

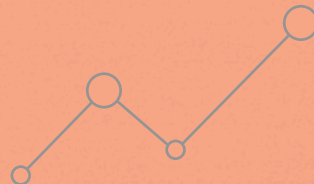
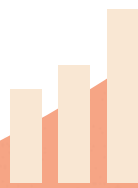


1ST WORKSHOP in CONSUMER CULTURE THEORY

September, 2021

University of Aveiro, Portugal

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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1ST WORKSHOP IN CONSUMER CULTURE THEORY

Book of Abstracts

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PREFACE

Consumer Culture Theory is now widely recognized as an established field of research that sits alongside and compliments other major scientific traditions for studying consumer behavior. Theorists are increasingly focusing not just on the consumer as a market actor but also on more complex institutional systems of market interaction as constitutive of consumer culture. In other words, consumer culture is not only about what consumers do but also about how the world in which they do it is constituted. The call to study consumption in the construction of culture is welcome but a somewhat uncharted territory in Portugal.

This workshop was both a tribute to research already conducted and an attempt to inspire culturally conscious and critically oriented investigation in Portugal by highlighting the underlying connections between researchers in consumer behavior, psychology and cultural studies, among other disciplines, which enables them to share common ground.

In June 2020, I considered organizing this workshop in Aveiro so that CCT scholars could meet for the first time in Portugal and share their research. At the beginning of 2021, the Portuguese government reinstated a nationwide lockdown due to a surge in new COVID-19 cases. Portugal registered the highest number of coronavirus cases in Europe per capita. The possibility of an *in-person* event was slim due to the likely difficulties workshop participants might be expected to face as a result of travel restrictions in the effort to try and control the pandemic. By early March, the pandemic was still featuring prominently in the Portuguese media, but the vaccination plan for COVID-19 was ongoing, and a hybrid event was believed possible.

The *1st Workshop on Consumer Culture Theory* in Portugal took place in Aveiro (and online) from the 29th to the 30th of September 2021, and involved 68 students and researchers worldwide.

Authors who had submitted working papers to the workshop were offered the opportunity to have their work reviewed and included in this *Book of Abstracts*. Of those submissions, eight have been included in this book.

Ema Rolo

PROGRAM

29th SEPTEMBER

EDIFÍCIO CENTRAL E DA REITORIA/ ONLINE

- 10:00 **“On Failure: Perspectives and Prospects in Marketing and Consumption Theory” — Dannie Kjeldgaard**
- 11:00 Coffee Break
- 11:30 **“*Homo Desirans* and Consumer Culture” — Søren Askegaard**
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:30 **“Talking to Myself: on Self-gifts, Hope and Desert” — Teresa Heath**
- 15:30 Coffee Break
- 16:00 Working Papers Presentations
- 17:30 Tutoring Sessions/ Paper Development Workshop

30th SEPTEMBER

EDIFÍCIO CENTRAL E DA REITORIA/ ONLINE

- 10:00 ***Visual Methods in Ethnographic Research* with Niklas Woermann**
- 11:00 Coffee Break
- 11:30 **“Happy Relationships with Mass Prestige Brands” — Helena Nobre**
- 12:30 Lunch
- 14:30 Working Papers Presentations
- 16:00 Coffee Break
- 16:30 Tutoring Sessions/ Paper Development Workshop
- 17:30 Closing Session

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ABSTRACTS

COMMUNITY THROUGH COMPETITION

Tomar, Nitisha¹¹Wisconsin School of Business. Wisconsin, USA**Keywords:** *community; marketplace culture; consumption*

The social sciences' corpus has generally posited the concepts of community and competition antithetically, namely: *Gemeinschaft* (community) versus *Gesellschaft* (society) (Tönnies, 2013); mechanical versus organic solidarity (Durkheim, 1997), antistructure versus structure (Turner, 1969) and communitization versus socialization (Weber 1978).

These historical dichotomies have contemporarily manifested in studies of communal and ludic consumption experiences (Canniford & Shankar 2013; O'Sullivan & Shankar 2019; Seregina & Weijo 2016) wherein anti-structural, communal experiences are destabilized by structural, competitive forces. However, we do witness and participate in the empirical coexistence of community and competition, (e.g. neighbourhood competitions and sports). This begets the question – how does the principle of individuation, integral to competition, interact with the principle of socialization, integral to communal experiences? Why are the concepts of “community” and “competition” sometimes mutually constitutive rather than oppositional?

Our paper attempts to answer these questions. Firstly, we suggest that competition can be conceptualized as a structured form of play (Caillois, 2001) that leads to agonistic contest rather than antagonistic conquest. Thus, we direct focus on how individual competitors can possibly end up sharing a social symbolic space. Secondly, we suggest going beyond ontological presumptions of “consciousness of kind” as an “element of community” (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001) to analyse the “combination of processes necessary” (O'Sullivan, Richardson & Collins, 2011) for the emergence of communal experience and subsequent enactment of community. Thus, we illuminate how the bundling of various elements in the practice of competition can possibly lead to the binding effect of “*communitas*” (Turner, 1969) and condition a sense of community. We insist that investigating the process of generation of community is crucial as it helps us to also identify the conditions that can hamper its generation. We make these arguments in the empirical context of “story slams” which are competitive storytelling events wherein storytellers compete by telling stories in front of an audience. In-depth interviews with competitive storytellers and participant observation in “story slams” resulted in data and fieldnotes which were qualitatively analysed. We employed practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2010) as an analytical lens to examine how “community happens” (Buber, 2003) as well as how it can be hindered in the *mise-en-scène* of the competitive storytelling practice.

Our analysis reveals that story slams are constituted of the following practice elements:

1) Rules and format, 2) Competence, 3) *Teleoaffectivities*, and 4) *Practicescape*. Rules and format create an “echo of complicity” (Caillois, 2001) which binds all the practitioners while also conditioning interdependencies that stimulate *communitas*. Competence in the form of skills and practical understandings results in the active participation of all and also facilitates collaborative learning and skill sharing. *Teleoaffectivities* are the affective pursuits recruiting competitors. Registering as motivational ends to compete, *teleoaffectivities* of self-transformation, diversity representation, and self-exhibition demonstrate how ‘community’ isn’t necessarily a teleological project but is conditioned by different proclivities of pursuits embedded in the competitive practice. *Practicescape* is an amalgam of cultural context, event space, and material elements.

The cultural context of a politically liberal environment facilitates a sense of openness encouraging participation of all. The event space is instrumental in conditioning a visceral sense of gathering, and material elements of the competitive practice, like the conspicuous scoreboard on the stage, serve as *cynosures* for the active participation of all to facilitate a sense of communion. In sum, the competitive format is constituted by an architectural grid of rules and format through which run various *teleoaffective* orientations and practical understandings that are embedded in a conducive *practicescape*. We posit that a conducive alignment of these practice elements is crucial to the emergence of *communitas*. The favourable alignment of these elements integral to the “story slam” competitive practice establishes interdependencies amongst the competitors that leads to a sense of competing together. This helps us question the autonomous dichotomies that attribute separate spheres to “community” and “competition” by showcasing how a supposedly centrifugal force of competition can indeed facilitate the emergence of a centripetal force of community. Rather than separate ontological antithetical spheres, this study demonstrates an evolutionary affinity between the two.

However, we do add further nuance to our thesis. Our findings also illuminate how misalignments in the configuration of a competitive practice’s elements can hamper the emergence of *communitas*. We show how certain configurations in rules can hinder the seamlessness of the flow of *communitas* and how differences in levels of competence can thwart the democratization of participation. Thus, our analysis demonstrates how communal experiences and the sense of community need not be volitional teleological projects.

They can, instead, be conditioned (hampered) by the favourable (unfavourable) configuration of the elements of a competitive practice.

Our study contributes to the communal consumption and ludic experiences literature by: 1) advancing an agonistic relationship between the concepts of community and competition against the pervasively documented antagonistic relationship, and 2) contesting the assumption of communal experiences as teleological projects by demonstrating how the sense of community can, instead, be conditioned or hampered by the way a competitive practice's elements are configured. Further, understanding the competitive dynamics of community-building by examining the mechanics that can facilitate/hinder the sense of community entails crucial societal implications.

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF HOW THE STORY BEHIND A PRE-LOVED LUXURY ITEM CREATES VALUE

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Keywords: *preloved items; secondhand consumption; luxury; conspicuous consumption; story of the object.*

The pre-loved luxury goods market has existed for centuries (McNeil & Riello 2016). Historically, this market predominantly focused on heirlooms such as art, sculpture, and jewelry. However, in recent times, this trend has further expanded to many exquisite goods, including watches, accessories (especially handbags), and fashion goods such as dresses (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015). Reselling high-quality luxury goods is now considered a multi-billion-dollar industry and is expected to reach 25 billion US dollars of the total resale market in 2025. According to Luxe Digital, this market is growing four times faster than the primary luxury market, 12 percent per year versus 3% (Beauloye, 2020). Despite the increasing demand for pre-loved luxury items, existing literature on the motivational drivers for their consumption is largely silent. Studies focusing on pre-loved goods consumption have explored the motivational drivers without specifically addressing the specificities of luxury goods, and previous research has established that applying generic management principles in the context of luxury goods is futile (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). For instance, consumers that are more prone to consume luxury goods do it to fulfill their emotional and pleasurable senses (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Husic & Cicic, 2009; Bian & Forsythe, 2012), and for these consumers, quality, aesthetic, and performance are far more important than price (Brun & Castelli, 2013; Yeoman & McMahan-Beattie, 2006).

Previous research has marginally addressed the motivations and meanings for purchasing pre-loved luxury items: Kessous, Valette-Florence and De Barnier (2017) found that new luxury products are connected to power, social ranking, and quality, while pre-loved luxury goods are linked with social climbing, eco-consciousness, and heritage. Additionally, Turunen and Leipämaa-Leskinen (2015a) proposed that consumers attribute five possible meanings for pre-loved luxury items: sustainable choice, unique find, pre-loved treasures, real deals, and risky investments. If we specifically focus on the pre-loved treasures, we find that the dynamics underlying the meaning of pre-loved items may be complex and full of meanings.

Kessous et al. (2017) discussed the process of accepting a luxury watch as a heritage

from father to son and concluded that the process of accepting the pre-loved item as heritage is a four-stages complex and dynamic appropriation process, which showcases that depending on the context and history of the pre-loved item, the process of buying, owning and using may be complex and full of meanings.

This research aims to contribute to this discussion by discussing a specific context for pre-loved luxury items: the market for buying and selling pre-loved luxury items in Monaco. Specifically, we interviewed three professionals from resellers companies and three consumers of pre-loved luxury items commercialized through an exclusive, by-invitation-only market. Pre-loved luxury products are sold through an exclusive catalog, and items are auctioned due to their uniqueness. Throughout the interviews, we noticed that the uniqueness of the luxury product was the main driver for consumers to buy these specific pre-loved luxury items, and due to the characteristic of the product or its history, the monetary value of the pre-loved item could even surpass the monetary value of a similar, new one. From this perspective, we were able to collect one particular market practice that we decided to highlight as the main discussion of this article: some of the products commercialized as pre-loved items were sold from escort girls that received these items payment for their services. These items are then discreetly marked for potential buyers. Professionals from the sellers' companies learned that this particular characteristic raises the perceived value for their clientele, mostly composed of high-income women. Even though this is a particular context, we believe it is full of symbols, meanings, and representations of the dynamics that are present in the pre-loved luxury market. Our analysis presents dynamics similar to the singularization of an object (Epp & Price, 2010) and symbolic motivations (Shukla & Rosendo-Rios, 2021), where the object's history is relevant to the perception and attribution of monetary value and to the symbolic meaning of *owning* and *re-owning* of this pre-loved item. To comply with the complexity of transmitting the richness of these meanings in the stories we found in the interviews, we decided to use a narrative method to present the particularities of this market practice. Therefore we were inspired by the work of Kessous et al. (2017) and discuss the phenomena in this practice through the frame of consumers' identity (Ahuvia, 2005) and the sociological perspectives of consumption (Cherrier & Murray, 2004).

Our findings show the possibility that not only the characteristics of a pre-loved luxury item, such as design, materials, and price but also its previous history may increase the perceived value of this product to the consumer, which may even be willing to pay more for a pre-loved item than in a similar, new one.

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DIGITAL CONSUMPTION AS PERFORMANCE: THE SOCIOTECHNICAL EXPERIENCE IN VIRTUAL YOUTUBERS' STREAMINGS

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Keywords: *virtual youtubers; live streaming; digital consumption; sociotechnical relations; performance.*

The global pandemic generated an unprecedented health crisis that catalyzed profound changes in the digital world, such as an accelerated shift to online environments and the development of different and (re)defined consumer relations. These developments also promoted new forms of social interaction on the internet (Levy, 2000; Castells, 2014). At the moment, the most significant social media platforms for video sharing are YouTube and Twitch, both responsible for delivering some of the most assisted content in recent years: live streams and real-time video sharing, which allows the audience to interact with the streamer. Following these shifts, an intriguing social phenomenon emerged: some live streams are presented by virtual Youtubers or Vtubers: avatars that look like anime (Japanese animation) characters. “VTubing,” as a performance, engages millions of viewers, offers entertainment activities, creates unique experiences, and connects people through online socialization (Paz & Montardo, 2017). The study conducted by Lu et al. (2021) analyzes the differences between VTubers and “real” streamers, showing that virtual avatars bring unique performative opportunities which result in different viewer expectations and interpretations of VTuber behavior. The study by Puspitaningrum and Prasetyo (2019) highlights that the main reasons why internet users choose to watch VTubers are: interest in Japanese popular culture (the VTubers phenomenon emerged in Japan), curiosity, a necessity to stay up-to-date with the latest trends, entertainment, and the need to assert one’s identity through digital consumption.

This study opted for a qualitative and exploratory approach. Data was obtained through netnography (Kozinets, 2014) using participant observation in the channels of several VTubers on YouTube and Twitch platforms. We observed and noted the interaction between the Vtubers and the audience during live streams. Vtubers usually perform entertainment activities during live streams, such as playing video games, singing, watching movies, and having conversations with “fans” to create bonds and rapport with the audience. These performances witnessed a significant increase in followers in recent months, coinciding with the onset of the pandemic, generating billions of views. YouTube showed a 15% increase in its total number of users in

2020, and Twitch had a 115% increase in its number of simultaneous viewers (IQBAL, 2021). According to the Google Trends tool, from February to September 2020, the number of web searches for the term VTuber increased by more than 418%, and this explosive popularity was also reflected in the number of subscribers of the most popular VTubers (Holotracker, 2021). Live streams, which allow the interaction between the streamer (who transmits the video) and its audience in real-time, has been one of the most-watched content on YouTube and Twitch. We conclude that these interactions can be analyzed as performances of entertainment to create a memorable experiences or even to stimulate a sense of community, which can heal, teach, persuade or convince, with content that promotes intense online socialization (Montardo et al.; 2017).

During the pandemic, the total or partial lockdown triggered significant changes in our behaviors and habits, affecting our socialization, subjectivities, social values, and consumption habits. In a period of social isolation, social media plays a role in replacing “real” human contact with socio-technical relationships. The value delivered by VTubers is not limited to casual entertainment consumption since they offer immersion in a fantastical world, distant from everyday problems, as well as empathy, validation, identity, the sense of belonging to a community, and even a “one-way friendship” between streamers and “fans”, as suggested by previous studies.

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UNDERSTANDING VALUE CO-CREATION IN ONLINE VEGAN CONSUMPTION COMMUNITIES

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Keywords: *consumer culture theory; consumption communities; value co-creation; vegan communities*

The growth of the internet and eCommerce contributed to an increasing dematerialisation or “liquidity” of consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Hence, the marketing literature shifted its focus from goods to relationships as in Service-Dominant View (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This context enhanced the appearance of new online communities. Online fan groups, consumer tribes and brand communities, among others, emerged in social media (Kozinets, 2019). Most of the literature in the field, focus on brand communities, but there is still a research gap regarding the vitality of communities not particularly focused on brands. Online communities enhance the sharing of ideas regarding diverse consumption interests and lifestyles. In other words, consumers that participate in them do not necessarily focus on a particular brand or consumption interest (Weijo et al. 2014). Moreover, consumer motivations for joining these communities and contributing to value co-creation through their interactions have been understudied (Ind et al. 2019).

To understand the dynamics of online consumption communities, we combine the theoretical grounds of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) and value co-creation theory (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). We focus specifically on the theoretical dimension of marketplace cultures, which addresses the socio-cultural and material contexts (Rokka, 2021) in consumption collectives or communities. These communities facilitate the creation, co-creation, negotiation and diffusion of meanings, practices, and performances (Rokka, 2021; Sorensen et al., 2017). According to Merz, He and Vargo, (2009), consumers are endogenous to value creation. They can engage in co-creation activities of marketplace symbols, meanings and market offerings (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Thus, consumers become proactive makers of meaning, who shape their interactions with firms, their experiences and co-create value with organizations and other consumers (Hollebeek & Belk, 2021; Sorensen et al., 2017). In online communities, companies can interact and collaborate with consumers over time (Ind et al., 2020), through practices. Practices, such as understandings, discourses and procedures (Schau et al., 2009) are important to understand consumer behaviour because they generate and determine consumption behaviours and patterns (Schau et al., 2009). The most widely applied framework

are Schau, et al. (2009) twelve brand community practices, which spread across four main typologies: (1) social networking; (2) impression management; (3) community engagement and (4) brand use. We sought to address the dynamics of consumption community practices through an exploratory netnography in three Portuguese vegan communities. Netnography is appropriate to address the practices of online vegan communities since it provides a deep understanding of its rituals, symbols, values, meanings, and relations of power (Arnould & Epp, 2006). Moreover, this method is widely used in CCT-inspired research (Hollebeek & Belk, 2021). We chose vegan communities as our research setting due to the richness and complexity of their practices (Greenebaum, 2012). Indeed, these communities are largely lifestyle-based and provide cultural tools to promote changes in consumption habits (Cherry, 2015). To check the feasibility of netnographic procedures for these online communities, we first performed a preliminary study based on the content analysis of the posts and comments of six members of these communities, during six months. In line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) of the European Union, we ensured to the participants that this data would only be used for this study and that we would ensure its anonymity. We searched for posts and comments by these six consumers across three Facebook groups dedicated to veganism. We selected the posts and comments to analyse based on their relevance, activity, interactivity, diversity, and richness (Kozinets, 2019). Then, we used NVIVO to support the analysis of content. This software can be used to facilitate coding, even though it does not fully replace human analysis (Arnould & Epp, 2006). Besides, we combined inductive and deductive approaches to coding: open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Veréb et al., 2020). We departed from Schau, Muñiz and Arnould (2009) brand community practices typologies of brand use, community engagement and social networking to categorize practices. Then, from the data analysis, we identified eight distinct practices specific to these vegan communities: 1) brand promoting; 2) entrepreneurship; 3) celebrity sponsoring; 4) influencing; 5) shocking; 6) opinion and information-seeking; 7) local buying; 8) expanding.

This study offers managerial implications for practitioners. We believe that they can benefit from engaging with these communities in two ways: 1) to understand the current changes that are happening in consumption habits and 2) to learn and adapt their businesses to these changes. The study also has implications for researchers since it extends the study of consumption communities beyond the scope of the brand and provides a broader understanding of practices adopted in online consumption communities. Besides, it answers Merz, He and Vargo (2009) calls for studies that address consumption communities not focused on a specific brand. Although the sample size limits the generalizability of findings, this is a preliminary stage of an in-progress study. We plan to depart from the initial themes (practices) identified in this study and address a larger sample of communities and participants, and/or different community typologies in future research.

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DIMENSIONS OF SILENCE FROM A CONSUMER'S PERSPECTIVE

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Keywords: *silence; sensorial marketing; soundscape; exploratory research*

Seeking silence to escape temporarily one's hectic and fast-paced lifestyle has become more and more popular. For example, meditation practice saw a global 2900% increase during the pandemic (McGroarty, 2020). Outdoor times (Canniford & Shankar, 2013), slow consumption (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019) and noise-cancelling products become progressively an object of desire and luxury when consumers seek periods of quietness in their busy lifestyle. In contrast with its growing pervasiveness in consumers' experiences and practices, consumer research has dedicated limited attention to the meaning, functions and values of silence. We address this theoretical and empirical gap by exploring the concept of silence from a consumer's perspective.

The purpose of this exploratory research is twofold: 1) to understand how consumers define and perceive silence, and 2) to explore in which ways the marketplace contributes to their experience of silence. Consistently with the exploratory and discovery-oriented nature of our research, we conducted in depth interviews to enable participants to express their personal views, understandings and meanings (McCracken, 1988). Informants were recruited through social media and snowball technique until sampling reached saturation at 14 interviews.

First, and in contrast with existing conceptualizations in consumer research, the findings reveal that consumers' experience of silence is multisensorial and refer to the absence of noise rather than the absence of sound. Therefore, far from its literal sonic dimension, silence is also metaphorically associated with the absence of external stimulation, whether visual, physical or social. Furthermore, most respondents bring to light the restorative dimension of silent experiences that they perceive as vital. In opposition to the negative effects of noise on consumers' well-being, silence facilitates muscle relaxation, sensorial perceptions and mental well-being. Interestingly, respondents also highlight the ambivalence of emotions experienced during silence: as a time of introspection and reflection, silence can be either soothing or challenging. Finally, their accounts evocate a form of temporary and restorative escape from the exhausting and numerous imperatives imposed to their social identities (Cova et al., 2018) rather than a complete rejection of them. In other words, silence seems to operate as a liminal space (Turner, 1969) suspending time and expending space between consumers' individual identity/space and social identity/space. This exploratory research's main contribution is to advance our understanding of its meaning, values, and functions in consumers' experiences.

First, we find that consumers conceive silence as an absence of noise. In line with existing research on crossmodal correspondences (Spence, 2011), their definitions include but are not limited to their sonic experience. Secondly, consumers highlight the restorative function of silence on both physiological and psychological level. This finding deserves closer examination to understand to which extent and in which conditions silence could participate to the health potential of servicescapes (Rosenbaum & Massiah, 2011) and to consumers' well-being enhancement. Thirdly, our findings shed light on the paradoxical nature of the restorative function of silence: while respondents define silence as a "refuge" away from their social imperatives, silence also facilitates their engagement with their surroundings. Thus, silence operates as a liminal space helping consumers to manage their resources and keep the equilibrium between their personal and social identities. Finally, the marketplace is described as a source of noise experienced both in the servicescape and throughout the market actors' communication practices. Contrasting with their accounts of silence, noise in the marketplace is defined by its manipulative intent, its uselessness and its pervasive character.

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PEOPLE-PRODUCT: A STUDY ON THE EMERGENCE
OF THE PEOPLE RENTAL MARKET IN JAPAN

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Keywords: *market studies; market systems dynamics; people rental market; japanese market; marketing.*

This research is part of an ongoing master's thesis on the emergence and legitimization of Japan's "people rental" market. Based on Market System Dynamics, we see markets as living and dynamic environments as well as performative social narratives inseparable from their contexts, culture, and social norms. To understand how this market emerged and became legitimate in Japan, we conducted an exploratory-documentary study that revealed how the Japanese socio-cultural elements led to the emergence of this market, which arises from the Japanese society's cultural-cognitive dynamics. Some rental companies in Japan offer a service where they rent actors who can assume social roles, in line with the social behaviors required by society (Sennett, 1977; Goffman, 1959). Whether to replace an absent parent, a relative at a religious ceremony, or a friend at a party, it is now possible to hire actors who can take on social roles for specific purposes. In this sense, based on the cultural-cognitive demand of this society (Humphreys, 2010), Japanese people live a social drama that, to Giesler (2008), cannot exist independent of collective discourses and practices (that guide people's thoughts and actions). Thus, the birth of a market is summarized in what Humphreys (2010) acknowledges as the inseparability of context, culture, and norms when it is created and legitimated. Therefore, this research follows Martin and Schouten's (2014) creation of a market that comprehends the relationships between the actors involved, which alter or modify both the meanings and the material side of the market formation. This account also validates that every market is co-constituted by human and non-human actors. Beyond that, we use the perception that not only exclusion, stigma, or the inefficiency of a market structure can generate driving forces for its emergence, but the desire and a purely emotional need can result in the movement to create an understanding of a market that fills with meaning, the lives of consumers (Humphreys, 2010; Martin & Schouten, 2014; Giesler & Fischer, 2017).

This study was conducted through a qualitative-exploratory approach, using documentary research for data collection. In documental analysis, it is necessary to examine the documents, understating their particular context and accept them as they are, whether they may be "incomplete, partial or imprecise" (Cellard, 2008, p. 299). The main source was the book *Ningen Rentaru Ya* (People Rental Store) by Yuichi Ishii, which describes in detail the

trajectory of the company Family Romance, a pioneer in this market. Through content analysis, their accounts were divided into three thematic categories that reflect the signifiers and meanings endowed by the Japanese historical and sociological context: “adequacy”, “shame”, and “obligation”. In a preliminary observation, the performativity of the rental people market in Japan is inseparable from the collective practices of the Japanese people. Their subjective definition of a market configuration becomes a shared definition by all society. As pointed out by Humphreys (2008) and Loasby (2000), the actors who work in the “people rental” companies, as well as the consumers of this service, share understandings that are specific to the society in which they are. It is also possible to verify how this market emerges and legitimizes itself from the cognitive processes shared by society, which strives to (re)produce norms of conduct that function as *appropriate behaviors* in the Japanese culture. Those norms are identified by three shared emotions: “adequacy to the social drama”; “the shame of their social insufficiencies”, and “the obligation to the collective”. This market emerges a way to meet social requirements and avoid deviation from Japanese society’s rigorous norms while giving new meanings to consumption. Moreover, while enjoying a moment of freedom from the bonds of social life, Japanese people take control over the script of their lives using the society norms as a model of conduct.

The emergence and legitimization of this market show us the materialization of Market System Dynamics theory as a performative social narrative of symbolic exchanges, inseparable from its social, cultural, and legal situation, where actors and consumers interact and seek harmonization of interests (Giesler, 2008; Giesler & Fischer, 2017; Humphreys, 2010). Thus, this phenomenon holds a special feature regarding the theories of Humphreys (2010) about the birth of a market when consolidating what the author describes as the cultural-cognitive demand of the Japanese people. The people’s rental market appears under a normative model specific to Japanese society, in a dialectical relationship of narratives of its actors, mediated by the co-constitutive relations of the Japanese people. In this dynamic, they select cultural elements that not only demand, but shelter these services and establish consumption as performance, to harbor a desire and fill an existential void driven by a structuring social facade, (with unique traits and peculiarities), when compared to any other market in that country or in the western world. All this is only possible through the performativity and this social drama shared by this society, as the inseparability of context, culture, and norms in the creation and legitimation of a new marketplace.

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THE GENDER BIAS IN SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATIONS
OF PROFESSIONS DRIVEN BY SEARCH ALGORITHMS:
AN ANALYSIS THROUGH THE LENS OF PERFORMATIVITY

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Keywords: *gender, performativity, algorithmic culture*

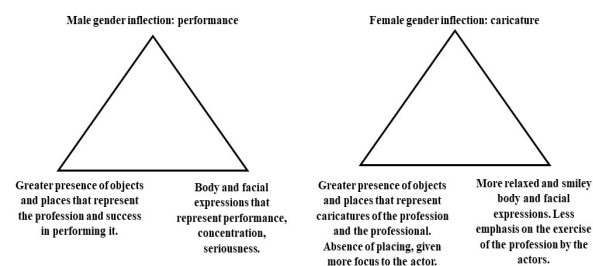
With the increasing incorporation of the internet into all our social relationships and daily activities, it's time to investigate the paradigms brought by the algorithmic organization of our everyday lives. Online mathematical algorithms classify and rank people, local objects, and ideas (Carah & Brodmerkel, 2020), creating cultural meanings and categories (McCracken, 2007). Considering that algorithmic culture is increasingly present in our daily lives, in shaping and guiding behaviors and social constructions of meanings (Danaher et al., 2017), we investigate how the construction of understanding and expectations about gender unfolds through representations of different professions driven by algorithms in the online environment. We chose online representations of professions as a research context, considering that the salary discrepancy between genders has been the object of discussions and studies in recent years. It is important to note that most countries where these salary discrepancies persists have state legislation and policies to combat them. Therefore, we believe that the persistence of this disparity is related with the social construction of gender through the visual representations of the performance of professions.

To understand the social construction of gender, we chose performativity (Butler, 2014; Cabantous & Gond, 2011; Callon, 2020) as our lens for three reasons. First, a gendered vision of professions contributes, both to the construction of the roles to which men and women can aspire and play within social norms and to the construction of what is expected of them when performing these roles. Second, the normalization of an encompassing a range of behaviors and attitudes regarding professions can be found in online and offline media. Thus, the consumption of this kind of information can also be treated from the perspective of gender performativity, analyzing the way in which research tools meet individuals' expectations to reinforce performativity. Finally, we understand the process of choosing a profession as a consumption process that contributes to the formation of the self. If the construction of understandings around certain professions is endowed with gender roles, it will contribute to the formation of a self, through this form of consumption, also endowed with gender. We collected data through the search tool of Google Images. Google's algorithms rely on previous

searches with the same word to determine which results will be the first to appear, (the results that were most useful at earlier searches appear first ranked for future users)(Google, 2020) We used the last four reports released by the Brazilian Higher Education Census - Inep (2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) and developed a list of professions based on higher education courses with the most significant number of students enrolled in Brazil. We chose this context because the Portuguese language has a gender inflection for nouns. For example, a man who is a professor, in Portuguese, is called *professor*, a woman who is a professor is called *professora*. We analyzed 230 images found on Google Images, referring to 12 different professions, using discursive analysis of visual data (Rose, 2016).

Our results (Figure 1) show that the relation with professional performance is evident in the results (images) for terms related with males, regardless of who plays the role in the image, a man, or a woman. In the female related results, there are images with less or no emphasis on the exercise of the profession. The objects representing the profession and professional environments portrayed in the images appear in greater quantity in the images resulting from the male gender inflection. Many images with female-related words, do not display the workplace environment. This aspect led to the understanding that “consumers” look for a profession with male-related words but search for other information with female-related words.

Figure 1 - Binarities in professions connected to “masculine and feminine”.



Results related to professions in the female-related words are the imagery representation of what Laclau and Mouffe (2013) called an empty *signifier* in a hegemonic discourse: by having a sign that fits a diversity of meanings, this sign ends up being emptied of its meaning, which can be monopolized for the representation of any speech. With this, the binary idea of gender, in which the man relates to the productive activity, is reinforced. The professional woman becomes a caricature of the profession, with different images that do not represent the real meaning of this professional exercise. Search algorithms exert power in the social construction of meaning (Carah & Brodmerkel, 2020), and by reproducing gender biases arising from previous searches, they perpetuate and reinforce these biases. Regarding

consumption implications, the results show that constructing an image of seriousness and professionalism relates to the adoption of sober clothes. The consumption of objects that facilitate the inference of masculinity “in appearance” and “in the way of behaving” are those that are placed as an indication of “seriousness” and “competency” (whether they are men or women). On the other hand, women are expected to balance these masculinities with the consumption of objects that help identify femininities in appearance, trapping them in a female stereotype (Gurrieri, 2021).

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THE INSTAGRAMMERS' INFLUENCE ON PURCHASE INTENTION FOR HEALTHY FOOD IN LIGHT OF THE GRATIFICATION THEORY

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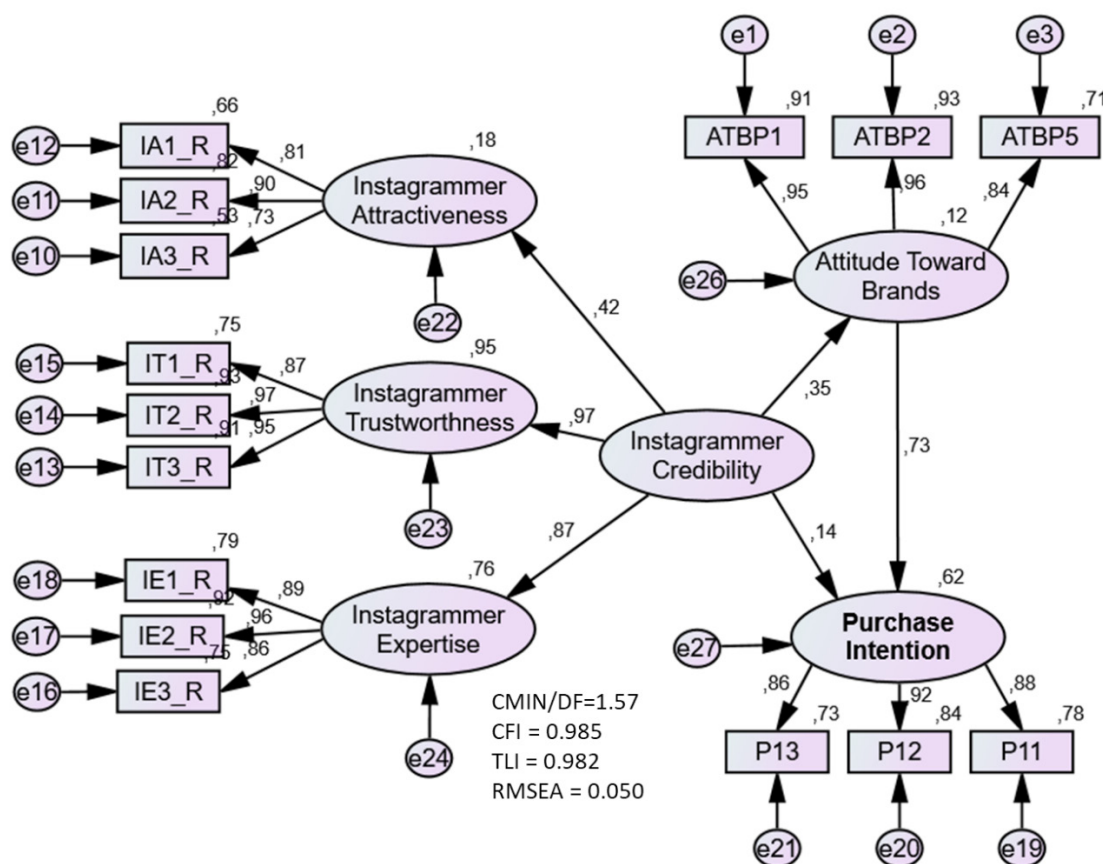
Keywords: *influence; instagrammers; purchase intention, healthy foods, gratification theory*

This article analyzes the influence of Instagrammers in reinforcing attitudes and purchase intention of food products from brands announced a healthy (or as part of a healthy diet). In the light of the Uses and Gratification Theory – UGT (Blumler, 1979), we seek to understand the role of influencers in consumers' decision. The UGT has been widely used to understand the gratifications that individuals obtain from media and technology. Studies on the social media influencers found that participants consider influencers to be “normal” people (rather than celebrities) who are followed by others, and that their popularity comes from sharing content (Morton, 2020). The UGT has specific relevance to social media. Instagram is one of the most popular photo-sharing apps individuals use for gratification on social interaction, information seeking, entertainment, relaxation, convenience utility, expression of opinion, information sharing, and surveillance/knowledge about others (Muhammad, 2018). Additionally, influencer marketing is a way to reach the right audience by choosing the appropriate influencer to transfer credibility to the brand (Mammadli, 2021).

This article includes a descriptive-quantitative study that collected a sample of 400 questionnaires among Portuguese respondents of different ages. The questionnaires contained nine questions about influencer credibility adapted from Ohanian (1990), six questions about attitudes towards brands advertised by the influencer (Speck & Elliott, 1997), and three questions about purchase intention (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991). Data were collected via online questionnaires from November 2019 to March 2020. After a preliminary analysis to identify possible outliers and missing data, data were submitted to a Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modeling with the IBM-AMOS-21 package. The measurement model, composed of five factors, was assessed and validated using Confirmatory Factor Analysis, which showed overall measurement indices above the expected minimums (CMIN/DF = 1.524; CFI = 0.987; TLI = 0.983; RMSEA = 0.049) and acceptable levels of convergent and discriminant validity. Two alternative structural models were compared, one treating the influencer credibility as a first-order construct, and another treating it as a second-order factor. Both models were compared by their χ^2 and degrees of freedom, and no significant difference was found between them ($P < 0.05$). Although both models showed comparable overall

adjustment rates, the result suggests that Instagrammer credibility fits better as a second-order construct, given that all the three factors (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) show significant influence on the endogenous constructs (attitude towards the announced brands, and purchase intention) something that does not happen when each dimension is treated separately (as a first-order construct). The second order model (Figure 1) also satisfied the convergent and discriminant validity and exceeded in the FIT measures (CFI = 0.985, TLI = 0.982, and RMSEA = 0.050).

Figure 1 – Structural Model



Results suggests that Instagrammers’ credibility, a second-order factor formed by three factors (attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise), directly influences attitudes toward the announced brands and purchase intention. It was also confirmed that attitude toward the announced brands strongly influences the purchase intention. This article offers theoretical and managerial contributions. From the theoretical point of view, the study advances knowledge by proposing an alternative model to Ohanian’s (1990) scale, which may become even more useful for measuring the influence of Instagrammers in more specific contexts, like the one involving healthy dieting. As Gaur, Tiwari, & Bathula (2012), we also found that Ohanian’s (1990) scale in its original form did not work well in all contexts, however after amalgamating the three factors into a second-order model the credibility of influencers adjusted quite well.

Other works that have used influencer credibility as a first-order construct have also needed to make minor adjustments, either merging two factors into one (Mammadli, 2021), or recognizing the lack of significance in some hypothesized relationships (Amelina & Zhu, 2016). This study offers important insights for marketing managers to find the right influencer for the respective audience, given that endorsement strategy can be an effective competitive weapon, particularly in mature and saturated markets where the space for product differentiation is almost ineffective (Erdogan, 1999).

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