

ABSTRACT

It is not new and startling that Gender has been a point of debate across the globe in multiple setups, personal and professional. The transition a woman undergoes in her entire life has been tied to various consumption patterns and ideal consumption behaviors at every stage of development as a woman. (Kaplan,1987;Bordo,1993; Madaran,2000; Catterall, 2013). Given the developments globally beyond gender, few issues and cases remind us that the cultural and societal embodiment of what constitutes being a women remains a site to be contested. In societies undergoing modernity, how do women use consumption to negotiate the contrasting cultural values of tradition and modernity when their own Selves, bodies and lives are held to be sacred (Agnew, 1997; Mukherjee, 1983; Wadley, 1977)? Women are defined and located through social and moral parameters which serve as prominent markers of control and surveillance over their consumption choices. As Contested by the women who feel they have ownership over their bodies, lives and selves and how they are perceived, versus how others, typically men, perceived the role of women and their lives. In the middle of this field lies the market, adapting, creating and nurturing change in an effort to open new market segments, opportunities and profit possibilities.

Advertisers certainly require an in-depth understanding of how and why consumption systematically changes over consumers' lifetimes (Harrison et al., 2011). The life cycle constitutes a key advertising concept that helps in exploring changes in consumers over time (Cornwell et al., 2006). As a multidisciplinary concept, the life cycle approach has significantly developed since its introduction in the marketing literature (Baer and Srnka, 2012). Advertisers seek the life cycle concept to study consumer needs and spending patterns. More recently, scholars call for an individual life course perspective in consumer research (Bailey et al,

2010). We observe the direction of empirical and theoretical research flexing from macro to a micro level and the stages of life (Murphy and Staples, 1979; Gilly and Enis, 1982; Du and Kamakura, 2006). And recent life cycle research in marketing has turned to the individual consumer as the level of analysis (Cornwell et al., 2008; Bailey et al., 2010).

Advertising research notes that an individual's identity is challenged during transitions (Epp and Price, 2008; Noble and Walker 1997; Schouten 1991) and that transitions lead to disruptions in consumption (Andreasen 1984; Fellerman and Debevee 1993). Some of these identity disruptions are those that we invite or anticipate, such as marriage. Many scholars address a particular transitional or liminal period in which identity is challenged and marketplace resources as symbolic anchors to a preliminal self and markers of a postliminal self (Belk 1992; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005; Mehta and Belk 1991; Noble and Walker 1997). In addition, researchers have explored various life stages viz., childbirth, motherhood, divorce, adulthood, family identity, retirement etc., in depth conceptually and empirically.

Research on marriage as a potentially life transformative event is widely explored in advertising in terms of wedding or matrimony market, couple decision making, marriage from a socio-cultural perspective comprising research on rituals, symbols and culture. Also, most of the literature has examined the transformative disruptions from the perspective of relational, group, and even societal level (Stryker and Macke 1978), what is exploratory and minimal in the marketing literature is a more adequate theory to detail these tensions at the individual level and the role of consumption in marking and enabling transitions. In extant research on life transitions, marriage, widowhood, divorce and childbirth are scheduled as major and job promotions, and pre-marital break ups are scheduled as minor transitions for women. For men, job promotion or loss, moving away from parents, pre-marital breakups are considered to be major and marriage is a minor transitions. (Wheaton, 1990). Research has also explored the use of consumption as coping mechanisms at various life stages except the liminal

transition of a welcoming invited event of marriage which in fact creates very unwelcoming and a greater disruption than any other unwelcoming life transition like divorce or death. Moreover, the market segment and thereby the market size of honeymooners has been on a rise. Given the preference to career by women lately and hence delayed marriages and childbirth has enhanced the liminal period of newlyweds. So, firstly, there seems to be a ‘necessity’ of attention by marketers that revokes on the one side the notion of market opportunism and on the other side the notion of ‘consumption strategies and processes’ why and how these newly-wed honeymooners conceive in renegotiating their disrupted self-identities.

How then do women use consumption in these changing environments – as an opportunity to thrive, resist or conform? Perhaps central to this cultural understanding is the Marriage, where women feature prominently in various roles. Indian womanhood has been characterized as an ambivalent state, wherein women are both revered and subjugated, worshiped and molested, free to express themselves in different domains and yet voiceless. Newly Married women seem to use consumption to renegotiate their culturally construed gendered identity and related representations. Central to this renegotiation is the embodiment of the married female self-concept and her identity embodied within the patriarchal bargain, representing a set of pre-existing rules and scripts that regulate her identity and related roles (Kandiyoti, 1988). For example, duties the wife is expected to perform, such as a daughter in law, cook etc. As women’s roles transition from a daughter to a wife, the self-concept embodied in these women are challenged and renegotiated.

A few important questions emerge from this line of inquiry, such as how do marriage as a life transition event affect an individual’s Self-concept? In what ways do these transformations disrupt or alter an individual’s Self after marriage? What consumption-oriented strategies do individuals use to overcome these disruptions? In what ways does consumption women to directly or indirectly renegotiate the disruptions and reinforce their sense of self? By adopting a

process-oriented view to the life transition of marriage and consumption we try to examine how self-concept moves in and out of salience as a woman reorganize her sense of self over time. Although Advertising researchers have examined the relations between life transitions and consumption, there's a scanty understanding of it at an individual level understanding disruptions to one's self-concept and with a welcoming transition such as marriage. By bringing together previously disparate streams of research, we try to develop a sensitizing theoretical framework for how women draw on marketplace resources and consumption to manage their identity interplay of their Self-concept during the liminal transition of marriage. We intend for this framework to provide an understanding of consumption from a process view at the level of self and how does it create market opportunities. We also see a promising future research in this area in terms of gendered studies in advertising, self as a unit of analysis to uncover consumption processes related to identity construction after marriage as a life transition event.