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Research Paper

Space Consumption and Redefining Femininity; A Study of Women's Cafe Experience in Shiraz

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Introduction:

Today, cafes, as one of the modern urban spaces, have become an integral part of our lives. They are known as an intellectual symbol and manifestation of the consumer life, especially in connection with the lifestyle of young people. By going to a cafe and drinking coffee, one enters into a complex social relationship that creates a culture of cafe experience. Having a historical view of the social space (the contrast between tradition and modernity and the lifestyle arising from those two spaces), we are witnessing a transformation from the form of a coffee house to a cafe and/or a coffee shop. The most important difference between a cafe and a coffee house is the possibility of transgender individuality in cafes and the manifestation of collective and unisex identities in coffee houses. Therefore, people experience the city differently according to their gender. In the new social space, women, like men, can walk in the city, go to cafes and redefine them by using different public spaces. In the present study, the authors to see what changes women's cafe experience brings to their definition of femininity. In other words, how do women redefine their identity by attending cafes and consuming space? How does women's cafeteria challenge the masculine structural norms of the city? How do women, with their new definition of femininity, use it as a tactic to seize gender space in cities? Therefore, in order to understand the experience that women have of the city, it is necessary to pay attention to gender as an aspect of their identity, and this leads us to consider the interaction between the city and gender. This reveals the role of space in the formation of gender identities and the type of power relations that exist. In this study, we look at de Certeau's feminist reading in urban spaces. De Certeau provides a good theoretical framework for understanding the production of urban space and its experience through the daily work of the inhabitants of a city. For consumers, urban consumers are seen as materials that actively use culture and reproduce the right atmosphere for themselves. Walking in the city is organized by spatial order and is, by nature, a tactic by the actors. It is with this walk in the city that many stories are told and the city is rewritten.

Materials and Methods:

Due to the nature of the research topic, a critical ethnographic method was used to answer the research questions and objectives. For this purpose, cafes in the areas of Eram, Ferdousi, and Qasr al-Dasht streets and Darvazeh-Quran (areas that are often known as the main gathering place for cafes in Shiraz) were selected as the research area. The researcher (the second author of the present study) has been visiting these cafes as an observer and customer for about six months and has been indirectly observing and writing field notes. After almost six months, the researcher started working as a barista in a cafe in the area of Darvazeh-Quran in September 2019. In addition to direct observation, he also

engaged in participatory observation (working in a cafe) and gradually changed from a passive observer to an active viewer and interact with customers of the cafe. According to the research topic, which is the experience of women in cafes, 35 women who went to cafes between the ages of 18 and 50 were selected as participants using the snowball sampling method. From the initial observations, we came to two main questions: what does going to a cafe mean for girls and women and why do they go to a café? The second question is how they define being a woman based on the experience of this new space? Then, using thematic analysis, coding and extracting categories and semantic codes were obtained from the data. How to encode the data is that in each

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interview, phrases and sentences are extracted and grouped based on a common semantic category under a code. Then a central theme is selected based on a key phrase and category, and finally, the categories of the semantics obtained are linked to the theoretical framework and concepts used in the research. At the end of the analysis, in order to evaluate the validity of the data obtained in the research process, we showed the findings to 5 participants we interviewed and explained the research process to them. After confirming that the researcher's interpretation was similar to theirs, we also consulted with several experts in research methodology about the research findings, who confirmed the findings and the research process. In addition, using coding angles, three other experts were asked to re-codify some of the interview samples, which showed that the coding was done correctly.

Discussion of Results and Conclusions

Based on the five stages of Carspecken's critical ethnography and thematic data analysis method, we extracted three central categories and analyzed them:

A: Cafe as a third-place: Six major categories called the meaning of place, production of experience, individuality, cultural capital, new consumption, and liberation-independence were all obtained under a central category called 'Cafe as a third-place'. Third place or "good places" are many public places where people can gather, put aside their home and work worries (their first and second places) to talk, and forget about the clutter of everyday life for a few hours.

B: Femininity as a conflict: femininity is a socio-cultural construct that is transmitted to women during the socialization process. The second question of the research, which was based on the researcher's observations, was formulated in such a way that how do you define your femininity? How do you think 'being a woman' differs from the definitions of your mother and past generations? According to all the observations and interviews that were made in this regard, many concepts were expressed that we can define under the name of modern and traditional femininity in contrast to each other under the main category of 'femininity as a conflict'.

C: The experience of new femininity from space: based on the observations of the researcher and the interviews that were conducted, according to the research topic 'Consumption of space and redefining femininity, the study of women's cafe experience', the main issue obtained was a new and modern identity that exhibits women. Their lifestyle is tied to modernity and shows a view of consumer life in the city. People want to bring their class closer to the upper classes by consuming cafes. It seems that by consuming cafes, people want to improve their social status and get closer to the higher classes and enjoy a higher status. Many components such as security, freedom of speech and behavior, and different behavioral styles are formed in the café. The components create a culture of café living and a special pleasure and meaning are produced there, which women call new freedoms. Femininity is no longer defined in terms of gender roles and gender stereotypes. Anyone with any gender can walk in the urban space and produce and consume their meanings. Based on observations, field notes, and textual data, a new female identity has been formed in the café bed.

Based on the conceptual foundations of Michel de

Certeau's research and perspective, it can be said that women have gained a new experience in the cafe environment such as the experience of modernity, freedom, and independence from others, etc. The café provides a new space for social activists to identify and capture space with their creativity and simple ways of acting. Cafes are therefore a new place to represent our modern social life. Women, like men, can be confronted with new gender values and roles in these public spaces that are undermined by traditional femininity. They can achieve equality from social inferiority to the superiority of the society (men). According to the obtained results, it is clear how space is formed in interaction with spatial and social structure by the structure of 'gender'. The city is a symbol of modernity, and the café is a symbol of this modern city life, which is free for women, unlike the coffee house, which belonged to males. The cafe can highlight the invisible presence of women in the public space of the city and women can read the city in their own language and not in another language (male) by wandering around in a two-way manner. New consumer spaces, such as cafes, are gradually changing the mapping of the city's gendered space, breaking the hegemonic masculinity that dominated the space. Women change their gender roles by consuming such new spaces in the city and give it a new meaning that is different from their mothers' generation.

Keywords: Experience, Femininity, the café, Gender Space, Consumption.

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