

The Role of the National Media in Promoting Iranian-Islamic Lifestyle

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ABSTRACT

The necessity of the role-playing of the national media in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle is an issue stipulated in the decree missive of the new president of the national media by the Supreme Leader. Now, the main question is that “how the national media can play role in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle?”

The present writing necessarily explains the components of Iranian-Islamic lifestyle and is more focused on its objective, which is the explanation of the role of the national media in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle.

Methodology: This paper has qualitative approach and has used library study and document-analysis method to collect its data and information.

Results: The results of the present research indicate that the national media play role in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle through discourse-making, valuation, normalization, increase of social capital, training audience’s taste, proper benchmarking and increase of audience’s media literacy.

Conclusion: If the national media intend to portray a model of Iranian-Islamic lifestyle for modern man and internalize it at a comprehensive level, it should attempt to explain and manifest the adaptability of original religious teachings and the behavioral models of the teachings with human nature by seizing audience’s aesthetic sense.

KEYWORDS: Lifestyle, Media, National Media, Media Literacy, Social Capital.

INTRODUCTION

Lifestyle is among concepts that has assigned a privileged position to itself in social researches in the present decade. This concept is bounded with a series of concepts such as objectivity and subjectivity, culture and society, objective and subjective culture, form and content, behavior and sense (attitude, value and norm), ethics and ideology, tradition and modernity, personality and identity (individual and collective), inheritance and environment, individuality and generality, creativity and reproduction, production and consumption, social class and stratum, aesthetics (taste) and need, dignity and legitimation [1].

The media and media products are among the most important factors affecting the evolution of modern lifestyles or change of lifestyles. Experts of mass communication generally consider two presuppositions regarding the main role of the media in society. The first one is that the media contribute to the creation of common subjectivity and experience in society by its action in producing, promoting and distributing knowledge and information. The second one is that the mass media play a mediating role between social objective realities and personal experience [2].

The mass media as a social institution has mutual interchanging relations with other institution existing in society [3]. They also have features and capacities that can be used in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle in the case of proper and opportune use. The necessity of the role-playing of the national media in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle is an issue stipulated in the decree missive of the new president of the national media by the Supreme Leader. In addition, according to the Supreme Leader’s guidance, one of the macro-objectives of the national media is determined as “deepening and promoting society’s clear-sighted knowledge and faith, utopian ethics and sincerely religious behavior and promoting Iranian-Islamic culture and identity.” [4]

The national media as one of the important passages of promoting behavioral models plays a crucial role in promoting a set of life models resulting from Islamic teachings in accordance with the cultural indices of Iranian society. The present writing necessarily explains the components of Iranian-Islamic lifestyle and is more focused on its objective, which is the explanation of the role of the national media in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle.

Now, the main question is that “how the national media can play role in promoting Iranian-Islamic lifestyle?”

1. Lifestyle

“Lifestyle” in Oxford Dictionary is defined “the way in which a person or a group of people lives and works[5]. Max Weber (1864-1920) clearly does not present an accurate definition for lifestyle, but it can be found from his words that he has considered a concepts signifying common values and customs giving one group identity feeling. He regarded lifestyle from the quality of behavior that desires and preferences leads it and life opportunities provide its background origin [1]. From Bourdieu’s phrases (1930-2002), it can be found that he considers lifestyle as a systematic activity that

springs from individual's taste and has mostly objective and external aspect, at the same time symbolically gives the individual identity. Therefore, it makes discrimination among different social strata [6].

"Lifestyle" is a very important concept often used to express "people's way of life" and reflects a complete range of social values, beliefs and activities. It can be mentioned that lifestyle is formed from cultural, behavioral and habitual models and individuals employ it daily in their personal and social life. Individuals learn behavioral models through their social deeds or those of parents, friends, peers, acquaintances and the mass media [7].

The creativity and selection of the components and elements of lifestyle make this concept distinguished from similar concepts such as culture and identity [8].

Respecting the above-mentioned issues, it can be mentioned that lifestyle is a concept that is well-established and highlighted in all arenas of men's personal and social life. In addition, from the analysis of the above-mentioned definitions, it can be found that although this concept is analyzable at personal level, the majority of thinkers have regarded it a collective model. Thus, a number of individuals would be common in a particular type of lifestyle.

2. Concept of Islamic-Iranian Lifestyle

Societies need to use various behavioral and active model at different levels to make progress. In our society, the literature particular to lifestyle is regarded, but it is natural that Iranian-Islamic lifestyle is emphasized owing to the Islamic religion of Iranian society. Therefore, for effective cultural institutions such as family, education and the media, paying attention to Islamic teachings and drawing inspiration from the introduced models in these teachings will be important to form a kind of lifestyle in accordance with the cultural indices peculiar to Iranian society [8]. It seems that in the discussion of the position of religion in the process of forming lifestyle, Weber's model can be employed as action in its general sense. According to this model, the interaction between tendencies and resources can create personal or group choices or the very action. The total actions delineate a model that can be called "lifestyle". Therefore, personal and collective tendencies and preferences determine the direction of action and available resources creating life opportunities in connection with structural factors, provide the appearance background of action [9]. The individual chooses a particular behavior model to achieve greater capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) in each field based on evaluation or the very taste. These models and their objective manifestations are lifestyles [6].

Thus, it can be mentioned that cultural capital from religion's worldview and semantic system along with religious symbols and rites can help the followers of a religion consistently in forming social values and norms as well as tastes and preferences from it.

It is evident that we cannot analyze in Islamic sources with the literature peculiar to "lifestyle", but the general presupposition of the writing is that the comprehensiveness of Islamic teachings include all man's life aspects and dimensions and the issue is provable by relying on valid religious explicit texts (An-Nahl Surah, 89) [10].

Another presupposition is paying attention to Islamic teachings as a general conceptual system that its components are related to each other firmly and the goal of each component is completing the goals of other components (Al-Baqara Surah, 85; Al-Maeda Surah, 49) [10].

In explaining the concept of "Islamic-Iranian lifestyle" taking several points into consideration is important including Islam's view to man, in other words, Islamic anthropology and life meaning from Islam's perspective.

2.1. Man from Islamic Perspective

In Islamic view, the existence of human special truth and common nature of men under the title of "Fetrat" (nature) is emphasized. The verse 30 of the holy surah of Ar-Room [10] explicitly give information concerning a kind of divine nature in man that based on it, a kind of attractiveness to monotheism exists in man's nature. Furthermore, from Islamic perspective, man has inherent and genetic greatness. In other words, God has created man so that has greater advantages from existence structure and the structure of his facilities is adjusted in a better form and has greater possessions in comparison with other creatures (Al-Isra Surah, 70) [10].

2.2. Life Meaning from Islamic Perspective

From the perspective of divine religions, man's life in this world is not limited to material and natural life and man should be away from absurdity in order to use his life completely. This is not possible except responding to main questions regarding life philosophy namely "Where did I come from?" "Where am I?" and "Where do I go?" [11] Religion responds to such decisive questions clearly and explicitly and removes darkness and ambiguities of life.

Individuals' lifestyle is affected by their semantic system and religion is one of the semantic systems. Most of religions have semantic systems, teachings, institutions and structures that empower their followers in creating lifestyles based on them. Therefore, it can be concluded that religion can play role in creating character, taste and aesthetics and as a result lifestyles and is involved in forming other lifestyles apart from religious lifestyles [9].

Thus, lifestyle is not apart from belief system and religious values, but attitudes and tendencies created from religious teachings also constitute part of lifestyle and are effective in forming its other parts seriously and profoundly.

3. The National Media

The media, in its general sense, in "Online Etymology" are defined as "the tools of saving and transferring information". The concept of the media in the field of communications and social science is a means to transfer individuals' or society's information, beliefs, thoughts and ideas. Supposing the acceptance of this definition, the media can be from the types of human, organizational or technological [12].

Broadcasting Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran (the national media) is consisted of two sections of radio and television. Two parts, which were founded and active separately. Certainly, radio is older than television (the opening of Iran Radio 1940/4/24 and the opening of the first television transmitter 1958/10/3). In 1971, the background was provided to integrate Iran Radio and Organization of National Television and a unit called "Iranian National Radio

and Television” was formally launched. INRT was renamed as Broadcasting Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran after the Revolution on 11th February, 1979. Imam Khomeini (pbuh) in the early days after the Revolution called the Broadcasting Organization as a “public university”, the very title indicating the great sociocultural mission of this institution. “The National Media” is a title that the Supreme Leader has referred to it according to the features and mission of the Broadcasting Organization [13].

3.1. Requirements of Promoting Islamic-Iranian Lifestyle in the National Media

The role-playing of the national media in promoting Islamic-Iranian lifestyle requires observing requirements resulting from Islamic teachings. The most important requirements include:

3.1.1. Relying on the Principles of Islamic Anthropology

As it was mentioned, in Islamic worldview, man is a creature with God-seeking nature, greatness, power of authority and choice. The audience should understand the coordination between suggested styles and their needs and nature properly and it is natural that the audience accept the teachings easily and apply the suggested models in their life path in gaining such an understanding [8].

3.1.2. Tool Legitimation

In Islamic logic, goal has never justified means and will never justify it. Achieving any goal even legitimate, desirable and rational should be achieved by legitimate and rational means. The holiness and value goal never can justify its achievement tool. Means and tool should be legitimate and rational in order to achieve a legitimate goal with legitimate tool. Thus, it is mentioned that goal cannot justify means.

The Supreme Leader in his own statement has dealt with the issue as follows:

“Some elements of our own front for example writes a story or a make a movie supposing that attracts the audience of the opposite front, dealt with issues that the writer or moviemaker of the opposite front has dealt with them. For example, they use woman as a sexual factor to make their movie interesting. They do the same work. The work is extremely inappropriate, because it contribute to abrasion in our own front. I do not accept this. Not only do not I accept it, but I think that this though is wrong and the work is a mistake. We should create our own audience” [14].

3.1.3. Consideration of Era’s Requirements

Religious lifestyle necessarily is not limited in a lifestyle, but in a framework resulting from Islamic principles, various styles are accepted. The innocent (pbuh) in the position of a complete man, chose different styles in life influenced by the requirement of their era. For example, Imam Ali (pbuh) mended his shoes[15], while Imam Sadegh (pbuh) wore clean and fine clothes[16]. Its reason is not something but difference in spatiotemporal condition. None of the chosen models cannot be considered out of religious lifestyle framework. Therefore, regarding the requirement of era is an indispensable issue in promoting Islamic-Iranian lifestyle.

3.2. Role of the National Media in Promoting Islamic-Iranian Lifestyle

The duty of the national media is modeling for society’s value and cultural behaviors and habits. The national media should invite the audience to thought, contemplation and wisdom and provide the background for developing dynamic national culture by promoting their faith and thought while promoting Iranian-Islamic ethics. If in the past “inheritance”, “environment” and “family” were regarded as the three main factors in forming an individual’s personality and education, nowadays, according to the wideness and effect of the mass media, the fourth factor can be added to the set namely the factor of radio and television [17].

Discourse-making, valuation, normalization, increase of social capital, training audience’s taste, proper benchmarking and increase of audience’s media literacy are among the most important duties and roles of the national media in promoting Islamic-Iranian lifestyle.

3.2.1. Discourse-making

Discourse can be used to make structure and break it in society. It should be noted that three points are suggested concerning the success of discourse in making or changing social structure:

- 1- The writing role of discourse in making movement and change that depends on the effect of advertising and discourse methods.
- 2- The persuasive role of discourse that is postponed to its logical and ideological consistency.
- 3- The emotional role that provides the background through stimulating feelings to accept new structures [18].

Therefore, it is necessary that the national media use the three capacities of discourse in promoting Islamic-Iranian lifestyle. The national media can contribute to the mainstream of Islamic-Iranian lifestyle by employing the writing role of discourse and provide the background to accept and follow Islamic-Iranian lifestyle by bonding the audience’s logical and emotional aspects.

3.2.2. Valuation and Normalization

In explaining the concept of lifestyle, it can be found that in the course of time and in the historic process, scientists’ attention in analyzing lifestyle from mere attention to consumable behaviors and relying on objective behaviors has been drawn to more subjective aspects such as human relations, tendencies and attitudes [19]. The origin of such a claim springs from the place that our values and attitudes are manifested from our identity beyond many of our behaviors, beliefs and thoughts. Thus, values and norms play an important role in leading individuals’ and social groups’ taste and ability.

Closs believes that the media can encourage society to accept and actualize their intended social and cultural beliefs and behavior invisibly. In other words, through this way, a society based on the logical thoughts can be achieved that its promotion and publication tool is the mass media [20].

3.2.3. Increase of Social Capital

Giddens considers the mass media as the tools of promoting social capital. He believes that the mass media are the tool to identify, continue, promote, maintain or transfer social capital. The advent of the mass media and their enormous expansion has reduced ambiguity in society [21].

The important function of the mass media is creating social cohesion. Social cohesion is the origin of emotional relations public commitment and social trust and consequently social capital [22].

In addition, Mc Quail believes that gaining insight regarding others' circumstance, coexistent-supposition concept with others, gaining attachment feeling, gaining a basis for dialogue, social interaction, finding a real companion in life, contribution to implement social roles, empowering individual to make relation with family, friends and society are among the services that the mass media present and through this way can consolidate social cohesion [23].

3.2.4. Training Audience's Taste

The accurate analysis of the indices of lifestyle indicates that scholars in their studies on lifestyle, willingly or unwillingly have considered a general axis called "taste" [24]. Therefore, approximately all indices of lifestyle are pertinent to aspects of human life that the individuals choose according to their taste or group in which they are members.

Bourdieu, in explaining the feature of selectiveness of taste, always attempts to introduce it as a kind of habit-like that springs from socialization and education (formal or informal), individual's position in social environment or in his words, field [24]. He regards the differences and similarities existing in taste as the effect of social atmospheres and individuals' position in these atmospheres, therefore introducing taste completely acquirable.

After the pious lifestyles are obtained from religious teachings and the status quo of society is analyzed and its choice models are described, it is the turn of a phase in which social taste are inclined to normative and prescriptive models. Maintaining and promoting superior models for lifestyle requires reaching the audience to a degree that understand the harmony of the model with their nature and needs.

3.2.5. Proper Benchmarking

We refer to standards that the reference groups offer to us in order to assess and evaluate behavior, talent, physical appearances, values and the like [25].

On this basis, reference groups have two main functions:

- 1) Induce norms, procedures, values and beliefs to others
- 2) Provide actors with criteria to assess their action and attitude on that basis [26].

Reference group refers to individuals or groups that become model and pattern [27] and since these groups can determine the direction of behaviors and play a crucial role in the process of the preference of lifestyles, it is necessary to scrutinize the policy of the national media concerning the introduction of social reference groups.

3.2.6. Increase of the Media Literacy

One of the objectives of the Broadcasting Organization as the national media is "immunizing the public opinion toward the affectability of the foreign cultural invasion wave especially secularism, atheistic, material and cultural tendencies of the western liberalism[4]".

One of the most important challenges of the age of globalization at macro-level is the permeability of borders and the publication of the media messages endlessly. At micro-level, houses' walls are no longer citizens' exclusive and personal framework, but they are a space for the permeability of the media waves. In the above-mentioned conditions, how cognitive and motivational background can be created in citizens so that react to the content and performance of the media self-motivationally and make them meaningful in their encounter with the media and their content through analysis and contemplation [28].

Scholars in the field of communications and the media, since several decades ago, have been concerned about the damage of the media citizens' vulnerability in the global society and have recommended ideas and suggestions to reduce their destructive effects. One of the suggestions is reinforcing citizens' "literacy of the media" in society [29].

Literacy of the media seeks to empower citizens and change their inactive relations with the media and converting them into active and dynamic communicators. It also enables citizens to be familiar with the methods, instructions and culture structure of the media and challenges them so that they cannot surrender to the media messages easily. Respecting the citizens of the age of globalization live in the media environment, it is indispensable for them to interact with the different layers of the media messages and promote their communicative skills and the media understanding in using the media more properly by acquiring new skills and techniques [30].

4. Conclusion

If the national media intend to portray a model of Iranian-Islamic lifestyle for modern man and internalize it at a comprehensive level, it should attempt to explain and manifest the adaptability of original religious teachings and the behavioral models of the teachings with human nature by seizing audience's aesthetic sense.

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