



# ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

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## **Running Through Time: How Life Rhythms Foster Identity Permanence**

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This research proposes a Rhythmic Experiences Framework inspired by Lefebvre's (2004) theory. While studying third-age runners, the authors describe how consumption practices' properties of place, time, and energy foster life rhythm experiences (of eurhythmia and arrhythmia), which through time and repetition, in linear and cyclical processes, may reinforce identity projects.

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# Extended Consumption Experiences

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## **Paper #1: Schooling as an Enduring Consumption Experience**

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## **Paper #2: Family Consumption Experiences Across Generations**

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## **Paper #3: Pursue Your Passions: Cultural Discourses about Consumer's Heroic Wilderness Adventures**

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## **Paper #4: Running Through Time: How Life Rhythms Foster Identity Permanence**

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### **SESSION OVERVIEW**

Consumption experiences are a vital area of consumer research and have been studied from a variety of different perspectives as they pertain to various consumption phenomena (Akaka and Nardini 2017). For example, service researchers explore how customers' cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings (Lemon and Verhoef 2016) while CCT scholars examine how consumption experiences help consumers construct and represent reality, as part of both collective (Moscovici 1988) and individualistic pursuits (Richardson 1999). This research views the consumer experience as "a personal occurrence, often [but not necessarily] with important emotional significance, founded on the interaction with stimuli which are the products or services consumed" (Carú and Cova, 2003, p. 270).

Although prior CCT research has examined everyday and ordinary consumption experiences (Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1990; Carú and Cova 2003) and volitional reconsumption (Russell and Levy 2012), most research tends to examine experiences that are extreme, intensive, and spatially or temporally bounded (Arnould and Price 1995; see also Lindghard and Oostergaard 2015). Moreover, this stream of research often focuses on the individual outcomes of experiences, that is, to center on consumers who live the experience as subjects. Finally, with the recent exception of Scott, Cayla and Cova's (2017) work on painful experiences, we lack research on how consumers endure experiences that are not necessarily pleasant, easy, or leisurely.

This session aims at addressing these gaps by looking at consumption experiences that last over several years, often producing ambivalent and systemic outcomes. The four papers in this session explore extended consumption experiences, their cycles, rhythms and their outcomes over time. The first paper theorizes enduring consumption experiences as those that span through several years and are transformational at the individual, familial, and societal levels. Researching the context of schooling, the authors argue that enduring consumption experiences are not ordinary or extraordinary, and

neither purely pleasant nor painful, but present elements of all these types of consumption experiences.

The second paper investigates the temporal dynamics of a family identity, embedded in a family consumption experience (playing soccer) that spans multiple generations. The authors document the lifecycle of the identity, highlighting periods of dormancy, rekindling, growth, and decline and note the role of identity guardians in sustaining the consumption experience across these phases.

The third paper examines pursuit of passions through extended wilderness consumption experiences. They investigate 'dirtbags' who prioritize long-term wilderness adventures such as climbing, river and mountain sports. Diverse data collected over a two-year period reveal hero and trickster archetypical journeys of "heroic passion," fueled and celebrated by outdoor brands and media. Complexities of navigating passions and social norms can leave 'dirtbag' consumers perpetually caught between society and the wild.

Finally, while studying third-age runners, the last paper develops the Rhythmic Experiences Framework. Inspired by Lefebvre's (2004) theory, the authors describe how consumption practices' properties of place, time, and energy foster life rhythm experiences (of eurhythmia and arrhythmia), which, through time and repetition, and in linear and cyclical processes, may reinforce identity projects.

## **Schooling as an Enduring Consumption Experience**

### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

*"I had to endure a highly transient lifestyle and attended seven different schools from Kindergarten through 8th grade...This was difficult. Very difficult. I was secure in my abilities and my potential in life, and at a young age, I knew the importance of education, but it was still very challenging...Some days will be extremely tougher than others and some days those accomplishments will glow, but giving up is not an option... It should make one stronger. It should make one want to reflect on how to beat all the odds. It should foster one's thinking that current challenges have been designed to build upon one's strength, not tear one down. That one's long-term goal can be fulfilled." (Dubiel 2015)*

Education is a fundamental human right (UN 1948) and a highly institutionalized practice. Schooling practices spill over other consumption spheres such as housing, workplace, celebrations and sports (Rojas Gaviria et al, 2018), converting it into one of the pillars of socialization (Doucet 2011). Hence, in addition to the cognitive engagement that is at the core of schooling, these interactions are frequently long-lasting, affect and emotion-laden, having physical and social implications for those involved in them and for society as a whole.

During schooling, various interdependent market actors (i.e. government, schools, consumers -parents, children, therapists, physicians, baby-sitters, tutors, etc.) engage in a myriad of interactions and negotiations that have little to do with teaching and learning. Our study describes the complexity involved in these interactions and shows that schooling is strikingly in contrast with the possibilities for escape and regeneration provided by extraordinary con-

sumption experiences. In fact, students and their families frequently experience schooling as entrapment and find the routine and rituals entailed by schooling and the numerous tasks needed to support it taxing and stressful, yet inevitable (see O'Reilly 2016; Doucet 2011, McLaren 1999). Nevertheless, school attendance and affiliation has been shown to significantly shape one's social and professional network, as well as future opportunities in life (Zimmermann 2016). Thus, given its all-encompassing nature and long-term transformative impact, schooling cannot be considered an ordinary experience as theorized by Carú and Cova (2003).

Moreover, schooling presents elements of pleasurable experiences, as in celebrations, prizes, gatherings and achievements, yet, over the course of the 12 years of basic education, and particularly in markets where performance is closely measured and high standards are required of students (Rojas-Gaviria et al., Forthcoming), it often resembles the painful experiences studied by Scott, Cayla and Cova (2017). We sustain that schooling cannot be seen as either ordinary or extraordinary, and neither purely pleasant nor painful, as it presents elements of all those types of consumption experiences. We thus propose that schooling is an enduring consumption experience. We theorize enduring consumption experiences as those that span through several years and are transformational at the individual, familial, and societal levels. In this study, we examine how Chilean families endure the experience of schooling by immersing ourselves on the private school market.

Primary data collection consists of in-depth interviews with families, service providers and school representatives as well as personal reflections about the schooling experience collected among recent high-school graduates using art as an elicitation technique (Tarr et al. 2017). This main dataset was complemented with media archives and online data collected from parenting blogs, blogs on education and online communities centered on schooling and education. Data analysis involved iterative reading and manual coding of the dataset by all three researchers, searching for patterns (Thompson et al. 1994).

Our findings illustrate how enduring consumption experiences differ from volitional reconsumption (Russell and Levy 2012), and ordinary (Carú and Cova 2003) and extraordinary consumption experiences (Arnould and Price 1995, Scott, Cayla and Cova 2017) in their characteristics, development, and outcomes. We sustain that other types of consumer experiences such as child or elderly care (Huff and Cote 2010; 2011; Barnhardt and Peñaloza 2013), chronic health conditions or disability (see for instance Pavia and Mason 2012) or migration (see Luedicke 2011; 2015) show similar characteristics and could also be considered enduring consumption experiences.

Through reflecting on enduring consumption experiences, we develop a framework that can assist consumer researchers in understanding several under-researched aspects of consumption such as its compulsory, routine, non-agentive (Askegaard and Linnet 2011) nature. Our findings also allow for a reconsideration of temporality and the ways in which different understandings and perceptions of time continuously shape consumption. Finally, this conceptualization opens avenues for additional research on the systemic aspects of enduring consumption experiences, such as their impact on family well-being and identity.

### Family Consumption Experiences Across Generations

#### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research investigates how consumption experiences linked to a family identity evolve over time. Family identity is the set of

attributes and qualities that make a family unique and differentiate it from other families (Epp and Price 2008). This identity is shaped by, reflected in, and reinforced by a family's consumption practices (e.g., Barnhart, Huff, and Cotte 2014; Cross and Gilly 2014; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Epp and Price 2008; Epp and Price 2010, 2011; Moisis, Arnould, and Price 2004). Work exploring family identity has clearly articulated the role of consumption experiences in family identity and acknowledges that family identity, and the associated consumption experiences, are dynamic and have unique trajectories (Epp, Schau, and Price 2014; Reckwitz 2002; Warde 2005). However, we still know relatively little about these trajectories, how a family's identity related consumption experiences change over time, or how families grow into and out of particular consumption related identities. To redress this gap, we explore the following research questions: (1) How does a family identity evolve over time? and (2) How do consumption experiences and practices associated with a family identity transfer across generations? To inform our understanding of these issues, we appropriate theories related to the resurrection of collective identities in communities and organizations as a theoretical lens (Howard-Grenville, Metzger, and Meyer 2013). These theories articulate how collective identities are resurrected after experiencing a period of decline, noting the important role that experiences, emotion, and identity guardians (i.e., leaders who leverage community emotion and experiences to support an identity) play in reviving identities. This work also highlights the processual nature of identities, noting that they ebb and flow in and out of favor over time as communities and organizations evolve.

To address our research questions, we explored how a particular consumption experience—playing soccer—enters into families as a practice, collects into an identity, and evolves over time. The focal activity of “playing soccer” is an ideal context for this research as this consumption experience often reflects a lifetime of engagement and is frequently integral to family identity (e.g., “soccer family” with multiple family members (children and parents) gathered into the practice as players, supporters, or volunteers. Given our interest in how family identity evolves over time and across generations, we adopted a novel methodological approach that allowed us to observe some of the dynamics of identity evolution within an empirically reasonable timeframe. In phase 1 of data collection, we conducted interviews with 66 parents and children from 22 U.S. families at different stages of adopting a soccer family identity (some families were in their first year of participation and other families noted 20 years of involvement with youth soccer). Here, our focus was on how children become socialized into the soccer experience and how their engagement with the activity impacts family identity. In phase 2, we conducted an in-depth analysis of a single, multi-generational family whose family identity includes playing soccer. The family consists of two parents, four adult children (2 male, 2 female) and their spouses, and nine grandchildren ranging in age from one to eight years old. All the adult children played soccer in their youth, with one of the adult children being heavily engaged with the activity as a child and remains so in his adult life. Interviews were conducted with all the adult members of this family and explored their recalled accounts of being a soccer family in the past as well as their current experiences as the newest generation of children enters into the world of organized sports. The focus in phase 2 was to explore issues related to the intergenerational transfer of consumption experiences and family identity.

Our findings show how key family consumption experiences and practices evolve over a long temporal period. We document how adult members of families act as identity guardians who protect and nurture the soccer family identity, sometimes through years of dor-

mancy but then rekindle the identity as the next generation of children age into the activity. Rekindling the identity may involve something seemingly innocuous like registering a child in a recreational soccer league and while also foregrounding positive elements of the experience in narratives, emphasizing benefits that accrue from engaging with soccer (e.g., exercise, fun, team-building skills). This introduction is embedded in a series of other influences that elevate it from a simple ‘registration’ to an important act of rekindling that sets the stage for practice evolution where the practice gathers force within a family.

Next, families take on increasing commitment to the practice and identity. At this point, other assemblages in which soccer is embedded may break into the consumption experience with competition and performance expectations penetrating the family’s identity. This can threaten the practice as engagement incites tensions between conflicting discourses, identities, and other practices. The survival of the practice at this stage is once again dependent on identity guardians who work to unify family members around the positive elements of the consumption experience. Families grapple with questions related to their feared and desired selves and try to determine what kind of family they want to be and what kind of people they want their children to be. Here, identity guardians forecast into the future and strategically think about how to pursue the family identity. Once determined, families continue enacting the soccer identity until the next phase of dormancy begins (often associated with children going to college and no longer playing soccer). During the dormancy phase, the soccer identity takes on a nostalgic quality, supported by related materialities curated by identity guardians (e.g., soccer themed baby clothes) that prepare the identity for eventual rekindling.

In summary, we explore the temporal dynamics of a family identity, embedded in a consumption experience that spans multiple generations. We document the lifecycle of the identity, highlight periods of dormancy, rekindling, growth, and decline and note the role of identity guardians in sustaining the identity during all four phases. Overall, this work enhances understandings of how family identity and consumption practices evolve over time.

### **Pursue Your Passions: Cultural Discourses about Consumer’s Heroic Wilderness Adventures**

#### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Cultural discourses shape brand meanings and how consumers’ navigate market and social structures (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Bunderson and Thompson 2009; Chouinard 2006; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Coulter, Price, and Feick 2003; Holt 2004; Holt and Cameron 2010; Holt and Thompson 2004; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Thompson 2004; Thompson and Haytko 1997). Our research examines cultural discourses that encourage individuals to pursue their passions, especially how consumers integrate the pursuit of passion into their navigation of market and social structures. Consumers are urged to “pursue your passions” or “chase your dreams.” Similar to Campbell’s (1973) description of the Hero’s Journey, stories of successful athletes, artists, spiritual seekers, entrepreneurs and outdoor adventurers describe individuals who pursued a passion, overcame great difficulties, and were subsequently celebrated for their accomplishments.

Our research examines the pursuit of passions through extended consumption experiences in the wilderness. The wilderness, viewed as outside human control, is celebrated in ancient myths, American culture, and as places that challenge those who venture into them and for their transformative power (Arnould and Price

1993; Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998a; Belk and Costa 1998; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Hawes 2008; Kozinets 2002; Miller 1991; Thoreau 2006; Tumbat and Belk 2011; Turner 1969). Further, the wilderness may allow individuals to pursue their passions uninhibited by the strictures of society (Arnould, Price, and Tierney 1998b; Belk and Costa 1998; Canniford and Shankar 2013; Hyde 2010; Radin, Jung, and Kerényi 1972; Rickly-Boyd 2012; Rickly 2016, 2017; Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

Despite rich scholarship on transformative consumption and extraordinary consumption, relatively little is known about wilderness consumers’ temporally enduring pursuit of passions. For example, little is known about the role of brands in shaping and perpetuating passion driven journeys into the wilderness. Products such as the GoPro Hero personal camera, and brands such as Patagonia and North Face exemplify this discourse (Holt and Cameron 2010). Our research asks: (1) How do consumers draw on cultural discourses to inform wilderness brand and consumption choices; and (2) How do long-term wilderness adventurers integrate pursuit of their passions with market and social structures?

To inform our understanding of consumers who pursue their passions in the wilderness, we rely on trickster (Hyde 2010; Radin et al. 1972) and hero (Campbell 1973; Segal 1990) archetypes as enabling theories. Tricksters live morally ambiguous lives pursuing their passions on the boundaries of society. They are celebrated and condemned for their cunning ability to defy and survive outside of societal norms. The Trickster’s disruption of social order may infuse society with new vitality, or it may introduce destructive chaos (Babcock-Abrahams 1975). Heroes leave society, conquer evil forces, experience personal growth, then return to improve society.

To address our research questions, we focus on individuals who prioritize their passion for wilderness adventure over socially normative and expected priorities, such as shelter and financial well-being. These consumers refer to themselves as ‘dirtbags,’ and exist in a wide variety of outdoor pursuits, especially climbing, river sports and mountain sports (Rickly 2017). Dirtbags, sometimes referred to as “core users” by outdoor brands, are connected to the branding, product development and entrepreneurial creation of many outdoor service and retail businesses (Chouinard 2006; Harrison and Corley 2011; Holt and Cameron 2010; Taylor 2010). Dirtbags offer an ideal subject group for researching heroic wilderness pursuit of passions.

Our findings incorporate diverse sources of primary and secondary data. Data collection was concentrated over a two-year time span. Informants described experiences retrospectively, prospectively and as they were living them. Primary data was collected during participant observation at wilderness site visits, climbing competitions, and screenings of dirtbag movie memoirs resulting in field notes and photographs. Further, snowball sampling led to 17 semi-structured in-depth interviews of participants ranging from age 20-46, and included selective follow up interviews and communications. Secondary data included branded content, dirtbag themed documentaries sponsored by outdoor brands, memoirs, and approximately 30 hours of *The Dirtbag Diaries* podcasts. Further, Dirtbag themed blogs, newspaper content and dirtbag titled social media provided insight into how dirtbags portray themselves to others.

Our findings adopt an extended temporal perspective on consumption and show how the heroic pursuit of passions cultural discourse informs brand and consumer practices. We find that brands depict ‘heroic’ wilderness struggles and conquests, with the brand helping to launch the hero’s journey into the wilderness. Outdoor brands also occasionally integrate tricksteresque messages celebrating the edge-dwelling, norms-challenging aspects of passion pursuits in the wilderness. Popular and social media accounts similarly

describe wilderness adventures as heroic conquests with tricksteresque undercurrents. Media targeting in-group audiences, such as a blog post titled “The Sophisticated Dirtbag,” delve more thoroughly into morally questionable techniques dirtbags use to extend passionate wilderness pursuits, such as dumpster diving and illegal camping.

Our informants describe self-transformative, passion-driven wilderness conquests. However, they also highlight socially ambivalent themes, offering the promise of transcending social structures and reconfiguring consumption patterns, while simultaneously threatening to contaminate and undermine systems of order. Consumers who follow their passions for extended adventures into the wilderness enter a shapeshifting space defined by paradox and tension. Our informants sacrifice comfort, income, security, family relationships, old friendships, intimate relationships and health in pursuit of ‘essentially pointless’ conquests. These sacrifices lead to diverse internal tensions and tensions with society. Navigating tensions between the individual’s pursuits of passion and the social norms that inherently constrain them is a perpetual challenge for these consumers. Through their celebration of dirt, both literally and in the figurative sense of dirt as a rejected by-product of creating order (Hyde 2010), our informants highlight the paradoxical natures of meaningful consumption, work, relationships, autonomy and security. We find that pursuits of passion are characterized by tricksteresque ambivalence and may end heroically, tragically or as prolonged journeys into futility and irrelevance.

In summary, we explore the practices and lives of consumers who pursue their passions in the wilderness. Using data from diverse sources, we reveal the tricksteresque and sometimes heroic nature of passion pursuits, which differentially informs and influences outdoor brands, media and consumption practices. This work has implications for the broader cultural discourse of the pursuit of passion in many domains, including consumers who pursue their passions for video games, art, spirituality, entrepreneurship and athletics.

### **Running Through Time: How Life Rhythms Foster Identity Permanence**

#### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Time experience is crucial for human emotion, motivation, action (Carstensen et al., 1999), and well-being (Gabrian et al., 2017) and it is a constitutional part of what individuals have when engaged in social activities and practices. Social practices induce a specific pattern of experienced temporality in those performing them (Woermann & Rokka, 2015) because personal time is embedded in interactional structures in which individuals synchronize their time with others (Brodowsky, 2008) in physical and social contexts (Cotte & Ratneshwar, 1999). Also, the lived-time experience is mediated through the body, derived by the sensory-motor experiences in each activity (Toyoki et al., 2013).

Recently, Woermann and Rokka (2015) developed the concept of timeflow in consumption practices, which is the ability of social practices to evoke experienced temporality. From their study, we know that consumption practices embed a specific temporal experience and that this experience is a quality of a practice given its bodily, material, situational and teleoaffective influences. We also know that consumption practices shape identities and lifestyles (Celsi et al., 1993; Goulding et al., 2009; Schau, Gilly & Wolfenbarger, 2009) and that the extended and continuous performance of consumption practices vest individuals with symbolic, cultural and social capital that feed their identity projects (Arsel & Thompson, 2011).

Nevertheless, the literature on consumer culture still lacks a proper understanding of the way temporal experiences embedded

in consumption practices (Warde, 2005) shape, reinforce or challenge identity projects, especially when consumption practices are performed over extended periods. In this research we ask, how does consumption practices temporal experience influence identity projects of individuals who engage in consumption practices for extended periods? We explore this research question in the context of third age individuals in Brazil who are engaged in the consumption practice of running, a context that represents many other consumption practices such as yoga, swimming, or jogging.

Running is a social practice with many adherents among third age in Brazil. According to Krutman (2018), third age runners account for between 8,5% and 12% of the individuals registered for street runs in Brazil (a reasonable number, given that 12% of the population in the country belong to the third age group).

We adopted the semi structured interview method (Kvale, 2007), starting with general open questions about the evolution of running practice throughout their life and evolving to their running routines, the feelings, benefits and meanings of running, whether and how running has changed their lives, the development of social ties through running, how they imagine they are perceived by their social groups, and their main identity projects. The first author interviewed twelve runners ranging from 60 to 78 years of age, all residents in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The second author listened and read to all the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed. We recruited some of the participants during a six-month observation of two on-line communities of interest related to running and the others we recruited through snowball technique. For all the participants, in our judgment, running has been a crucial part of their lives. Analytically, we adopt the theory of rhythm analysis of Lefebvre (2004), which next, we explain in its main elements.

Through the use of rhythm - biological, psychological and social - as a tool for analysis, Lefebvre (2004) interrelates space, time and energy in the comprehension of the quotidian. Rhythm is a way to understand time and experience, with the body playing a central role in the theory. Repetition (of movements, actions, situations and differences), the interference of linear (originated from social elements) or cyclical (originated from nature) processes, comparison (to our own’ and to others’ rhythms), and cycles of birth, growth, peak, decline, and end are important analytical elements in his theory. We also borrow the concepts of eurhythmia (and arrhythmia), in which the various rhythms in life sequentially unite in accordance (and discordance) producing order (and disorder).

Inspired by Lefebvre’s theory we developed the Rhythmic Experiences Framework, which describes how consumption practices’ properties of place, time, and energy foster life rhythm experiences (of eurhythmia and arrhythmia), which through time and repetition, in linear and cyclical processes, may often reinforce identity projects. We find a process in which the elements of running consumption practice - physical commitment, self-monitoring, socialization, attendance, and personal transformation - all of them with specific properties of time, energy and place, foster rhythm experiences. These experiences are recurrent, linear and cyclical, of a eurythmic nature that reinforces the identity project of being a runner, or of an arrhythmic nature - events that break with the routine or gradually changes it, such as injuries or slow decay - challenging the same identity project.

We complement prior studies on the role of temporal experiences in consumption practices (Goulding et al., 2009; Canniford and Shankar, 2013; Woermann and Rokka, 2015) and we extend this line of research in adding the role of rhythm in extended temporal experiences of consumption practices in fostering enduring identity projects of old age individuals.

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