

A Qualitative Exploratory Study of Morning Grooming Rituals

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Every morning, we groom and dress ourselves in personal places (e.g., houses or rooms) before moving to social places (e.g., offices or schools). Such grooming can be viewed as the connecting link, channel, or point of transition from private to public places. In essence, we are in the transitional phase in which we move from personal spaces to common places. Private places have a sense of privacy as regards their contents, and the meaning of “private” is always used as a relative concept to the meaning of “public” (Choi et al., 2010). Ritual is followed according to a fixed sequence, and it is defined as a “type of expressive, symbolic activity constructed of multiple behaviors that occur in a fixed, episodic sequence, and that tend to be repeated over time” (Rook, 1985).

The elements of ritual experience are classified into ritual artifacts, ritual script, ritual role, and ritual audience (Rook 1985). Thus, based on the previous literature’s definition of ritual characteristics, this study aims to identify the meaning of grooming rituals that are repeatedly performed every morning. Although many studies have conducted ritualistic analysis of the behaviors that are closely related to daily life, few studies analyze grooming from a ritualistic perspective. Using conceptual framework, this study analyzes the factors that influence the ritual by examining the following:

- 1) the external characteristics that are directly witnessed by observing the grooming ritual; and the internal characteristics that are latent and thereby indirectly shown through behaviors.
- 2) the social and personal factors that influence grooming rituals.

This study conducts qualitative research using participants to identify the ritual characteristics of every-morning grooming and the factors that influence this ritual. Men and women in their 20s and 30s with regular daily schedules were purposively sampled, and among them, 10 were selected as research subjects in consideration of age, occupation, and gender. First, considering everyday grooming as a behavioral pattern that possesses mostly ritualistic elements, the study examines both the external characteristics that are shown through the methods of grooming and the internal characteristics that reflect the inherent symbolic meaning. Second, the study identifies the social and personal factors that influence grooming rituals. The data from the 10 respondents were analyzed based on the grounded theory suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The collected data will be analyzed and conceptualized through open, axial, and selective coding and will then be used in establishing a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The results indicate that the external characteristics of grooming rituals include the sense of procedure, set pattern, and repeatability. Every-morning grooming is conducted according to the performers’ own sequences and procedures; and it is ritualized step-by-step according to

sequences and ways that the individual has followed for a long time. The grooming ritual does not express a formal ritual script, but it is internalized, thereby having an established sense of set pattern. The performers make their own rules and ways during each grooming activity. Every-morning grooming is performed routinely as a preparatory phase to equip oneself for the transition from personal to public places, such as work or school. Every morning, performers use ritual tools and follow their own procedures to conduct the grooming ritual based on the script created by their own ways.

The internal characteristics of the grooming ritual include the sense of seriousness, symbolism, immersion, and formality. Every-morning grooming is conducted with seriousness for individual satisfaction and expression. By utilizing ritual artifacts during grooming, research participants express their personality and feel a sense of self-satisfaction. Such ritual has the sense of symbolism and conveys or expresses one's intended meaning or image. In this case, confidence and sociality are conveyed. Furthermore, grooming rituals have the sense of immersion: the performers show a tendency to focus on and be immersed in the rituals. As the grooming ritual is conducted with a sense of symbolism, the research participants focused on how they conducted the grooming procedures. Given that ritual behaviors are typically conducted in accordance with formality and manner, the grooming rituals are also conducted in accordance with formality and manner toward ritual audiences.

Through in-depth interviews to analyze consumers' grooming ritual behaviors and their awareness of those behaviors from various aspects, this study identifies the external and internal characteristics of the grooming rituals and the social and personal factors that influence the rituals. However, the demographic characteristics of the study have limitations, as the ages of the research participants are skewed to the range of late-twenties to mid-thirties. As a qualitative research study, this study focused on recruiting young research participants, known to typically engage in regular grooming, to closely examine the meaning of the grooming rituals. However, future research should include participants from a broader age group. Moreover, although this paper uses qualitative analysis, for example to explore the relationship between grooming rituals and their performers, it does not combine its analysis with quantitative research methods. Thus, to improve the validity and reliability of the qualitative analysis results, future studies should conduct a more comprehensive analysis by adding quantitative research methods. This approach would extend the scope of research on consumers' behavior regarding the grooming rituals, thereby contributing to the generalizability of the results. Furthermore, an analysis of differences in grooming rituals according to the age of the consumer or the group difference of involvement level in grooming should be included in future studies.

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