



Courtesy versus efficiency: Personal gifts and monetary gifts – Preferences and norms in Israeli society

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes gift-giving and gift-receiving in the Israeli society. We examine the behavior and norms that Israelis adopt for ceremonial occasions such as weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, birth celebrations and birthdays, in order to understand the abandonment of personal gifts and the embracing of monetary gifts instead. An online survey was sent to a diverse sample of participants all over Israel. We included in the sample secular, traditional, religious and ultra-orthodox respondents in order to examine possible differences in gift-giving norms between these populations. We also analyzed how ethnicity and additional demographics affect various behaviors and perceptions related to gift giving. The results show that there is a rejection of personal gifts and a preference for monetary gifts. Compared to monetary gifts, personal gifts are perceived as more personal and having a sentimental value, but also as more disrespectful, cheap, inappropriate and unappreciated, and less practical and functional. We also discuss the business implications of the social norm of giving monetary gifts. This norm allows to organize more expensive events and benefits the event halls, which in turn encourage high spending of hosts based on expected gifts, by allowing them to pay most of the amount after the event.

1. Introduction

Gift exchange has long been a subject of anthropological study because it is one of the earliest examples of human connection and serves as a striking illustration of both humanity's universality and variety (Yan, 2020). Gift-giving is commonplace worldwide, yet it takes diverse forms in various cultures and geographical areas (Chiu et al., 2022). When we discuss gift-giving behavior, we do not focus exclusively on the occasion or the form of the gift, but also on several additional aspects, such as the giver's choice, his or her feelings before and after giving the gift, and the cycle of reciprocity.

In Chinese culture, giving gifts is a frequent but significant societal phenomenon. China has a lengthy history of giving cash gifts, in contrast to many Western societies. In the traditional rural Chinese society, full moon birth feasts, weddings, funerals, and the Spring Festival are the primary occasions for households to exchange gifts (Chiu et al., 2022). In Arab society, it is common to give both monetary and sentimental gifts. According to Belbağ (2020), although monetary gifts are common at weddings in Turkey as it is a great way for people to display their identities and social standing, personal gifts are still expected on birthdays, New Year's Eve, and birth celebrations.

In Western cultures, personal gifts are still more common than monetary gifts, even though they may be less efficient in terms of time and results (Hudik & Fang, 2020). The rules of courtesy and etiquette, which are dominant in dictating behavior in most westernized societies, address this important subject of gift-giving. These notions recommend that the guest should provide his host with a personal gift that reflects the amount of information that the guest holds about his host in terms of what would be appreciated. As for westernized cultures, gift giving norms and the meanings attached to gifts have evolved over time. In the nineteenth century, it was assumed that close family would provide land, property, and household goods. It was acceptable to give decorative, non-essential household items as gifts. As we entered the 20th century, household goods started to dominate wedding present lists. This occurred at a time when getting married signaled the beginning of cohabitation for many couples who needed or wanted assistance creating a brand-new home. Since the majority of couples getting married today cohabit before marriage, they no longer need to obtain the same amount of domestic goods when getting married. Therefore, we might witness a shift towards the nineteenth-century norms in which the majority of wedding presents are expensive, special-occasion items (Carter & Smith, 2020).

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Bulte et al. (2018) suggest that household gift-giving has been on the rise in recent years and that stress and competition around gift-giving has been prompted due to income growth in several developing countries. Gift-giving has not lost its significance despite the fact that we live in an affluent society where many people can buy almost anything and get it right away, particularly since the economy has also managed to create other gift-giving occasions (Stauss, 2023). Countries with capitalistic economies have, in a sense, encouraged gift-giving, as each passing year brings more products as well as more opportunities for gift-giving (Grandparent's Day, Valentine's Day, etc.) and these are used by retailers to encourage consumers to buy more (Creighton, 1993; Epstein, 1982; Otnes & Scott, 1996). Gifts continue to represent a significant proportion of the budget of US citizens. Even though monetary presents are in the minority (10–15%), gifts in general represent about 3 to 4 percent of a person's income (Waldfoegel, 1993; Caplow, 1982).

In Germany, retail sales in the 2020 Christmas season amounted to €103.9 billion. German consumers planned to spend an average of €281 on Christmas gifts that year. Similar and even higher numbers were also reported by the Swiss and Austrian consumers (CHF 327 and €364, respectively) (Stauss, 2023). The minority of gifts given in the form of cash can be explained, according to Prendergast and Stole (2001), by the fact that although money is the most wanted asset, gifts still have an important role in terms of relationships. It is a way of communicating to the recipient the amount of information that the donor knows about him or her.

Economists study whether holiday gifts represent a deadweight loss, i.e., they cost to the giver more than they are worth to the recipient, either in Christmas (Waldfoegel, 1993; Solnick & Hemenway, 1996; List & Shogren, 1998; Ruffle & Tykocinski, 2000) or in the Jewish holiday of Passover (Shtudiner, 2020). However, even if a deadweight loss does exist in certain occasions and can be spared if monetary gifts were to be given instead of personal gifts, many people still believe that cash could never replace a well-chosen gift.

1.1. Reciprocity

Gouldner (1973) distinguishes two different norms of gift-giving, one being based on the norm of reciprocity and the other being based on altruistic norms. According to Mauss (1990), whose work represents the foundation for the understanding of gift-giving in societal life, gift-giving is a situation where obligation and liberty intermingle. Invitations must be sent out and guests must accept, and when they accept they must return what was given to them. This cycle has been described by Banks (1979) as the 'self-perpetuating nature of the giving cycle – to give, to receive and to repay.' The reciprocity aspect of gift-giving has been described by Sahlins (1972) and Roberts (1990) as an equilibrium where people seek to find 'balanced reciprocity,' which is a direct exchange whereby people expect to get the same value as what was given. Gift-givers and receivers find the answers to this equilibrium according to the 'scaling rule,' which refers to the process whereby people estimate the relative worth of the gifts given to them in order to maintain relationships with their surroundings (Caplow, 1984). According to Camerer (1988), due to the reciprocity force that is connected to gift-giving, inefficient gifts may be better than efficient gifts in the eyes of the receiver, given that they signal the giver's intention.

1.2. The selection of the proper gift

When people have the financial capacity and a certain amount of free time, they prefer to invest in a personal gift that will enable them to express their feelings towards the receiver, in which case the gift's value to the receiver will often surpass its economic value. Even with the general assumption that gifts are given mainly because of the force of reciprocity, people still feel that this should be in the form of spontaneous and non-financial gifts that will please the other person (Komter & Vollebergh, 1997).

Belk (1996) provides six characteristics of the perfect gift, which are: 1. That the giver makes an extraordinary sacrifice; 2. The giver wishes solely to please the recipient; 3. The gift is a luxury; 4. The gift is something uniquely appropriate to the recipient; 5. The recipient is surprised by the gift; and 6. The recipient desires the gift and is delighted by it.

The meaning of a gift and its impact on the relationship are also influenced by the gift-giving occasion. Gifts given on ritual occasions have less impact on the relationship than gift-giving on more personal occasions (Ruth et al., 1999). Malinowski (1922) and Sahlins (1972), who focused their studies on the Western culture of gift-giving, suggested that the level of closeness between the giver and the receiver affects the message that the gift beholds. The closer the relationship between the two, the less a gift resembles an economic transfer.

According to Kaplan and Ruffle (2009), search cost is an important factor in gift-giving. Today, we are exposed to a very wide selection of goods that are suitable as gifts. However, the wide array of goods available makes it hard for the giver to choose a gift that will satisfy the receiver, and therefore the search costs are high.

When a person is in the situation of gift-giving, there are two dimensions that influence his or her judgment: desirability and feasibility. Desirability refers to the attractiveness of the gift, while feasibility refers to the convenience of the gift to the receiver. Givers prefer giving gifts that are desirable, while receivers prefer the dimension of feasibility over desirability (Baskin et al., 2014). Another study reports that people prefer to get gifts that they have expressed wanting, rather than to get thoughtful gifts that they never wished for. This reinforces the efficiency of today's society, which is also reflected in the field of gift-giving (Gino & Flynn, 2011).

1.3. The norms of gift-giving in the Israeli society¹

The most important phenomenon that can be noticed in the Israeli society is the transformation from the familial-tribal weddings (weddings as a tool in order to reinforce bonds with family and close friends) to the individualistic wedding (wedding as a personal event of the couple only). This new era has led to changes also in the form of the wedding, and couples are now competing in the search for uniqueness and extravaganza (Rodin & Almog, 2008).

It seems that the personal gift has lost much of its value and importance in the Israeli society, since most of the gifts given at weddings are purely monetary gifts. As well-intentioned and kind as gift-giving might seem, gift-giving is perceived very differently in Israel. In today's Israeli society, giving personal (non-monetary) gifts at weddings is perceived as being highly inappropriate. Such gifts are associated with cheapness and the intention of 'economizing.' Everyone is expected to give monetary gifts. Most halls only put electronic safes in order to collect the envelopes (with checks or cash) brought by the guests. Today, several halls have even adopted the newest trend, which is an electronic machine located at the entrance to the hall, where the guest can swipe his or her credit card and transfer to the host the desired amount. This method leaves all the personal aspects of gift-giving behind, since even the handwritten note that might still be present when giving money in an envelope has been discarded. The gift-giving experience becomes a credit card financial transaction.

This situation of having to give a monetary gift is perceived as stressful and is often a deal-breaker when considering attending a certain event. This phenomenon has also been reported by other cultures who also embraced the norms of monetary gifts. A similar burden of the monetary gift has been reported in China and in Turkey, and for some households, it has even become a financial burden (Belbag, 2020; Hudik

¹ One of the authors was an event organizer and the observations and claims in this section that do not refer to the literature are based on personal knowledge from this vast professional experience as an event organizer.

& Fang, 2020). In Israeli society the financial aspect has overtaken the social aspect of events, with couples often declining an invitation to attend an event because they cannot provide the expected gift. Participants are expected to cover a significant part of the event expenses, and to take into consideration the amount invested by the hosts in the event.

According to a research led by the Israeli company Easywed amongst 693 participants, only 34% of them succeeded to finance their wedding independently without any debts in 2011 compared to 45% in 2006. 3% of the participants took loans in order to pay for their wedding, a phenomenon that was not present in the data reported in 2006. D&B reported that the average cost of a wedding in Israel in 2015 is 120,000 shekels (over USD 30,000) (Yaakovi, 2015). In order to cover this large expense, hosts are relying on gifts from the guests. Today, the gift-receiver counts on these monetary gifts to pay for the event, and without them the hosts often could not afford such a grandiose event. This reality has created a situation where guests feel obligated to give cash in order not to be a financial burden on their hosts. There is a certain expectation that a guest should cover his or her share of the expenses and take into consideration all that has been 'invested' in the event.

Some tend to explain the preference for cash as being caused by the fact that Israeli society wants to be useful and people do not want to give something that will not be appreciated. However, in the case of birthdays and birth celebrations, where events are celebrated more modestly, the norm in terms of gift-giving remains the personal gift. This point reinforces the belief that monetary gifts are desired not for their practicality but for their financial value (paying for the event).

One may argue that the fact that weddings include a large number of guests might be a reason for people to give cash instead of gifts, as many guests do not really know the couple and their tastes. In reality, the contrary seems true, because close friends also give money (and usually larger amounts than more remote guests). Guests who give personal gifts are normally those who do not know the couple very well and therefore feel at ease giving something less appreciated than money.

1.4. Research questions, motivation, and contribution

The motivation behind researching the gift-giving norms of the Israeli society is to understand the cultural, social, and economic factors that shape and influence gift-giving behavior in Israel and more generally. Israel is a multicultural society with diverse religious and ethnic groups, and gift-giving plays a significant role in their social interactions and relationships. By analyzing the gift-giving norms and practices of the Israeli society, researchers can gain insights into the values, beliefs, and attitudes that underpin gift-giving behavior. This research can also shed light on the role of gift-giving in maintaining social cohesion, expressing gratitude, and strengthening interpersonal relationships.

Although the field of gift-giving has been studied, the abandonment of the personal gift is considered a relatively new phenomenon that has not yet been researched much. The Israeli case has never been researched using quantitative methods, which means that although researchers have already noted the uniqueness of the Israeli case, the topic has not been researched systematically using a scientific approach. We fill this gap in the literature by studying various aspects of gift-giving in Israel with special attention to the decision between giving personal gifts and monetary gifts.

The Israeli society is considered very heterogeneous, due to the different communities living in Israel. We analyze whether this new norm of giving monetary gifts exists equally in all parts of society (e.g., secular vs. religious vs. ultra-Orthodox; Sephardic vs. Ashkenazi vs. Russian, etc.). We analyze the number of events the average Israeli is invited to, the attendance rates, and the factors that influence those rates. We also study the decision-making process of Israeli people in a gift-giving situation. We want to know what affects their judgements and what drives them to give a certain gift, evaluating among other things the effect of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, education, etc. We

analyze the factors that influence the amount invested in a gift, and we examine whether different norms exist when purchasing gifts for different events, such as weddings, birth celebrations, Bar/Bat Mitzvah, and birthdays. In addition, we analyze the associations linked to personal gifts and to monetary gifts.

2. Method

This study analyzed the behavior and beliefs of Israeli gift-givers and gift-recipients. In order to collect the relevant information, we used an online survey that was sent out to a sample of 403 participants all over Israel, using a company that specializes in handling such surveys². Participation was voluntary and participants were paid by the company for filling out the survey³. The survey is made up of closed-ended questions. The questions were not based on previous surveys. The questions address various issues related to preferences, attitudes and beliefs about gift-giving for different events: weddings, birth celebrations, Bar/Bat Mitzvahs and birthdays. We used birthday celebrations as a basis for comparison with other events, due to their particular characteristics (smaller events, higher closeness of hosts to guests, lower costs of the event, etc.). Some questions try to identify the factors that affect the decision whether to give a sum of money and, if so, how much to give as a gift for different occasions. Some questions address the emotions and associations of participants concerning gift-giving and gift-receiving. Finally, the questionnaire also includes a few demographic questions about gender, origin, occupation, income, etc., to allow an analysis of whether these characteristics have an impact in the gift context.

3. Results

3.1. Distribution of various characteristics in the sample

Our sample consisted of 403 participants ($n = 403$), made up of 201 female participants and 202 male participants, with ages ranging from 18 to 80 years. The sample consisted of Jewish Israeli citizens that define themselves as Ashkenazi (36.9%), Sephardic (31.3%), 'Sabre' (19.4%), from the former USSR community (6.2%) and those of mixed descent (6.2%). Looking at the religiosity level, the sample consisted of a majority of secular partakers (46.9%), followed by those who categorized themselves as traditionalist (28.8%) and those who considered themselves religious (14.9%) or ultra-Orthodox (9.4%). The sample consisted of different marital statuses: Married (62.3%), Single (20.8%), Divorced (8.7%), In a Relationship (6.5%) and Widowed (1.7%). Regarding income (monthly household income after taxes, including both spouses for non-singles, in Shekels), 39.9% earned more than 10,000 shekels; 14.5% reported an income of 8000 to 10,000 shekels; 11.5% between 6000 and 8000 Shekels; 14.5% between 4000 and 6000 Shekels; 8% between 2000 and 4000 Shekels; and 11.7% reported income below 2000 Shekels.

3.2. Attendance at events

3.2.1. Comparing invitations and attendance at different events

Participants were asked to report the number of invitations and the number of annual events they attended. The average respondent receives 6.2 invitations to weddings (median=4, SD=8.7); 2.9 invitations to Bar/Bat Mitzvah (median=2, SD=3.8); 3.7 invitations to birth celebrations (median=2, SD=6.1); and 7.2 invitations to birthdays

² Some of the analysis consists of a smaller number of responses due to missing or irrelevant answers to some questions. In particular, in the regressions even if only one of the variables is missing for a certain observation, the entire observation could not be used.

³ An ethics committee approval for the study was obtained.

(median=5, SD=7.7). Out of these invitations, the average respondent attends 4.2 weddings, 2 Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, 2.5 birth celebrations and 5.4 birthday parties. On average, 77% of the invitations are accepted for all event types, except birthdays where the rate is 81%.

3.2.2. The cost of the gift as a factor that influences the decision to attend an event

Participants were asked to rank the frequency of their decision not to attend events because of the gift cost on a scale from 'never' (27.5%) to 'seldom' (33%), 'sometimes' (27%), 'often' (10%), 'almost always' (2%) or 'always' (0.5%), which later translated into values from 1 to 6, respectively. These results suggest that the cost of gifts has become a financial burden for a part of the Israeli society, to the extent of avoiding going to some events.

In order to examine the effect of various personal characteristics on the decision not to attend events because of the gift cost, we used OLS regression analysis. Table 1 presents the results of the regression, with the dependent variable being the frequency of the decision not to attend events because of the gift cost. Several ethnic groups (Sephardi, USSR and Mixed descent) tend more to give up on events due to the gift cost.

Table 1
What affects the decision not to attend events because of the gift cost?

Variables	Coefficients
Income	-0.033 (-1.78)
Ashkenazi	0.160 (1.05)
Mixed	0.539* (2.10)
Sephardi	0.575** (3.56)
USSR	0.527* (2.10)
Traditional	-0.035 (-0.26)
Religious	-0.451** (-2.63)
Haredi	-0.502* (-2.49)
Divorced	0.017 (0.08)
Relationship	0.604* (2.51)
Single	-0.029 (-0.16)
Widow	0.415 (0.87)
Female	0.354** (3.11)
Age	-0.008 (-1.72)
Observations	344
R-squared	0.177

Comments: The table presents the coefficients of the variables in the OLS regression, where the dependent variable is the frequency of the decision not to attend events because of the gift cost (on a 1-6 scale). t-statistics appear in parentheses. *p < .05. **p < .01 (significance levels are two-tailed). The omitted group that serves as a benchmark group is Israeli-Sabre (ethnicity), secular (religiosity), male (gender), and married (marital status).

Terms used here and in the upcoming tables: Ashkenazi- Jews of Central or Eastern European descent; Sabre- term that refers to any Israeli born in Israel; Sephardi- Jews from Spanish or Portuguese descent; Mixed- participants with mixed descents; USSR- Jews descending from the former USSR; Haredi- Ultra-orthodox Jew.

Religious and Haredi (ultra-orthodox) people tend less to miss events due to the cost of gifts.

3.3. Appropriateness, satisfaction, and preferences of gifts

3.3.1. Comparing the appropriateness of four types of gifts (cash, check, personal gift and no gift)

We were interested to evaluate different norms and standards in the Israeli society, especially in relation to the type of gifts that were seen as most appropriate for each type of event. This was done by asking the respondents to rate on a scale of one (least appropriate) to 10 (most appropriate) which of the four options (cash, check, personal gift, no gift) seemed to them to be the most fitting when going to a wedding, birth celebration (a.k.a. Brit), Bar/Bat Mitzvah or birthday celebration. The results showed that when attending a wedding celebration, the most appropriate gift comes in the form of a check (M = 8.8, SD=2.52, n = 399), and then in the form of cash (M = 8.13, SD=3.04, n = 398) (M here and elsewhere stands for Mean). The least appropriate were personal gifts (M = 3.47, SD=2.89, n = 400) and bringing no gift (M = 1.38, SD=1.52, n = 402) (Fig. 1). Birth celebrations (a.k.a. Brit) and Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebrations revealed very similar results to those of weddings, except when it came to personal gifts. The appropriateness rating of non-monetary (personal) gifts was higher at these events than at weddings, with Brits having an average of 5.73 (SD=3.29, n = 399) and Bar/Bat Mitzvahs having an average of 5.16 (SD=3.36, n = 401). Gift-giving norms for birthday celebrations revealed different appropriateness results for personal gifts (M = 8.65, SD=2.42, n = 398), followed by cash (M = 4.97, SD=3.56, n = 399), check (M = 4.02, SD=3.33, n = 398) and bringing no gift (M = 1.96, SD=2.13, n = 402). For all types of events significant differences were found between all four options (cash, check, personal gift, no gift), except for the comparison between cash and check when attending a Brit or a Bar/Bat Mitzvah celebration (p = 0.3011, t=-1.03, df=397). The results show that all the participants agreed that gifts should be given when attending an event. Personal gifts were rated as least appropriate for weddings and most welcomed at birthday parties. Except for birthdays, the most appreciated gift was in the form of money.

3.3.2. Correlation between the perceived appropriateness of each type of gift for each type of event and the percentage of occasions the participant gave that type of gift

Next, we examined the value given by participants based on what they thought was the most appropriate gift for each event with what they reported actually giving at events and found a positive correlation between the two. Correlations were tested and the values ranged between 0.3733 and 0.5518, which means that there was no dissonance between thought and action.

3.3.3. Average estimated satisfaction of host (when participants are in the guest position)

Participants were asked to mark one or two types of gifts that would be most welcomed by gift-receivers, among the options of cash, check, or a personal gift. Except for birthdays, results show that participants believed that monetary gifts would be most appreciated, while personal gifts would be the least desired gifts. Only 1% of the participants believed that gift-receivers would enjoy most getting a personal gift at their wedding, compared to birthday celebrations where 68.2% stated that gift-receivers would enjoy most from getting a personal gift (Table 2). Here again, we can see that the norms for birthday gifts are very different from the norms for other events.

3.3.4. Average preference of the participant for each type of gift at each type of event

In order to check the robustness of our results, similar questions were asked using different approaches. We wanted to test whether there were any gaps between what someone thinks gift-receivers would like best

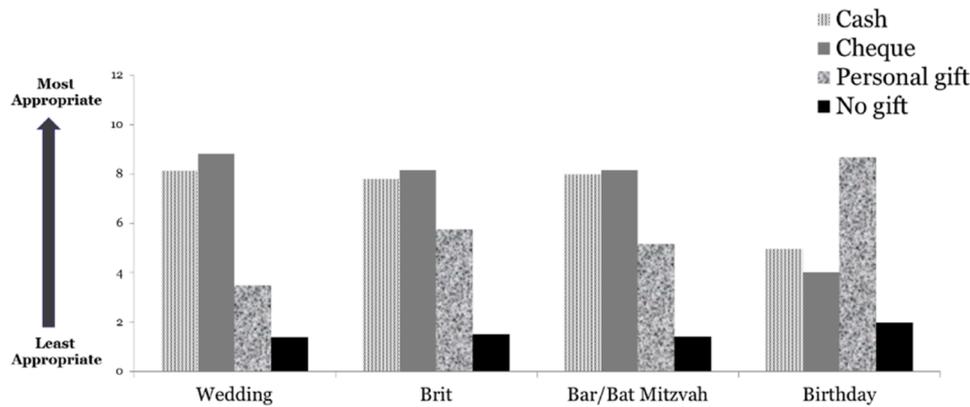


Fig. 1. A comparison of the appropriateness of each type of gift at each type of event.

Table 2

Gift that will best please the recipient (when participants are in the guest position).

Event	Cash	Check	Personal gift
Wedding	Cash (M=74.4%)	Check (M=53.6%)	Personal gift (M=1%)
Brit	Cash (M=68.2%)	Check (M=46.7%)	Personal gift (M=18.9%)
Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Cash (M=71.7%)	Check (M=40.9%)	Personal gift (M=18.1%)
Birthday	Personal gift (M=68.2%)	Cash (M=44.9%)	Check (M=13.4%)

and what that person actually wants for himself or herself when that person is in the gift-receiving position. Therefore, participants were asked to rate which type of gift they would prefer to receive at each type of event when they were themselves in the gift-receiving position. For each type of event and each type of gift, we ran Kruskal-Wallis tests. No significant differences were found between what a person thinks gift-receivers would like best and what that person actually wants for himself or herself when that person is in the gift-receiving position at birth celebrations (a.k.a. Brits) (cash: $p = 0.76$, check: $p = 0.48$, personal gift: $p = 0.93$), Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (cash: $p = 0.76$, check: $p = 0.57$, personal gift: $p = 0.13$) and birthday celebrations (cash: $p = 0.72$, check: $p = 0.32$, personal gift: $p = 0.23$) (Fig. 2). However, when using Kruskal-Wallis tests for comparing each type of gift at weddings, a significant difference was found in the category of personal gifts given as wedding gifts, with 4.5% of the respondents saying that they would appreciate a

personal gift as a type of gift to receive, compared to 1% who believed that gift-receivers would enjoy getting a personal gift at their wedding ($p = 0.002$) (Fig. 2). No significant differences were found for the other two types of gifts as wedding gifts (cash: $p = 0.38$, check: $p = 0.36$).

3.3.5. How the likelihood of giving a certain type of gift at a certain type of event is affected by various variables

Tables 3 and 4 examine the effect of various personal characteristics on the form of gift giving using OLS regressions where the dependent variable is the percentage of cases (on a 0–100 scale) of each form of gift (cash/check/personal gift). Table 3 deals with a Wedding and a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and Table 4 deals with birth and birthday celebrations. Putting aside birthdays that are very different from the other events, we see that higher income causes a shift from cash to checks; Sephardi guests favor cash more than other ethnicities; Haredi and to a lesser extent Religious are much more inclined to give personal gifts (and less inclined to give cash or checks) compared to secular or traditional people; and this last effect is especially prominent in Bar/Bat Mitzvah. It could be explained by the fact that the Haredi community as a whole has strong foundations of traditions. An example would be the tradition to give sacred writings or silver Judaica ornaments when attending a Bar Mitzvah. The norms of the religious and Haredi community are the closest to being 'correct' in term of the etiquette, which can be perceived as ironical, because usually this community is seen by others as disconnected from western customs.

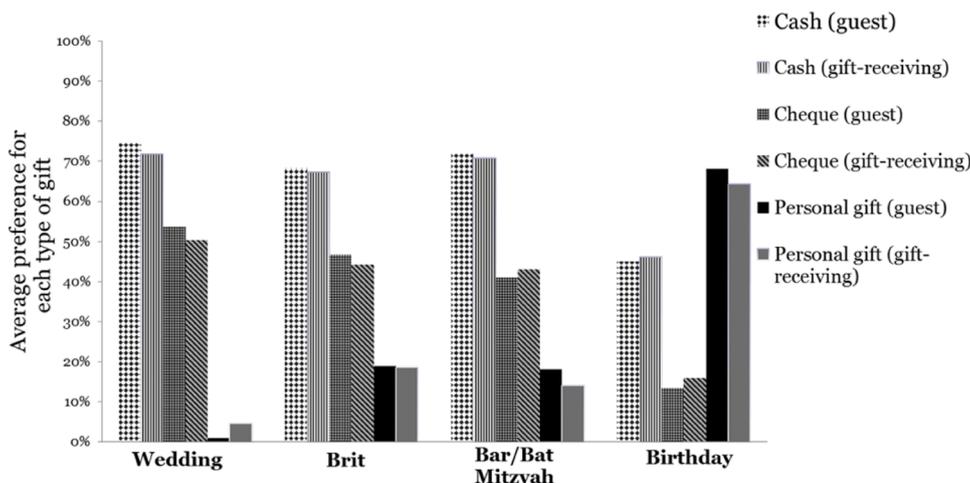


Fig. 2. A comparison between the average preference of the participant (when participants are in the gift-receiving position) and the average preference of host (when participants are in the guest position) for each type of gift at each type of event.

Table 3
What affects the type of gift chosen?

Variables	Wedding			Bar/Bat Mitzvah		
	Cash	Check	Personal gift	Cash	Check	Personal gift
Income	-1.416* (-2.15)	1.967** (2.92)	-0.551* (-2.21)	-1.106 (-1.79)	1.939** (3.00)	-0.832 (-1.96)
Ashkenazi	-4.981 (-0.91)	1.246 (0.22)	3.736 (1.81)	-3.292 (-0.64)	-3.379 (-0.63)	6.671 (1.90)
Mixed	-10.466 (-1.13)	6.464 (0.69)	4.001 (1.15)	-7.812 (-0.90)	-1.826 (-0.20)	9.639 (1.62)
Sephardi	13.185* (2.27)	-8.420 (-1.42)	-4.765* (-2.17)	11.813* (2.17)	-4.945 (-0.87)	-6.869 (-1.84)
USSR	5.446 (0.60)	-4.197 (-0.45)	-1.249 (-0.37)	6.986 (0.82)	-7.581 (-0.86)	0.595 (0.10)
Traditional	2.340 (0.49)	-3.294 (-0.67)	0.953 (0.53)	1.243 (0.28)	-1.390 (-0.30)	0.147 (0.05)
Religious	-0.564 (-0.09)	-5.346 (-0.86)	5.910* (2.56)	-12.725* (-2.22)	-11.148 (-1.86)	23.873** (6.06)
Haredi	-9.829 (-1.35)	-17.329** (-2.34)	27.158** (9.90)	-17.732** (-2.60)	-24.890** (-3.50)	42.623** (9.11)
Divorced	3.950 (0.51)	-2.439 (-0.31)	-1.511 (-0.52)	1.832 (0.25)	-7.611 (-1.01)	5.780 (1.16)
Relationship	12.917 (1.50)	-10.764 (-1.23)	-2.153 (-0.66)	8.678 (1.08)	-13.300 (-1.58)	4.622 (0.84)
Single	-0.192 (-0.03)	2.458 (0.38)	-2.266 (-0.95)	0.816 (0.14)	-3.017 (-0.49)	2.201 (0.54)
Widow	6.750 (0.39)	-0.279 (-0.02)	-6.471 (-0.99)	-4.481 (-0.28)	-9.887 (-0.59)	14.368 (1.29)
Female	-2.386 (-0.59)	2.736 (0.66)	-0.350 (-0.23)	-3.048 (-0.80)	4.778 (1.20)	-1.729 (-0.66)
Age	-0.401* (-2.34)	0.407* (2.34)	-0.007 (-0.10)	-0.386* (-2.40)	0.259 (1.55)	0.127 (1.16)
Education (up to 10 years)	3.958 (0.29)	-1.477 (-0.11)	-2.480 (-0.48)	8.945 (0.70)	-6.163 (-0.46)	-2.782 (-0.32)
BA	2.802 (0.61)	-1.795 (-0.39)	-1.007 (-0.58)	6.268 (1.46)	-3.934 (-0.88)	-2.334 (-0.79)
MA	-9.386 (-1.39)	10.837 (1.58)	-1.451 (-0.57)	-7.652 (-1.21)	9.164 (1.39)	-1.513 (-0.35)
PhD	2.807 (0.21)	-2.707 (-0.20)	-0.100 (-0.02)	-11.123 (-0.89)	-2.234 (-0.17)	13.357 (1.55)
Observations	344	344	344	344	344	344
R-squared	0.1475	0.1624	0.3263	0.1548	0.1734	0.3395

Comments: Tables 3-4 present variables' coefficients in the OLS regression where the dependent variable is the percentage of cases in which each type of gift is given in the associated event. t-statistics appear in parentheses. *p < .05. **p < .01 (significance levels are two-tailed). The omitted group that serves as a benchmark group is Israeli-Sabre (ethnicity), secular (religiosity), male (gender), married (marital status) and with 11-12 years of education (level of education).

3.4. Amounts and values of gifts given when attending an event

3.4.1. The average minimum amount that was reported appropriate to give per person

Participants were asked what was the acceptable minimum amount to give at each type of event. The question provided six ranges. For statistical analysis, we converted those ranges to numbers by using the average of each range, and for the two extreme categories, the minimum and maximum, we used 25 Shekels and 600 Shekels, respectively. In terms of the monetary values of gifts given, the average minimum amount that was reported appropriate to give per person was 281 shekels (SD=88 shekels) at a wedding, 185 shekels (SD=80 shekels) at a Brit, 206 shekels (SD=85 shekels) at a Bar/Bat Mitzvah and 100 shekels (SD=62 shekels) for a birthday celebration.

3.4.2. Effects of personal characteristics on the minimum amount considered appropriate

Table 5 examines the effect of various personal characteristics on the minimal amount considered appropriate per guest at various types of events. We can see that the coefficients of Ashkenazi are negative and statistically significant at the 1% level for all events except birth celebrations (a.k.a. Brits). Mixed ethnicity revealed significant negative effects on all types of events except birthday (1% and 5% levels). Sephardi had a significant negative effect on birthday celebration only (1% significant level). In terms of religiosity, Religious revealed significant

negative effects on all types of events at the 1% level. The same results were found for the variable Haredi, except for birthday celebrations, where we found a significant negative level at the 5% level. The coefficient of Divorced had a significant negative effect on weddings and on Bar/Bat Mitzvahs at the 5% level. In addition, there was a statistically significant positive effect of Age on Brits (at the 1% level) and on Bar/Bat Mitzvahs (at the 5% level). The effect of other variables was not statistically significant.

3.5. The factors that influence the sum invested in gifts

There are various websites that provide guidance about the proper amount to give in events in Israel, often taking the form of a calculator that asks you about the location of the event, your income, the closeness between you and the host, the day of the week in which the event occurs, and more. We tried to understand to what extent people actually consult such websites when they decide how much to give. We found that the use of these websites is not as widespread as we initially thought. 55.6% said they never use these websites, 24.1% seldom use them, and 11.9% sometimes do. Only 5.2% often use them and 3% almost always do; only one person said he always consult such websites.

3.5.1. Reciprocity

Some additional questions attempted to identify the factors that influence the sum invested in gifts for different occasions. Participants

Table 4
What affects the type of gift chosen?

Variables	Birth Celebration			Birthday Celebration		
	Cash	Check	Personal gift	Cash	Check	Personal gift
Income	-0.255 (-0.42)	1.288* (2.03)	-1.032* (-2.14)	-0.574 (-1.36)	0.039 (0.12)	0.535 (1.02)
Ashkenazi	-3.720 (-0.74)	-5.282 (-1.01)	9.003* (2.26)	-4.576 (-1.31)	-1.186 (-0.46)	5.762 (1.32)
Mixed	-7.632 (-0.90)	-2.585 (-0.29)	10.217 (1.52)	-9.739 (-1.65)	-6.056 (-1.38)	15.795* (2.14)
Sephardi	9.823 (1.85)	-8.427 (-1.51)	-1.396 (-0.33)	-3.677 (-0.99)	-4.027 (-1.46)	7.704 (1.66)
USSR	5.446 (0.66)	-5.293 (-0.61)	-0.173 (-0.03)	-1.91 (-0.33)	0.574 (0.13)	1.335 (0.18)
Traditional	3.958 (0.90)	0.025 (0.01)	-3.982 (-1.14)	-1.363 (-0.44)	0.226 (0.10)	1.137 (0.30)
Religious	-7.507 (-1.34)	-8.184 (-1.39)	15.691** (3.51)	-7.284 (-1.86)	-3.528 (-1.21)	10.812* (2.21)
Haredi	-11.601 (-1.75)	-15.640* (-2.24)	27.241** (5.14)	-7.971 (-1.72)	-2.424 (-0.70)	10.395 (1.79)
Divorced	6.293 (0.89)	-7.419 (-1.00)	1.126 (0.20)	-1.336 (-0.27)	-4.835 (-1.32)	6.171 (1.00)
Relationship	3.366 (0.43)	-14.453 (-1.75)	11.087 (1.77)	-1.413 (0.26)	-1.963 (0.48)	0.55 (0.08)
Single	-0.460 (-0.08)	-0.317 (-0.05)	0.777 (0.17)	6.192 (1.54)	-0.065 (-0.02)	-6.126 (-1.22)
Widow	-1.952 (-0.12)	10.282 (0.62)	-8.330 (-0.66)	-1.094 (-0.10)	1.598 (0.19)	-0.504 (-0.04)
Female	-4.306 (-1.16)	4.508 (1.16)	-0.202 (-0.07)	-3.045 (-1.17)	-3.499 (-1.81)	6.545* (2.02)
Age	-0.478** (-3.05)	0.305 (1.86)	0.172 (1.38)	-0.123 (1.13)	0.182* (2.23)	-0.305* (-2.23)
Education (up to 10 years)	12.132 (0.97)	-6.921 (-0.53)	-5.211 (-0.52)	9.149 (1.05)	4.015 (0.62)	-13.163 (-1.21)
BA	4.655 (1.11)	-3.261 (-0.74)	-1.394 (-0.42)	0.716 (0.25)	0.273 (0.13)	-0.989 (-0.27)
MA	-6.134 (-1.00)	12.147 (1.88)	-6.013 (-1.22)	3.521 (0.82)	-0.055 (-0.02)	-3.466 (-0.64)
PhD	-10.398 (-0.85)	-13.178 (-1.03)	23.576* (2.41)	1.841 (0.22)	-3.646 (-0.57)	1.805 (0.17)
Observations	344	344	344	344	344	344
R-squared	0.1260	0.1356	0.1966	0.0615	0.0772	0.0977

were asked whether they consider what the host gave them in the past when deciding what to give as a gift. This reciprocity consideration turned out to be important, with responses being Always (5%), Almost always (15.4%), Often (20.1%), Sometimes (33.3%), Seldom (16.6%) and Never (9.7%).

3.5.2. Location of the event

Another potential factor that we predicted would be influential was the location of the event (event garden / hall / hotel, etc.). Participants were asked to rank the influence of the location on a scale from 'never' to 'sometimes', 'often' or 'always', which later translated into values from 1 to 4, respectively. The mean for each type of event was approximately 2.2 (Wedding: $M = 2.34$, $SD=1.22$; Brit: $M = 2.22$, $SD=1.13$; Bar/Bat Mitzvah: $M = 2.28$, $SD=1.15$; Birthday: $M = 2.13$, $SD=1.19$).

3.5.3. Religiosity and ethnicity

Participants were asked to which host ethnicities and religious level they feel they should give a larger gift. 89.3% said that the host religiosity level does not affect their gift, whereas 5.7% stated that secular hosts should get more expensive gifts. In terms of ethnicity, also a large majority (89.1%) indicated that this factor had no influence on their gifts. Additional 8.2% stated that hosts from the Sephardic communities would get larger gifts.

3.5.4. The effect of the event's estimated cost on the gift

The survey included a question about the extent to which participants agreed with the statement 'When I go to a simple event I give a less

expensive gift than when I go to an fancy event,' on a scale from 'not at all' to 'slightly', 'moderately' or 'to a large extent', which later translated into values from 1 to 4, respectively. 29.5% said that they did not agree with this statement, 23.8% agreed slightly, 32.5% agreed moderately and 14.1% agreed to a large extent with this statement. In a regression we ran where the dependent variable being this agreement level (with the independent variables used in Tables 3-6), the only variables that were statistically significant at the 5% level were Sephardi and USSR, both being positive. That is, gifts given by people from a Russian or Sephardi descent are more influenced by how fancy the event appears to be (compared to gifts given by others).

3.5.5. Personalization of the gift

We examined the 'personalization of the gift,' by asking respondents to rank the importance that their gift will show the recipient how much they know him personally on a scale from 'not at all' to 'slightly', 'moderately' or 'to a large extent'. The majority (82.5%) reported that this notion influences them to a certain extent when they are in a gift-giving situation (14%, 36%, and 32.5% reported 'slightly,' 'moderately,' and 'to a large extent,' respectively), while 17.5% said that 'personalization of the gift' is not important for them at all.

3.5.6. Seven factors that may influence the amount spent on the gift

Participants were asked to rank seven considerations that may affect the size of their gift, from one (most influential factor) to seven (least influential factor). Based on the average responses (notice that a lower mean captures a greater importance), the ranking of the seven factors from most important to least important is: (1) Extent of family /

Table 5
Regression analysis of the effects on the minimum amount considered appropriate.

Variables	Wedding	Brit	Bar/Bat Mitzvah	Birthday
Income	1.159 (0.76)	-0.238 (-0.17)	0.890 (0.61)	0.097 (0.09)
Ashkenazi	-32.630** (-2.58)	-11.243 (-0.95)	-37.467** (-3.08)	-28.785** (-3.15)
Mixed	-76.473** (-3.58)	-43.840* (-2.19)	-65.784** (-3.20)	-29.951 (-1.94)
Sephardi	-18.184 (-1.35)	7.411 (0.59)	-4.363 (-0.34)	-28.239** (-2.91)
USSR	-16.335 (-0.78)	8.643 (0.44)	-25.054 (-1.24)	-3.453 (-0.23)
Traditional	-9.356 (-0.84)	-0.121 (-0.01)	8.035 (0.75)	1.650 (0.21)
Religious	-59.047** (-4.17)	-41.089** (-3.10)	-42.173** (-3.09)	-29.630** (-2.90)
Haredi	-56.895** (-3.38)	-48.528** (-3.08)	-49.603** (-3.07)	-27.052* (-2.23)
Divorced	-38.208* (-2.14)	-20.561 (-1.23)	-34.676* (-2.02)	-10.812 (-0.84)
Relationship	18.211 (0.92)	16.946 (0.91)	7.186 (0.38)	-6.046 (-0.42)
Single	12.708 (0.87)	2.880 (0.21)	3.354 (0.24)	12.021 (1.14)
Widow	14.055 (0.35)	29.876 (0.80)	15.749 (0.41)	46.952 (1.63)
Female	-12.278 (-1.31)	-2.063 (-0.23)	-0.000 (-0.00)	-5.527 (-0.81)
Age	0.502 (1.27)	0.973** (2.63)	0.952* (2.50)	0.376 (1.32)
Education (up to 10 years)	-26.785 (-0.85)	-40.447 (-1.37)	-2.701 (-0.09)	19.526 (0.86)
BA	-5.226 (-0.49)	-2.301 (-0.23)	-6.166 (-0.61)	-6.034 (-0.79)
MA	-17.805 (-1.14)	1.518 (0.10)	-1.521 (-0.10)	3.461 (0.31)
PhD	-7.647 (-0.25)	26.761 (0.92)	31.639 (1.06)	66.598** (2.98)
Observations	344	344	344	344
R-squared	0.1562	0.1345	0.1729	0.1457

Comments: Table 5 presents variables' coefficients in the OLS regression where the dependent variable is the minimum amount considered appropriate for a gift in each type of event. t-statistics appear in parentheses. *p < .05. **p < .01 (significance levels are two-tailed). The omitted group that serves as a benchmark group is Israeli-Sabre (ethnicity), secular (religiosity), male (gender), married (marital status) and with 11-12 years of education (level of education).

friendship closeness ($M = 2.52, SD=2.30$); (2) My own economic situation ($M = 3.52, SD=1.71$); (3) How much I got from the host in the past ($M = 3.79, SD=1.55$); (4) Type of the location of the event (event garden / hall / hotel, etc.) ($M = 3.99, SD=1.51$); (5) The level of expenses of the host on the event ($M = 4.15, SD=1.40$); (6) What others are giving in the same event ($M = 4.61, SD=1.59$); and (7) The origin of the host (Ashkenazi, Sephardi, etc.) ($M = 5.44, SD=2.38$). The most influential factor in choosing the value of the gift is thus the degree of closeness between the gift-giver and the gift-receiver.

3.6. Associations of personal and monetary gifts

Finally, we analyzed which word associations (out of a list of 12 associations) were given most frequently to personal (non-monetary) gifts and to monetary gifts. This analysis is exploratory. The results showed that the words that were associated most frequently with non-monetary gifts were personal, sentimental value, cheap, disrespectful and unappreciated, while the associations for monetary gifts were very different in nature: functional, practical, considerate and appreciated. When using *t*-tests to compare the same associated word for the two types of gifts, we can see that there are statistically significant differences in the association of words to the two gift types for all words

except 'Long Term' (Fig. 3).

4. Conclusion and discussion

This paper analyzed Israeli society in order to understand the current social norms in the Israeli gift scene. Israeli society has unique norms in this matter. Some key concepts that were found in the literature of gift-giving were present, while others were clearly missing. There are perhaps three words that describe the ongoing preferences in terms of gifts: friendship, efficiency and cost.

4.1. Attendance at events

Most invitations to attend events are accepted (77% - 81% on average) and the average respondent attends every year more than five birthday parties and over eight other events (weddings, Bar/Bat Mitzvah and birth celebrations). These results reinforce the premise that events and gift-giving are tools that are important in societal life as they reinforce the bonds between people (Mauss & Evans-Pritchard, 1967). When analyzing the effects on the decision not to attend events due to the economic consideration of the gift cost, results show that Sephardi, mixed descent, female and in-relationship (but not married) guests are particularly likely to give up attending events due to the cost. Religious and Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) people, on the other hand, are least likely to give up invitations to events due to cost considerations.

4.2. Appropriateness of types and amounts of gifts

As expected, all respondents believed that gifts should be given when attending an event. Israelis show a major preference for monetary gifts. Good gifts come in the form of money while bad gifts are those that are personal and non-monetary. The only exception to this rule was birthday presents.

What respondents perceived as appropriate was also what they thought would be more welcomed, and what they themselves desired as gifts when they were in the gift-receiving situation. Although these new norms of gift-giving might be perceived as wrong according to the 'etiquette,' Israeli society as a whole is getting what it wants. Monetary gifts today are not only wanted, but they have also become the most appropriate gifts for most types of events (except for birthday parties).

Only 1% of the respondents believed that gift-receivers would enjoy getting a personal gift for a wedding, compared to 68.2% at birthday celebrations. In Israel, wedding celebrations are usually more elegant and expensive compared to other events. The strong tendency to give monetary gifts in weddings supports the idea that the guest feels obliged to consider the hosts' financial costs of organizing the event, and help them with this financial burden when choosing his gift. Israelis often refer to the term 'lechasot et hamana' (a Hebrew slang phrase that literally means 'to cover the dish'), which means to cover the marginal costs of the food of an additional guest.

This new norm of monetary gifts, where hiding the true cost of the gift is impossible (unlike in personal gifts), turned out to be a burden to 39.5% of the respondents, who reported that they at least sometimes declined invitations not because of unwillingness to go, but because of what was expected of them in terms of a gift to their host. This shows that in the Israeli society today, some key elements and notions of gift-giving, such as its power to create societal bonds, have been trespassed due to the financial aspect of gift-giving.

4.3. Business implications

Gift-giving in the form of money is a social norm and as such is related to social behavior, feelings, attitudes, perceptions, etc. (of both the gift givers and the recipients), but it also has business implications on the events industry. Individuals budget their event expenses based on the future monetary gifts that they expect to receive in the event. The

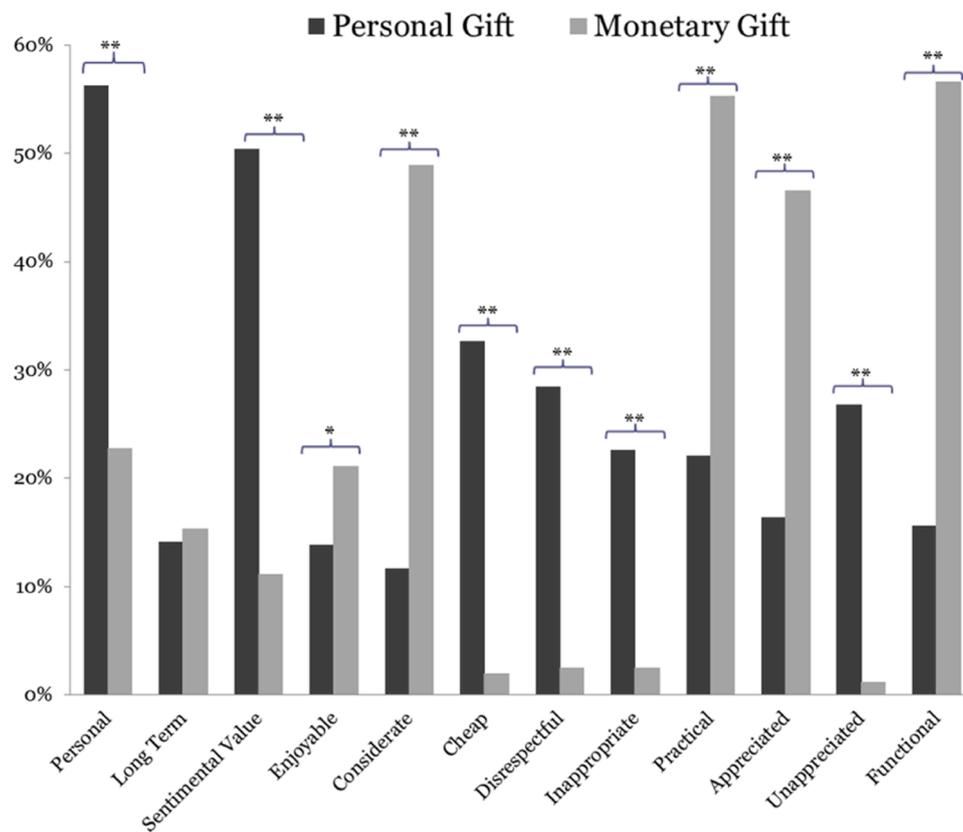


Fig. 3. Comparison of word associations for non-monetary (personal) gifts and monetary gifts
* $p < 0.05$. ** $p < 0.01$ (significance levels are two-tailed).

event halls reinforce the hosts' behavior of using the monetary gifts to fund the event, by demanding only a small part of the payment prior to the event. Most of the payment to the event hall (including typically not just payment for the hall but also for the food) is required only several days after the celebration. This practice encourages the hosts to go into much higher expenses for the event than they could afford without the monetary gifts they receive. Often the cash the hosts receive as gifts does not even leave the event hall – the hosts use it to pay the event hall at the end of the event. If the entire payment (or most of it) to the event hall was required in advance, many hosts would organize events with a much lower budget because they cannot or do not want to take a debt (even for a limited time between paying in advance and getting the gifts in the event). Thus, it is in the interest of the event halls to allow paying most of the amount only after the event and thus encourage more expensive events.

Moreover, because every additional guest is expected to yield additional revenues in the form of monetary gifts, the hosts are motivated to invite more people to the event (assuming that the gifts are higher than the marginal cost of an additional guest). The event halls use a pricing strategy in which the price per person declines with the number of guests (which makes economic sense given their cost structure and given that the hall can be used by only one event per evening regardless of the number of guests), further encouraging the hosts to invite more guests. During periods of high demand such as the summer, the halls also require paying for a minimum number of guests that is quite large, once again pushing hosts to organize events with more guests and larger budgets.

Overall, the change of the Israeli society over the last few decades from a situation in which even at weddings many brought personal gifts, to the current situation where essentially everyone brings money as a gift, while having both negative and positive implications for the host and the guests, is clearly advantageous for the event halls. It results in

hosts arranging more expensive events and thus increasing the revenues and profits of the event halls. It is therefore not surprising that the halls are supporting this norm of monetary gifts by allowing the hosts to pay the hall most of the amount after the event. The guests know that the hosts depend on the gifts to fund the event, and this further puts pressure on them to stick to the norm and bring money as a gift, without even considering giving a personal gift. So at least to some extent, it seems that the business interests of the event halls were part of the mechanism that encouraged the switch from personal gifts to monetary gifts. The event halls allowed postponing the payment and encouraged larger events, this increased the hosts' expenses and put more financial pressure on them, and this in turn puts more pressure on the guests to bring a monetary gift that will assist the hosts to pay the costs of the event. This seems to be an interesting case in which a social norm evolution is encouraged by business interests and in which a change in a social norm has substantial business implications. Overall, the change to monetary gifts has promoted the economic growth of the event management sector.

4.4. Social norms about events in the Haredi and religious societies

In Israel there is a connection between religiosity and gift-giving behavior. According to a study done on expectant mothers in Israel, the strength of popular views varies according to religiosity. As a result, smaller monetary gifts for the newborn baby are preferred over more extravagant personal gifts (furniture) (Bayer et al., 2018). As for events, when analyzing what affects the minimum amount perceived as appropriate, we found that ethnicity (Ashkenazi and mixed descent) and religiosity (religious and Haredi) have a negative and statistically significant effect. That is, religious and Haredi people believe that the minimum amount for a gift is lower than what others think. It is well known that a major priority of wedding guests in religious and Haredi

communities is to 'lesameach chatan ve kala' (a phrase in Hebrew that means to bring joy to the groom and bride). This is also related to the phenomenon of 'mesamchim' (meaning 'those who bring happiness'), who are young boys and girls that are invited only towards the end of the event. This tradition is mostly found in the Haredi and religious communities. The goal of those 'mesamchim' is to add some joy to the event without having to pay for a full course for those youngsters (usually at weddings). The event hall usually provides these youngsters little snacks or dessert plates only. The 'mesamchim' are not expected to bring any gift. Another interesting tradition among the Haredi society is the custom to 'drop by' at an event in order to say 'Mazel Tov' (a Jewish phrase capturing both 'Good luck!' and 'Congratulations!'). These drop-by guests do not stay for long and do not eat; since they do not cost the hosts as additional eating guests, they are also not expected to bring a gift. The traditions of 'mesamchim' and drop-by guests are very common in the religious and Haredi sector. We can view these as interesting social norms that are created to solve a conflict. On one hand, due to large families, the Haredi community has lots of events. For example, in our sample they report being invited to over 14 weddings annually on average, compared to about 4 for secular respondents and almost 8 for religious ones. Moreover, it is a community where making the marrying couple happy is considered important and as we noted earlier, Haredi and religious people do not tend to miss events they are invited to due to the gift cost associated. On the other hand, the Haredi community is generally poor due to many men not having a job (they go to a Yeshiva to study religious studies all day), women having low-paying jobs, and the high number of children per family. How can they reconcile these conflicting factors? By inventing social norms that make it possible to have guests in the event who do not increase the hosts' costs and therefore are also not expected to bring gifts; both the mesamchim and the drop-by guests can be viewed as such social norms. These norms make it easier for guests to show their bond to the family without any financial obligations, and allow the host to invite a large number of guests without a large financial cost. The higher tendency of Haredi guests (and to a smaller extent of religious guests too) to bring personal gifts and not monetary gifts is also a solution that helps to economize on the gift cost, because one can buy a personal gift that is not expensive without the host knowing its true cost. The higher appreciation of sentimental gifts has also been found in other relevant studies who analyzed the religious Jewish society in the context of the endowment effect. The endowment effect is defined as the likelihood of consumers to value a product more highly after purchasing it. In the case of Jewish religious tourists, it was found that their endowment effect was greater than that of the non-Jewish group, indicating that they demanded more compensation for losing the religious product. This could imply that there is a connection between religiosity and the appreciation of non-monetary gifts (Shtudiner et al., 2019).

4.5. Concluding remarks

Most Israelis are not interested in either buying or receiving personal gifts. Those who value the notions of *savoir-vivre* and believe that those norms are the most appropriate in order to respect one another may be disappointed by these norms. However, those who have a more economic mindset and who praise efficiency, may be satisfied with the current norms of monetary gifts.

In our survey, respondents had negative associations with non-monetary (personal) gifts, such as cheap, inappropriate, unappreciated and disrespectful (but also positive associations of sentimental value and personal). In contrast, the monetary gift was rewarded with positive associations, such as considerate, practical, functional and appreciated. The negative associations of a personal gift are surprising given that etiquette sources consider the personal gift as the most considerate and personal, and that buying a personal gift requires more effort than giving cash or a check. The reason for thinking of personal gifts as cheap and disrespectful may be that because the vast majority of people give

monetary gifts, people suspect that guests who bring personal gifts (other than for birthdays) do so because they do not want to spend much on the gift (but hide this, which they cannot do with a monetary gift), or maybe because they got stuck with a gift they received and do not want.

This paper contributes to the literature on social norms in the context of events and gift-giving, considering the norms in a young and interesting society. The Israeli gift-giving scene is a very particular one, and has not been studied prior to this study. In addition, the analysis of the custom of monetary gifts is still in its infancy, because this custom is relatively new. Future research could focus on gift giving in the ultra-Orthodox and religious communities, who often have distinct norms, as we discussed earlier. It would also be interesting to expand the research about etiquette-based behavior in additional contexts in Israel, to better understand which norms have survived in the Israeli melting pot and which ones have been revised and reconsidered.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

Data Availability

Data will be made available on request.

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