultural identity. Self, identity and consumption are therefore socially constructed and therefore interdependent concepts. Rituals as repetitive consumption behavior play an important role in identity construction and maintenance. This research shows that participants try to create and realize subcultural identities through their consumption of marriage rituals and related lifestyles.

Marriage and wedding ceremonies are special times in a couple's life when the most unforgettable moments take place. Many marriage rituals during this process are perceived as a memory. This memory is created for both couples and their families, relatives and social circles. In order to preserve and share this memory, these most beautiful and exciting moments are recorded in the form of videos or photographs. The results of the research show that couples attach a high level of importance to the photo shoot, make preparations as if they were preparing for a wedding and want to be in places that reflect the nature of the marriage they dream of.

Rituals are thought to be an influencer of cultural continuity and cultural change. It is seen that rituals have a special power to bring people together and impose a sense of purpose, value and meaning. People who feel that they belong to the group make more effort to participate in the ritual. Thus, shared rituals help to ensure cultural continuity. Cultural change takes place in the long term and other external factors may also change during this period. It would not be right to think of cultural change as independent from fluctuations in the market, local and global conjuncture. Rituals are seen as an element that will help to provide stability and resilience independent of other factors.

Marriage ritual consumers may have different cultures. Practitioners must therefore spend time and money studying the effects of culture on consumer behavior. This is because a strong marketing strategy in one culture may not appeal to members of another culture and may even be perceived as offensive. Especially multinational companies with customers from diverse cultural backgrounds need to pay attention to this issue. Marketers should address specific cultural behaviors by offering different versions of the same product adapted to appeal to the target audience. When we look at Turkey in particular, we see that there are individuals coming from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Many of them act together with these diversities at school, at work, in the neighborhood, etc. Many of them even form a marriage union to share life together. It should be taken into account which of the elements of culture, such as family, religion, economy, ethnicity, traditions, customs and norms, the ritual consumers attach importance to or to which extent they are loyal to, and marketing communication activities should be carried out by taking these elements into consideration. At the same time, marketing strategies should be developed by investigating whether cultural minority groups will give up their cultural values, assimilate into the mainstream culture or become marginalized and completely separate.

Couples and families closely follow changing trends from their social circles and, more often, social media to realize the rituals of their dreams, even gaining insights into what will be popular in the coming days. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have started to dominate contemporary culture. Individuals can access their friends, families, and social networks at any time through social media. Whether at home, at work, on the move, exercising, or working, "followers" and "followed" appear just a click away. During the marriage process, social media serves as an effective tool for direct and indirect social communication and interaction. Nowadays, couples often arrive at their first meeting equipped with curated glimpses of each other's lives, as shared on social media, without having spoken a word. The online behaviors of marriage ritual consumers are also evolving daily. These consumers engage in various activities, ranging from creating and consuming content, participating in discussions, and sharing information with others, to contributing to the activities of fellow consumers. Such active consumer behavior is reshaping the media and marketing landscape. Additionally, social media continuously reinforces the notion that the marriage process represents one of the most important days in an individual's life. It disseminates the message that couples, by making the right choices, can experience a process that is distinct, unique, and flawless, setting themselves apart from others.

Social media is one of the most important channels used by parties in marriage consumption. Before the development of digital marketing strategies, this task was carried out by word-of-mouth marketing strategies. Considering that consumers spend at least 2.5-3 hours on social platforms every day, it can be

said that digital word-of-mouth marketing will now be effective in purchasing decisions. The results of the research revealed that the majority of marriage consumers are considering utilizing social media, especially Instagram, for their wedding shopping. In order to reach the target audience effectively, it is important to use the platforms they commonly use. Nowadays, it has become a necessity to publish content from the website, share information about the product and the business, and reach potential and existing customers through social media. With increased exposure, social media creates sales and customer loyalty. Creating and executing marketing campaigns on social media and working with expert content producers will provide market advantage. In social media marketing strategy, businesses and marketers need to create a brand image that will be the first thing that comes to the minds of customers considering a particular product or service. Since personalized messages can be delivered to the target audience through social media, the target audience can be reached directly in marketing communication management.

Through rituals, communities convey meaning and create identity. Each ritual gives the parties a chance to show their uniqueness by using symbolic resources. Given the importance attached to rituals, people's conspicuous consumption behaviors indicate that they attach importance to symbols in identity formation. Marketing communication tools play a major role in shaping people's beliefs and intentions about a particular product. It is recommended that messages emphasize building relationships with products and shaping identity.

Businesses have been selling goods and services for marriage and beyond for many years. However, with the growing consumer culture and the changing material and ideological nature of ceremonies, the consumption of rituals has changed. Businesses no longer have to direct their sales efforts only to brides, but also to grooms, families and even the social environment that influences them. As a result of the research, it is seen that traditional and modern ritual requests vary. It is seen that the number of those who want to perform rituals by adhering only to the traditional is gradually decreasing, and it is desired to gain new experiences by blending the traditional with the modern.

In order to fulfill all the rituals and to do their best, couples and families have to stretch their budgets financially. Sometimes the parties are burdened with loans or different debts. Even if they pay these debts for many years, they do not stop doing it. Developing and announcing campaigns that will provide ease of payment for the target audience will provide an important advantage.

In this study, due to cost and time constraints, data were collected in Tokat province. Therefore, it is not possible to generalize the results of the research. Since the cultural structure of each province may be different, it is thought that research to be conducted in different provinces will yield enlightening results. Considering the intricate structure of consumption; it is thought that significant contributions will be made to the literature by focusing the qualitative study on a ritual by making each ritual a separate research topic.

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