

Gifts That Bind Relationships: A Qualitative Exploration of Meaning in Self, Interpersonal, and Business Gifting

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Abstract

This study examines gifting behavior across self-gifting, interpersonal gifting, and business gifting to understand how gifting functions in relationship building and maintenance. Through in-depth interviews with 25 participants, the research explores how individuals make sense of gifting as both givers and receivers. Findings show that self-gifting involves internal negotiation and self-affirmation, interpersonal gifting highlights intentionality and relational meaning, and business gifting requires managing cost while signaling attentiveness. Across contexts, the perceived meaning of a gift is more important than its monetary value. The study proposes an integrated model that summarizes key psychological mechanisms and relational outcomes, offering a comprehensive foundation for understanding gifting as a symbolic social practice.

Track: Relationship Marketing