MAY 29-31 | UNIVERSITA' CATTOLICA DEL SACRO CUORE | MILAN | NETNOCON.ORG

ASSOCIATION FOR NETNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

NETNOCON 2024

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

CONFERENCE PROGRAM, EXTENDED ABSTRACTS, AND FULL PAPERS

"LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE"

Milan, Italy Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

NETNOCON 2024

GLOBAL NETNOGRAPHY CONFERENCE

UNIVERSITÀ CATTOLICA del Sacro Cuore

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NETNOCON2024 is also proudly supported by the Department of Economics and Management Sciences of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore

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NETNOCON 2024 Conference Theme

"Looking toward the future"

Science fiction author William Gibson was famously attributed with saying "The future is already here, it just isn't evenly distributed". Looking towards the future has always been a part of scientific practice and certainly of netnography. Mystics, mythic storytellers, business futurists, and, increasingly, technocultural scientists like netnographers traffic in mapping the trajectories that sweep us along into the future. The world facing researchers is changing as never before, putting more demands on us to keep up with the demands of the future. For 17 years, Milan was the home of history's greatest futurist, Leonardo da Vinci. The conference pays tribute to him and to all futurists, past, present and…future. Drawing inspiration from this great artist's hope for a future without cruelty, we follow Leonardo in holding Netnocon as a vegetarian conference including also vegan options, so we can help realize a less cruel footprint. Netnocon24 is intended to bring netnographers of all interests and experiences together to collectively explore futuristic themes at the digital frontiers of science and cultural understanding. Netnocon24 will continue the prior year's emphasis on the field's rising stars –as we look to them to carry the torch—and invites all participants to take a further look towards our collective future. With rapid changes taking place in technology and research, the conference will be as much about understanding the various ways that our different visions of the future shape our collective presents as it is about predicting how current trends will shape our tomorrows.

NETNOCON 2024 Conference Chair & Co-chairs

Chair

Professor Robert V. Kozinets develops methods and theories that are widely used around the world. His work aims to provide a human-centered understanding of technocultures as well as the social structures and passions that surround them. Netnography, his major innovation, is transforming research practices throughout industry and across the social sciences

Co-Chair

Dr. Ulrike Gretzel is a Senior Fellow at the Center for Public Relations, University of Southern California and Director of Research at Netnografica. She has over 15 years of experience conducting academic and practice-focused netnographies, with topics ranging from the experiences of black vanlifers to the collective activism among fans of a Chinese TV drama.

Co-Chair

Rossella Gambetti is professor of branding and consumer culture at Labcom, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. Her research focuses on emerging technocultural phenomena shaping contemporary branding and consumer culture. Rossella is a "netno-enthusiast" who conducted several netnographic explorations in the social media worlds of amateurial chefs, virtual influencers, counter-brand activism, youth tobacco consumption and Chinese cosmetics consumption.

Co-Chair

Silvia Biraghi is Senior Assistant Professor at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. Her research interests are driven by a profound curiosity for emerging phenomena related to consumer collectives and the dynamics of interaction between consumers and brands, which give rise to the creation of novel connections, transformations, and projects, particularly in technomediated contexts. This is why netnography is her preferred method of inquiry.

Co-Chair

Dr. Angela A. Beccanulli is Post-doctoral Researcher and Adjunct Professor at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. Angela is a passionate netnographer, interested in deep cultural understanding of emergent issues affecting tourism consumption. Her research interests are focused on the intersection of tourism with smart technologies and technocultural consumption phenomena.

Co-Chair

Aleksej Heinze as a pragmatic scholar is deeply rooted in the realms of action research and practical application. His research endeavours have primarily spanned the domains of Digital Transformation and Digital Pedagogy, with a current focus on critical Sustainability issues. This includes delving into areas such as Sustainable Digital Marketing and leveraging digital transformation for the establishment of robust institutions, marked by the prevention, identification, and combat of corruption.

NETNOCON 2024 Conference Programme

Day 0 – May 28

Pre-Conference Drink and Get-Together!
18h00-20h30 – Aperitivo at GinO12, Gin Bar, Navigli district

Day 1 - May 29

Location: Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Largo Agostino Gemelli 1, Milan. https://www.unicatt.it/

8h30 - 9h00 – Registration

9h00 - 9h30 – Welcome Address and Meet the Conference Team [G 127 Pio XI]

9h30 - 10h00 – Plenary Session: "The future of netnography" [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Aleksej Heinze
Scholarship recipients will deliver a one-minute introduction of themselves and of their work

10h00 – 10h30 – Plenary Session: Keynote Prof. Robert Kozinets [G 127 Pio XI]

10h30 - 11h00 – Networking break

11h00-12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 1) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Russell Belk
"Theorizing netnography & netnography for theorizing"

1) Brooks, G., Eckhardt, G., Parmentier, M.A., Producing Social Media Content to Achieve Netnographic Immersion.
2) Gambetti R., Kozinets, R.V., Turning Netnography into Taxonomy: Classifying Virtual Influencer Forms and Functions.
3) Kelleher, A.J.M., Kelleher, C., McCarthy, M., O'Raghallaigh, P., Post-Human Realities: An Exploration of Embodied Consumer Experience in Immersive Virtual Environments.

11h00-12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 2) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Rafael de Oliveira
"Netnography for acculturation: travel, geography, and technoculture"

1) Han, L., Wengel, Y., Unveiling the Dynamics of Temple Tourism among Chinese Youth: A Netnographic Exploration of Secular Pilgrimage.
2) Xie-Carson, L., Gretzel, U., Investigating daigou transborder shopping: A longitudinal, multi-phase netnography.
3) Cheah, C.W., Ho, H.P., Surprise me with a pet in a blind box! Online pet trading from the legitimacy perspective.
4) De Simone, L., Campos de Oliveira, P., The energy that moves us: Using geo-netnography for mapping user's perceptions about sustainable energy and electric power distribution in South America.

12h30-13h30 – Lunch break

13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 3) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Liliana De Simone
"Netnography for shaping identities and subjectivities"

1) Mohamed, A., Silence identity in social media.
2) Kozinets, R.V., Liu, C., Nationalist Narratives: Gathering Political Identity and Consumption Insights from the Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of Social Media Traces.
3) Farias, M., Castilhos, R., Re-working the black female subjectivity on social media: navigating within African heritage and US-centered black empowerment.
4) Qian, S., Powell-Turner, J., Hancock, C., Who are we and how do we fit in? – Fostering international students' positive identity and sense of belonging in British society.

13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 4) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Rebecca Scott
"Netnography for capturing multifaceted parenthood"

1) Bridges, N., Facebook as a netnographic research tool: Exploring breastfeeding peer support on social networking sites.
2) Aishwarya A., Belk, R., Integrating Multi-Sited Ethnography and Netnography: An Enquiry of Self-Love among New Mothers.
3) Scussel, F., Costa do Nascimento, T., The consumer temporary vulnerability process: theorizing from the case of mothers who can not breastfeed.
4) Smith, L., et al., Creating and maintaining norms and power relations on online sperm donation platforms: Preliminary findings from a digital ethnography.

15h00 – 15h30 – Networking, tea, coffee, cakes

15h30 – 17h00 – Full length presentations (Session 5) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Aleksej Heinze
"Netnography for crafting digital entrepreneurship and leadership"

1) Ciampa, I., Bardhi, F., Market-Enabled Consumer Creativity.
2) Duan, X., Wu, Q., Between Reality and Virtuality: Digital Entrepreneurs Engage and Manage Followers.
3) Romenti, S., Murtarelli, G., Colleoni, E., Digital Leadership in the Social Media Era: A Netnographic Analysis of CEO Strategies and Practices.

15h30 – 17h00 – Full length presentations (Session 6) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Diego Rinallo
"Netnographic journeys into consumer fantasies, escapes, and storytelling"

1) Vittadini, N., Netnography of algorithmic imaginaries.
2) Mulvey, M., Down the rabbit hole: Adventures in Reddit and the consequences of curiosity.
3) Scussel, F., Suarez, M., Petroll, M., The digital narratives regime: reproducing practices from extraordinary experiences' stories.
4) Chakraborty, A., Understanding the role of mindfulness retreats for escapism in tourism: An Exploratory study.

15h30 – 17h00 – Full length presentations (Session 7) [G 129 San Paolo]
Session Chair: Ashleigh Logan-McFarlane
"Netnography for crisis management and coping"

1) Ebony. L., Somerhalder, M., The Era of Social Media and District Crisis Communication.
2) Nagarayan, D.V., Harnessing Real-Time Netnography and AI for Sustainable Marketing Strategies and Crisis Management: A Conceptual Framework.
3) Negri, F., Netnography for Crisis Communication Management and Recovery: the case of Chiara Ferragni.
4) Lloyd, K., A study of social media influencer's self management techniques to cope with online hate.

17h00 – 18h30 – Plenary Session: Interactive workshop 5-minute presentations [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Ulrike Gretzel
"Netnography for exploring cultural territories"

1) Copland, S. Understanding the use of digital memes to develop co-created brand focused narrative transmission and transportation through storytelling.
2) Maton, A., Roya R., Dale C., Overtourism Alleviation Indicators as a Strategic Tourism Planning Tool for Sustainable Urban Tourism: A case study of Reykjavik.
3) López-Garcia, Y., Exploring the postdigital lifeworlds of Latin American and Spanish migrant women on Facebook.
4) Kapareliotis, I., Matiatou, M., Website features and cultural elements: An investigation.

5) Lonardi, S., Confente I., Mazzoli V., Acuti D., Understanding the evolution of sustainable travel behaviors: a netnographic analysis of an online community.

After-dinner gelato experience!
21h00-22h00 – Gelateria Crema, Brera district

Day 2 – May 30

9h00 – 10h30 – Full length presentations (Session 8) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Marie Kerekes
"Applying Netnography in Business and Education"

1) Rodriguez, L., Navigating Digital Realms: Unveiling Technology Appropriation through Netnography Exploration in Digital Service Startups.
2) Powierska, A., @JagiellonianUniversity, I have a question!. Brand auto-netnography on the example of the Jagiellonian University.
3) Marchowska-Raza, M., Kozinets, R.V., Pursuing a PhD with Netnography: Insights from Netnographic Doctoral Students.

9h00 – 10h30 – Full length presentations (Session 9) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Mariam Humayun
"Netnographic encounters with generative artificial intelligence"

1) Von Richthofen, G., Who is Creative, Now? Generative AI in Advertising.
2) Sorbino, F., Gaur, A., Tonini, D., Zerbini, F., Colm, L., Cirrincione, A., Between Images and Words: Deciphering Sentiment on Instagram through Multimodal Analysis using Generative AI.
3) Dimitrova, I., AI, is that you? Bank customers' experience of AI assistant in Metaverse: an immersive netnographic approach.

9h00 – 10h30 – Full length presentations (Session 10) [G 129 San Paolo]
Session Chair: Lena Cavusoglu
"Netnography to support business practices"

1) Hu, L., Olivieri, M., Filieri, R., The role of social media and LinkedIn in B2B startups' marketing communications: A netnographic analysis.
2) Castellini, G., Fontana, M., Paleologo, M., Graffigna, G., Unveiling Dynamics of Quality Milk Discourse: A Social Media Analytics Exploration in the Dairy Industry.
3) Bellotto, M., De Luca P., Consumers' knowledge sharing about sustainable coffee. A netnographic research on an online coffee community of practice.

10h30 – 11h00 – Networking, tea, coffee, cakes

11h00 – 12h00 – Plenary Session: Panel on "Looking toward the future of netnography" [G 127 Pio XI]
Panel chair: Angela Beccanulli

Panelists: Russell Belk, Rachel Ashman, Lena Cavusoglu, Katie Lloyd, Magdalena Marchowska-Raza

12h00 – 12h15 – Plenary Session: Presentation of the special issue of *Futures* on "Netnographic Inspirations for Imagining Hopeful Futures" [G 127 Pio XI]
Guest editors: Rossella Gambetti, Robert V. Kozinets, Ulrike Gretzel

12h15 – 13h30 – Lunch Break

13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 11) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Marie-Agnes Parmentier
"Netnography, AI, and Diversity: Immersions and Applications"

1) Kozinets, R.V., Ashman, R., Cyborg Thirst Traps: A Technovisual Auto-netnography of Generative AI Pornography.
2) Scott, R., Gretzel, U., The Netnographer's Peripheral Vision: Exploring the Shadows of Agentic Bodies in Digital Representation.
3) Kozinets, R.V., Cavusoglu, L., Belk, R., Diverse Barbies on Diverse Platforms: Platform Comparative AI-Assisted Netnography.

13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 12) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Matteo Corciolani
"Methodological journeys and developments"

1) Marchowska-Raza, M., Immersion journal journey through social media brand community research.
2) Jakovac, M., Hobbs, L., Rowe, E., Gaps and opportunities: A scoping-review-style literature review of netnographic research into K-12 teachers' agency and identity.
3) Leccio, B.J., Maniago, J., Crafting Methodological Rigor: A Framework for Netnography in Nursing Research.

15h00 – 15h30 – Networking, tea, coffee, cakes

15h30 – 17h00 – Plenary Session: Interactive workshop 5-minute presentations [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Robert Kozinets
"Consumer and Community focused Netnography"

1) Ribeiro, M.A., Netnography and the sick consumer on the internet.
2) Aksu Gungor, S., Alkaya, U., Ulker, G., Vasile, I., Grigoras, V., Harmony and Hurdles in ELNN Online Youth Community: The Encounter of Online Community Building and Online Ethnography.
3) Zagni, L.M., Pera, R., From Immersion to Invasion: a netnographic exploration of consumers' responses' to In-Game Advertising.

18h00 – 22h00 – Experiential Evening Event at La Cascina Cuccagna (Interactive labs and social dinner)

Day 3 – May 31

9h00 – 10h30 - Full length presentations (Session 13) [SA 010 Barelli]
Session Chair: Chihling Liu
"Charting the extremes: netnographies of fandom, witchcraft and psychedelic cultures"

1) Ménard, F., Chartray, J., Etronnier, A., Lapierre, M., "Welcome [back] to New York": Taylor Swift Fans Expressing their Loyalty on TikTok.
2) Rinallo, D., Mimoun, L., Zanette, M.C., "The digital plane and the astral plane have converged": a longitudinal exploration of the witchcraft field combining netnography with in-person ethnography.

9h00 – 10h30 - Full length presentations (Session 14) [SA 115 Paolo VI]
Session Chair: Rachel Ashman
"Understanding contemporary influencer culture"

1) Costa do Nascimento, T., Morais, I., Scussel, F., Social Media Influencers as Socio-Economic Intermediaries in Beauty Consumption.
2) Scussel, F., Costa do Nascimento, T., From experience to monetization: the professionalization of social media influence process.
3) Naz, F., The Role of Instagram Influencers in Altering Brand Consumption: A Conflict Context Case.

9h00 – 10h30 - Full length presentations (Session 15) [SA 116 Schuster]
Session Chair: Valentina Primossi
"Netnography for enhancing nursing and mental wellbeing"

1) Leccio, B.J., Maniago, J., Nursing in the Social Sphere: A Netnographic Study of Online Nursing Communities and their Impact on Professional Development.
2) Garwood-Cross, L., Influencing Health: A Netnography of Social Media Health Influencer Cultures.
3) Obispo-Salazar, K., Rozo-Bernal, V., Figueroa, P., Gómez, V., Cabas-Hoyos, K., Human and virtual influencers in Mental Health: A Netnographic Study.
4) Hoyland, C., Navigating care on the digital 'stage': Young people's online peer-to-peer support networks for mental health and wellbeing - unpacking ethical considerations in non-participatory netnography and researcher reflexivity.

10h30 – 11h00 – Networking, tea, coffee, cakes [Courtyard on the ground floor]

11h00 – 12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 16) [SA010 Barelli]
Session Chair: Robert Kozinets
"Exploring gaming and livestreaming"

1) Quadri M., Andreini, D., Live streamers and where to find them: roles and purposes in influencer marketing.
2) Humayun, M., Belk, R., Navigating Brave New Worlds: Spatial Constructs in the Metaverses of Animal Crossing and Axie Infinity.
3) Beccanulli, A., Auto-Mobile Ethnography to unveil destination images in tourism live-streaming netnography.

11h00 – 12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 17) [SA 115 Paolo VI]
Session Chair: Magdalena Marchowska-Raza
"Empowering diversity and addressing vulnerabilities"

1) Marnfeldt, K. "The word dementia is a stigma on its own": a Netnographic Analysis of the Dementia Diaries.
2) Mattias, G., Bagna, G., Pera, R., Mind the Gluten: A netnographic study on trust in vulnerable consumers.
3) Primossi, V., Mulvey, M., Skyward inclusion: Transforming the aviation ecosystem for people living with dementia and their travel companions.
4) Santanni, M., Pera, R., Quinton, S., From stigma to being cool: Neurodiversity in social media.

12h30 – 13h45 – Lunch Break [Courtyard on the ground floor]

13h45 – 14h00 – Plenary Session: NETNOCON25 announcement [SA010 Barelli]

14h00 – 15h30 - Full length presentations (Session 18) [SA010 Barelli]
Session Chair: Rebecca Pera
"Navigating branding opportunities and tensions through netnography"

1) Almaghrabi, T., Heller, M., Chelekis, J., Memes in Marketing: A Study on the Legitimate Use of Internet Memes by Brands.
2) Biraghi, S., Gambetti, R., Cova, B., Fangame Netnography: When Brand Hijack Fosters Brand Revitalization.
3) Heinze, A., Malevicious, R., Serwanski, T., Netnographic insights into woke washing: how to increase the transparency in brand communications.
4) Arshad, M.H., Exploring why Brand Hate is expressed on Brand Publics.

14h00 – 15h30 - Full length presentations (Session 19) [SA116 Schuster]
Session Chair: Michael Mulvey
"Digital visibility and authenticity"

1) Sanyal, J., Consumer Visibility: How visibility dynamics shape identity in the SMI marketplace.
2) Ahmed, I., Alwi, S., Asaad, Y., Visibility through clutter: How could brands cut through advertising clutter on Instagram?.
3) Campbell, V., Maximising social media engagement in the future: Building authentic relationships via Facebook. A not-for-profit case study.

15h30 – 16h00 – Coffee break [Courtyard on the ground floor]

16h00 – 17h30 – Plenary Session: Industry panel on "Developing cultural consumer insights and the challenges of AI" [SA010 Barelli]
Panel chairs: Silvia Biraghi & Rossella Gambetti

Panelists:
Carla Bastetti, Head of Strategy & Insights, Danone
Marco Fornaro, Chief Strategy Officer, MSL (Publicis Groupe)
Carola Lattuada, Innovation Expert & Trend Cult Leader, Kantar
Novella Sardos Albertini, Brand & Digital Marketing Director, Illycaffè
Giulia Sarti, Senior Marketing & Communications Manager, Huawei

17h30 – 17h50 - Plenary Session: "Netnography Enriched: Business Approach" [SA010 Barelli]
Irina Schneider, Senior Consultant Consumer Research & User Experience, Spiegel Institute

17h50 – 19h15 – Closing reception with aperitivo [Courtyard on the ground floor]

NETNOCON 2024 Conference Proceedings

Day 1 - May 29

11h00-12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 1) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Russell Belk
"Theorizing netnography & netnography for theorizing"

1) Brooks, G., Eckhardt, G., Parmentier, M.A., Producing Social Media Content to Achieve Netnographic Immersion.
2) Gambetti R., Kozinets, R.V., Turning Netnography into Taxonomy: Classifying Virtual Influencer Forms and Functions.
3) Kelleher, A.J.M., Kelleher, C., McCarthy, M., O'Raghallaigh, P., Post-Human Realities: An Exploration of Embodied Consumer Experience in Immersive Virtual Environments.

Producing Social Media Content to Achieve Netnographic Immersion

Gillian Brooks[1], Giana Eckhardt[1], Marie-Agnes Parmentier[2]
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Extended Abstract
How a researcher can immerse themselves into a community of interest – at the heart of most interpretive research – in a digital context typically involves engaging in textual conversations in comment threads, and text and visual analysis of content produced by others (Kozinets 2019; Caliandro 2018). Yet, the online space supports different mechanisms of engagement beyond looking at what others do. In some communities of interest, achieving immersion can benefit from the production of original content by the researcher. How to produce such content has not yet been discussed within the literature.
In this paper, we introduce three content production practices that can be used in netnographic research. We developed an Instagram account and platform profiles and used them to immerse ourselves in a community of consumers focused on fashion rental over the course of one year. These consumers, actively engaged in circular fashion practices, are renting fashion via platforms like ByRotation and Hurr and interact on social media.

Table 1: Three practices to achieve netnographic immersion

Demonstrating Acumen	Using the Native Tone and Voice of the Space	Adapting To Your Surroundings
Tagging brands, using hashtags identified as effective, and co-creating content with key actors in the space.	Adopting key strategies used by online influencers (Brooks et al. 2021) increased our engagement with brands, which gave us the capital necessary to gain access to central actors.	Learning how other members of the community post and adapting accordingly.

Engaging in these practices to develop an embodied understanding of circular fashion while becoming renters ourselves allowed us to achieve four outcomes:

1. Gain access to key informants and the community at large including at exclusive events.

2. Experience the phenomenon of interest from an emic perspective (Geertz 1973), immersing ourselves amongst insiders and becoming insiders ourselves.
3. Capture how digital immersion works in new forms of online spaces, e.g. apps, going beyond the current literature (Kozinets 2019; Caliandro and Gandini 2017).
4. Document practices to capture the evolving consumer whose behavior is a blend of online and offline practices.

In conclusion, we engaged in a study which took place in online apps and associated social media, and quickly realized that there was little guidance that focused on how a researcher can immerse themselves in these spaces. We used this as an opportunity to document useful content production practices, allowing us to provide needed methodological innovation to netnographic research on how consumers engage with each other and with brands in online and offline spaces.

Keywords: content production, social media, immersion, fashion, netnography

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Turning Netnography into Taxonomy: Classifying Virtual Influencer Forms and Functions.

Rossella Gambetti[1], Robert V. Kozinets[2]
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Extended Abstract

Netnography has been used in prior research to classify types of peer-to-peer platform businesses (Perren and Kozinets, 2018) and influencers or word-of-mouth marketing strategies (Kozinets et al., 2010). However, the overarching principles and guiding procedures for conducting a netnography and then analyzing it to produce a rigorous taxonomic theoretical contribution still remain opaque. Using a recent study of virtual influencer forms and function, we demonstrate how to conduct a large-case netnography in pursuit of a theoretical contribution to taxonomic classification.

Our three-year multisite longitudinal netnography of virtual influencers across major social media platforms serves as the foundation for a taxonomy, drawing inspiration from Weber's (1949) notion of ideal types and adhering to Wimmer's (2008) criteria. This methodology extends taxonomy design principles outlined by Kundisch et al. (2022) for contemporary technosocial phenomena. The key to the taxonomy is sampling a large enough number of cases in the initial round, with sufficient cultural detail, to enable the pattern recognition which allows the identification of meaningful differences among the instances of the phenomenon and relevant conceptual axes. The taxonomy's development unfolds in three phases, which we term the telescopic microscopic, and nanoscopic.

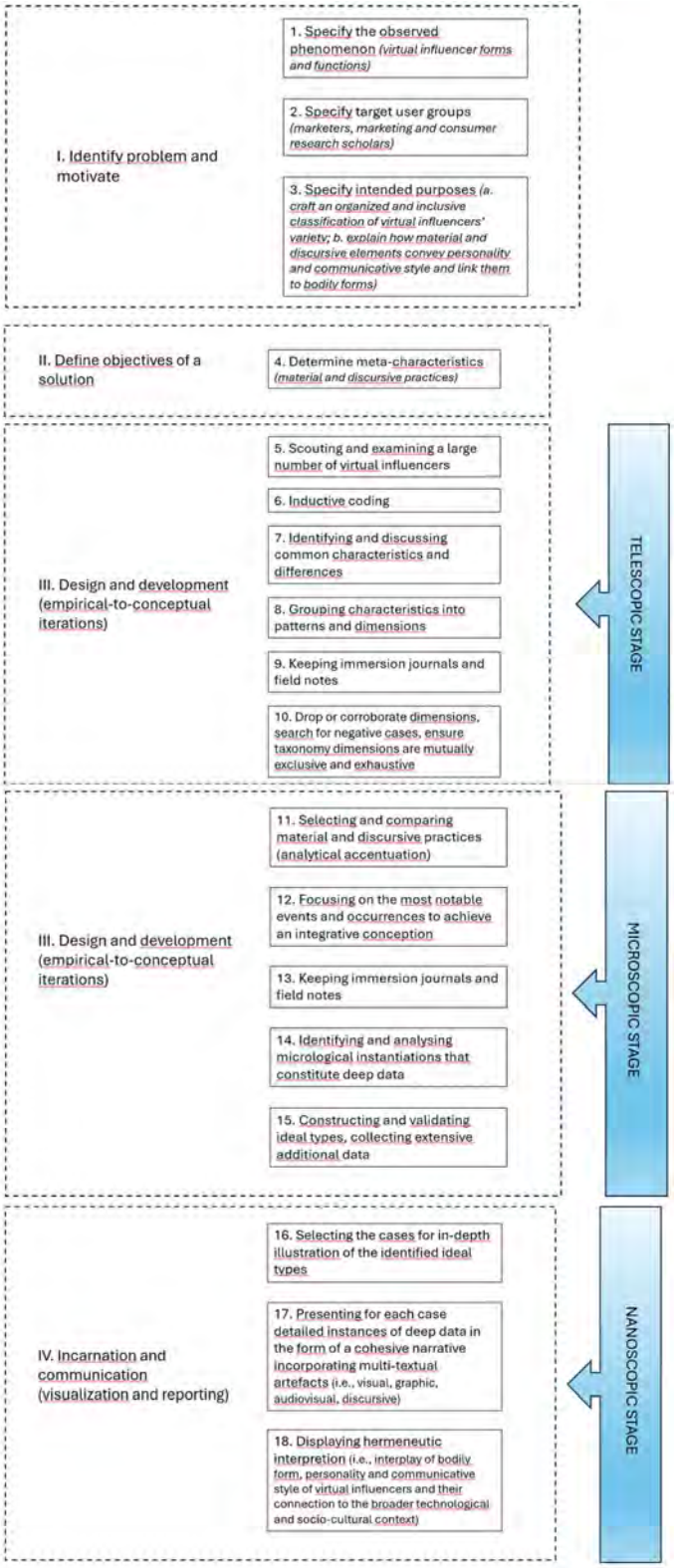
In the initial telescopic phase, we sampled the entire relevant and obtainable set of virtual influencers available, which totaled 174 influencers. This corresponded to prior research that sampled (a) the entire set of influencers in a particular campaign, and (b) the entire reachable set of platform-based

business model companies. The initial set was subject to a variety of coding strategies resulting from careful deliberation of their commonalities and distinctions. Various descriptors and dimensions are employed to elucidate patterns across diverse virtual influencers. Immersion journal notes documented the discovery research process, encapsulating data encounters, insights from the empirical dataset and integration with existing concepts. The telescopic view enabled the identification of types, in each case captured by a 2X2 quadrant.

From the four resultant types a much smaller set of cases were chosen for more intensive netnography to deepen the classification scheme and knowledge of each quadrant's variability and characteristics. This microscopic phase comprised the more precise elaboration of ideal type characteristics, in this case, by selecting and contrasting key emergent material-discursive practices. This process, akin to "analytical accentuation," focuses on notable distinctive events. Within this stage, we identify, analyze, and discuss pertinent "micrological" instantiations from the 14 influencers in our final dataset. Subsequently, we expand our dataset by collecting additional data from posts and consumer comments over an additional 11-month period.

The final, nanoscopic investigation stage was largely representational. It required us to decide on the key cases to use for illustration and draw on detailed instances of deep data from virtual influencers in the four types we elaborated: hyper-human, anti-human, pan-human, and alter-human. Each type was represented by two detailed case studies drawn from the prior 14 cases, thus comprising 8 mini-case studies in total. Each was represented to illustrate their distinctive interplay of bodily form, personality, communicative style, and their connection to the broader technological and socio-cultural context.

Figure 1 - Netnographic taxonomy design process of virtual influencer forms and functions



Source: elaboration of the authors adapted from Kundisch et al. (2022, p. 428)

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Post-Human Realities: An Exploration of Embodied Consumer Experience in Immersive Virtual Environments

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Extended Abstract
The conventional paradigms that have historically shaped extant understandings of consumer experiences characterise embodied experience as *intelligible embodiment* (the bodily basis of thought), described as a blending of "physical interaction and conceptual blending". However, such approaches inadequately capture the transformative post-human nature of embodiment within the contemporary digital landscape as the body undergoes techno-digital transformations that challenge consumer sensemaking, such as taking on non-human forms or having experiences that augment consumers' experiences of embodiment.

This is particularly the case in immersive virtual environments (IVE's), such as social virtual reality platforms, which are characterised by a computer interface that surrounds the user with visual information, typically by means of a head-mounted display (HMD), and users navigate and interact with the environment by means of their physical body. Consumer experience (CX) in IVE's is under theorised as traditional discussions of social interactions and virtual reality have often centered on human experiences, whereas post-humanism, with its emphasis on the complex entanglements between humans, technology, and virtual environments, challenges anthropocentrism and expands the limits of current approaches to re-embodied CX.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a more nuanced exploration of the interplay between the human body and the digital realm from a post-humanist perspective and its impact on embodied CX in IVE's. We first develop and outline a post-humanist framework, FUTCX, which recognises the dissolution of boundaries between human subjects and their virtual counterparts. By viewing consumers in IVE's as networked entities entangled within a web of human, technological, and virtual forces, FUTCX reconceptualises embodied CX as a fluid and dynamic phenomenon that transcends traditional boundaries. By destabilising anthropocentric CX perspectives, which prioritise human-technology binaries, FUTCX problematises traditional conceptualisations of embodied CX in IVE's by identifying 5 forms of embodiment in a post-humanism framework and we critically discuss how the fusion of human and non-human elements shapes and redefines the very essence of embodied CX within IVE's.

Finally, we discuss the ethical dimensions inherent in post-humanist embodied CX, exploring issues of agency, autonomy, and the potential for reconfiguring power dynamics in the digital landscape. As virtual environments become increasingly sophisticated, the article contemplates the broader societal implications of a post-humanist perspective on consumerism, encouraging a critical discourse on the ethical responsibilities of designers, marketers, and policymakers.

In conclusion, this conceptual paper contributes to the ongoing scholarly conversation by offering a theoretical framework that redefines and expands our comprehension of embodied CX in IVE's. By embracing a post-humanist perspective, the paper challenges conventional boundaries, paving the way for a more inclusive and holistic understanding of the intricate interplay between humans and technology in the realm of CX, and provides a future research agenda to explore the impacts for innovative design, ethical considerations, and the development tailored marketing strategies that resonate with the complex interplay between human bodies and the digital environment.

Keywords: Embodied consumer experience, immersive virtual environments, post-humanism

11h00-12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 2) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Rafael de Oliveira
"Netnography for acculturation: travel, geography, and technoculture"

1) Han, L., Wengel, Y., Unveiling the Dynamics of Temple Tourism among Chinese Youth: A Netnographic Exploration of Secular Pilgrimage.
2) Xie-Carson, L., Gretzel, U., Investigating daigou transborder shopping: A longitudinal, multi-phase netnography.
3) Cheah, C. W., Ho, H.P., Surprise me with a pet in a blind box! Online pet trading from the legitimacy perspective.
4) De Simone, L., Campos de Oliveira, P., The energy that moves us: Using geo-netnography for mapping user's perceptions about sustainable energy and electric power distribution in South America.

Unveiling the Dynamics of Temple Tourism among Chinese Youth: A Netnographic Exploration of Secular Pilgrimage.

Longrui (Lorie) Han[1], Yans Wengel[2]
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Extended Abstract

Enriched with cultural diversity and historical significance, China is experiencing a rise in tourism to religious places. Moving beyond a perception of a singular national identity, there is a growing fascination with religion and religious tourism, particularly towards temples. The temple pilgrimage of young people differs fundamentally from the traditional "pilgrimage" of the past. While various aspects of religious tourism have been extensively studied, there is a relatively limited focus on understanding young people's interest, motivation and belief in visiting temples.
Rooted in phenomenolog, this qualitative study used a netnographic approach to examine the growing phenomenon of temple tourism among Chinese youth. We employ netnography to unravel the motivations, experiences, and cultural dimensions surrounding this contemporary phenomenon by focusing on the narratives and behaviours observed on social media platforms. Utilizing popular platforms like the Little Red Book and Bilibili, where young Chinese individuals extensively document their lives and emotions, this study collected 120 posts about temple visits. Furthermore,

the first author conducted 15 semi-structured interviews at the Tiantai Temple (located on Mount Jiuhua, Qingyang County of Anhui province). Through keyword analysis of the data, the study investigates the pivotal role of social media in shaping and propagating this trend, emphasizing the transformative influence of online platforms on cultural shifts among Chinese youth.
The study captures the diverse evolving patterns of young individuals engaging in temple visits. Findings reveal a notable shift in visitation patterns, driven by cultural curiosity, social influence, and a quest for work-life balance. Contemporary temple tourism has gradually become detached from religious beliefs as many young Chinese who do not identify as religious also visit temples for spiritual support. This phenomenon shares similarities with Hegel's Lord-bondsman dialectic as outlined in the Phenomenology of Spirit. It reflects the evolving self-consciousness among young people in China, transitioning from "slave-like" to "master-like" personality through pilgrimages.
The study delves into the pragmatic and secular aspects of temple visits, shedding light on the realistic goals and mental relief young people seek amid work and study challenges. While they may not adhere to traditional religious beliefs, their temple visits signify a quest for spiritual fulfilment, connection to tradition, and a sense of belonging. This secular pilgrimage can be seen as a manifestation of the bondsman's struggle for recognition within the social hierarchy. By engaging in practices traditionally associated with religious devotion, such as visiting temples and participating in rituals, these individuals assert their autonomy and seek recognition of their cultural heritage and values. At the same time, the temples represent symbols of power and authority, akin to the lord in Hegel's dialectic. Visiting these temples can be interpreted as negotiating power dynamics, where individuals navigate their relationship with tradition, authority, and their sense of self. Thus, the phenomenon of secular pilgrimage among younger Chinese individuals reflects the complex interplay between power, recognition, and the search for identity within contemporary society, mirroring the themes central to the Lord-bondsman dialectic.
The research contributes to a nuanced understanding of contemporary youth culture, elucidating the pragmatic perception of religion and showcasing how young individuals navigate societal pressures in modern China. The study identifies a desire to visit temples as a response to stress and a search for well-being. This secular pilgrimage is possibly linked to the phenomenon of Tang Ping (lying flat), which encompasses a mindset that challenges societal expectations of constant productivity and economic growth in favour of a simpler, less stressful life. Visiting a temple may initiate a transformative journey of visitors' self and related worldviews. It emphasizes the need to align pilgrimage behaviour with the preferences of young visitors who embrace this new format. The research explores potential forms of temple tourism by comparing them with traditional temple tourism literature. The study examines potential variations in temple tourism by contrasting them with traditional forms documented in the literature. The findings propose strategies to design participatory and experiential tourism products that cater to individual needs while underscoring the significance of preserving temples' natural and human environment. Furthermore, the study highlights the potential of temple tourism not only as a means of stress release but also as a powerful tool for spreading and experiencing temple culture in innovative and engaging ways.

Keywords: temple tourism, religious tourism, netnography, secular pilgrimage, Tang Ping - lying flat

Investigating daigou transborder shopping: A longitudinal, multi-phase netnography.

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract

Daigou (代购) or surrogate shopping has significantly stimulated the growth of transborder shopping. While the daigou phenomenon has become prevalent in practice, scholarly research remains underdeveloped in this field. This study aims to investigate the perceptions of Chinese daigou shoppers by employing a longitudinal, multi-phase netnography from 2017-2023. The netnographic process encompassed closely following daigou shoppers' social media accounts, having firsthand experiences as a daigou shopper, and collecting and analyzing post comments from daigou shoppers. The results suggest that daigou shopping is perceived as a social obligation, a source of income, a leisure activity, and a form of gift giving. This study contributes to the surrogate consumption literature by adding social capital, gift-giving and technology mediation as important dimensions. It also demonstrates the merits of the longitudinal, multi-phase netnography approach in obtaining in-depth contextual understanding of the unique technocultural phenomenon and in exploiting the possibility of adopting different immersion methods during the process.

1. Introduction

Transborder shopping has proliferated in recent years. In 2022, 89% of Australian shoppers have purchased merchandise across borders (Flow, 2022). Consumers are motivated to buy goods from foreign vendors to take advantage of cheaper prices or to obtain goods not available in their country. While much of transborder shopping is conducted online or when traveling abroad, many consumers in countries like China still often lack the opportunity to engage in cross-border e-Commerce or travel. However, intermediaries such as daigou shoppers have significantly contributed to the growth of transborder shopping in China (Xie, 2018). Daigou (代购) stands for "purchasing goods on one's behalf" in Chinese. It involves a daigou shopper making purchases on behalf of those who are not physically willing or able to travel abroad and subsequently bringing the goods to those individuals by mailing a package or carrying the goods in their own suitcase (Glavas et al., 2023).

The daigou phenomenon emerged around 2005 when individuals living or travelling abroad started to frequently purchase foreign products for their friends and family in China (Jiang & Kungel, 2017). The blooming of an organized daigou industry began around 2008 when the scandal of infant formula containing melamine erupted. This incident widely raised Chinese consumers' safety concerns for domestic products and significantly destroyed their trust towards them (Jiang & Kungel, 2017). Due to the imperfect consumption market and the commonness of pirated goods in China, daigou shopping of foreign products suddenly became exceptionally popular (Xie, 2018). Despite the Chinese government's attempts to crack down on the practice, the market size of daigou shopping in China has increased more than 40% since 2019, resulting in an estimated value of US$81 Billion (Re-Hub, 2023).

Daigou shoppers enable individuals to purchase foreign goods at a less expensive price without high custom tariffs, shop for niche offerings and purchase products or promotional deals that are not (yet) available in China (Glavas et al., 2023). Consequently, daigou shopping remains an important economic phenomenon facilitated by global flows of people (Xie, 2018). Daigou shoppers can be broadly divided into professional shoppers and amateur shoppers. Professional shoppers are those who do daigou shopping for a living and serve a wide range of customers whereas amateur shoppers

are those who are not mainly driven by profits and usually only serve acquaintances, such as friends and family.

Theoretically, daigou shopping is a form of surrogate consumption (Gabel, 2005), which means that consumers relinquish control over some aspects of their consumption behaviors to an external expert or market intermediary. While existing literature has looked into the surrogate consumer phenomenon to some extent, most research has focused on the functions and responsibilities of professional shoppers (Solomon, 1987; Hollander & Rassuli, 1999). There is also some research on motivations to use surrogate shoppers (Forsythe, Butler, & Schaefer, 1990). The daigou-specific literature has explored the corporeal mobilities of daigou shoppers (Xie, 2018) and their behaviors and preferences (Zhang et al., 2021). However, the experiences of surrogate shoppers, including daigou shoppers, remain largely unexplored.

Daigou shopping is a major technocultural phenomenon in China, as the interaction (e.g., advertisement, communication, and payment processing) between professional daigou shoppers and recipients are achieved through online platforms such as Taobao and WeChat (Glavas et al., 2023). Amateur shoppers also rely on social media channels such as WeChat and Weibo to interact with recipients (Liu & Cheng, 2021). COVID-19 has given rise to new opportunities for online live-streaming, which has been used widely in daigou shopping (Wang, 2020). In essence, daigou shopping is cultivated by the advancement of information and communication technologies in combination with changing consumer demands, shopping behavior, and interpersonal relationships.

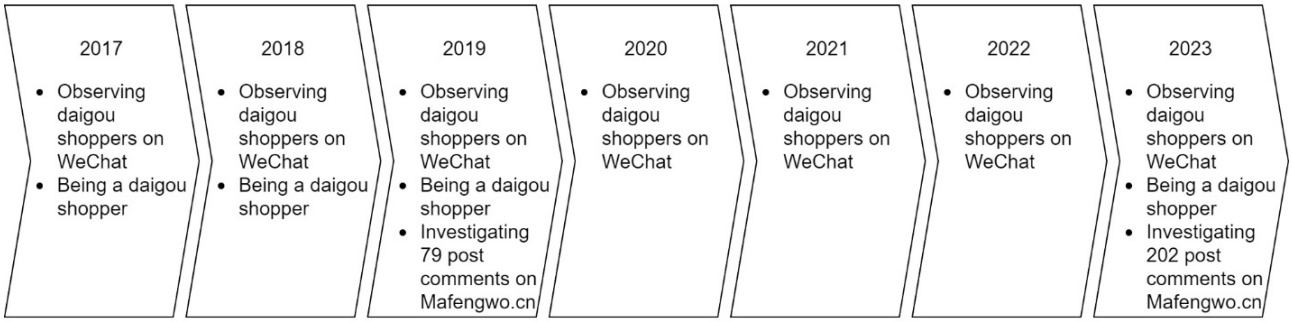
While the daigou phenomenon has become prevalent, scholarly research that investigates daigou shoppers is scarce (Zhang, Tham, Liu, Spinks, & Wang, 2021). Understanding daigou shopping is imperative from a marketing perspective as daigou shoppers become an important target segment that needs to be catered to. This study is aimed to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Chinese daigou shoppers. It is believed that this research on daigou shoppers will enrich the current understanding of the daigou shopping landscape as a digital channel and technocultural phenomenon, contribute to the surrogate consumption literature, and better inform businesses and individuals that are involved in transborder shopping.

2. Methodology

Given that daigou shopping is a unique technocultural phenomenon embedded in the intricate Internet landscape in China, netnography is deemed as an appropriate method to investigate it (Kozinets, 2020). A longitudinal netnography with multiple phases and types of immersion was employed from March 2017 to November 2023. The central role of immersion in netnography distinguishes the method from other digital research approaches (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023). The longitudinal, multi-phase nature allowed the authors to be immersed in the technocultural phenomenon over an extensive period of time and in different ways, thus generating more nuanced and in-depth findings.

The netnographic operational procedures of immersion and investigation were combined in this study across multiple phases (see Figure 1). The first author immersed herself online and offline as a daigou shopper and made purchases for friends and family in 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2023. She used WeChat Chats throughout the daigou process: from the pre-purchase phase (e.g., inquire products), to the purchase phase (e.g., discuss changes and logistics) and to the post-purchase phase (e.g., provide feedback). She also followed seven friends' journeys as daigou shoppers who used WeChat Moments for information dissemination and communication. Such close observation enhances the comprehension of the daigou phenomenon. An immersion journal using Microsoft Word was kept during the longitudinal, multi-phase netnography to record valuable insights, note self-reflections and offer additional contextual information for data analysis.

Figure 1. An overview of the longitudinal, multi-phase netnography.



Daigou shoppers' user generated content (a total of 281 post comments) on Mafengwo.cn (马蜂窝旅游网) was investigated in 2019 and 2023. Mafengwo.cn is a Chinese travel booking and experience sharing website that was founded in 2006 (Mafengwo, 2023). Mafengwo.cn was chosen for this study because it is a leading Chinese travel networking site that daigou shoppers use to share their transborder shopping experiences. In this study, 79 post comments (from https://www.mafengwo.cn/wenda/detail-13068875.html) were collected and analyzed in 2019 and 202 post comments (from https://www.mafengwo.cn/wenda/detail-11635013.html) were collected and analyzed in 2023. Notably, only publicly available post comments were collected, and the usernames of those who commented were anonymized in this study.

Daigou shoppers' post comments were analyzed thematically following Creswell's data coding process model (2011). The data were coded in Chinese and only exemplary codes were translated. The translation was conducted by the first author as she is a native speaker of Chinese with prior translation experience. Post comments were read several times before codes were generated. Codes were then grouped into common themes after the iterative process of coding. Subsequently, the themes were discussed and validated between the authors. The researcher positionality and opportunities for reflexivity were broadened by having two authors with different cultural backgrounds engage in extensive discussions.

3. Findings and discussions

The investigative data revealed that Chinese daigou shoppers perceived daigou shopping as a social obligation, a source of income, a leisure activity, and a form of gift giving (see Table 1). The findings presented in Table 1 were generated based on data coming from 281 post comments collected at two different moments in time. Since some comments had two or more perspectives expressed, the sum across all categories exceeds the number of post comments.

Table 1. Post comments of Chinese daigou shoppers.

Perceptions of Chinese daigou shoppers	Times mentioned in posts collected in 2019 (N=79)	Times mentioned in posts collected in 2023 (N=202)	Total mentions across all posts (N=281)
Daigou shopping as a social obligation	28 (35.4%)	135 (66.8%)	163 (58.0%)
Daigou shopping as a source of income	7 (8.9%)	89 (44.1%)	96 (34.2%)
Daigou shopping as a leisure activity	33 (41.8%)	21 (10.4%)	54 (19.2%)
Daigou shopping as gift giving	27 (34.2%)	19 (9.4%)	46 (16.4%)

Findings from the investigative data were compared, contrasted, and complemented with findings from the immersive data collected across the varied immersion phases. While the themes remained

stable over time, some changes in the relative prominence of the themes emerged that hint at increased levels of professionalization of daigou shoppers and a shift away from gift giving to social obligation for amateur shoppers. There is a growing professionalization in the network as relationship-driven daigou shopping is becoming more selective, particularly during the pandemic. This was corroborated by data from the immersion journal. The first author reflects:

Initially, I did daigou shopping for all friends and family who requested it, but I later found that their requests became so frequent to a point that I could not accommodate. Therefore, I had to find a way to resolve the issue. I now do daigou shopping for family only and refer friends and colleagues to professional daigou shoppers through WeChat.

All four themes reflect different motivations and experiences that shape daigou shoppers' involvement in surrogate consumption. In the following section, exemplar quotes translated from Chinese to English are used to demonstrate each perspective.

3.1. Daigou shopping as a social obligation

Social obligation is the main driver of daigou shopping. Approximately 58% of the comments from Chinese daigou shoppers discussed daigou shopping as a social obligation. Immersed in a collective society that puts heavy emphasis on social norms, Chinese daigou shoppers considered daigou shopping as a gesture of social obligation to maintain guanxi (关系) within their social network. Chinese guanxi is a set of social connections that enable the reciprocity, mutual favors and trustworthiness between individuals with an emotional feeling of attachment (Zani, 2019). According to Fei, Hamilton, and Zheng (1992), the Chinese society consists of guanxi circles that extend from kinship ties like family to non-kin ties such as friends and acquaintances. This sense of social obligation drives amateur daigou shoppers to do daigou shopping even when they are not or no longer interested in transborder shopping. This also explains why daigou shopping has become a ubiquitous activity of Chinese transborder travelers. Exemplar post comments include:

Depending on guanxi, I will do daigou shopping for some people while traveling. I will definitely do daigou shopping for family and close friends.

I have no choice but to do daigou shopping for friends, mostly friends and family, I feel sorry to decline their requests.

I helped others to purchase products, some colleagues, family and friends who have a close relationship with me, it is not okay not to daigou shop something for them.

In reflecting on her own experiences, the first author found that most amateur daigou shoppers had experiences that resembled her own. The majority does daigou shopping for close friends and family out of this sense of social obligation; some do daigou shopping for colleagues when the requested items are relatively small in size and light in weight. While there are relational benefits arising from daigou shopping, daigou shoppers also face several key challenges, including the risk of harming established relationships. For example, recipients might be unhappy when the items they purchased are perceived as expensive, inauthentic or were damaged in transition. This is because recipients often pay for the items themselves even though daigou shoppers engage in this behavior with a sense of social obligation.

3.2. Daigou shopping as a source of income

While approximately 34% of the comments mentioned daigou shopping as a source of income, amateur daigou shoppers did not rely on daigou shopping for profit making but rather used it as a way to offset their effort and time involved. The reason for that is the profits they would earn are

perceived to be marginal compared to the amount of time and effort they have to invest in the activities. Daigou shoppers also expressed that charging a commission fee is a tactic they use to ward off the overwhelming requests from friends and colleagues. Amateur daigou shoppers tend to charge a commission fee (e.g., 10% of a merchandise price) when daigou shopping for not-so-intimate friends and colleagues. The following post comments reflect daigou shoppers' desire to be compensated for their hard work and risks:

It is fine to charge a fee for daigou shopping for friends or colleagues that I am not so close with. Afterall I will need to do everything. It is not easy. For example, I will need to be responsible for the potential risks involved going through the customs.

I think daigou shopping is hard work, especially for people like me who doesn't enjoy shopping. If I changed my travel plan to do daigou shopping and put in my heart and soul comparing prices in different stores, why can't I charge a fee? I should get paid for what I do.

From my perspective as a student, my parents paid for my flights. Since I will need to carry the merchandise in my luggage, charging a fee is not too bad, at least this can compensate for part of my airfare.

Professional daigou shoppers, on the other hand, treat making profits as the main motivation rather than considering social obligations, leisure activities or gift-giving. These shoppers tend to use several social media platforms (e.g., WeChat, TikTok, Xiaohongshu and Weibo), technology (e.g., live streaming), and e-commerce platforms (e.g., Taobao) to promote merchandise and communicate with their clientele. Figure 2 shows the WeChat Moments of a professional daigou shopper that the first author followed as part of her multi-phase immersion on WeChat. Often the merchandise and pricing are posted on WeChat Moments and interested consumers can either comment on the post or message the daigou shopper directly for further details. Intriguingly, the pandemic did not inhibit the professional daigou shopper from advertising daigou shopping merchandise. Instead, she pivoted to sell more health-related merchandise such as vitamins and over-the-counter medicines. She also relied on direct delivery services from the manufacturers and existing stocks in China to alleviate the logistics delay during the pandemic.

Figure 2. A professional daigou shopper's WeChat Moments from 2020-2023.

3.3. Daigou shopping as a leisure activity

About 19% of the comments collected during the investigation movement considered daigou shopping as a leisure activity. Some amateur daigou shoppers mentioned that they would not mind doing daigou shopping for friends and colleagues, as long as they had shopping plans themselves or if the stores were accessible and conveniently located. Daigou shoppers revealed that the fun of shopping, the opportunity to learn about products and intrinsic motivations such as a sense of happiness after helping others out and the feeling of being needed are the reasons why they do daigou shopping. Daigou shoppers who see their surrogate shopping activities as interesting, fun, beneficial, and part of their travel experience expressed this in a variety of ways:

Sometimes I happen to need the same product, so I would purchase them together, besides, I could use the daigou shopping opportunity to learn about, for instance, the skincare products my colleague wants to buy and see if these would suit me. This is one of my useful ways to know what to shop abroad. Go shopping is also an interest of mine.

I really like to go daigou shopping for my good friends as it allows me to get to know many good products. I like to daigou shop locally made products for my friends, that way I also have the chance to look around in the store.

I went to Japan twice and went daigou shopping and bought a big suitcase worth of products for friends and colleagues. I only bought a small suitcase worth of products for myself. I was stoked because daigou shopping satisfied my desire for shopping, yet I didn't spend my money.

On the flip side, doing daigou shopping may interrupt personal plans. The immersion journal notes suggest that amateur daigou shoppers tend to find it difficult to relax and enjoy themselves abroad when having daigou tasks. Also, doing daigou shopping can be physically exhausting, especially when returning unwanted products and searching for popular items that are out of stock easily.

3.4. Daigou shopping as a form of gift giving

Over 16% of the comments referred to daigou shopping as a form of gift giving. Some amateur daigou shoppers would go daigou shopping but ended up purchasing the product as a gift for their friends or family. Others perceived daigou shopping as a gesture to build reciprocity with others. The behavior of gift giving is often motivated by this promise of reciprocity and transborder gifts are especially effective. Daigou shoppers intend to build guanxi with whoever they do daigou shopping for, because Chinese are used to cultivate relationships through reciprocal behaviors of doing and returning a favor (Fei et al., 1992). This aligns with the findings in Appau and Crockett's research (2023) where gifts enabled shoppers to perform reciprocity, underlining the value in people as gift subjects. The following comments illustrate how intricately linked daigou shopping can be with maintaining friendships through gifts:

I have a friend who asked me to do daigou shopping, but only a little bit of shopping. Because the friend is my bestie, just like my family, I'm too embarrassed to accept money and ended up gifting it.

If my friends helped me to purchase something on their trips, I would definitely do daigou shopping for them on my trip, this is friendship. I like helping my friends through daigou shopping because they are courteous. They would treat me to a meal, rather than asking me directly to do daigou shopping for them.

I don't think it [daigou shopping] is troublesome, as we help each other out, they would also do daigou shopping for me (when going overseas). I feel it is fine, I don't hate it, I'm willing to do it.

Performing daigou shopping as a gift also eliminates some of the risks and challenges mentioned earlier as no fee is charged. Figure 3 is part of the immersion journal that reveals discussions between the first author and her friends on WeChat. The conversations consolidate the view that treating daigou shopping as a form of gift-giving and a social obligation is common amongst Chinese amateur daigou shoppers.

Figure 3. Daigou shopping conversations with friends.

For which products did you do daigou shopping for family or friends?

Makeup and snacks.

Did they ask you to do daigou shopping or did you volunteer to do it?

I volunteered to shop for snacks as gifts, but they also requested me to purchase something.

Makeup was what they requested.

Why did you volunteer to daigou shop snacks?

Because they are light, convenient and easy to carry, and good for everyone. Each country has snacks with their unique flavors.

Bringing snacks back shows my thoughtfulness. The pricing of snacks is usually reasonable.

Is thoughtfulness important in Chinese society?

Very important.

Why?

I think, to me, it shows I care about my family and friends.

Building reciprocity is also part of the reason, but not all.

I tend to treat it casually. I don't pressure myself to focus only on this sort of thing.

For instance, do you feel like you need to help when your family wants you to do daigou shopping?

Yes, depending on whether it is convenient to do so.

Why do you feel that you need to help them?

Life always has moments when we need to help each other.

This is common. The same applies to daigou shopping.

You did mention that some people requested you to do daigou shopping. Did you want to refuse their request or accept it wholeheartedly at the time?

Both.

For which products did you do daigou shopping for family or friends?

I did daigou shopping both to and from China. Products that I bought back to China were mainly makeup from duty free shops.

What about products from China for people overseas?

Apparel, small electric appliances, everyday products and beddings.

Did your family and friends request you to do daigou shopping or did you volunteer to do it?

Both.

I usually ask them what they like. I would purchase products based on their shopping list.

Why were you willing to do daigou shopping for them?

Favors.

Could you please elaborate?

We usually have a good relationship. When I go abroad, I have time to do daigou shopping for them.

Do you think favors are important for Chinse society?

Quite important.

Why?

Ultimately, China is a society filled with favors.

It's easier to get things sorted when you know someone. Besides, doing daigou shopping allows me to reconnect with friends who I haven't contacted in years.

Bringing us closer.

Do you find a specific timeslot, say a day, to do daigou shopping? Or do you do it when you have spare moments?

It depends. I went daigou shopping for masks specifically during the pandemic, many times.

Other times I did it when I had time. For example, when I purchased products I needed, I took pictures and asked if others also needed them.

I see, thank you.

4. Conclusion

This study employed a longitudinal netnography with different phases of investigation and multiple types of immersion to explore the perceptions and experiences of Chinese daigou shoppers in the context of transborder shopping. It found that daigou shopping is intricately linked to Chinese guanxi culture and gift giving practices. Charging a fee for daigou shopping services offers a way to negotiate social obligations and justify the risks taken and efforts invested in the shopping activities. However, when money enters the equation, additional challenges arise, and it might be easier to simply refer those with transborder shopping needs to professional daigou shoppers. This embeddedness in relationships and the complexity of balancing obligations with potential benefits adds important dimensions to the surrogate consumption literature that has only focused on professional shoppers.

Specifically, this study expands surrogate shopping theory (Gabel, 2005) by adding social capital, gift-giving, and technological dimensions. In contrast to existing surrogate shopping research, the daigou shopping findings emphasize relational rather than purely transactional outcomes for the surrogate shoppers. Further, while surrogate shopping has only been researched in offline settings, the daigou shopping results highlight the role of social media platforms and mobile technology for connecting both professional and amateur surrogate shoppers and recipients, as well as for supporting the shopping process and the transaction. From a practical perspective, the findings further illustrate that not all daigou shoppers are equal, and that marketing strategies aimed at daigou shoppers need to consider their distinct motivations and social relationships with their daigou shopping recipients.

The research also has methodological implications. Given the centrality of contextual understanding for netnographic research, it is important to note that continuously evolving contexts might require multiple and varied engagement over longer time spans. This study illustrates how a longitudinal netnography can be applied to investigate an emerging technocultural phenomenon through multiple phases and types of immersion and investigation. While netnographies usually add a longitudinal perspective through the investigation of archival data from different time periods, this particular netnography involved multiple and varied phases of immersion and investigation over a seven-year time span. Each netnography phase and movement provided a particular window into the phenomenon. Together, the different times and types of engagement offered opportunities to zoom in and out of the phenomenon and to reflect on previously identified patterns.

There are some limitations to this study that should be addressed in future work. First, the netnography approach did not include active interactions with users on Mafengwo.cn. Future research is recommended to employ a more active approach such as conducting interviews to further validate the results. Second, it is acknowledged that the daigou phenomenon may manifest differently based on countries and regions involved in the transborder shopping activities, such as the differences found for the daigou phenomenon in Hong Kong (Xie, 2018) and Sweden (Jiang & Kungel, 2017). Therefore, expanding the research to different contexts is recommended. Third, the role of different applications and platforms in shaping the technocultural dimensions of daigou shopping deserves more attention in future investigations.

Keywords: transborder shopping, daigou, netnography, cross-border shopping, China

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Surprise me with a pet in a blind box! Online pet trading from the legitimacy perspective.

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Abstract
Digital platforms have made the supply chain of products and services more efficient, agile, and customer-focused. Nevertheless, they also create economic and social peculiarities, such as the online pet trading phenomenon in China. Using institutional theory as our theoretical lens, this study examines how pet trading via digital platforms is legitimized. The study also explores the roles of network actors in the legitimization process. We combine observational netnographic data collection with in-depth interviews of network actors. Our study aims to contribute to areas that remain underexplored by linking the Chinese pet adoption culture, digital marketing, online pet trading, ethics, and network governance.

Introduction
The ascent of the digital economy, characterized by the economic and social peculiarity facilitated by digital platforms, has incited a philosophical shift in business strategy and shopper decisions (Chen et al., 2020). The business model in the digital economy is alluded to - a "by-request" plan of action in which one seller offers products or services to multiple potential buyers depending on customer demand. The digital platforms could be in the forms of (a) business-to-consumer (B2C) – e.g., Amazon and JD.com, (b) business-to-business (B2B) - e.g., Shopify Plus and Alibaba.com, and (c) consumer-to-consumers (C2C) – e.g., e-Bay and TikTok. These platforms enable the entire supply

chain of products and services to be more efficient, agile, and customer-focused through the use of digitization, artificial intelligence (AI), and information and communication technology (ICT), thus effectively enhancing the network effects in the digital economy (Bouncken & Kraus, 2022; Luz Martín-Peña et al., 2018). The extant research on the digital platform business model has focused on marketing fast-moving consumer goods (Dost et al., 2019) or services (Endres et al., 2022; Laudien & Pesch, 2019). There is little research on marketing pets and live stocks through these digital platforms.

Indeed, online pet purchases are not uncommon in some parts of Asia. In May 2021, a Chinese courier service company, ZTO Express, was fined 30,000 yuan (USD4647) for illegally delivering live pets, including dogs and cats, which resulted in the death of these animals. The investigation depicts that these animals come from an industry chain that has been in existence for nearly 30 years (Global Times, 2021) and now leverages digital platforms to generate sales. Online pet sales are on the rise due to increasing global demand for pet adoption, driven in part by factors such as the growing middle class, rising numbers of single adults, DINK (dual income, no kids) families, and the aging population. This trend is particularly noticeable in China (Yin et al., 2020). Pets are not only obtained through digital platforms like Taobao.com or JD.com for personal adoption; they are also ordered as mystery gifts for loved ones. In this scenario, recipients of the pet "mystery box" are unaware of the specific animal inside, although purchasers typically specify whether it is a puppy, kitten, hamster, or unhatched turtle egg when placing the online order. Despite the illegality of shipping live animals in carton boxes across the country, online vendors continue to openly hold online sales and promise fast deliveries (May 2021).

In exploring the above phenomenon, we focus on the role of institutions and the process of legitimacy seeking by these actors in online pet trading. Legitimacy refers to the perception of actors' actions or behavior being socially appropriate (Cheah et al., 2020; Suchman, 1995). It acts as a framework for understanding the development, maintenance and persistence of social structures known as institutions (Humphreys & Latour, 2013). These institutions, including government, businesses, and social actors, pose institutional capital and undertake resource transformation activities that legitimize their existence through interactions with other stakeholders. By understanding the coordinated efforts of these institutions in building the social structures, we can understand how legitimacy needs are developed and their impact on legitimacy seeking behavior.

This paper aims to address the following main research question:

How does online pet trading is legitimized in Chinese markets?

Specifically, addressing this question entails uncovering how the industry actors or stakeholders legitimize online pet trading. These actors are considered the *sources of legitimacy* as they are defined as 'the internal and external audiences who observe organizations and make legitimacy assessment' (Ruef & Scott, 1998, p. 880). We combine observational netnographic data collection with in-depth interviews of network actors. First, we observe a few major social media websites and online digital commerce platforms. We gathered consumer feedback and traders' online responses on their pet trading experiences. This consumer-generated online content is critical to uncovering the documented experience of pet trading. We then identified some active online participants and contacted them for an online or offline interview at their convenience.

Institutional Theory – Legitimacy Needs

Suchman (1995) identified three distinctive dimensions of legitimacy (pragmatic, moral and cognitive) where the industry actors, as the source of legitimacy, assess the organization's actions and offerings. *Pragmatic legitimacy* reflects assessments of the perceived ability of an organizational action or attribute to yield tangible benefits for the organizations. The tangible benefits include reduced costs due to improved resource efficiency, enhanced sales, or improved brand image. Organizations often evaluate if there is a 'business case' to initiate or participate in an action. In the study context, pet traders perceive online trading as a beneficial action as the online pet store enables them to reach out to the nationwide markets with low search costs per customer. Pet buyers' pragmatic

assessment, on the other hand, is that online stores enable them to compare deals on one screen. Therefore, pet trading is legitimized through a pragmatic assessment of both the supply and demand sides. Such a 'business case' dimension of pragmatic legitimacy has received considerable attention in the literature (Thomas & Lamm, 2012).

Moral legitimacy denotes the social judgment of a social action based on social norms or implicit moral obligations (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1994). It involves normative assessments of the "rightness" of social action, regardless of costs or benefits to the organizations or individuals. In essence, "Is it the right thing to do?" Thus, both pragmatic and moral legitimacy have important implications not just for pet trading transactions but societal level as well, that is because the member of society, as the source of legitimacy, evaluates organizations' actions, values, and structures to align with the widely accepted beliefs, norms or cultural expectation, terms as *cognitive legitimacy* (Cheah et al., 2020). Organizations gain cognitive legitimacy when their actions, for example, a new product offering, resonate with the ingrained beliefs and values of the larger social environment (Aldrich & Fiol, 1994). This alignment contributes to the organization being seen as appropriate, proper, and acceptable within its cultural and social context (Vedula et al., 2022).

This paper explores the online pet trading legitimation process on Chinese digital platforms using institutional theory's legitimacy theoretical lenses. This study contributes to the institutional theory-legitimacy literature in a few ways. Firstly, it links legitimacy to online pet trading that are underexplored. In addition to the pet adopters as the key informants, we include other network actors, such as the players in the digital economy, associations, and opinion leaders, aligning with the legitimacy framework proposed by Dacin et al. (2007). This approach demonstrates how these institutions are motivated by self-interest, interact and lobby for solutions to the challenges posed by online pet trading. Secondly, we respond to the call for more localized studies on the digital platform economy (Sageder & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2019). A localized focus is important because of the uniqueness of local institutional forces that influence local business and social environment. Therefore, this study acknowledges the importance of examining digital platforms within the contexts where regulatory and cultural environments vary considerably across the globe. Thirdly, this study offers policy insights and recommendations to institutional actors in addressing the online pet trading issues. It demonstrates how these actors' interact, negotiate and respond to pragmatic, moral and cognitive pressures, and eventually contribute to the legitimization of the online pet trading.

Research Methodology

This study combines observational netnographic data collection with in-depth interviews of network actors, including pet adopters, social influencers, sales agents, pet association members and logistic employees. Netnography is a method for gathering information online based on ethnographic principles (Kozinets, 2006). While ethnography focuses on actual human observations and non-verbal body language, netnography focuses on online communication in textual and graphic forms (Bartl et al., 2016). It is considered an applied qualitative research method to understand social interactions in contemporary digital communication through social media. Using a netnographic approach, researchers can gain new insights into the transformation of traditional services into digital services (Heinonen & Medberg, 2018), which is highly relevant to the study context. Netnographic inquiry allows researchers and practitioners to access unelicited and naturalistic data from multiple sites, such as online forums, reviews, blogs and other social media (Croft, 2013). In this study, we collected netnographic data from xxx (list of online sites) between the month of xxx and xxx in the year 2023. In total, we collected how xxx pages of data – in progress.

Despite these advantages, the netnography method has some limitations. For example, the lack of actual informant identification in the online context may pose difficulties for researchers in generalizing their findings to non-online users. Such limitations, however, can be mitigated to some extent by the careful use of convergent data collection methods that bridge online and offline research in a systematic manner, as well as rigorous sampling and interpretive approaches (Kozinets, 2022). We addressed the limitations by conducting face-to-face or offline interviews that included pet

adopters, animal welfare activists, digital platforms (customer services), logistic company employees, and other opinion leaders (such as active participants or social influencers in social media). We recruit the interview participants through personal contacts and referrals. We also shortlist active online participants and invite them for an online/offline interview. Apart from that, we also contacted some physical pet stores, pet cafes and animal welfare associations to reach out to their members and customers. Table 1 shows the semi-structured interview questions that guide the interviews. As Kozinets (2019, p. 204) indicates: 'the people who post publicly on social media may be more extreme, opinionated, attention-seeking, and self-promotional than those who do not". Thus, a need to combine personal interview data and the netnography findings to have a balanced view, as we did in this paper. The interview data complements the netnographic data, providing us further insights into the institutional logic of how online pet purchases come to being and are legitimized.
During the interviews, Pet adopters were asked to select online images that illustrate the phenomenon of online pet purchases. The images were subsequently reduced and combined to produce a vignette to be used in future interviews (see Figure 1).

Research Findings/ Theoretical Implications/ Conclusions
In progress. Will presents part of the findings during the conference.

Table 1: Proposed semi-structured interview questions

No	Types of actors / Interview Guides	Pet Lovers	NGO/Associations	Digital Platforms/	Logistic Company	Government Officers	Other Opinion leaders
1	Filtering Question: a) Do you have a pet, or are you planning to have a pet? b) Does any of your family members have a pet?	√	√	√	√	√	√
2	Where do you get/purchase your pet? Have you ever purchased any pet food, toys and other necessities online?	√	√	√	√	√	√
3	How do you see purchasing a pet online? If the answer is positive: Follow up questions: Showing the vignette A If the answer is negative: elicit more by asking why?	√			√		√
4	Is purchasing pet food online accepted by many? Why not the live pet in a blind box?	√	√	√	√	√	
5	To what extent do you agree that purchasing a pet online is unethical? Follow-up question: If it is unethical, what should we do?	√	√	√	√	√	√
6	What is the best delivery method for pet purchases online?	√	√	√	√	√	√
7	Referring to Vignette A, what should the authorities do about it?	√	√	√	√	√	√
8	Referring to Vignette A, who should be blamed for the incident?	√	√	√	√	√	√
9	Follow-up questions to Q7 and Q8: Do you think the authorities have done enough to curb the issue?	√	√	√	√	√	√
10	From the point of the logistic company, do you think they should take the delivery job?	√		√	√		√
11	As an active member of the pet association, what is your take on those incidents?	√	√				
12	Going ahead, what do you think of online pet purchases?		√	√	√	√	√

Figure 1. Image-Vignette A to be used as interview Guide

Clockwise: (A) Online purchased pets are packed in boxes; (B) 40,000 pets were died in a road accident that involved a delivery truck. (C) An anonymous purchaser disclosed in social media: "I spent a few hundreds to buy a dog online and ended up I've received a dead body"; (D) 160 Pet Blind-Boxes were found in Chengdu.

Keywords: Digital Transformation; Online Pet Purchase, Business Ethics, Netnography, Legitimacy-seeking behavior; Network governance

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The energy that moves us: Using geo-netnography for mapping user's perceptions about sustainable energy and electric power distribution in South America.

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Extended Abstract

"*Electric power is everywhere present, in unlimited qualities. This new power for the driving of the world's machinery will be derived from the energy which operates in the universe, without the need for coal, gas, oil, or any other fuel*." Nikola Tesla, The Brooklyn Eagle. 1931

To ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy, which is key to the development of agriculture, business, communications, education, healthcare and transportation, are among the main goals for tackling the climate change crisis (UN, 2023).
Nowadays, consumer behaviours have an approach toward more informed decisions about electricity consumption (Rowlands et al., 2003).

Our objective is to learn more about the online behaviours of consumers of the electricity service sector, both in generating, transmitting, and distributing electric power (Pelka et al., 2022) and their awareness of sustainability issues. By applying netnography to map the influence that the sociocultural context has on the consumption of electric energy and renewable sources' perceptions in places where access to power is or has been a reformative issue, like Chile and Brazil (Peyerl et al., 2022; Poque González et al., 2021). By using a geolocated immersion approach of online conversations about the technocultures of electro-sustainability, this netnography uses a mixed method of georeferenced mapping data (GIS) and online posting on social networks (X/Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) from consumers of electric energy (renewable or carbon-based), their challenges and frustrations in Chile and Brazil during the last years.
The main objective is to understand how online consumer communities contribute to sustainability decisions and transitions (Gonzalez-Arcos et al., 2021) through the analysis of brand perceptions of electric system operators on social media and how the energy market can eventually orient their services. Preliminary results show that potential consumers of sustainable energy are primarily located in metropolitan areas with specific ecological concerns. This differs significantly from those who post online about sustainable electricity solutions in areas where the production and distribution systems present a territorial conflict.
These conflicts and their online analysis can contribute to a better understanding of the challenges for a sustainable development agenda and for moving towards a greener future.

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13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 3) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Liliana De Simone
"Netnography for shaping identities and subjectivities"

1) Mohamed, A., Silence identity in social media.
2) Kozinets, R.V., Liu, C., Nationalist Narratives: Gathering Political Identity and Consumption Insights from the Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of Social Media Traces.
3) Farias, M., Castilhos, R., Re-working the black female subjectivity on social media: navigating within African heritage and US-centered black empowerment.
4) Qian, S., Powell-Turner, J., Hancock, C., Who are we and how do we fit in? – Fostering international students' positive identity and sense of belonging in British society.

Silence identity in social media.

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Extended Abstract
This study explores the collective identity formation process within Facebook groups as a form of dramaturgical practice, where community members align around shared norms, values, and culture. Identity in this context is linked to users' contributions – comments that show agreement, resistance, or nuanced reflection. The research applies Netnography, a qualitative methodology tailored for social media studies, to understand interactions (Kozinets, 2020). It particularly focuses on Facebook as a platform that facilitates diverse textual expressions and the use of digital tools, requiring a certain level of skill for self-presentation (Mohamed, 2023; Goffman, 1959). The study raises critical considerations about power dynamics within these groups by examining the presence and impact of silent participants – those who observe but do not visibly contribute to the collective identity formation. The central inquiry questions the nature and formation of collective identities when the majority of participants are not actively engaging (Klandermans, & van Stekelenburg; Mohamed, 2023). By analyzing interaction within three distinct Facebook groups I mentioned the Rivals, The Guardians and the Stakeholders. The findings indicate that the Rivals group encourages polarized debates with a "hard" debate climate where differing opinions are expected and not considered norm-breaking, unlike the Stakeholders group. In contrast, the Guardians group focuses on community-building, maintained by specific gatekeepers and group support. The Stakeholders group is distinct in its open character, promoting both community and nuanced discussions, aiming to collaboratively establish a shared opinion for a common interest. The research assesses how these digital environments enable or limit interaction, and in turn, how they influence the emergence of a collective identity among both vocal and silent members (Mohamed, 2023). This study will contribute to understanding the role of silent participators in collective identity formation using netnography and Conversation Analysis to examine silence identity in social media (Kozinets, 2020; Farina, 2020).

Keywords: Collective Identity, Netnography, Silent Participants, Social Media.

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Nationalist Narratives: Gathering Political Identity and Consumption Insights from the Cross-Cultural Comparative Analysis of Social Media Traces.

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Extended Abstract
Exploring the contours of nationalism and identity within social media, this paper presents a netnography centering on the comparative analysis of narratives that sculpt nationalist identities in

China, Canada and the United States. Our tricultural authored study of these three culture prioritizes the development of netnographic methods through the investigation of deep data cases, engaging multiple cultural frames to unpack cultural narratives.

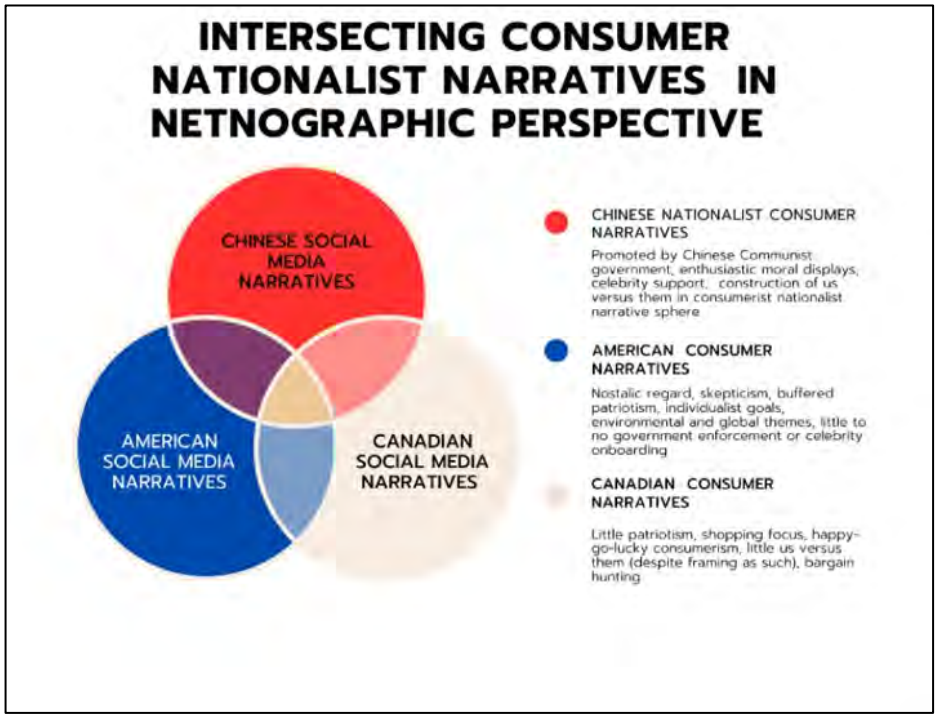
The netnography begins with a bicultural analysis of recent (post 2020) posts with buy American and buy Canadian themes on Reddit, including an analysis of the r/BuyCanadian sub-reddit. Our immersion-driven interpretations of the data indicate that Canadians are generally bargain hunting and lack a political orientation when identifying as social media posting consumers. Similarly, although Americans acknowledge a nostalgic connection to a past in which American products were noticeably better, numerous posts generally affirm that American products are either overpriced or are not actually fully made in America. An individualistic, skeptical, and pragmatic tone pervades both the American and Canadian discourse—with the exception of some detectable anti-China sentiment in the American data.

Next, we examine Chinese discourse, including those of the 2021 Xinjiang cotton controversy, which also involved celebrities and fans jumping aboard a buy Chinese nationalist bandwagon. Here, a complex interplay of narratives that construct a sense of national outrage and pride among Chinese message posters. From the incendiary comments circulated by official state media to the potent hashtags that mobilized millions, the netnographic method dissects layers of narrative empathy that are largely absent from the American and Chinese discourses. The Chinese case exemplifies "moral consumption exhibitionism"—a phenomenon where national stakeholders assert their moral stance against perceived international stigmatization, leading to both consumer boycotts and buycotts, as represented by the widespread #I support Xinjiang cotton# campaign. This term captures the dual nature of expressing national identity and moral righteousness within a digital ecosystem, emphasizing the role of emotional contagion and collective sentiment in shaping public discourse.

Meanwhile, deep data from Reddit reflects a complex perspective on American and Canadian nationalism and consumer identity. Users express skepticism about the "Made in America" label, questioning whether patriotism is used to justify higher prices for domestic products. Discussions indicate a tension between nationalist sentiment and capitalist motives, where quality and affordability challenge the call for domestic purchasing. The discourse reveals a much more nuanced understanding than the Chinese context, indicating ways in which American nationalism in consumerism is multifaceted, often intersecting with issues of global labor ethics and environmental concerns.

The study thus contributes to the advance of netnographic methods by highlighting the method's utility in comparatively analyzing culturally laden narratives from three nations, articulated in different languages and idiom, and interpreted by native speakers and culture bearers. The findings underscore the potent interrelation of social media, governance, public opinion, and national identity, leading to a reconfiguration of power relations and civic engagement.

Figure 1



Re-working the black female subjectivity on social media: navigating within African heritage and US-centered black empowerment.

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Extended Abstract
Racial relations in Brazil have historically been marked by a colorist hierarchy, between white, mixed race, and black subject positions. From the neglection of freed black slaves after slavery abolition to the mass migration of white Europeans during the Brazilian Republic, sociopolitical processes have systematically marginalized black people to the country's subaltern positions. Particularly, myth making around the idea of "racial democracy," portraying Brazil as a harmonious blend of races, gave rise to the imaginary of the "mulata" – a mixed-race, sensual woman symbolizing Brazil's exotic identity. Embedded in official propaganda, this myth became a marketplace tool used by various stakeholders, shaping narratives in advertising and marketing strategies (Thompson, 2004). The "mulata" archetype, associated with cultural phenomena like samba, carnival, and football, persisted throughout the 20th century in the social imaginary of locals and foreigners as the epitome of *Brazilianess*. However, beyond essentializing mixed-race women as hypersexualized subjects, the social construction the "mulata" has contributed to devalue and marginalize black women. Departing from this socio-historical backdrop, we conducted a 2-year Netnography study examining black women's consumer subjectivity in social media plataforms. We analyzed Instagram accounts managed by digital black activists. These activists utilize utopian discursive (Kozinets 2019) projects to establish a counter mythology (Kristensen, Boye and Askegaard, 2011) of blackness, rescuing African heritage and constructing new references for proud black identities. Simultaneously, they incorporate African American cultural references for a US-centered black empowerment, revealing a paradoxical interplay between decolonial aspirations and a partly colonial mindset in reshaping contemporary representations of blackness among Brazilian women.

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Who are we and how do we fit in? – Fostering international students' positive identity and sense of belonging in British society.

Shiyu Qian[1], Julieanna Powell-Turner[1], Connie Hancock[1]
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Extended Abstract
As a continuously growing community, international students bring talent and fresh perspective to British society. During interaction with students as a lecturer in UK Higher Education (HE), the researcher observed that a large proportion of international students are eager to pursue long-term life in the UK, beyond their studies at the university. Yet, they often express concerns and struggles in 'fitting in' the British society.

The Life in the UK test (Gov.uk, 2023) sends a clear signal on fitting in to British society with two key words: identity and sense of belonging, aligned with the fundamental values and principles of British life, and shared values and responsibilities of members of British society (Dillon & Smith, 2023; Vincent, 2019). These are expectations of the UK government on its future citizens and permanent residents. These are also important to international students who are not aiming for citizenship or settlement, for research shows that society integration via identity and a sense of belonging positively impacts their academic achievement and retention (Baek, 2023; Mirikarbasaki, 2023). On the other hand, UK HE Institutions (HEIs) play a key part in promoting civic role and citizenship education (Dereli, 2022; Pan, 2021). Hence, fostering international students' positive identity and sense of belonging under society's expectations benefits international students, their community, the HE sector, and British society.
Current studies focus on students' sense of belonging to their institutions (Hue & Karim, 2024; Szelei, 2022), its influence on their academic achievement and retention (Baek, 2023; Mirikarbasaki, 2023; Perez-Guerrero, 2023), with an emphasis on institutional provision/educational conditions, inclusive education or pedagogical practices/tools for developing students' sense of belonging (Ahn & Davis, 2020; Chen, 2023; Elerian et al., 2022; Harrop & Hoppitt, 2023; Hue & Karim, 2024; Paul et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2023; Sancho, 2020). Data collection predominantly included qualitative data via interviews and/or online surveys (Cena et al., 2021; Kaat et al., 2023), with participants limited to certain institution(s) or individuals (Hue & Karim, 2024; Lee, 2024; Yuen & Leung, 2019). There, however, lacks knowledge of what international students perceive themselves as in British society and how that perception 'fits in' with society's expectation. A research gap also appears in how international students' previous experiences prepare (or fail to prepare) them for building a sense of belonging to the host society (Mohamad & Manning, 2024).
This research aims to explore international students' self-perception in British society, how previous experiences may shape their expectation on social integration, and how potential chasm between their perception of identity and host society's expectation on them may affect the formation of their sense of belonging. Following interpretivism philosophy, Netnography is the adopted research approach, for the presence of international students on social media forms an integral part of their community, and their perception of identity and sense of belonging reflects the community culture. This approach reaches beyond the boundary of certain institution(s), and is particularly effective in capturing real

and unfiltered views of international students (Kozinets, 2019). Data collection will be carried out through immersive observation on Tiktok, Facebook and X. Immersion journal will be deployed to record and track reactions, comments, conversations, hashtags and influencers identified. The researcher seeks to minimise risks of research ethics including data protection by following the ethics chart for netnography (Kozinets, 2019). The findings could inform policymakers and UK HEIs on recruitment and civic education strategies for international talents (Mohamad & Manning, 2024; Yang & Hoskins, 2023).

Keywords: international students, student identity, student sense of belonging, civic education, netnography

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13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 4) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Rebecca Scott
"Netnography for capturing multifaceted parenthood"

1) Bridges, N., Facebook as a netnographic research tool: Exploring breastfeeding peer support on social networking sites.
2) Aishwarya A., Belk, R., Integrating Multi-Sited Ethnography and Netnography: An Enquiry of Self-Love among New Mothers.
3) Scussel, F., Costa do Nascimento, T., The consumer temporary vulnerability process: theorizing from the case of mothers who can not breastfeed.
4) Smith, L., et al., Creating and maintaining norms and power relations on online sperm donation platforms: Preliminary findings from a digital ethnography.

Facebook as a netnographic research tool: Exploring breastfeeding peer support on social networking sites.

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Extended Abstract

What began as a way to connect students, boasts 2.09 billion daily active users on average for September 2023, an increase of 5% year-over-year (Meta, 2023), placing it 1st in the ranking of the world's most 'active' social media platforms (Kemp, 2023). In 2024, Facebook remains an important player, and continues to attract a diverse user-base, with a strong emphasis on building community, which provides a platform to connect with others facing similar challenges, share experiences, seek advice, and access resources. These groups can offer a sense of belonging and solidarity, fostering empathy and understanding, while enabling rapid dissemination of information and timely responses to queries or concerns within peer support communities, which is crucial for individuals seeking urgent support or guidance.

However, Facebook's role as a source of information via online peer support communities is not without limitations; namely misinformation and the spread of unverified or potentially harmful advice. The lack of oversight and regulation within Facebook groups can lead to the proliferation of pseudoscientific claims, anecdotal evidence presented as fact, which may exacerbate rather than alleviate individuals' health or social issues. Users may hesitate to share sensitive information or seek support openly due to concerns about data breaches, algorithmic surveillance, or potential repercussions in their personal or professional lives. The platform's algorithms also have the potential to amplify certain voices or perspectives while marginalising others, potentially reinforcing existing power imbalances within online communities.

Employing a netnographic research approach, the aim of my research was to explore the experiences of users of closed Facebook groups and how these parents seek and share breastfeeding support and information (Bridges, 2016b; Bridges, Howell, & Schmied, 2018a, 2018b). The unique aspect of my research was how I employed Facebook as a data collection tool throughout the ethnographic process, from observation, through to online focus groups and depth interviews, using embedded Facebook tools such as Events and Messenger (Bridges, 2016a).

In addition to sharing how I gained the trust and consent of the community members in these private groups, I will explore the findings about the characteristics and contents of queries, shares, comments, and comment responses illustrating the ways in which parents not only gained access to support for their own breastfeeding experiences, but offered support to others.

Social media has radically altered the social landscape of the Internet. Instead of self-contained discussion groups with their own unique cultures, much of the user experience of this version of the Internet has become at once more individualised, with a curated collection of personal connections, while being embedded in the everyday lives of community members (Hine, 2017).

Closed Facebook groups, can be valuable tools for breastfeeding support and information. Furthermore, participation in such groups can be empowering for both new and more experienced parents and those who support them. In the constantly evolving technological and social media landscape, it will be interesting to explore how this type of parenting peer support evolves into the future, and how communities continue to engage Facebook and additional social networking tools.

Integrating Multi-Sited Ethnography and Netnography: An Enquiry of Self-Love among New Mothers.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Netnography has evolved from being the marketing research study of online communities (Kozinets, 2002) to the broader study of digital spaces (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023). It now combines individual and group social media representation studies with participatory action research and transformative netnography (Kozinets et al., 2024). Ethnographic 'field sites' have metamorphosized into netnographic 'data sites,' and 'field notes' are now supplemented by 'immersion journals.' Further, auto-netnography offers a further focus on reflexivity. These digital qualitative research methods gain cultural understandings through digitally immersive, investigative and interactive data (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2022). However, the question here we pose is: Is their gap between the online and offline behaviour? Does netnography need offline research to distinguish and contrast between online and offline behaviour?

We answer this question by integrating multi-sited ethnography with netnography. Multi-sited ethnography is a long-term immersion in multiple natural settings of offline communities(Falzon, 2009). Integrating two qualitative methods is needed as consumers do not express what they do; what they do is not always spoken or expressed online (Ogilvy, 1988). Hence, this mixed methods approach draws parallels between offline and online behaviour and identifies deviations between digital representations and actual consumer behaviour. We also see that when an offline study succeeds a digital study, it improves the reliability and supports triangulation of the data.

Context of the Study

In the first stage, we performed a netnography on the lives of new mothers on digital platforms. The initial data was gathered on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Likeminds (Mobile Apps), as well as Self-love (App), Yoni Circle (App). To gather rich and thick data, Instagram and WhatsApp were chosen for the study. Highlighting initial observations a community called as "Freedom to Feed" on Instagram was identified. On this forum women express their experiences regarding liberating themselves from the traditional practices and taking professional jobs, taking time out for themselves and buying convenience products such as breast pumps and baby formula. Similarly, mom influencers have created a huge community where they have redefined the narrative of a mother in the today's times. However, there is still lack of understanding about whether mothers actually do what they advocate on their digital accounts? Hence a multi-sited ethnography succeeded the netnography where the researcher immersed herself into the daily lives of mothers, identifying their rituals, practices and routines. Findings reveal a gap between online and offline behaviour.

Rationale

Representation on digital platforms is often influenced and cultivated (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) through what were once called "new media." Peer-influenced and trending narratives cultivate ideas among fellow users. These ideas are converted into sharable content which may or may not resonate with real life. For example, new digital media provides gratification and narcotizing dysfunction (Mateus, 2020) that distracts audiences from real-life problems. They 'know', but they fail to 'do'. (Eşitti, 2016).

Hence our mixed method approach finds an important difference in contrasting and comparing between online and offline behaviours. Based on this finding, we propose a framework to follow up netnography with a multi-sited ethnography.

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The consumer temporary vulnerability process: theorizing from the case of mothers who can not breastfeed.

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Abstract
While consumer research has extensively delved into the concept of consumer vulnerability, recent approaches advocate for a more in-depth exploration of the experience of temporary vulnerability that all consumers may encounter at some point. In this article, our aim is to comprehensively understand the dynamics between consumers and the market within the context of temporary vulnerability. To achieve this, we focus on mothers who faced challenges in breastfeeding, employing a combination of auto-ethnographic narratives and netnography. This research presents the Consumer Temporary Vulnerability Process, consisting of four phases: presumed vulnerability, concrete vulnerability, managed vulnerability, and abandoned vulnerability. The significance of this article lies in its contribution to consumer research on vulnerability in three key areas: elucidating the temporal dynamics of vulnerability, examining the role of the market in rendering consumers vulnerable, and analyzing the institutional logics that contribute to socially structured vulnerability.

Introduction
In the context of consumption, consumer vulnerability configures a market condition that exposes one or more individuals to the risk of obtaining limited utility from market relations, with implications for their well-being (Visconti, 2016). This has become a topic of growing interest among researchers, given the need to make access to products and services available to all consumers (Baker et al., 2005; Hill & Sharma, 2020; Raciti et al., 2022). In this sense, expanding the scope of what is understood as vulnerability, beyond traditional research on how factors such as race, gender, age, impairment, or adverse situations generate consumer vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005; Yap et al., 2021), becomes

pivotal for the development of this research line. This expansion allows for the understanding of risk situations in consumer contexts and how they can render consumers vulnerable (Commuri & Ekici, 2008), especially in light of recent discussions about the need to explore the potentially vulnerability-inducing aspects of issues such as stigma, discrimination, ableism, inclusion, empowerment, and resilience (Khare & Jain, 2022).

The idea that every consumer may experience vulnerability at some point (Commuri & Ekici, 2008) led us to the concept of temporary vulnerability, involving situations in which consumers find themselves in a vulnerable position for a specific period, influencing their interactions with the market (Wunderlich et al., 2020). From this perspective, vulnerability is a state, as in a circumstance, rather than an individual characteristic, encompassing the consumer's susceptibility, which can vary throughout their life, depending on time and space (Raciti et al., 2022). Despite the growing research interest in consumer situations of temporary vulnerability, such as pregnancy (The Voice Group, 2010), mourning (Gentry et al., 1995), divorce (Sanchez-Ruiz et al., 2018), and fertility treatments (Robertson et al., 2021), little is known about how vulnerability behaves during the occurrence, how emerges and concludes, and, more importantly, how it affects consumption practices. On that basis, we wonder: how does temporary vulnerability manifest, develop, and cease in the consumer's life?

Considering the temporality involved in the experience of temporary vulnerability (Baker et al., 2015; Commuri & Ekici, 2008; Raciti et al., 2022), the goal of this research is to comprehend the process of consumer temporary vulnerability, underlying the dynamics between the consumer and the market during these periods. We believe that this objective can contribute to the understanding of marketing dynamics surrounding vulnerability, particularly regarding the impact of temporary conditions on consumption. The relevance of this study lies on its implications for transformative consumer research (Khare & Jain, 2022), studies on the market's role in the consumer vulnerability process (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014), and exploration of the behavior of service ecosystems and their actors concerning consumers in vulnerable situations (Kabadayi, Livne-Tarandach, & Pirson, 2023).

We embark on this research within the realm of maternity, with a specific focus on new mothers grappling with the inability to breastfeed. Existing literature recognizes the transition to motherhood as a vulnerable juncture for women (The Voice Group, 2010). Moreover, breastfeeding has transformed into a significant endeavor for women (Avishai, 2007), aligning with prevailing mothering standards (Knaak 2010). Consequently, women who cannot breastfeed often find themselves entangled in guilt and shame, perceiving their inability as a failure in their pursuit of being a good mother and feeling diminished in their maternal role (Cornelio, 2021). This renders women unable to breastfeed susceptible to market influences, shaping a context conducive to the objectives of this research.

Theoretical pinpoints on Consumer Vulnerability

In 2005, Baker and colleagues published a review on consumer vulnerability research, delineating the concept and proposing avenues for investigating the subject. According to the authors, vulnerability occurs when control is not in the hands of an individual, leading to powerlessness and creating a dependence on external factors to establish justice in the market (Baker et al., 2005). Ten years later, Baker and colleagues present a new work, whose objective was to map the scientific production on the subject since the first review.

According to Baker et al. (2015), consumer vulnerability can be studied using three approaches. The first involves analyzing specific populations based on their biological or psychosocial characteristics, like race (Bone, Christensen, & Williams, 2014), age (Berg, 2015), and disability (Higgins, 2020), among others. The second approach focuses on environmental conditions, framing vulnerability in situations related to structural problems and systemic issues that disempower consumers, like homelessness (Hill & Stamey, 1990), low levels of education (Adkins & Ozanne, 2005), or consumers in peripheral countries (De Jongh & Mncayi, 2019). The third approach focuses on the meanings and experiences of vulnerability, in which vulnerability promps consumers to develop resilience to cope with situations live cancer (Pavia & Mason, 2004) and grief (Gentry et al., 1995).

Regardless of the approach, studies on consumer vulnerability investigate how restrictions on access and control of consumer resources can cause damage, impeding the abilities of consumers to function normally in the market. Traditional approaches often view vulnerability as synonymous with disadvantaged, at-risk, or neglected consumers, adopting a fixed, structural, and non-temporal perspective on vulnerability (Baker et al., 2005). However, criticisms involves the rise of stigma around certain consumer groups, who come to be recognized by their characteristics rather than as individuals (Commuri & Ekici, 2008), and by the pathologization of individuals who may identify themselves as powerless or incapable (Raciti et al., 2022). Scholars advocating for the broadening of the consumer vulnerability scope agree that vulnerability should be understood as a situation of consumer susceptibility, shaping a circumstance rather than a fixed condition.

For the purpose of this research, we adopt consumer vulnerability as a temporary and fluid state of impotence resulting from consumption contexts in which consumers must grapple with uncertainty and instability caused by unexpected and sudden events (Yap et al., 2021). Consumer vulnerability, therefore, refers to life moments when consumers need to deal with a type of impotence based on the lack of control and agency, potentially leading to a loss of well-being (Visconti, 2016). This perspective becomes essential as ongoing societal, economic, and technological changes can generate new forms of vulnerability, necessitating frameworks capable of analyzing new experiences of vulnerability and their relationships with the market (Wunderlich et al., 2020).

According to Yap et al. (2021), this comprehensive perspective can enhance our understanding of how vulnerability arises, encompassing its antecedents, causal factors, and the consequences of these periods for consumers and markets. However, despite the growing interest in the broader perspective of vulnerability as a temporal circumstance (Baker et al., 2015; Hill & Sharma, 2020), such as how vulnerability emerges and manifests in the consumer's life, what occurs during the vulnerability period, the behavior of vulnerability, and what brings about the cessation of vulnerability still remain research gaps. Our literature review suggests that comprehending temporary vulnerability as a process with a beginning, middle, and end can contribute to the development of this burgeoning research area, which is the focal point of this study.

Method

To comprehend the process of consumer temporary vulnerability, we opted for a qualitative research approach conducted in two phases. In the initial exploratory phase, the leading author, who is a mother, conducted an auto-ethnography (Hackley & Hackley, 2016) around her preparation for motherhood, including pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding. From March 2021 to January 2022, the researcher-mother made her self-ethnographic field diary, reporting her entire process of searching for information, purchasing products and courses. Regardless of the preparation, the author was unable to breastfeed due to low milk production, bringing numerous and profound reflections, which were discussed with the other author of this article, which led them to initiate the first drafts of this study. Based on the topics identified in the first phase, the researchers gleaned insights that indicated the major role of social media in guiding the interactions between mothers and the marketplace. Beyond sheltering an online community, social media acts as a network connecting mothers, brands, and service providers. The increasing number of narratives about motherhood and the abundance of products offered on social media led the researchers to choose to proceed with the second phase using a netnography, a research technique that seeks to understand issues of interaction and sociability through the observation of online communication displayed by users on social media (Kozinets, 2019).

The second immersive phase, which spanned from January 2022 to December 2022, involved the execution of netnographic research. First, we concentrated on exploring the profiles of mothers and service providers (doctors, nurses, doulas, and breastfeeding consultants) on Instagram based on the profiles mapped on the first phase. Similar to what happens in a snowball technique (Patterson & Ashman, 2020), one profile led to the other. This means that there was no specific selection criterion for the profiles. We began following profiles based on those known to the researchers and gradually

discovered others through post comments, recommendations, and suggestions of the social media platform itself. Second, we started to look for specific hashtags related to breastfeeding to identify other types of content shared on social media. This action on Instagram allowed us to identify how communal and consumer relationships are formed, with the advantage of verifying consumer narratives while simultaneously observing market agents' behavior. Third, we searched for videos on YouTube about breastfeeding, analyzing the videos as well as the comments left by the audience.
Data collection was done qualitatively, without the use of software since the researchers chose to proceed through immersive engagement to have a cultural look at the phenomenon of breastfeeding (Kozinets 2019). In total, 650 screenshots were collected. Data analysis followed a hermeneutic logic (Thompson 1997), in a back-and-forth movement with the literature, guided by Kozinets (2019).

Findings

The main contribution of this research is the theorization of the consumer's temporary vulnerability experience, characterized as a four-phase process representing the onset, peak, decline, and conclusion of the vulnerability experience.

Presumed Vulnerability

Pregnancy is accompanied by the acknowledgment of vulnerability that emerges during the postpartum period, wherein breastfeeding emerges as a significant challenge for women. On social media, expressions such as "breastfeeding is an act of love", "breastfeeding is the materialization of love", and "protection and love come from the breast," along with claims that breastfeeding is a natural and essential act for both the baby and the mother, contribute to a perception that breastfeeding is certain and concrete. Despite the fact that the practice of breastfeeding is distant and women are uncertain about its unfolding, there is a societal influence that deems a lack of preparation as neglect towards the infant. Consequently, women are compelled to prepare for the experience.
Despite the romanticized portrayal of breastfeeding, reports from other mothers, doctors, nurses, doulas, and influencers reveal that breastfeeding is a complex practice that may lead to pain and infections, posing potential harm to the breastfeeding process. These challenges contribute to the emergence of presumed vulnerability, prompting preemptive measures to mitigate future vulnerability. The market, in turn, plays a crucial role as a provider of resources aimed at safeguarding women from the presumed vulnerability. This is facilitated through a market-mediated process of consumer education, encompassing research, purchase, implementation, and evaluation of products and services.. This process begins with a proactive behavior that guides pregnant women on the pursuit of information, the engagement with healthcare professionals for assistance in preparation, and the acquisition of consumer products that facilitate breastfeeding. Preparation becomes a strategy to avoid vulnerability, as the researcher-mother wrote in her research diary:

As soon as I found out I was pregnant, it seems that Instagram also found out and started showing me that I had little time – in fact, a very precise deadline – and that I needed to prepare myself for the most difficult and most important task of motherhood. I saw no other option but to start preparing myself. I started following countless people who talked about breastfeeding on Instagram, I bought an online breastfeeding course, I hired a breastfeeding consultant, and I spent almost two thousand reais in a breast pump imported from the United States, which is not even sold in Brazil, top of the line, so that I could prepare myself for breastfeeding. The complete package. I was ready. I felt ready.

During the presumed vulnerability phase, the consumption of products and services takes on a preventive and supportive nature. Its role is to equip women with the necessary preparations for potential challenges associated with breastfeeding even before they arise, ensuring the protection of the breastfeeding practice. This consumption of assistance involves the acquisition of products termed "breastfeeding-friendly" as described in social media discourse. Endorsed by doctors, health professionals, experienced mothers' testimonials, and maternity digital influencers, these products are actively promoted on social media platforms with the promise of being invaluable allies in maternal preparation. Detailed instructions on their usage are provided, enhancing their appeal and positioning them as essential tools for mothers navigating the complexities of breastfeeding.

In addition to the consumption of assistance, mentoring emerges as a guidance service provided by breastfeeding specialists. The consumption of mentoring is designed not only to facilitate the effective use of assistance products but also to offer cutting-edge techniques for managing breastfeeding, aligning with the medical scientific discourse that advocates for the superiority of breastfeeding, commonly expressed as "breast is best" (Kramer 2010). Breastfeeding specialists play a pivotal role in assisting expectant mothers in physical and emotional preparation for breastfeeding. This includes guidance on selecting appropriate products and empowering them with knowledge, enabling them to engage in informed discussions with family members or healthcare professionals who may discourage breastfeeding preparation. Our findings indicate two distinct types of mentoring consumption.

The first type of mentoring consumption pertains to online breastfeeding courses, typically led by medical doctors and/or breastfeeding specialists. For instance, Rosane Baldissera, a nutritionist renowned for operating "the most comprehensive and practical breastfeeding channel in Brazil" with 12 thousand followers on YouTube and 52 thousand followers on Instagram, offers the PPS course - Positioning, Gripping, and Suction, which promises to educate pregnant women on preparing for breastfeeding "without pain and with ample breast milk". Despite the absence of regulatory frameworks governing the content of such courses in Brazil, online breastfeeding courses have gained popularity in recent years. The promoted content of these courses specifically addresses concerns related to presumed vulnerability. Comprising recorded video classes, these courses are designed to empower mothers-to-be through education, providing them with knowledge and skills to navigate the challenges of breastfeeding.

For a more personalized mentoring experience, breastfeeding specialists offer breastfeeding consultancy services through individual in-person sessions. These sessions aim to prepare families for the breastfeeding process. Such professionals are readily accessible on social media platforms, actively advocating for the importance of planning ahead for breastfeeding. Mentoring consumption relies on evidence-based practice scientific discourse in order to support women in their breastfeeding projects, as demonstrated in the caption of an advertisement on Instagram of a nurse specializing in breastfeeding:

What is the importance of breastfeeding consultation since pregnancy? Breastfeeding is the longest phase of motherhood, and the least explored in prenatal care. Not every baby is born knowing how to breastfeed and not every mother is born knowing how to breastfeed. Having information is the best way to make decisions in times of possible difficulties. Remember: before diving, you need to learn to swim. No one learns to dive majestically in the tsunami.

Our findings show a robust market initiative aimed at educating pregnant women about the potential vulnerabilities associated with breastfeeding, positioning itself as a strategy to address presumed vulnerability. This strategy is implemented through both the consumption of assistance products and the utilization of mentoring services. The presumed vulnerability phase concludes with the birth of the baby.

Concrete Vulnerability

The initiation of breastfeeding is marked by various physical challenges, including persistent issues such as bleeding, fissures, mastitis, difficulties in achieving compatibility between the mother's body and the baby, low milk production, and engorged breasts. For example, Figure 1 illustrates a moment where a mother, while expressing milk, encounters the presence of blood in her breast milk.

Figure 1
Concrete vulnerability

The concrete vulnerability phase gives rise to a subjective tension between the empowered mother who invests energy, time, and resources to breastfeed and the vulnerable consumer that the mother perceives herself to be when experiencing pain. In the virtual maternal community, mothers facing challenges are acknowledged and praised for the love they have for their children, often referred to as warriors and heroines who persist despite the pain, exemplified by statements such as: "I can't think about weaning right now, especially because she needs my milk more than ever, but I swear, breastfeeding this breast is TORTURE, it is UNBEARABLE pain" as reported by a mother experiencing mastitis in both breasts. Within this context, doctors, nurses, doulas, and breastfeeding consultants form a virtual support network. This network aims to assist women in confronting challenges related to breastfeeding and provides alternatives to improve the conditions for those seeking to breastfeed.
During this stage, the market takes on a remedial and urgent character, working to address challenges associated with breastfeeding and devising strategies to sustain breastfeeding successfully. For mothers experiencing low milk production, the market also provides the option of translactation. For instance, in cases where there are insufficient breast ducts for breastfeeding, the primary author received guidance from a breastfeeding consultant to implement the translactation technique. This involves extracting breast milk using a pump to supplement breastfeeding, thereby increasing the baby's milk intake. This is illustrated in Figure 2, sourced from the researcher's personal archives.

Figure 2
Coping with concrete vulnerability

Upon posting the photo on her social media platforms, the researcher received numerous accounts regarding the use of the technique and how cumbersome and unnatural it seemed. In her research journal, she notes that "it didn't seem natural to have a tube helping me breastfeed," and that "in the end, it was doing me more harm than good." She was aware that "I would soon introduce the bottle, no matter how much it tore my heart apart." This decision was influenced not only by the intense physical challenges but also by the mental struggles, peer comparisons, and the pervasive sense of

being perceived as "less of a mother" that is common among women who have difficulties in breastfeeding.

Concrete vulnerability elicits two specific sensations in women. The first pertains to a project (Avishai, 2007) that did not succeed, accompanied by a feeling of failure as a mother. In addition to the cultural discourses surrounding breastfeeding (Knaak, 2010), mothers find themselves embedded in a broader cultural context where neoliberal-able discourses promote an ontological invalidation of their bodies (Goodley et al., 2018). The second sensation involves a feeling of a disabled body, driven by the perception that the body does not function as expected, contradicting the notion that women are biologically capable of breastfeeding (Black et al., 2020), representing a social construction of vulnerability. This is perceived and felt by women whose bodily ableism is presumed, demanded, questioned, and evaluated within the cultural understanding of motherhood. The conclusion of the concrete vulnerability phase is marked by the decision to cease breastfeeding.

Managed Vulnerability

The managed vulnerability phase commences with the acceptance of the impossibility of breastfeeding, followed by the pursuit of coping strategies in the situation, marked by the initiation of infant formula use, as illustrated by the example:

Sometimes the milk doesn't come in enough and you end up not being able to breastfeed. And that hurts more than all the other pains combined. Because you will always be the mother who didn't breastfeed, Weak, bad with milk. Because you will see your child crying and you will ask yourself why you are there, if you can't even offer your breast to calm him down. A bottle, anyone can give that and that's when you feel useless, disposable. And wherever you go with your baby, it will hurt all the looks you receive because, instead of the breast, you will take a bottle out of your bag to feed him. It will hurt all the comments saying that you could have insisted more, it will hurt all the looks that "good mothers" will give towards their baby. It will hurt to read articles saying that children who have not had breast milk are more susceptible to respiratory diseases. And your own guilt will hurt you.

The maternal community's imposition regarding breastfeeding renders this practice viewed by mothers who couldn't breastfeed as something shameful, laden with stigma and social judgment, perceived by the mothers themselves as an erroneous action. During this phase, there is a tension between societal expectations regarding the mother's role in infant nutrition and the relief from pain and the assurance of the baby's well-being that comes with the introduction of formula. This is exemplified in a testimony posted on Instagram: "the first bottle was terrible. Aurora was having the bottle super happily, and I was crying asking for forgiveness for doing that". Mothers adopt a defensive posture generated by this tension, concealing formula consumption to avoid judgment from others: "going outside with her is still a torment for me. I try to plan to give the bottle before I leave and not be gone for more than three hours, just so I don't have to give the bottle in front of other people who insist on being inconvenient".

Our data demonstrates that when a mother chooses to formula feed her child, she is perceived as a transgressor, as she deviates from socially imposed norms. Here, transgression is understood as the concept of breaking social norms (Bakhtin, 1984). In this context, the use of formula in a community that regards breastfeeding as a crucial factor for good motherhood constitutes a transgression of the code of conduct for a good mother. In this research, transgressive consumption is understood as an activity carried out by consumers in situations of vulnerability, aiming to alleviate a vital need and opposing the stigma and previously advocated social behavioral patterns. The decision for this transgressive consumption activity is not simple and appears to require defense against judgments, as illustrated by the following testimony posted on Instagram:

Despite the stigma (Earle 2013), formula consumption appears as a viable alternative for relieving the mother's vulnerability and maintaining the baby's health. In this way, transgressive consumption appears as an immediate and inevitable solution to manage vulnerability. The phase of managed vulnerability is characterized by tensions and ups and downs of mothers with the impossibility of breastfeeding. Over time, the need to manage vulnerability is transformed into acceptance, and mothers' defensive posture opens space to a new way of dealing with the impossibility of breastfeeding, reaching the phase of abandoning vulnerability.

Abandoned vulnerability

The phase of abandoned vulnerability signifies the resolution of tensions between societal expectations and the individual realities faced by each mother. During this phase, women discard anxieties related to the baby's health and the mother-infant relationship, thereby diminishing the sense of vulnerability and the need for constant management. It is also during this stage that women relinquish the desire for social approval, enabling them to embrace their experiences freely and openly discuss them:

Nine months preparing me to live the magic of breastfeeding. I thought it would be as natural as becoming a mother, but reality and practice were very different. Difficult for me and her. Much harder for me to see her screaming with hunger! Our suffering ended when we decided to use formula. I noticed that she also looks me in the eye and that she plays with my fingers while I hold the bottle. The dad who surrenders me in moments of sleep also lives these moments with her. This is our connection, which is neither more nor less than the other way of breastfeeding. After all, the love that hits the breast also hits the bottle.

Similar to numerous other accounts within our dataset, women who faced challenges in breastfeeding often experience a sense of resolution when they recognize that the baby's well-being is secured, and their emotional concerns are addressed. As the influence of societal judgments wanes, these mothers shed their vulnerability, gaining a sense of empowerment in their role as mothers. Another instance of relinquishing vulnerability arises from the disclosure of the baby's health through formula feeding, resolving the tension with the feeling of transgression, as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 3

Abandoned vulnerability

The phase of abandoned vulnerability is also marked by a collective commitment with other mothers, aiming to transform motherhood into a more welcoming and judgment-free environment. The baby's health symbolizes the manifestation of the ability to be a good mother, contributing to mothers abandoning their perception of the disabled body and, consequently, managing vulnerability until the point where it ceases. In this context, social media transitions from a space for sharing and exchanging experiences to a platform for collective resistance (Eichert & Luedick 2022), providing support for the efforts of the 'bottle mothers,' as they identify themselves online, in creating a inclusive and nurturing space for mothers, regardless of their choices. The following post represents a call for unity among mothers and respect for individual experiences.

I want you to find a post that doesn't belittle you as a mother, that doesn't say that your child will be sick, and that you will have no connection. [...] I know you cried when you gave the first bottle and felt incapable. I know that quitting breastfeeding was a relief to your soul, but everything around you didn't allow you to feel good about weaning your baby. Everything around you demeaned you as a mother, you who carried nine months, underwent numerous invasive exams, went through childbirth, and always put your child first. I want to tell you mom that your baby will grow up healthy. That the formula is not the devil, it is the salvation for us who can't. I want to say that motherhood is not just about breastfeeding, and the mother and child connection comes from within, from the souls.

Discussion and Conclusion

Our primary contribution lies in presenting the Consumer Temporary Vulnerability Process, where four distinct phases delineate the experience of temporary vulnerability. Beyond being a social construct (Baker et al., 2005; Baker et al., 2015; Hill & Sharma, 2020), we show that the temporary vulnerability is mediated by market action, catalyzing consumer emotions and consumption practices. This leads to three main implications for research at the intersection of consumption and vulnerability.

First, our research elucidates the temporal dynamics of vulnerability, characterizing it as a consumption journey. Each phase comprising the Consumer Temporary Vulnerability Process encapsulates specific tensions between consumers and marketers. In the presumed vulnerability phase, consumers anticipate vulnerability, marked by a preventive nature where the market provides a pool of resources for consumers to avoid vulnerability. Here, there is an attempt to become invulnerable, wherein consumers expect that high knowledge and ample resources can circumvent vulnerability (Baker et al., 2015). During the concrete vulnerability phase, consumers experience the peak of vulnerability, adopting a resolute stance characterized by seeking solutions to minimize or cease vulnerability, when the market takes on an emergency nature. Moving to the managed vulnerability phase, consumers undergo the initial decline of vulnerability, embracing transgressive consumption practices with a defensive character. This marks a moment of accepting vulnerability, where the market enables consumers to cope with vulnerability as it diminishes. The abandoned vulnerability phase signifies the culmination of the vulnerability experience.

Despite the widespread recognition of vulnerability as a temporary state and its determinants and antecedents (Baker et al., 2005; Hill and Sharma, 2020; Yap et al., 2021), we demonstrate the relationship between time, consumer action, and market action in each phase of the vulnerability experience. Unlike the perspective focused on the vulnerable consumer, commonly reported within the area of consumer behavior (Baker et al., 2005; Commuri & Ekici, 2008; Hill & Sharma, 2020), the phases of the vulnerability experience discussed here can be used to investigate other cases of vulnerability in the marketplace, thus challenging what Yap et al. (2021) called "generalizability criticism," concerning the lack of generalizability of consumer vulnerability studies to other vulnerability cases.

Second, beyond elucidating how markets interact with vulnerable consumers (Hill & Sharma, 2020), we unveil the market's interest in making consumers vulnerable. Faced with the possibility of vulnerability conveyed by the market itself, consumers initiate a coping process even if vulnerability is only a future and uncertain possibility. By guiding the consumer through the entire experience of temporary vulnerability, the market acts not only as a provider of resources to address vulnerability but also as the primary agent of vulnerabilization. This shows that vulnerability can be constructed not only socially and culturally but also by market action, which benefits from constructing vulnerability to create a consumption journey. The market plays a dual role in this context: at the same time, it structures vulnerability and it manages vulnerability, regardless of the vulnerability phase in which consumers are situated.

Third, our culture around ableism (Goodley et al., 2018) and the effects of neoliberalism on consumption practices (Avishai, 2007) play a major role in structuring vulnerability. In this sense, our research highlights the role of institutional logics in making consumers vulnerable, serving to maintain a consumption community based on the protection against vulnerability. By making consumers vulnerable, culture, social expectations, and markets contribute to the diffusion of discourses focused on performance (Han, 2015), where the market emerges again as the provider of resources for constant improvement (Scussel, 2023).

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations, opening opportunities for future research. Although motherhood is a conducive context for investigations into vulnerability (The Voice Group, 2010), other contexts may reveal different relationships and tensions between consumers and markets during the phases of the temporary vulnerability experience. Thus, we encourage researchers to explore the connections and outcomes of the Consumer Temporary Vulnerability Process. For example, we visualize presumed vulnerability in the role of preventive botox being commercialized for young women to prevent the formation of wrinkles or the role of bodybuilding to prevent a weak body in old age. These pre-vulnerability interventions could also be helpful in understanding the strategies of vulnerability anticipation and its reflection on concrete vulnerability situations. Managerially, this research unveils the behavior of a consumer community and how consumers interact with marketers, potentially being of great value for defining product creation and marketing strategies via social media. However, considering consumer vulnerability, we hope that the discussion

proposed here contributes to a more humane market, where consumer well-being takes precedence over corporate interests.

We also see the need to investigate the role of social media in structuring the vulnerability experience. Although our work was not about the relationship between social media and vulnerable consumers, the volume of netnographic data reveals technology as a fundamental element in the experience of temporary vulnerability, demanding a deeper look at this phenomenon. Lastly, considering the structuring role of the market in socially constructing vulnerability situations, we stimulate future research to engage with the theorization of the market around vulnerabilization and its connection with neoliberal rationality, beyond the relation with the ableism culture.

Keywords: Consumer vulnerability, Temporary vulnerability, Experience of vulnerability.

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Creating and maintaining norms and power relations on online sperm donation platforms: Preliminary findings from a digital ethnography.

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Extended Abstract

Online sperm donation (OSD) facilitates recipient-donor connections through websites, social media, or mobile application software with the aim of enabling recipients to conceive with donated sperm (Taylor et al., 2023). Online sperm donation can be distinguished from 'regulated' donor conception, which takes place via clinics and is governed by codes of practice and, in some countries, legal frameworks (e.g., the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority in the UK). OSD is rapidly expanding, with over 60 English-language platforms hosting 350,000+ participants. These platforms, primarily managed by donors, vary in payment structures from free to fee-based, providing economic

accessibility compared to clinics, but with new dynamics of power in family-making (Taylor et al., 2023).

In this presentation, we will share preliminary findings from a one-year digital ethnography of six OSD sites. This was conducted as part of a larger ESRC-funded multi-phase and multi-method study into online sperm donation (see: https://www.theosdproject.com/). Five primary OSD sites were identified and selected using Taylor et al.'s (forthcoming) environmental scan of OSD platforms. A secondary, sixth site was identified during the digital ethnography. Consent to join the sites was obtained from the site owners. The research questions addressed in this presentation are:

1. How do OSD site owners and members create and maintain subcultural norms?

2. How is power enacted, reinforced, and/or resisted on OSD platforms?

The types of data collected were: 1. the policies/guidelines from each site; 2. synchronous virtual interviews with five site owners; 3. asynchronous instant messaging interviews with site members; 4. fieldnotes from participating in the sites and researcher reflections. Qualitative data analysis involved collating, coding, and combining text to interpret meaning (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2021).

In this presentation, we will argue that the digital facilitation of sperm donation is not inherently harmful. This perspective challenges prevailing narratives in the media and some academic discourse regarding OSD. For example, warning people of 'fraudulent' or unethical donors and the health risks associated with OSD (e.g., Jewers, 2023). However, we also acknowledge the potential individual and socio-cultural implications of participation in OSD platforms and their creation and management, which may have harmful effects. Digital spaces are not "normatively neutral" (Stanfill, 2014, p. 1016); rather creators actively shape values, such as through policies or rules on member conduct (e.g., expectations for donor-recipient interactions) and online safety (e.g., guidelines for reporting to site moderators). Consequently, these digital spaces can influence ideals and norms about what is un/acceptable behaviour (e.g., whether it is acceptable for site members to offer or express a preference for sexual intercourse to conceive, rather than via artificial insemination) and these norms can be reinforced, accepted, and enacted, or resisted by site members. The preliminary findings from this study advance knowledge of digital lives/spaces and online governance, privacy, and safety.

15h30 – 17h00 – Full length presentations (Session 5) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Aleksej Heinze
"Netnography for crafting digital entrepreneurship and leadership"

1) Ciampa, I., Bardhi, F., Market-Enabled Consumer Creativity.
2) Duan, X., Wu, Q., Between Reality and Virtuality: Digital Entrepreneurs Engage and Manage Followers.
3) Romenti, S., Murtarelli, G., Colleoni, E., Digital Leadership in the Social Media Era: A Netnographic Analysis of CEO Strategies and Practices.

Market-Enabled Consumer Creativity

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract
In the last decades, digital platforms have allowed millions of self-publishing authors to reach their audiences and the publishing market, simplifying distribution and offering a significant degree of freedom in personalizing their approach. We argue that consumer creativity changes as a result. This study investigates how hobbyist consumers have taken advantage of the resources, knowledge and legitimation provided by the networked sociality and the market in these platforms to navigate the traditional publishing industry. Building on the sociology of creativity as our theoretical lens, we draw from an eight-year ethnographic study within the Italian publishing sector to explore the transition from consumers to creators. Our findings introduce a marketization process of consumer creativity comprised of four phases: instinctive, rookie, constrained, and market-enabled consumer creativity. Through each phase, consumers transition from being hobbyist writers towards professional creators. Our contributions emphasize the role of digital platform markets as intermediary between personal creative aspirations and market standards leading to the development of a market-enabled consumer creativity. We contribute to literature on consumer creativity, advancing understanding of the genesis and legitimization of consumer creativity within the marketplace.

Introduction
We live in a creator economy valued at over $250 billion (Goldman Sachs 2023), which encompasses "over 50 million independent content creators, curators, and community builders including social media influencers, bloggers, and videographers" (signalfire.com, 2023). In this intricate ecosystem, aspiring to be a creator—particularly any artistically driven professional—often intertwines with active participation in digital platforms such as SoundCloud, YouTube, or Wattpad, where creativity is both the focal point and the main currency (Jenkins 2006; Morgan and Nelligan 2018). This paper delves into this phenomenon by uncovering how professionalism is achieved in creative industries by leveraging consumer creativity and resources from digital platforms. Our goal is to understand how ordinary consumers learn to market their creativity for the marketplace, transitioning into the role of professionalized creators via digital platforms, social media, and traditional marketplaces, with the use of digital tools and resources.
We address the following research questions: How does consumer creativity take place on digital platforms? How is the creative process re-configured and adapted through digital platforms and traditional markets? And what is the process of marketization of consumer creativity? We address these questions by exploring the relevant literature on consumer creativity in consumer research and our theoretical lens, the sociology of creativity. Then, we detail our qualitative methodology, involving a mix of multiple methods: introspections, fieldwork, and narrative interviews with consumers. Lastly, we introduce our findings by identifying the concept of market-enabled consumer creativity, conceptualized as the artful translation of personal creative endeavors into a language, or format, resonating with the marketplace, through appealing to resources from digital tools and the marketplace itself.

Literature Review: Consumer Creativity in Consumer Research
The contemporary notion of creativity emerged over seventy years ago, introduced by psychologist J. P. Guilford to better understand the cognitive mechanisms enabling imaginative individuals to generate novel ideas. Creativity is typically defined as a quality of outcomes and responses judged to

be creative by appropriate observers (Amabile 1982). In social psychology, it is often associated to the generation of novel and valuable ideas with practical applicability, aimed at solving problems (Amabile 1996; Csikszentmihalyi 2014; Hirschman 1980). Anchored to the imaginative capabilities of the human mind, creativity's concept is blurred: considered both extraordinary (De Filippi, Grabher and Jones 2007) and commonplace (Gauntlett 2011), permeating a wide array of human activities (Simonton 2000).

Consumer researchers have made significant contributions to the study of creativity, especially with the introduction of the concept of consumer creativity, which explores the intersection of creativity and consumption (Hirschman 1980). Consumer creativity is defined as "the problem-solving capability possessed by the individual that may be applied toward solving consumption-related problems" (Hirschman 1980, p. 286), broadly occurring in consumption environments. In 2019, Mehta and Dahl highlighted how consumer researchers have extensively shed light on factors influencing consumer creativity, such as cognitive ability, motivation, personality, and the impact of one's environment. In general, a particular focus on consumer creativity has been psychological, concentrating on personal behaviors rather than the socio-cultural context influencing them (Weijo, Martin, and Arnould 2018). In this paper, we respond to calls for a dynamic outlook on consumer creativity (Hirschman 1980; Weijo, Martin, and Arnould 2018), taking a sociological perspective to shed light on the larger societal, historical, and contextual frameworks surrounding consumer creativity and its evolution over time. To do so, we turn to the literature on the sociology of creativity.

Theoretical Perspective: Sociology of Creativity

The relationship between sociologists and the concept of creativity has always been complex (Godard, Seong and Phillips 2020), as creativity is a topic often explored more through psychological means (Chan 2011). From a sociological perspective, creativity is anchored to specific historical periods (Reckwitz 2017), subject to change over time, at least when viewed externally, and difficult to pinpoint with a single, universally accepted conceptualization. Furthermore, sociology associates creativity with an idea of progress (Morgan and Nelligan 2018), shaped incrementally, and related to tastes and ideas that shift over time (Elias 1978), influencing how creativity is perceived. This inherent fluidity further complicates a sociological definition and understanding of creativity. Nonetheless, in recent decades, sociologists have embraced the study of creativity with the aim of developing a comprehensive understanding that encompasses its social dynamics and aligns with its pervasive and evolving nature. For example, sociologists have delved into the underpinnings of creative success, highlighting a connection between one's success and their network (Uzzi and Spiro 2005). This is particularly relevant for this paper, allowing us to view creativity not just as an individual endeavor but as embedded in a set of relations that impact it, and in different ways.

This paper aligns to the sociology of creativity also by uncovering its transition in settings such as creative industries and cultural domains, which represent prolific empirical contexts for sociology (Rosenberg and Harburg 1992), where creativity is easier to recognize (Csikszentmihalyi 2014). A fascinating example of this approach is Norbert Elias' posthumous exploration of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's genius (1993). In this, Elias portrays Mozart's struggles for creative production and recognition amidst societal structures governed by the court, royal preferences, and institutional power dynamics that restricted artistic freedom. Elias, perhaps unintentionally, underscores the significance of broadening our understanding of creators and their works to include the societal context they inhabit. He argues that a creative individual is not merely a creative genius with psychological complexities that would be viable in any moment, but it is rather deeply embedded in a social framework governed by rules and institutions. These societal constructs both impact creativity and shape the expression of one's imaginative power. Elias' examination of Mozart provides a window into the unique, empirical contributions that sociology can make to the study of creativity, shedding light not just on the psychological facets of creators but also on the societal systems they navigate and the myriad influences they face.

A sociological approach allows us to understand creativity by dissecting one's embeddedness in ideas and socio-cultural influences (Fox 2013). Instead of viewing creativity solely as a human capacity, this lens allows us to view it as a byproduct of the interaction between human capabilities and the social environment in which a creator, or someone with creative potential, operates. Hence, this research adopts a sociological stance on creativity by embracing its definition of an "intentional configuration of cultural and material elements that is unexpected for a given audience" (Godart et al. 2020, p. 494). In their sociological review of creativity, Godart et al. emphasize how sociology views creativity as the result of three main characteristics: (1) the interrelations within a network, (2) the legitimacy this network provides to one's creativity and (3) the influences on its configuration.
We adopt this sociological lens to trace the evolution of consumer creativity and its configurations over time when mediated by platforms as well as traditional markets. We turn to Godart et al.'s definition of creativity from a consumer creativity perspective and explore how it is influenced over time by digital platforms.

Methodology: Context

In recent years, the publishing industry has undergone significant changes. From being predominantly traditional and institution-bound, it has now begun to incorporate digital media and processes (Thompson 2021). Our study delves into the Italian publishing industry, which is uniquely characterized by a dominant oligopoly that often pushes aspiring authors toward conventional publishing avenues instead of newer digital ones, but where a democratizing push towards digital platforms is nonetheless at play.
A report from the Italian National Institute for Statistics reveals a telling trend: major publishers in Italy, defined as those releasing more than 50 books a year, control almost 80% of the books available in the market (Istat 2018). Remarkably, these publishers distribute 90% of these titles through traditional bookstores and established e-stores. On the other hand, while small to medium publishers represent 84.9% of the market in terms of the number of companies, they account for just 10.2% of published works. This disparity highlights the considerable grip larger publishers maintain, resulting in a distribution bottleneck that smaller publishers struggle to penetrate. For aspiring writers, navigating this landscape is daunting. While there are numerous publishing channels available today—from self-publishing solutions like Amazon Kindle Direct Publishing to crowdfunding platforms like Kickstarter—their impact remains somewhat muted in Italy (Istat 2021). Consequently, writers looking to transition from hobbyist to professionals must grapple with both the intricacies of the traditional publishing process and the emerging complexity of digital media, all in the hope of personal success.
According to the Italian Publishers' Association (AIE), a significant chunk of readers—over half, in fact—still prefer purchasing books from physical stores (Ufficio Studi AIE, 2022), where spaces are predominantly occupied by major publishers. This trend underscores the dilemma aspiring writers face: either navigate the maze of traditional publishing or carve out their own niche in the digital space. Today, writers can in fact choose among a variety of different routes. Traditional publishing, considered the classic route, provides legitimacy, professional support, and broad—or niche, depending on the size of the publisher—distribution (Sinykin 2023). Self- publishing grants authors complete control of the publishing process, from manuscript preparation to marketing, but lacks industry validation (Hviid, Izquierdo-Sanchez, and Jacques 2019). Authors that choose a self-publishing route often self-define as indie writers, independent of traditional boundaries of the publishing industry (Gatekeepers.com 2021). Pay-to-publish requires writers to finance their own print runs, and hybrid models combine elements of traditional and self-publishing (Jerichowriters.com 2023). Pay-to-publish is often considered as a vanity option and has less legitimacy than other types of publication (Gatekeeperpress.com 2021). Lastly, digital publishing platforms, such as Amazon Kindle Publishing or Apple Books, intersect some of these publishing

routes by handling publication and distribution, making it even easier for writers to reach the market, but at the same time intensifying market competition and causing saturation (Sinykin 2023). Amid this complexity, the digitalization of the publishing industry is permeating all elements of the publishing process. This phenomenon stems from the socio-culturally rooted platformization of cultural production (Nieborg and Poell 2018), which is defined as "the reorganization of cultural industries around digital platform logics" (Davis 2020). Beyond permeating the publishing process, digital platforms have emerged to allow writers to share stories and experiment with writing before reaching the market. These platforms allow hobbyist writers to gather feedback and inputs from peers and readers, and to engage with a public beyond the traditional marketplace. In the methodology section, we detail how we delve into this setting.

Methodology: Data Collection

This paper employs an ethnographic approach (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) to theorize about consumer creativity in the publishing industry. We focus on a subculture of hobbyist writers in the Italian publishing industry, engaging with both digital platforms such as Wattpad (a social media for writers) and with the traditional marketplace. Over eight years, the first author observed and documented the experiences of 17 informants and the trajectories of their careers and creative outputs. Informants were initially sampled by convenience and later via snowballing, facilitated by the fact that the first author is a hobbyist writer and was able to connect with, follow, and interview the informants during her writing pursuits. At the start of the data collection, all informants were hobbyist writers aspiring to become professionals, except for two informants who served as negative cases as they were already established professional writers at the time of the data collection. These negative cases were considered to contrast themes, and to compare the professional writers' trajectories and writing processes with those of hobbyist writers slowly making their way onto the market, continuously interacting with digital platforms.

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of both the informants and their contextual dynamics, several data collection methods were employed: guided introspections (Wallendorf and Brucks 1993), a netnography (Kozinets 2020) of three different social media platforms, narrative interviews with hobbyist writers (Riessman 2008), and an analysis of archival material to contextualize the publishing industry in media discourse.

Overall, the first author collected 10 introspections at the beginning of the data collection, in 2016, to understand consumers' initial approaches to digital platforms. Concurrently, the netnography started in 2016 and lasted until 2023, currently comprising over 1350 double-spaced Word pages and 255 TikTok videos. The netnography detailed changes in consumer creativity, how creativity is configured over time, and how hobbyist writers navigate digital platforms and the traditional publishing industry. Lastly, 10 narrative interviews were collected between 2021 and 2023 with some of our informants, to compare the lived experiences of engaging in consumer creativity online and traditionally with netnographic data. For media contextualization, we used Factiva to gather articles from sources such as The New York Times, Forbes, Corriere della Sera, The Guardian, La Stampa, and others.

In conclusion, we collected and analyzed 2,925 double-spaced Word pages. We followed an iterative analysis process (Spiggle 1994), employing a recursive style of theorizing (Cloutier and Langley 2020) that complemented the ongoing nature of the data collection. This approach facilitated continuous theorization throughout the longitudinal study (Langley 1999; Giesler and Thompson 2016). We implemented a temporal bracketing strategy (Langley 1999), which allowed us to connect the different phases that emerged from our data and to identify the key mechanisms driving them. The social media data was further analyzed using a narrative inquiry approach (Pace 2008), which helped build on the shared narratives from our informants' social media profiles, to understand the use and roles of digital platforms over time. Overall, our analysis comprised three rounds of coding and analysis in which we identified themes (Strauss and Corbin 1990) and built the final process. The first round focused on aspects related to understanding the informants and

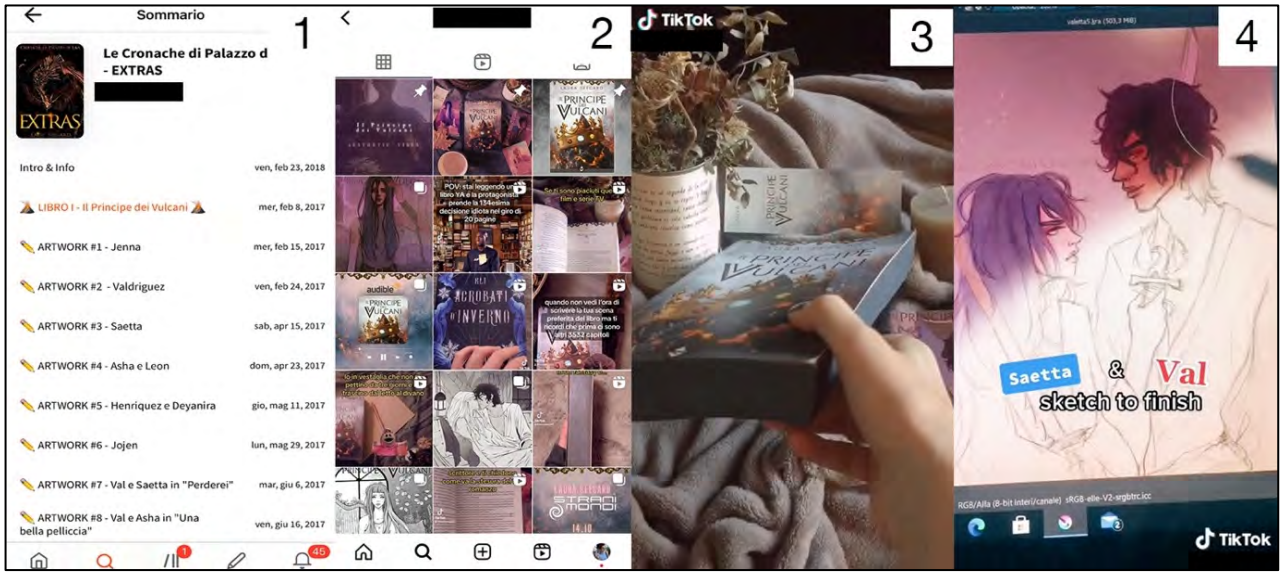
their creative processes. In the second round, the focus shifted to the roles of digital platforms, the involved actors, and the evolving influence of market actors. The third round of coding and analysis identified mechanisms within the framework. Throughout our analysis, we continuously iterated with the data to abstract essential insights (Spiggle 1994) and engaged with the literature to establish theoretical connections.

Findings

Our data allows us to identify two primary categories of determinants shaping consumer creativity. The first revolves around intrinsic factors, including personal rituals and both tangible and intangible tools employed in a creative process. For instance, one's imagination, preferred writing tools, or writing schedule play a crucial role. Informants exhibit different patterns and schedules on different social media platforms, utilizing digital platforms for different purposes related to the configuring and communicating of their creativity. Figure 1 illustrate this phenomenon, featuring one of our informants, Anna, and examples of her presence on different social media platforms: (1) Wattpad, used mostly for gathering market intelligence and strong interactions with digital communities of peers; (2) Instagram, where consumer creativity is configured to deliver a specific writer persona alongside the writing output; (3-4) TikTok, used to share aspects of creative experience with an authentic approach typical of this platform (Chu, Deng, and Mundel 2022).

The second category of determinants shaping consumer creativity pertains to extrinsic factors, notably the audience, institutional stakeholders, and the broader marketplace dynamics— anyone providing feedback or unsaid rules to one's creative configurations. The interplay between these intrinsic and extrinsic elements dynamically shapes an individual's creative trajectory over time, resulting in a fluid and ever-evolving configuration of consumer creativity.

Figure 1. Managing consumer creativity through different digital platforms.



Our research traces the changing configurations of consumer creativity across four pivotal phases that chart the progression of consumer creativity within the marketplace. We term this trajectory as the *marketization process of consumer creativity*, which portrays the transition of consumer creativity from its raw, unstructured form to one more attuned to marketplace demands, shaped via digital platform. In fact, in the marketization process of consumer creativity, the transition occurs as hobbyist creators tap into resources and tools gathered from both digital and traditional marketplaces, further enriched by audience interaction on digital platforms, to reach professionalization.

In our process, we label four phases pushing consumer creativity forward: instinctive, rookie, constrained, and market-enabled consumer creativity. These phases are detailed via the characteristics of creativity mentioned in the literature: relations, legitimation, and configurations. In this short paper, we offer a brief summary of each one.

Phase 1. *Instinctive Consumer Creativity* is defined as the unintentional and spontaneous configuration of lived experiences, both cultural and material, that emerges as novel for the creative consumer. It represents the first manifestation of an individual's imagination and creative behavior in life. This stage captures consumer creativity in its rawest form, stemming from the individual's observations and reflections of their surroundings, reconfigured by inherent talents and unique viewpoints.

I used to write short tales, stories on animals, things like that. I mean, it was the kind of elaboration of what you see around yourself, I don't know. Maybe, you know, you're young, you see an animal or a cartoon with a lot of animals, things like that. So, if you need to invent a story you do it with animals. Then, while you grow and go forward with life, you start interacting with humans [laughs]... and I think I started writing about people (Anna, 30-40, consultant, narrative interview).

Anna's words highlight the raw nature of instinctive consumer creativity and how it is freely configured by revisiting elements from daily life. This configuration happens outside of the marketplace, or before the individual steps into the market for the first time. In this instance, legitimation is achieved by self-legitimating one's creative output, which is also shared with close friends and family.

Phase 2. *Rookie consumer creativity* is defined as the intentional configuration of cultural and material elements shared with an audience of peers in a process of knowledge exchange. It happens when consumers interact for the first time with digital tools and resources that facilitate the sharing of creative output with a wider audience. It is the result of a negotiation with a community of practice, usually found amidst digital platforms and their communities, which enables one to derive market intelligence as part of their creative process.

Wattpad added another step [...]. The big step I included and that I still do was the preliminary study of my public. Before writing on Wattpad, I spent a bit of time studying the stories there, looking up the most read ones, why were they read. I even made an Excel spread sheet where I wrote down number of views, votes, everything (Simona, 20-30, social media manager and editor, narrative interview).

In her interview, Simona offers a glimpse of gathering of market intelligence by benchmarking her ideas with the most successful stories on Wattpad, where she approached the public for the first time. This made a difference in the way she later configured her creative output, guided by ratings and rankings, and broadly by the Wattpad demand—what genre would have fit, what stories and characters, and what style of writing.

Phase 3. *Constrained Consumer Creativity* is defined as the intentional configuration of cultural and material elements that meets the expectations of traditional gatekeepers. It arises when transitioning from digital platforms to the traditional marketplace, particularly when interacting with gatekeepers––editors, agents, talent scouts, or the publisher itself—who influence the final creative output, re-configuring it for the marketplace.

I had lectures [with the editor] on the structure [of the book], the chapters' list, the writing style... which completely destroyed the way I used to write [...], you know, I mean, because before knowing

all of that, you don't really care about the details in the style. [...] Well, anyway I have the feeling that I ruined the book, you know, you have that feeling, but since it's done... I know I don't have to see it as 'I ruined it', I need to see it as 'I made it different to make it accordingly to what the current fantasy editorial scene expects to see' (Anna, 33).

In this phase, legitimacy is provided by gatekeepers once the final output aligns with their expectations. In Anna's case, she highlights the difficult transition from the previous configurations of consumer creativity to the new one, aligned to the need of the marketplace, albeit not completely true to Anna's original vision. Re-configurations in this phase are structured and rigid and perceived as less creative by most informants. At the same time, they are seen as a necessary step towards professionalization.

Phase 4. *Market-enabled consumer creativity* is the last phase in our marketization process. We define it as the intentional configuration of cultural and material elements that, while being unexpected, can be easily conveyed to a given audience. In this phase, consumers, now professionals, sustain gained legitimation through continuous interactions on the marketplace, acting as legitimizing agents with others. Relations broaden to a wider network of peers, gatekeepers, and the audience, while configurations of creativity occur in structured steps allowing re-configuration aligned to the marketplace.

I had this desire to be alone and write in peace, but mostly it was born out of a need that is the same for every writer, I think. Writers that write professionally, as a job... it's about the first draft, the most difficult of all. It's when you are less confident, when you write really bad (...). Every time I had to sit, to write this first draft, I felt a big empty hole inside of me (...). It was a type of torture, so big that, at one point, I told myself: 'I want to reduce this torture as much as I can, because I cannot go on like this, if this is really my passion'. (...) 'Alright, I want to find a solution, so I will try [to go on a writing retreat]'. And at the beginning it was a bit of a game (...). It worked well, the first book I wrote during a retreat was an adult science fiction book, and I came out of that booth that I was inside the story, I was the characters, I was so immersed that... I underwent a psychological change in that moment, which was fundamental for my current life (Barbara, 31).

Barbara provides an example of this re-configuration, which unfolds in two distinct moments for her. In the first, she experiences a personal and instinctive configuration of her stories, which happens outside of the marketplace, during what she describes as "writing retreats". These retreats serve as a creative sanctuary where her initial ideas take shape without external influences. In a second moment, Barbara re-configures her creativity in collaboration with her editor, gatekeepers, and a group of helpers whom she defines as "beta-readers"—trial readers, not yet a proper public. The individual provides feedback and guidance, bringing her work towards its final form, ready for publication. This second moment represents the integration of external input and marketplace demands into her creative process, resulting in a refined and market-ready output.

Contributions

Previous consumer creativity research has mostly revolved around analyzing the psychological determinants of creativity, seeking to understand its nature and associated traits (Burroughs and Mick 2004; Hirschman 1980; Mehta and Dahl 2019). However, a noticeable gap exists in consumer research: there is a lack of understanding of consumer creativity within the socio-cultural context in which it is embedded and the elements that influence its configurations. Our longitudinal exploration of hobbyist writers within the Italian publishing industry bridges this gap. By delving into the lived experiences of hobbyist writers, we detail the nuanced changes in configurations of consumer creativity over time, and the role of digital platforms and the traditional marketplace in supporting and shaping consumer creativity, offering a variety of ways to configure

and re-configure it. Overall, this study shows how consumers transition into the role of creators, by tapping into resources and tools gathered from the marketplace, be it digitally-driven or traditionally-bounded. In this journey, consumers cultivate market intelligence and learn how to manage their creative processes, culminating in professionalization.

Keywords: netnography, consumer creativity, writers, publishing industry, digital platforms

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Between Reality and Virtuality: Digital Entrepreneurs Engage and Manage Followers.

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Extended Abstract

Identity which could help overcome hardship (Powell & Baker, 2014) and predict venture performance (e.g., de la Cruz et al., 2018), is rising in entrepreneurship research. Identity is "produced through dialogs with clients, suppliers, employees, and family in a processual fashion" (Essers & Benschop, 2007). Particularly, interactive digital technology has enabled digital entrepreneurs to construct and reconstruct their identities in engagement with the public audience (Brydges &

Sjöholm, 2019). Since identity is a relational process (Fletcher & Watson, 2007), the interaction between entrepreneurs and online audiences warrants attention. The extant research finds followers' perceived norm similarity to influencers and procedural fairness predict the relationship (Yuan & Lou, 2020). However, entrepreneurs are proactive, which refers to active attempts to stimulate situational changes (Delle & Amadu, 2016), challenging rather than maintaining the conventional norms (Hollander, 1958). How entrepreneurs, slightly distinct from influencers, construct their identities in the interaction with their followers remains less studied.

To understand how entrepreneurs construct identity in their engagement with followers, we plan to employ ethnography and netnography (Kozinets, 2010) between a rural venture and their Douyin fan community. We purposively select one returning digital entrepreneur who regularly updates content with over 55,000 followers and undertakes streaming activities on Douyin, a popular social media platform in China. After a 5-day preliminary fieldwork in 2023, the first author plans to conduct a 6-month ethnographic and netnographic study through immersion and observation to collect archival, interactive, and fieldnote data (Kozinets, 2018) from September 2024 to March 2025. Additionally, we will interview entrepreneurs and viewers respectively, with a semi-structured interview guide to uncover 1) how they perceive each other; 2) how they feel when streaming, and 3) how they interact with each other, and record our interviews. We will transcribe and verify, familiarize data, code line by line, define themes, build a theoretical model, and translate the quotations on an iterative basis for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure our ethnographic and netnographic research ethically, we follow the ethical principles recommended by Kozinets (2019) through our data-collection process.

Our preliminary findings demonstrate returning digital entrepreneurs demonstrate a "positive deviant" to better engage and manage their audiences. Drawing from organizational psychology (Grant et al., 2009), our preliminary findings indicate returning digital entrepreneurs act proactively as a positive deviant from the norms manifest in their counterparts, rural-urban movers. It in turn earns credits among audiences. The prosocial actions embedded in the pre-industrial rural context enhance the relationship between returning digital entrepreneurs and followers. Our research contributes a network-based view to identity and entrepreneurship research and para-social relationship research by challenging the extant research about the relationship between norm similarity and relationship building (e.g., Yuan & Lou, 2020). Additionally, we expand on the application of netnography (Kozinets, 2010) in digital entrepreneurship. Digital entrepreneurs could benefit from learning about follower management and identity construction to improve their digital businesses and the digitalization of rural China.

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Digital Leadership in the Social Media Era: A Netnographic Analysis of CEO Strategies and Practices.

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Extended Abstract
Strategic alignment with societal values is key for business longevity. CEOs are turning to social media for activism, facing both opportunities and risks in this polarized arena (Branicki et al., 2021; Hou & Poliquin, 2023). While it allows for direct public engagement, the divisive nature of online platforms can lead to backlash, boycotts, or reputational damage, particularly when a CEO's message clashes with audience values. Understanding how to navigate this digital landscape to foster authentic leadership and mitigate negative reactions is an underexplored yet critical area of study.

Based on these premises, this study has three goals: to examine how CEO activism on social media affects brand image and stakeholder engagement, highlighting differences between personal and corporate branding; to investigate CEOs' communication strategies for navigating the polarized digital environment and promoting authentic leadership; and to explore how visual narratives and the interplay between supportive and opposing audiences impact the success of digital leadership and activism. Employing netnography, the paper analizes the interactions between ten prominent CEOs known for their activist stances and its audiences on LinkedIn and Twitter. The netnographic approach allowed for an in-depth analysis of the interactions between CEOs and their digital audiences. By examining these dynamics on platforms, the study could evaluate the content, context, and the strategic use of digital communication techniques.

Key findings show that effective digital leaders strategically engage with their polarized online audiences, often using visual narratives like images and videos to address social issues, which boosts audience interaction. This approach fosters environments with both supporters and detractors.

Supportive audiences actively share content and engage in dialogues that advance CEOs' agendas. Conversely, the same strategies can mobilize counter-audiences who challenge the CEOs' stances through critical discussions due to differing views.

This phenomenon underscores the polarizing effect of CEO activism, with digital platforms serving as arenas for both support and opposition. Our findings indicate that the line between supportive and counter-audiences is more fluid than anticipated, with some individuals shifting between support and opposition. This flexibility is key for leadership emergence, as it strengthens the leader's base and

facilitates robust discussions. CEOs strategically navigate audience polarization by fostering open dialogues with both supporters and critics, applying crisis management tactics to preserve balanced discourse and brand image. The findings indicate that CEO activism on social media provides an authentic view into their commitment to social issues beyond traditional PR, shown through visual storytelling and direct involvement with societal concerns. Overall, our results indicate that, for leaders to emerge, they need to embrace the polarization inherent in digital media, fostering genuine debate among different audience groups.

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15h30 – 17h00 – Full length presentations (Session 6) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Diego Rinallo
"Netnographic journeys into consumer fantasies, escapes, and storytelling"

1) Vittadini, N., Netnography of algorithmic imaginaries.
2) Mulvey, M., Down the rabbit hole: Adventures in Reddit and the consequences of curiosity.
3) Scussel, F., Suarez, M., Petroll, M., The digital narratives regime: reproducing practices from extraordinary experiences' stories.
4) Chakraborty, A., Understanding the role of mindfulness retreats for escapism in tourism: An Exploratory study.

Netnography of algorithmic imaginaries.

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Extended Abstract

The paper presents a new field of netnographic investigation that concerns the relationship between users and algorithmic media. Algorithmic media (social media, recommendation systems and content delivery platforms) plays a central role in modern platform societies. The way in which these media are used is influenced by the imagery of the algorithms that is shared by groups of users, either through stories circulating within social media or through word of mouth.

The paper aims to answer the question: how can ethnographic research methodologies be applied to analyze algorithmic imaginary formation processes and what results can be achieved?

Algorithmic media are defined as media technologies that use algorithms to sort, filter, hierarchize, and curate content (Bucher, 2020, p. 1706).

The algorithms within these platforms are not purely technological objects, but cultural artifacts since they are modeled on social worldviews (Beer, 2017, p. 4) and their functioning depends on the data and inputs provided by individuals (Shellewald, 2022).

The users' actions towards algorithmic media are defined as strategic and include all conscious actions aimed at influencing the functioning of algorithms and, consequently, the types of content present in the social media feed (Gillespie, 2014). Taina Bucher defines these practices as 'clicking consciously'

on certain types of content to 'correct' algorithmic prediction errors that lead to flows of unwanted content (Bucher, 2020, p. 1707).

To implement interaction practices with algorithms, users and content creators must share an algorithmic imaginary of what algorithms are, what they should be, and how they work (Bucher 2017, p. 40). This social imaginary is co-constructed by platform users and has also been referred to as 'folk theories' (Ytre-Arne, Moe, 2020). Algorithmic imagery and folk theories are disseminated through 'algorithmic stories': informal, bottom-up narratives that develop when ordinary users share their direct or mediated experiences with algorithms across various platforms (Schellewald, 2022, p. 3).

The above-described processes of constructing algorithmic imagery are based on exchanging stories about the functioning of algorithms within online communities. These stories often differ from community to community, so much so that in some cases, there has even been talk of 'algorithmic gossip'(Bishop 2019). Therefore, we can say that algorithmic images are also the result of a discursive process of story processing and exchange within online communities.

This paper will explore the significance of netnography in comprehending the creation and circulation of algorithmic stories, as well as the distinctions between communities.

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Down the rabbit hole: Adventures in Reddit and the consequences of curiosity.

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Extended Abstract

Venturing off the beaten path, crossing disciplinary boundaries, or "taking a hike!" are familiar calls to action to expand the frontiers of knowledge (Zaltman, 2000). Netnographers excel at such adventures, examining various subjects by delving into digital traces of communications within dynamic online communities (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023). To the uninitiated, the immersive and intricate nature of netnography may evoke the metaphoric sensation of "going down the rabbit hole."

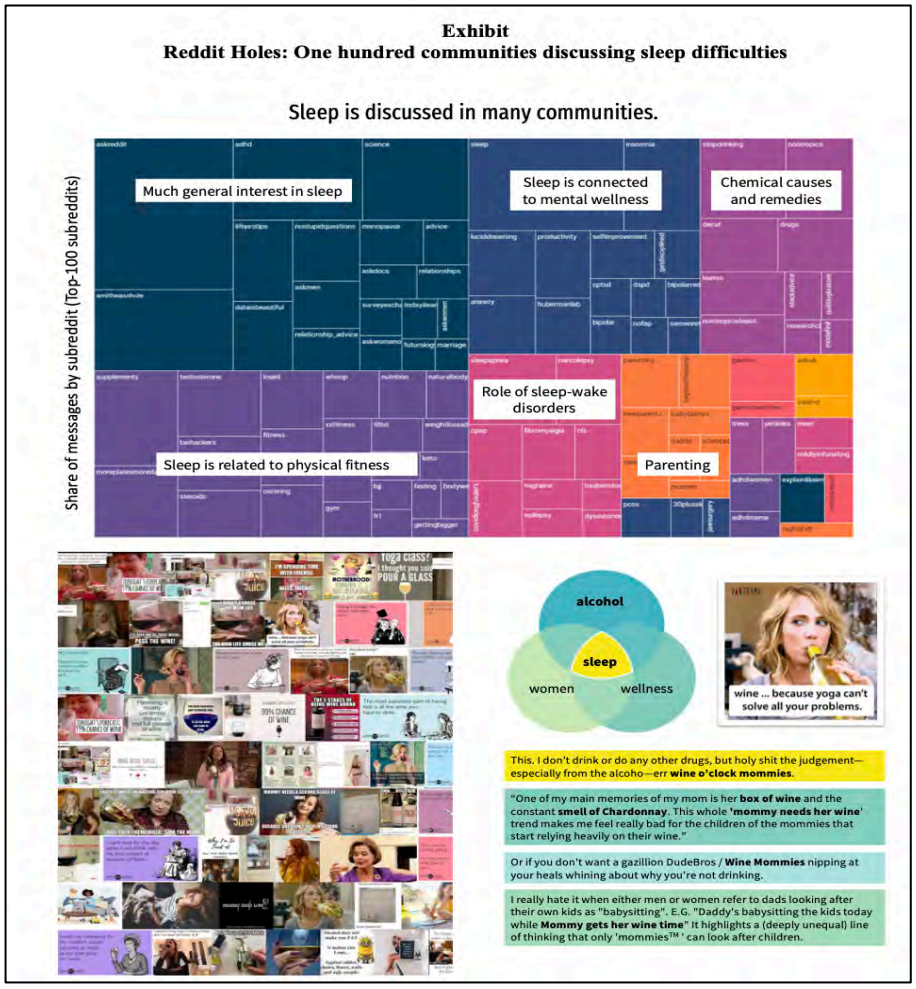
This paper reflects on the cautionary tales and lessons learned from this metaphor, drawing from the author's experience teaching social listening methods and conducting fieldwork on Reddit – a rich trove of consumer information teeming with diverse communities and endless threads. The Exhibit offers a glimpse into the unexpected discoveries and insights uncovered during a study on discussions surrounding sleep difficulties.

The work-in-progress reflections include:

1. The rabbit hole embodies the unknown. Delving deeper yields valuable rewards, buried treasures, and opportunities. Yet generating ground-breaking theories and innovative ideas often stem from individuals' plausible hunches and engagement with the scholarly literature (Sætre & Van de Ven, 2021). Abductive reasoning underpins discovery.
2. Curiosity is an impulsive drive. However, a passion for ideas is a precious yet limited resource. Like an escape room or scavenger hunt, time limits intensify the search, making it more enjoyable and sustainable. Limits also foster teamwork and learning among research team members as they share discoveries. Sharing can arouse fresh curiosity.
3. Scale your presence. For some projects, it is best to observe from afar and not be noticed - like an astronomer looking through a telescope at a distant planet. However, a boots-on- the-ground presence is required for other projects to establish rapport and nudge discussions in directions of interest. Grow and shrink with purpose.
4. Be symbol-minded. Linguistic and cultural differences in online communities can lead to struggles in interpretation. Attend to the full spectrum of symbols deployed, including those conveyed in pictures, sounds, and motion (Lakoff & Johnson, 2008). Metaphors are central to language comprehension.
5. Map the warren of viewpoints. It's easy to lose your way. Developing navigational skills allows you to retrace steps and identify overlapping communities (e.g., subreddits) where diverse conversations occur. Exploring beyond a specific "neighborhood" in this online "metropolis" enables the synthesis of non-redundant information (Hannigan, 2023).

Ultimately, this interdisciplinary exploration provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics underlying the Reddit research experience, offering implications for both researchers and practitioners interested in netnography, social networks, and consumer behavior.

Figure 1



Keywords: netnography, social media, theory creation

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The digital narratives regime: reproducing practices from extraordinary experiences' stories.

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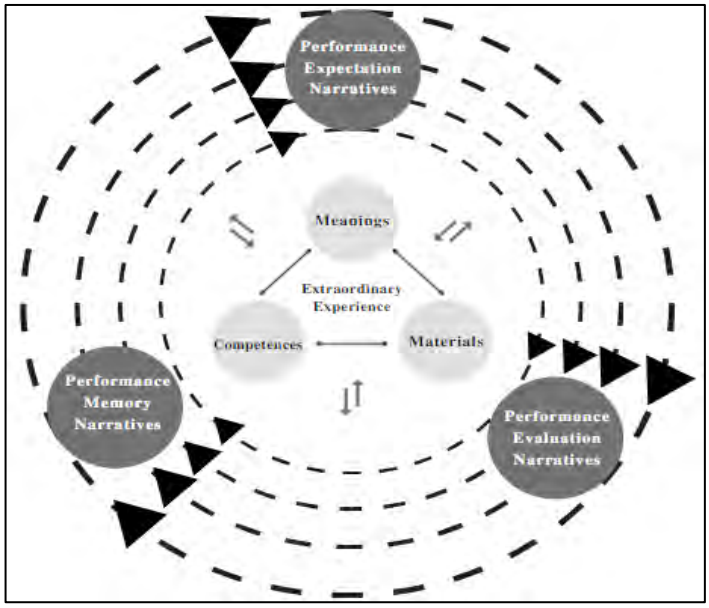
Extended Abstract
Consumers seek extraordinary experiences as a means of escaping routine, but the lasting engagement with such experiences is fueled by motives like self-efficacy, peer recognition, and status. This sheds light on the community practices that facilitate the occurrence of extraordinary experiences. The emergence of social media has extended these communities into the digital realm, fostering digital narratives that mobilize consumers and enhance the popularity of extraordinary experiences. However, the understanding how these narratives influence the dissemination of practices among consumers, communities, and marketers remains as a literature gap.
Considering that digital narratives facilitate the circulation of meanings (Kozinets, 2019; Van Laer & Orazi, 2014), their potential in contributing to practice diffusion (Akaka et al., 2022), and the need to understand how communities perpetuate over time (Thomas et al., 2013), we explore how extraordinary experiences act as a storyworld for digital narratives and their effects on practice reproduction.
Our seven-year study, combining ethnography (Belk et al., 1988) and netnography (Kozinets, 2019) within a running community reveals three types of digital narratives. Practice narratives document the journey towards the extraordinary experience; performance narratives describe the embodiment of the experience; and memory narratives act as a digital recollection of the experience. These narratives codify the elements of practice, render visibility and meaning to the extraordinary experience and promotes the community of practice. Together, these digital narratives form a narrative cycle that enhances the intelligibility of the complete story to a wider audience, contributing to the recruitment of new practitioners, who learn about practice meanings, required materials, and how to develop their competencies through digital narratives, thus reproducing the practice.
The recursive interplay between practices and digital narratives generates the Digital Narratives Regime, a discursive normative system that links practice elements, defines parameters for practice enactment, and creates patterns for digital narrative creation. By governing the interplay between practices and narratives, this system disseminates and shapes the community of practice. As for contributions, we demonstrate how the growth of communities is linked to social media, stimulating engagement, adaptation, and the reproduction of practices. Secondly, the relationship between practice enactment and practice narrative allows for an understanding of the current dynamics of practice diffusion, considering the technological framework of social media. Lastly, our research highlights the role of digital narratives as instruments for capturing and engaging consumers in specific practices, enabling narrative transportation.

Figure 1



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Understanding the role of mindfulness retreats for escapism in tourism: An Exploratory study.

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Extended Abstract

The concept of "mindfulness" stems from Buddhism and refers to being aware of one's own and others' actions at a particular moment and location (Milne et al., 2020). According to Sheth et al. (2011), mindfulness is "a process that requires consumers to pay attention to their bodily sensations, thoughts, and emotions with an attitude of acceptance as an ongoing process of inquiry to make consumption choices based on one's direct experience of needs, values, and insight." A mindful thinker's increased awareness and openness to new changes are distinct characteristics (An et al.,2024). Stankov et al. (2020) found that consumers became aware of mindfulness and adopted it in their lifestyle after COVID-19, a wake-up call mostly in Western societies. The tourist using their travels especially observed the adoption of mindfulness in the tourism domain. Research has found that mindfulness positively influences travel experiences through pro-environmental behaviours, satisfaction levels, and affective images such as fun and pleasure (Iacob et al., 2023; Loureiro et al., 2019).

Moreover, adopting and understanding the concept of mindfulness may take some time for the tourists, but they show interest in learning to care and take concern while travelling (Deb et al., 2023). Hence, engaging in the present moment and cultivating a non-judgemental attitude often provides escapism where tourists detach themselves from the present environment. Similarly, Eck et al. (2023) mention that escapism in tourism is the immersion in another environment that is different from daily life and which improves tourism experiences.

Escapism through retreats

Escapism is a mental, affective, and cognitive process in which a consumer is mentally and emotionally transferred to a location other than the origin, interrupting the auto-pilot mode of existence (Irimiás et al., 2021). According to research, escapism increases hedonic value and enjoyment with travel experiences (Ponsignon et al., 2020). Furthermore, the study discovered that the distance between the tourist's home country and the destination significantly impacted attaining escapism. Furthermore, escapism is a strong motivator for tourists to travel and immerse themselves in the areas they visit (Xue et al., 2022; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). On the other hand, escapism may be regarded as a voluntary activity performed by consumers to detach themselves from their everyday lives, enjoy time for themselves by resting, and feel stress-free by engaging in thoughtful practices.
Consumers often engage in mindful practices to seek escapism through retreats. Traditionally, retreats were associated with religious gatherings in a secular environment focused on personal well-being. Such retreats aimed to consciously rejuvenate individuals on multiple levels, acknowledging the interconnectedness of mind, body, and spirit in promoting overall wellness and renewal (Kelly, 2012). Such retreats involve activities such as meditation, yoga, and nature walks to promote inner calm, clarity, and relaxation. Thus, mindfulness retreats can be defined as an opportunity for an individual to experience a state of self-transcendence, escape from reality and break free from the auto-pilot mode of life. Extant studies on retreats in tourism literature have primarily focused on meditation (Norman & Pokorny, 2017), spirituality (Buzinde, 2020) or Zen experiences (Wang et al., 2021). However, cultivating mindfulness retreats is becoming essential to consumers' lives through escapism from reality, which is still unexplored. As a result, to explore the area, our research will take into consideration the following research question:

- RQ: How do mindfulness retreats lead to escapism in tourism?

The study will employ a qualitative methodology to investigate the research question about the process of intentional escapism by analysing the moment-to-moment experiences of tourists. The study will take place in two phases. First, to develop an understanding of retreats and tourists' experiences, we will do a netnography where platforms such as Tripoto, Trip Advisor and Airbnb will be considered. Their websites will be considered for netnography, where consumer reviews, brand postings, reactions, shares, likes, and comments will be studied. Second, based on insights archived from netnography, an open-ended questionnaire will be prepared to authenticate the findings, and in-depth interviews will be conducted. The sample will include tourists who have been through mindful practices during travel. The in-depth interview will focus on mindfulness practices during their retreats, the role of escapism, and how escapism and mindfulness retreats are interlinked.

Keywords:
Mindfulness, Escapism, Qualitative, Netnography.

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15h30 – 17h00 – Full length presentations (Session 7) [G 129 San Paolo]
Session Chair: Ashleigh Logan-McFarlane
"Netnography for crisis management and coping"

1) Ebony L., Somerhalder, M., The Era of Social Media and District Crisis Communication.
2) Nagarayan, D.V., Harnessing Real-Time Netnography and AI for Sustainable Marketing Strategies and Crisis Management: A Conceptual Framework.
3) Negri, F., Netnography for Crisis Communication Management and Recovery: the case of Chiara Ferragni.
4) Lloyd, K., A study of social media influencer's self management techniques to cope with online hate.

The Era of Social Media and District Crisis Communication.

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract
In May of 2022, Rob Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas stunned the world with their active shooter situation. According to the 77-page interim report by the Texas House of Representatives, uncertain narratives posted online lead to increase of conspiracy theories, false accusations, a "blame game" and scandal reports which complicated the investigation and elongated the situation (Interim Report, 2022). With instant access to one-way and two-way communication, information, crisis situations become even more critical. The increased use of social media for district communication in crises has placed added pressure on district leaders to be able to justify their choices and ensure that there is a common language and comprehension as to why the situation has been made (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Ion et. al., 2019; Murray, 2014). The current literature explores the use of social media as a tool in the classroom and for communication between teachers and/or teachers and students, but there has been limited research on the use of social media in regard to communication between district and the community especially in times of crisis (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Ion, Proteasa & Marin, 2019; Murray, 2014). The exploration of communication strategies, specifically the choice of language, platform, and timing of communication implemented by districts to inform the general public of crisis situations that is creating a disruption to the school day, is vastly understudied even with the increasing occurrences of campus crisis (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kim,et. al, 2016; Ion, et. al., 2019; Murray, 2014). This study will be exploring crisis communication via social media in school districts by examining district Facebook pages to identify communication strategies between the district and the larger school community. Crises are often referred to as unusual or abnormal events with infrequent occurrences, which allow leaders little to no preparation time (Wu et al., 2021). For this study, crisis situations are events that are immediate threats to students physical or emotional safety that disrupt the school day. This study aims to explore online crisis communication strategies of district leadership by answering the following question:

1. What online crisis communication strategies do district leadership teams implement when sharing crucial safety information with the community?

Using a longitudinal netnography study, this research can help school districts craft comprehensive communication plans and policies regarding social media as a tool for ass communication during times of crisis and can help predict coming trends in increased crisis communication needs or interactions between districts and their community. The study will track three school districts in Texas and their use of crisis communication over 5 years via social media. I will look at posts, statuses, and communication between districts and the community specifically exploring how changes of language, frequency of posting, or other strategic communication changes the response or perception of the district communication.

Introduction
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that there is a common language and comprehension as to why the situation has been made (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Ion, Proteasa & Marin, 2019; Murray, 2014).

Social media has become a new frontier in education and continues to redefine itself (Driss et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2016). Within the scope of education, social media has become a medium of communication and advertisement and a way for communities to come together as well as a place to form new relationships with those who may not have interacted otherwise (Driss, Mellouli, Trabelis, 2019; Kim, Hung & Emery, 2016). Social media's impact on communities and organizations can make or break a district (Driss, Mellouli, Trabelis, 2019; Kim, Hung & Emery, 2016).

The current literature explores the use of social media as a tool in the classroom and for communication between teachers and/or teachers and students, but there has been limited research on the use of social media in regard to communication between district and the community especially in times of crisis (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Ion, Proteasa & Marin, 2019; Murray, 2014). The exploration of communication strategies, specifically the choice of language, platform, and timing of communication implemented by districts to inform the general public of crisis situations that is creating a disruption to the school day, is vastly understudied even with the increasing occurrences of campus crisis (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Kim,et. al, 2016; Ion, et. al., 2019; Murray, 2014).

This study explores crisis communication via social media in school districts during crisis situations such as events that are immediate threats to students physical or emotional safety. This study aims to explore online crisis communication strategies of district leadership by answering the following question:

1. What online crisis communication strategies do district leadership teams implement when sharing crucial safety information with the community?

Methodology

Because this study is exploring how social media influences crisis communication strategies of district leadership in an online platform netnography is the most logical choice of methodology (Kulavuz-Onal, D., & Vasquez, C., 2013) To garner authentic data, the best option is to be immersed in day-to-day communications via social media and to watch the interaction of the district with community stakeholders. Data will strictly be collected from district Facebook pages where I will engage daily with the site, checking for updates, reviewing comments, and responding to post as appropriate. No data will be collected from in person, television news, or direct communication with district personnel.

Framework

My framework will be a combination of Social Network Theory and Media Multiplexity Theory. The combinations of the methodology and theories allow for the research to consider the various perspectives from online platforms and construct meaning for the best communication strategies for district leaders to engage with during time of crisis when clear and effective communication is crucial and identify why districts have chosen certain platforms to use as the primary communication method. Social Networking Theory will allow outcomes from the crisis and systems created during times of crisis or difficult decision-making can be used to apply to future situations while the Media Multiplexity Theory provides framing for why leaders use different social media sources for communication and their effectiveness as it relates to community awareness and responsiveness to communication and a framing for the analysis of the media source that the district selects most often for communication and identifies trends among districts in Texas for frequency or preference of social media in which the superintendent/district chooses to engage. The Social constructivism theory will help to identify behaviors and history of district leadership communications via social media (Mezirow, 1996; Taylor & Medina, 2011; Toledano, 2017).

Study Design

The study will be a longitudinal study utilizing archival data starting in 2020 to track changes of districts in their crisis communication with the community and current observation of real-time district interactions via three social media platforms. The archival data will consist of status post and responses from the larger community, "stories," pictures/videos and recorded meetings. For this study, I will only examine district communication and their interaction with the community regarding crisis communications. This will be a small-scale study for proof of concept. Three years of archival data will allow me to see the changes of social media integration and interaction with communication paying close attention to the ebbs and flows of communication, creating a timeline that will allow me to track trends in the increased use of social media for district communication and then explore major crisis event that was taking place during that time. The combination of trends across multiple districts of diverse sizes and demographics will help paint a picture of the use of social media as a means of communication during crisis in PK-12 spaces in Texas.

Sites/Participants

Each of the three participating school district will come from the same educational region in North Texas. Texas educational regions have notable similarities and differences, so selection of three districts from the same region offer a diversified sampling and allow for a general trend in Texas to be analyzed while offering some stability allowing for comparisons. Districts selected through stratified purposeful collection will include one small rural, a mid-sized suburban, and large urban district as specified from the Texas Education Agency 2022-2023 classification list (Creswell, 2013). Access to a public facing Facebook page that does not require proof of community membership is part of the selection criterion. Once the districts are randomly selected based on their size, I will verify access to their social media pages. To be qualified for the study, the district must actively used Facebook to communicate with their community.

Data Collection

I will implement interference field notes to collect data by taking notes while observing interactions on social media reflecting in real time on the behaviors of the district when engaging with the community and noting any social relationships or building meaning based off collaborative communication between district and the community. I will also collect archived data such as the event that has, or is, taking place and then track the number of likes, dislikes, and comments. Additionally, noting the time of the post and then identifying and similarities and differences of similar post that have previously occurred. For the short, proof of concept study, I will retroactively observe the district interactions for a three-year time span from archival data. For the longer study, I will study real time interactions from the district over the course of a school year.

Figure 1: Example data collection table

School District	Year	Event	# of Positive Reactions (likes, hearts)	# of Negative Reactions (sad, anger)	# of Comments	Time of Post	Similarities of other post from similar event	Differences of other post from different events
Example ISD	2021	Early dismissal sudden snow fall	3K	987	501	11:45am During the day of closing	N/A	N/A
Example ISD	2022	No school large snow fall predicted	900	57	145	5:56 pm day before school closing	More likes than dislikes, less comments than reactions, just words posted	Proactively closed school, posted the night before, less engagement with the post

Data Analysis
I will analyze the notes, videos, posts, etc. using process coding specifically connecting interrelated relationships, connections to influence and affect based on the interactions. This type of analysis is the qualitative form of correlation (Saldana, 2014).
The data collected will be analyzed through various methods. For both the longitudinal netnography and focus group, data will be analyzed using information coding identifying emergent themes. The themes will lead to categorization and more open coding. One of the themes that I will identify is the positive and negative interaction including language, shares, reactions to posting as well as identify wording choice that falls into the categories. I will note district and regional language alignment, language changes, and any emerging trends from all platforms. I will finally keep track of any changes to district responses based on community pressure or changes from other districts.

Limitations
The study will be limited to Texas public independent school districts. There is potential for a lack of longitudinal data depending on when districts began to use social media in their district. The study also only focuses on one side of the two way communication so the data will assume district intent is how the community is interpreting the postings.

Ethical Considerations
To be ethical, Kozinets suggests that research should disclose their position prior to engaging with their group (Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets, 2010; Kozinets, 2014). Because I am studying school districts, particularly district leaders, while working for the state governing body of K-12 education, my discloser and participation could influence how a district or community member interacts. For this reason, I will take on primarily an observational role and be less likely to engage in active participation within the group.
Because one of the selection criteria is that the district communication be posted on a public facing webpage the data collected for this study is not considered confidential. However for the study, three districts have granted consent to use of their public facing pages and data without a need for an Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

Significance of the Study
As communication practices change in the district based on the shift to a social media-heavy culture, superintendents and other district leaders must find a way to connect, collaborate, and effectively share via online platforms and social media sites. During a crisis, communication becomes even more crucial (Brion, 2021). The communication needs to be as efficient, clear, and precise as possible (Balasubramanian & Fernandes, 2022; Brion, 2021; Dirani et al., 2020; Eichenauer et al., 2022; Forster et al., 2020; Quinn & Spreitzer, 1997). As more parents and guardians of millennials saturate the PK-12 community, effectively communicating in both one- and two-way communications will be a necessity for strong leaders.
Districts must find a way to establish clear guidelines of what is appropriate communication to their community in the online space while balancing how much information is shared. As society demands more transparency, faster communication, access to information, and transparency of decision-making, districts also need to shift. Although nothing can fully replace authentic face-to-face communication, district communication practices are being (re)shaped to fit the needs of the community. This research will help craft social media policies for districts, understand trends in two-way communication between districts and the larger community, and predict trends in increased communication needs or interactions between districts and their community.

Future Studies
The current study is designed as a retrospective technique for data collection, however, for the long term project both historical and real time data collection will be essential. During future studies, I

will follow district pages in real time especially fully immersing in times of immediate crisis (real time weather emergency, intruders, lock down, developing situation). By setting notifications, I would receive notifications of updates to track in real time to see the post, comments, likes, shares, comments, and any changes made.

An additional study would allow for the creation of policy and communication strategy recommendations to be implemented while tracking the success of the revised protocols. Using the data collected from this initial study, protocol designed would increase the effectiveness of clear communication while decreasing the miscommunication or misinterpretation of crisis situations between districts and communities.

Keywords: Crisis, Communication, Educational leadership, Longitudinal netnography, District communication

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Harnessing Real-Time Netnography and AI for Sustainable Marketing Strategies and Crisis Management: A Conceptual Framework.

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract
The digital landscape has experienced a transformative shift from traditional marketing strategies to digital platforms, profoundly influenced by the rapid evolution of consumer behavior and the digital ecosystem. This shift underscores the relevance of netnography and artificial intelligence (AI) in understanding and engaging with consumers in a more nuanced and effective manner. Netnography, a term coined by Robert Kozinets in 1998, offers a methodological lens to explore online communities and consumer behaviors, leveraging the rich data available in digital spaces. Simultaneously, AI's capabilities in processing and analyzing large datasets have opened new avenues for marketers to understand consumer patterns and preferences at an unprecedented scale. This paper aims to present a conceptual framework that integrates netnography with AI to forge sustainable marketing strategies and effective crisis management approaches, marking a significant advancement in digital marketing research and practice.

Introduction
The digital landscape has experienced a transformative shift from traditional marketing strategies to digital platforms, profoundly influenced by the rapid evolution of consumer behavior and the digital ecosystem. This shift underscores the relevance of netnography and artificial intelligence (AI) in understanding and engaging with consumers in a more nuanced and effective manner. Netnography, a term coined by Robert Kozinets in 1998, offers a methodological lens to explore online communities

and consumer behaviors, leveraging the rich data available in digital spaces. Simultaneously, AI's capabilities in processing and analyzing large datasets have opened new avenues for marketers to understand consumer patterns and preferences at an unprecedented scale. This paper aims to present a conceptual framework that integrates netnography with AI to forge sustainable marketing strategies and effective crisis management approaches, marking a significant advancement in digital marketing research and practice. For this the two main questions focused on are

(a) How can the combination of netnography, GAI, and TAI provide actionable insights for preemptive crisis management and sustainable practice development?

(b) (b) What role do GAI and TAI play in dynamically shaping and adapting marketing strategies based on netnographic analysis to respond to emerging sustainability challenges?

Table 1: An extended table, including additional elements such as ecosystem simulation, crisis management pre-emption, preparedness, new methods for implementing sustainability, and addressing biases and discrepancies

Extended Outcomes	Netnography	Generative AI (GAI)	Transformative AI (TAI)
Real-time tracking of environmental concern discussions	✓	-	-
Proactive identification of crisis signals	✓	✓	-
Tailoring sustainability messages to consumer values	-	✓	-
Forecasting market disruptions for early response	-	-	✓
Evaluating consumer response to sustainability initiatives	-	-	✓
Preparedness for environmental and social challenges	✓	✓	✓

Simulation of ecosystem impacts and consumer behavior	✓	✓	✓
Factor in new biases and reduce discrepancies in strategies	✓	✓	✓
Simulating multiple ecosystem impacts	✓	-	-
Pre-emptive crisis management insights	✓	✓	-
Identifying new sustainable and social sustainability methods	✓	✓	-
Simulating consumer behavior in varied scenarios	-	✓	-
Predictive crisis management	-	✓	-
Innovative approaches to sustainability and social impact	-	✓	-
Scenario planning for ecological and social impact	-	-	✓
Crisis management strategy formulation	-	-	✓
Identifying and reducing biases in sustainability strategies	-	-	✓

Netnography, a qualitative research methodology, systematically studies the online expressions and interactions of consumers to uncover insights about their behaviors, values, and opinions. This ethnographic approach has been revolutionized by the advent of GAI and TAI, which offer advanced capabilities for data processing and strategy formulation.

Generative AI (GAI) and Netnography

GAI refers to the subset of artificial intelligence technologies that can create new content, from text to images, that closely resembles human-generated material. In the context of netnography, GAI can amplify the qualitative insights by generating simulated consumer dialogues and narratives based on existing data patterns, providing a richer, more nuanced understanding of the consumer psyche. It can also proactively identify crisis signals by analyzing these simulated interactions for emerging patterns or shifts in sentiment that may indicate brewing issues. For instance, if netnographic analysis identifies a growing concern among consumers about the environmental impact of packaging, GAI can be employed to simulate consumer conversations on a larger scale, predicting how the concern might evolve and affect brand perception. This allows companies to tailor their sustainability messages more effectively and develop strategies that resonate deeply with consumer values.

Transformative AI (TAI) and Strategy Adaptation

TAI, on the other hand, focuses on altering business processes and strategies in response to the insights gleaned from AI analysis. In the sustainability domain, TAI can predict market disruptions by evaluating the patterns and trends identified through netnography and GAI. It can model different scenarios of market response to various sustainability initiatives, guiding businesses to formulate adaptive strategies that are both effective and preemptive. By analyzing netnographic data, TAI can, for example, predict the impact of a sustainability crisis on consumer behavior and market trends. This enables businesses to prepare strategic responses in advance, such as developing alternative supply chain routes in anticipation of disruptions or crafting marketing campaigns that address consumer concerns before they escalate into larger issues.

Integration for Actionable Insights

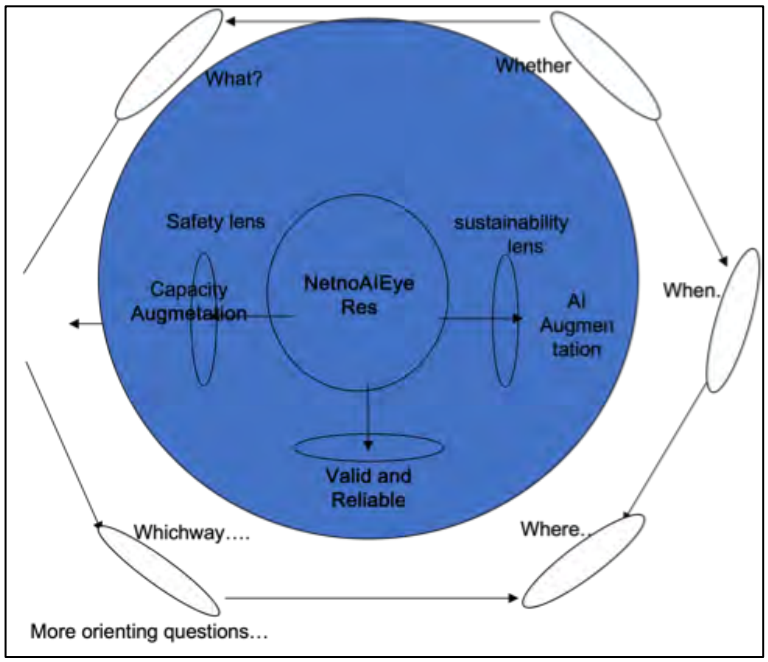
The combination of netnography, GAI, and TAI provides a robust framework for businesses to anticipate and manage crises, as well as to innovate sustainable practices. This integrative approach allows for the dynamic shaping of marketing strategies to align with the ever-evolving digital landscape and consumer expectations. By continuously monitoring online discussions with netnography, employing GAI to expand the data set through simulation, and using TAI to adapt strategies in real-time, businesses can achieve a level of preparedness that not only mitigates risks but also capitalizes on opportunities for sustainable growth. Here it is imperative to discuss the mechanism, and how netnography is harnessed. Data collection and monitoring are fundamental components of the advanced capabilities offered by General Artificial Intelligence (GAI) and Tactical Artificial Intelligence (TAI). These systems tirelessly scour a multitude of online platforms, including social media, news articles, blogs, and forums, employing sophisticated web scraping tools or APIs to gather real-time data pertinent to crises or sustainability matters. In the realm of crisis management, their focus is keenly set on identifying emergent issues, tracking sentiment trends, and pinpointing influential voices amidst the cacophony of digital discourse. Conversely, for sustainable strategies, their vigilance extends to monitoring discussions concerning environmental impact, corporate responsibility, and ethical practices.

Following the extensive data collection phase, GAI and TAI harness the power of Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to meticulously process and analyze the amassed data. Utilizing sentiment analysis algorithms, they discern the emotional tenor of user-generated content (UGC), categorizing expressions as positive, negative, or neutral. Additionally, employing topic modeling algorithms, they unearth the underlying themes and subjects inherent within the UGC,

providing invaluable insights into prevailing narratives and concerns. Moreover, GAI and TAI serve as vigilant sentinels, erecting real-time early warning systems premised on predefined keywords or patterns. In instances where crisis-related terms surge or sustainability discussions intensify, these systems promptly dispatch alerts to pertinent stakeholders, enabling swift and decisive responses aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of crises or fortifying sustainable strategies. In the realm of influencer identification, GAI and TAI deploy cutting-edge AI algorithms to pinpoint influential users, opinion leaders, and key stakeholders within the digital landscape. By meticulously scrutinizing engagement metrics, follower counts, and content reach, they identify individuals wielding significant sway over public opinion. Armed with this knowledge, organizations can strategically engage with influencers during crises or sustainability campaigns, amplifying their messaging and enhancing their outreach.

Furthermore, leveraging historical data, GAI and TAI develop predictive models that furnish critical insights for both crisis management and sustainable strategies. These predictive analytics forecast potential escalation points, anticipate public reactions, and discern sentiment shifts in crisis scenarios, while also facilitating the identification of trends and alignment of actions with long-term sustainability objectives. In adherence to ethical principles, GAI and TAI uphold user privacy and adhere to stringent data protection regulations. Employing anonymization techniques and securing consent where necessary, they ensure transparency and accountability throughout the data collection and analysis process, guided by robust ethical frameworks. In times of crisis, GAI and TAI seamlessly integrate with communication teams, offering real-time insights, recommending messaging strategies, and assessing public sentiment to refine crisis communication plans. Similarly, for sustainable strategies, these systems provide invaluable insights gleaned from the analysis of UGC related to environmental impact, social responsibility, and ethical practices. These insights drive informed decision-making, steering organizations towards actions aligned with societal expectations and long- term sustainability goals.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework. Source: Current Author



Discussion

The **"eye"** in the NetnoEyeAI framework symbolizes a comprehensive, observant approach to analyzing digital consumer behavior, signifying the core of netnography. The "safety lens" and "sustainability lens" represent filters through which data is interpreted, ensuring that insights adhere to ethical standards and sustainability goals, respectively. Generative AI (GAI) and Transformative AI (TAI) are positioned as augmentation layers around netnography. GAI enriches netnographic data by generating hypothetical consumer content and dialogue, providing a broader spectrum of consumer sentiment and response to analyze. This enriches the "what" aspect by providing numerous consumer perspectives and reactions that might not yet exist in the netnographic data.

Transformative AI (TAI), on the other hand, focuses on the "whichway" by taking the insights provided by netnography and GAI, and transforming them into actionable strategies. TAI considers the strategic implications of the insights, helping to direct where a business should head in terms of crisis response and sustainable practices. By integrating these AI technologies, netnography is not only about observing and understanding; it becomes a powerful tool for predicting and shaping the future of consumer interactions and business strategies. This framework suggests a dynamic, forward-thinking approach to market research that is rooted in ethical and sustainable principles.

Breaking it down further:

What? In this framework, GAI can process extensive qualitative data from netnographic research to identify key themes and discussions surrounding a crisis or sustainability. The generative aspect allows for the creation of varied content that mimics potential consumer reactions, providing a broader understanding of the crisis or sustainability issue at hand.

Whether? Here, both GAI and TAI play roles. GAI can help verify the authenticity and significance of trends by comparing generated simulations with actual consumer data. TAI can take this further by determining the potential impact of these trends on business strategies and operations, offering insights into whether these trends warrant a strategic response.

When? TAI can be instrumental in analyzing temporal patterns and predicting the trajectory of discussions and behaviors related to crises and sustainability. It can inform organizations about the optimal timing for interventions or launching sustainability initiatives, ensuring that these efforts are not only reactive but also preemptively aligned with consumer sentiment.

Where? Netnography locates the epicenters of discussion, whether on social media platforms, forums, or other digital spaces. GAI and TAI can extrapolate this information to predict where the next significant conversations or shifts in consumer behavior might occur, possibly even in different digital spaces or geographic locations.

Whichway? The combined insights from netnography, GAI, and TAI provide strategic direction. This can involve scenario planning, where different strategies are tested virtually to see how they might play out in the real world. It can also guide the adaptation of marketing strategies to address sustainability in a way that is most likely to resonate with consumers and stakeholders.

How? element of the NetnoEyeAI framework speaks to the operationalization of netnography with AI. GAI and TAI are tools that augment netnography to not just observe but to act upon the insights derived. GAI 'how' might involve using machine learning algorithms to generate predictive models of consumer discourse, while TAI 'how' could entail integrating these models into decision- making workflows, transforming raw data into strategic roadmaps. This operational layer is where the practical application of insights occurs, guiding the development of strategies and the implementation of actions in the realms of crisis management and sustainability.

Digging into the '**How**': Imagine a scenario where a popular coffee brand faces a crisis due to allegations of unsustainable sourcing practices. Utilizing the NetnoEyeAI framework, the brand embarks on a detailed netnographic analysis to gauge consumer sentiment across digital platforms. Leveraging GAI, the company generates additional dialogues, expanding the netnographic data to

encompass a broader spectrum of consumer perceptions and hypothetical scenarios. TAI is then employed to sift through this enriched dataset, identifying key patterns that signal a shift in consumer behavior and expectations. By applying the safety and sustainability lenses, the brand ensures that the generated insights conform to ethical standards and sustainability commitments. This process not only helps the brand manage the immediate crisis by developing targeted, responsible messaging but also informs a long-term strategy pivot towards a fully sustainable sourcing model. The company publicly commits to transparent and ethical practices, leveraging the crisis to transform its brand image into a standard-bearer for sustainability. This proactive and adaptive approach not only mitigates the crisis but also positions the brand as a leader in corporate social responsibility, resonating with consumer values and driving brand loyalty.

Furthermore, The NetnoEyeAI framework's lenses—safety and sustainability—act as critical filters for scrutinizing data and insights derived from netnography and AI. The framework's more orienting questions' lens delve into the specifics of consumer concerns, identifying the focal points of sustainability critiques. This process ensures the brand's narrative aligns with expectations and environmental impacts. Geographic and digital mapping of discussions guide targeted, context-aware responses. Timing sub questions inform strategic, timely interventions. Directions for strategic development emerge, indicating how messaging and practices should evolve to address crises and enhance sustainability. Finally, the mechanism for applying netnography and AI insights into actionable strategies emphasizes innovative, data-driven approaches for crisis resolution and sustainability improvement. Through this detailed analysis, a brand can navigate crises ethically and effectively, ensuring its strategies are informed, timely, and aligned with consumer and environmental values.

The subquestions within each lens serve as dynamic pathways for exploration and insight generation, constantly adapting to encapsulate emerging trends and shifting consumer behaviors.

The **"What?"** Lens: This lens dives into specific topics, trends, or sentiments that are prevalent in online consumer discussions. As consumer interests and societal concerns evolve, the subquestions under this lens adapt to identify new emerging issues, shifts in consumer preferences, and potential crisis triggers. The **"Whether?"** Lens: This lens focuses on evaluating the validity and significance of identified trends. As the digital landscape evolves, the subquestions under this lens adapt to verify the authenticity of evolving consumer sentiments, determine the lasting impact of emerging issues, and assess potential repercussions on brand reputation and market positioning. The **"When?"** Lens: This lens pinpoints critical moments in consumer discussions and market trends. In response to evolving consumer behaviors and market dynamics, the subquestions under this lens adjust to forecast the trajectory of emerging issues, identify opportune moments for strategic interventions, and adapt timing strategies for crisis management responses. The **"Where?"** Lens: This lens aims to locate the sources and hotspots of consumer discussions. As digital platforms and communication channels evolve, the subquestions under this lens adapt to track shifts in geographic spread, identify emerging digital platforms driving conversations, and assess the offline impact of online discourse on brand perception. The **"Whichway?"** Lens: This lens guides strategic decision- making and adaptation.

As consumer behaviors, technology, and societal trends continue to evolve, these subquestions remain fluid, ensuring that brands maintain agility and responsiveness in navigating the complexities of digital consumer landscapes. They continuously capture emerging issues, trends, and opportunities, empowering brands to leverage AI-enhanced netnography for sustainable and crisis- resilient marketing strategies. Overall, the NetnoEyeAI framework promotes a proactive, informed approach to crisis management and sustainable strategy development. By integrating netnography with GAI and TAI, organizations are equipped to not only understand and react to the current landscape but also to anticipate and shape future trends and consumer behaviors. This framework fosters resilience and agility, empowering businesses to create strategies that are not only effective in the short term but also sustainable in the long run.

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Netnography for Crisis Communication Management and Recovery: the case of Chiara Ferragni.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

The Web is today characterized by user participation, openness, and network effects like never before: the speed and depth of Social Media implicate a crisis can explode and instantly spread across all the touchpoint, online and offline. In this digital scenario, Influencers play a pivotal role in Marketing investments, and this is why they attracted so many attentions by Academics and Practitioners. And, of course, netnographers (*Patterson and Ashman, 2020*). However, even if critical aspects such as credibility (*Thomson*, *2006*; *Ki et al., 2020*; *Brooks et al, 2020; Kim et al., 2021*) and impact on company results (*Singh et al., 2020; Kim and Kim., 2021*) have been investigated, to date there is not an extensive contribution that connects the research stream of Influencer Marketing with the one of Crisis Management (*Sng et al, 2019*) and Recovery.

Aim

The purpose of this paper is to examine followers' reaction to the recent Chiara Ferragni's *Pandoro affair*. Shortly before Christmas 2023, the worldwide famous influencer was involved in a critical investigation by the Italian Antitrust on suspicions of inappropriate behavior in relation to a charity campaign. Understanding Chiara Ferragni's community reactions, feelings and interactions becomes the starting point for 1) managing the crisis and 2) ferrying the influencer, and the brands close to her, out of the crisis by identifying the best recovery strategies among those highlighted by the literature (*Coombs, 2022*), trying not to completely disperse the intrinsic value of the Community. The RQ pointed out is: considering Influencers peculiarities and the depth personal connection with their community, which are the most suitable recovery strategies? The originality of the contribution consists precisely in using Netnography to measure the crisis and understand if and which recovery actions need to be undertaken, with reference to the influencer's closest community.

Methodology

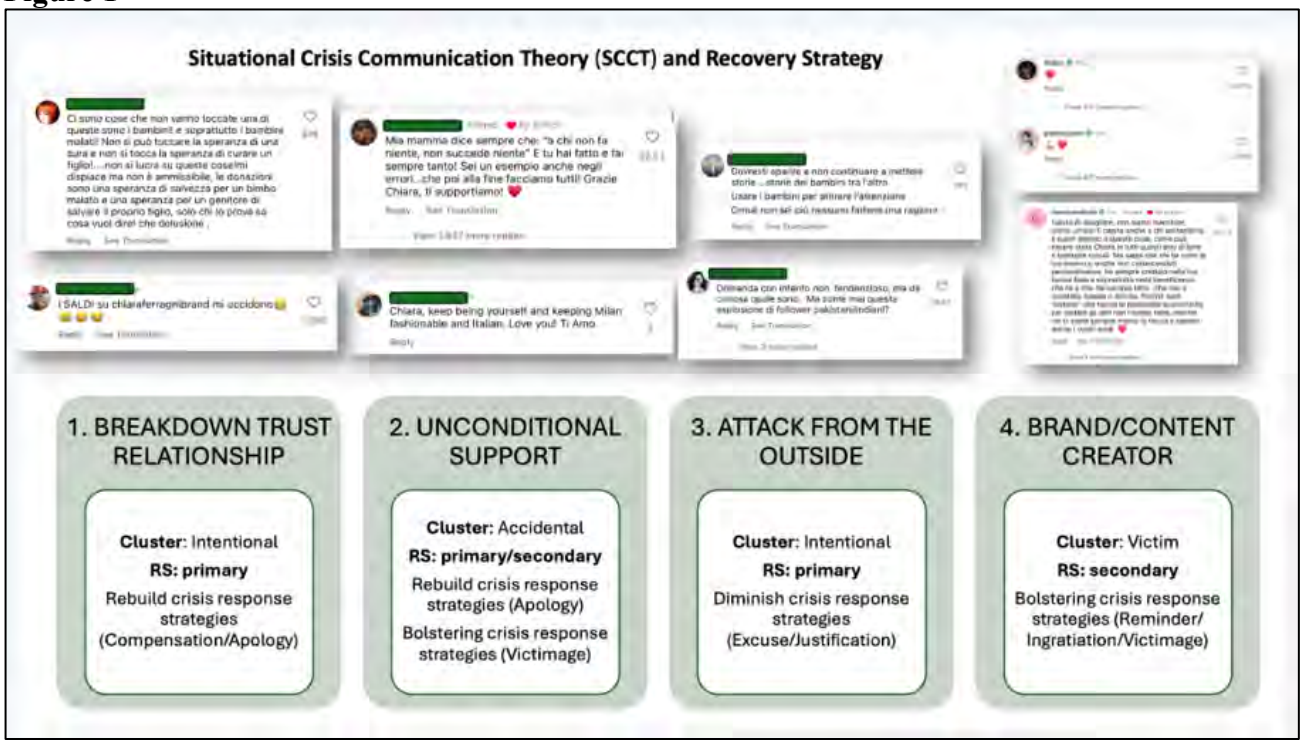
Netnography powerfully reflects the immersive time and strong involvement (*Kozinets, 1999*) that followers and fans invest in striking up a relationship with influencers. Considering the level of

participation of the researcher, the method refers to the "observational netnography", defined and applicated in Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003), trough the content analysis (*Langer and Beckman, 2005*). The research project followed Kozinets (2010) instructions: definition of research question, community identification and selection, community participant observation and data collection and, lastly, data analysis and iterative interpretation of main findings. Starting from Rheingold's (1993) definition of virtual communities as "social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on ... public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationship in cyberspace", the Instagram account of Chiara Ferragni and her main community have been considered. More than 5 thousand of comments were extracted with exportcomments.com, and then systematically analyzed in the light of SCC Theory. Data collection is composed by: (1) *dataset*: the data directly collected on Instagram, and (2) *fieldnotes*: the data that the researcher inscribes regarding observations of the community, its members, interactions and meanings. Screenshots/recordings of influencer' videos/post were also taken.

Findings and originality

With analysis yet to be completed (the crisis is still ongoing), findings in this study so far indicate four major themes, which deserve further investigation: breakdown of the trust relationship, unconditional support, attack from outside the community, role of other influencers/brand (re)actions. In conclusion, for each mapped theme, a specific recovery strategy is proposed, maintaining a holistic perspective. Netnography revealed reality from the perspective of the culture member: the immersion in the CF community, paradoxically brought out that 1) the crisis is outside of it 2) the recovery strategies adopted towards other stakeholders can be counter-prudent for the community. From the point of view of theoretical and practical implications, the study adds a degree of awareness to the topic of recovery strategies coordination and cross influence.

Figure 1



Keywords. Crisis Management, Influencer Marketing, netnography, recovery strategy.

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A study of social media influencer's self management techniques to cope with online hate.

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Extended Abstract
Social media is a vehicle that encourages users to share unvetted content with extensive audiences. Policies on how users can behave are general and loosely enforced, which gives such individuals the exposure to a constant stream of information and the ability to spread any message, both positive and negative. In particular, social media influencers (hereafter, SMIs) are closely monitored by their significant following and external audiences. According to Deloitte (2022), SMIs spend, on average, 9 hours per day on their mobile device in comparison to the general user who spends just 4 hours a day. SMIs are increasingly becoming the subject of online hate. From gossip forums like Tattle Life to private messages and comments, this study focuses on how a unique context of fashion and lifestyle SMIs deal with online hate and importantly, which self-management techniques they adopt to sustain their wellbeing, with close reference to the Theory of Emotional Labour (Hochschild, 1983).

SMIs have been the subject of significant studies within consumer behaviour literature and beyond (Hudders et al., 2021; Magno & Cassia, 2018 and Chae, 2018). This distinct segment of society is perceived to embark on a complex process of maintaining status (Costa Do Nascimento, Campus & Suarez, 2020), avoiding cancel culture (Lee & Abidin, 2021), and maintaining their mental health to pursue their hustle (McCosker, 2018). Likewise, a substantial selection of literature examines the realms of online hate (Walther, 2022), motivational factors of the perpetrator (Kilvington, 2020) and the process, in which, online hate is constructed (Lim, 2020). Whilst existing research in the hate literature domain is well developed, previous studies focus on the domain of online hate in a mono-platform setting and focus on how the users diffuse hateful content across social media. Hence, the purpose of this research is to fulfil the research gap within influencer marketing literature in the unique context of UK lifestyle influencers. More specifically, this thesis will also analyse the holistic influencer ecosystem (such as their management, agencies, and users) that play a unique role as external neutralisers towards sustaining their wellbeing.

By adopting Odell's (2019) Influencer Status Classification, the first objective of this study understands how the SMI's status (nano, micro, macro or mega) impacts on the experience of online hate. As a second aim, this study explores which self-management techniques are most effective in managing online hate to sustain their wellbeing.

To meet these aims, we conducted a six month immersive and investigative Netnography, as well as semi-structured interviews with twenty-five SMIs to learn about their online hate experiences and their self-management techniques. The netnography tracked their content across any 'active' influencing platform (namely Instagram, TikTok and YouTube) and Tattle Life across six months via an immersive journal and later analysed thematically. This tracked their behaviour including their coping mechanisms towards online hate to triangulate the findings with the semi-structured interviews. To further investigate external forces, we also conducted five semi-structured interviews with their management and brands to understand the protection they provide and their perspectives towards online hate.

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17h00 – 18h30 – Plenary Session: Interactive workshop 5-minute presentations [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Ulrike Gretzel
"Netnography for exploring cultural territories"

1) Copland, S. Understanding the use of digital memes to develop co-created brand focused narrative transmission and transportation through storytelling.
2) Maton, A., Roya R., Dale C., Overtourism Alleviation Indicators as a Strategic Tourism Planning Tool for Sustainable Urban Tourism: A case study of Reykjavik.
3) López-Garcia, Y., Exploring the postdigital lifeworlds of Latin American and Spanish migrant women on Facebook.
4) Kapareliotis, I., Matiatou, M., Website features and cultural elements: An investigation.
5) Lonardi, S., Confente I., Mazzoli V., Acuti D., Understanding the evolution of sustainable travel behaviors: a netnographic analysis of an online community.

Understanding the use of digital memes to develop co-created brand focused narrative transmission and transportation through storytelling.

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Extended Abstract

The nexus between storytelling and meme transmission forms a dynamic interplay where narratives are not only shared and propagated but also carry the potential to transform and influence the technological and cultural landscape. The digital age has introduced novel dimensions to storytelling, and these not only mirror changes in communication modalities but also serve as reflections of societal shifts and technological advancements. This research seeks to understand how digital memetic components of brand storytelling are potentially mutated through participatory brand focused narrative transmission and transportation through storytelling, which creates unintended shifts in narrative meanings.
This presentation is of an exploratory phase of this research that will use Netnography to understand the narrative journey of brand stories. By using a framework of typologies and narrative analysis to further understand the process of transmission and 'mutation' of digital stories, this research seeks to examine digital memetic narrative content on the internet through hermeneutic interpretation via an immersion and investigative process as set out by Kozinets and Gretzel (2024).Digital memes, characterized by recognizable elements and vernacular language, form a narrative collage reminiscent of folkloric storytelling (McNeill, 2017). Beyond their communicative function, Oswald, Esborg and Pierroux (2023) contend that digital memes facilitate collective participation in the creation of material sentiment, which creates a sense of community and belonging.

These contemporary forms of storytelling possess distinct properties that distinguish them from traditional narrative mediums. Aspects such as interactivity, multimedia integration, and rapid dissemination characterize digital storytelling, while in marketing literature discussing digital memes, there is a particular focus on affordances, reproduction through standardized templates, or subversive meanings or symbols (Caliandro & Anselmi, 2021).
Despite digital storytelling being recognised as a co-creative process due to its folkloric nature, increasingly brands are viewed as the lesser partners in this activity. Nieborg and Poell (2018) suggest that this lack of understanding is due to brands creating a universal set of platforms to disseminate the narrative but have little control over the co-creation of the narrative by the user. Davids and Brown (2021) state this is partly due to their organisational lack of understanding of the characteristics and methods of effective collective storytelling. This offers marketing professionals an opportunity instead, to shape digital stories through a process of memetic engineering.

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Overtourism Alleviation Indicators as a Strategic Tourism Planning Tool for Sustainable Urban Tourism: A case study of Reykjavik.

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Extended Abstract

This current study, based on the PhD in progress of the main author, aims to explore the continued growth in demand for urban tourism products, resulting in what many scholars and destination managers are referring to as *'Overtourism',* (Millano, Cheer and Novelli, 2019; Dodds and Butler, (2019), Jacobson, Iverson and Hem, (2019), Oklevik, et al. (2019), Peeters, et al (2018). The main aim of the study is to develop a set of sustainability indicators to mitigate the negative impacts of Overtourism in urban centres, which can be adopted as a strategic planning tool by destination management authorities to ensure tourism is planned and consumed in a sustainable manner. A critical part of achieving this aim, is to analyse the views of the key destination stakeholders. Once data collection has commenced, for the majority of the stakeholders, this will be achieved via semi-structured interviews, and the results analysed using NViVO Pro. The tourists' views will be captured and analysed by adopting a Netnographic methodology. Focusing on whether crowding has diminished their experience at the top ten tourist sites in Reykjavik and the surrounding Greater Reykjavik Municipalities, as crowding is one of the markers of Overtourism (Okelevik, et al., 2019,

p.1804-1805). This will be further supported by documentary analysis of the key tourism data such as receipts and inbound visitor figures, and documentation, such as Reykjavik's tourism policy, in order to fully consider the economic contributions of tourism and environmental impacts.

This is a paper is progress, following an integrative approach (Torraco, 2016). Upon its completion it will explore the key concepts of Overtourism, crowding, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, mass tourism, urban tourism, and associated concepts. This will include a critique of existing policies, accepted indicators, and models of destination management, concluding with a conceptual framework and application to the case study destination of Reykjavik. Thus, providing an expansion of the knowledge within the rapidly developing field of Overtourism.

Reykjavik has been selected due to the significant increase in international visitor arrivals to Iceland since 2000. *"Visitors to Iceland have almost tripled since 2000. Their number had risen to 807,000 by 2013. The mean annual increase has been 8.2% since 2000"* (Ferdamalastofa, 2014). By 2017 this had risen to 2.2 million foreign visitor arrivals; an increase of 24.1% from the previous year, where they received 1.8 million foreign visitors (Ferdamalastofa, 2018). Furthermore, continued growth was supported by Visit Reykjavik's vision statement in the city of Reykjavik's tourism strategy 2011-2020, where they state that *"Reykjavík shall become a popular all year-round destination and, in doing so, bolster the diversification of the economic and cultural life of the city."* (Visit Reykjavik, 2011). However, this approach has led to Visit Reykjavik noting in the City of Reykjavik's 2020-2025 tourism policy that although tourism has been one of the main drivers of progress for Reykjavik in recent years, it has also *"...sometimes tested the city's infrastructure and the patience of residents, not least in the city centre, and the large number of tourists has called for costly infrastructure investments, with a corresponding increase in costs for the city."* (The City of Reykjavik's Department of Culture and Tourism, 2020).

The study is based on a multi-method qualitative approach. The data will be collected via semi-structured interviews with representatives of Reykjavik's key stakeholder groups, e.g. local residents who have no connection to the tourism industry, local residents who are in-directly employed in the tourism industry (i.e. in a supporting business), local residents who are directly employed in the tourism industry, foreign workers who have come to live in Reykjavik to work in the tourism industry, international investors within Reykjavik's tourism industry, the DMO(s) and/or further governmental representation of the tourism industry in Reykjavik and the universities who are involved with tourism planning and development in Iceland and also research in this field.

The semi-structured interviews will be bolstered by adopting a Netnographic approach, which will analyse data generated in the form of tourist reviews to the ten most popular tourist sites in Reykjavik and the surrounding Greater Reykjavik Municipalities. Using appropriate data sets, including but not limited to Trip Advisor and content from social media platforms, such as 'X' (Twitter), reviews from international tourists will be selected. Kozinets and Gretzel (2023) note that social media is often a critical source of data for building cultural understanding. Capturing this will be an important facet of this study, due to the highly subjective nature of Overtourism.
There will be strict criteria applied to the data analysis including minimum length of time reviewers have been a member of the review sites, number of reviews posted, posted within the last twelve months, and only reviews written in English and with pictorial evidence attached will be included. This is to increase the likelihood of the review being genuine and will also help to reduce bias.

Following the approaches of Blut and Iyer, (2020) and Tokarchuck, et al. (2022), the classical application of the Mehrabian-Russell Model will be adopted for this paper, as it acts as a mechanism for the emotional states of consumers in consumer settings. In the context of this study, tourists are the consumers and the consumer setting are the top ten tourist attractions in Reykjavik and the Greater

Reykjavik Municipalities. Therefore, this model is fitting for this study, as the concept of Overtourism is being increasingly noted in the emerging literature as being highly subjective. Subjectivity of Overtourism is a concept that will be further explored via the research collection and data analysis of this research.

The data analysis will consider whether the emotional states of the tourists contribute to the subjective nature of who experiences and when Overtourism is experienced. The link between perceived crowding and emotional states has already been empirically proven in retail (e.g. Blut & Iyer, 2020; Das & Varshneya, 2017; Machleit et al., 2000) and also in leisure settings (e.g., Pons et al., 2006), so it stands to reason that similar links could be proven at tourist sites.

Machleit, et al, (2000) and Tokarchuck, et al. (2022) suggest that consumers experience a set of emotions when presented with crowding, and high levels of crowding are expected to generate negative emotions. Furthermore, emotions have been shown to influence satisfaction (Oliver, 1993). Therefore, the data analysis will seek to divide the emotions identified within the reviews into positive and negative emotions, following Machleit, et al. (2000) ten emotion types. The positive and negative emotions identified in the reviews and social media content will then be measured via sentiment analysis, which has been previously proven as a valid approach in the works of Tokarchuck, et al. (2022). This will replace the use of the more classical approach of conducting tourist surveys for this study.

Thelwall, (2019, p.87) notes that sentiment analysis software is a key component of tourism big data research for its ability to detect positive and negative opinions in text. As such, for this study, sentiment analysis will be conducted utilising a valence detector. Thus interpreting and classifying tourists' sentiments (positive, negative and neutral) towards overcrowding and how this impacted their overall experience at the top ten tourist sites in Reykjavik and the Greater Reykjavik area, within the text data gathered. Consequently, supporting large-scale analyses of the key affective dimension of reviews and social web posts about tourism venues and experiences.

This analysis, therefore, aims to analyse the subjective nature of Overtourism and how that might inform the creation of future sustainable tourism indicators for urban centres.

Keywords: Overtourism, sustainable development, sustainable tourism, mass tourism, urban tourism, crowding, Indicators, Reykjavik, Sentiment Analysis.

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Exploring the postdigital lifeworlds of Latin American and Spanish migrant women on Facebook.

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Extended Abstract

Facebook (FB) continues to be relevant in many people's lives, despite discussions about its diminishing appeal and declining membership, especially among younger people (Bucher, 2021, p. 10). For a number of Latin American and Spanish immigrant women in Germany, FB provides an opportunity to connect and share information in public and private groups. In this case, private groups provide a safe space where women can find emotional support, exchange supportive advice, learn from different experiences, and engage in community service (López García, 2024), although conflicts sometimes arise. Beyond leisure, FB groups serve as a forum for discussions about everyday life, integration, interculturality, and parenthood. Interactions also include discussions of challenging situations where women encounter obstacles such as discrimination, racism, and domestic violence.
Initial netnographic observations suggest that these online interactions extend beyond the digital realm, fostering offline bonds of solidarity. This includes face-to-face meetings and support in emergencies, reflecting a deeper sense of community. Thus, the boundaries between online and offline appear to be blurring, as suggested by the literature on postdigital contexts (Cramer, 2014; Knox, 2019; Lenehan, 2022). Therefore, it can be argued that social networking sites (SNS) are fields of action where "produsers" (Bruns & Schmidt, 2011) reconfigure their lives within the entanglement and continuity of online and offline contexts.
Despite the limited research on Latin American and Spanish women in Germany, existing studies highlight the disqualification, declassification and powerlessness they face in different contexts (Hernández, 2005; López García, 2021). However, there is limited current research on the situation of Latin American and Spanish women in Germany that also examines this phenomenon from a transnational and postdigital perspective.
An understanding of the lives and perspectives of these women is crucial.

This ongoing study aims to explore the lifeworlds and experiences of Latin American and Spanish women, focusing on the role that digitalization plays in their everyday lives. As they interact, share and create knowledge in FB groups, the research aims to unravel how these shared experiences influence and transform their everyday lives. How does digitalization shape their lives in both transnational and local contexts? What motivates their engagement in FB groups? What do they face in their daily lives, and what does belonging to a FB group mean and how does it affect their lives?
This paper is part of a new ongoing research project based on netnographic analysis (Kozinets, 2015; Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021; Kozinets et al., 2014). The researcher is active in approximately fifteen groups, with varying levels of engagement, from lurking to active participation. In one private group, the researcher has already participated in discussions and received positive feedback about the interest of some users in participating in the research; for example, the creator of the group has already given an interview. However, methodological and ethical considerations remain challenging and need to be addressed, especially when analyzing a private group with over five thousand members discussing sensitive issues. Such methodological challenges are the focus of this paper's discussion and reflection.
In conclusion, this ongoing research attempts to shed light on the worlds and experiences of Latin American and Spanish women in Germany, exploring the profound influence of digitalization on their everyday lives. By delving into the multifaceted dynamics of FB groups, this research aims to explore the nuanced interplay between the online and offline realms, and to examine how the postdigital field of action takes place in the example of the transnational and postdigital everyday lives of Latin American and Spanish women, and how these shared experiences reshape the everyday lives of migrant women.

Keywords: Spanish and Latin American migration, netnography, postdigital, Facebook, Germany developments.

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Website features and cultural elements: An investigation.

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Extended Abstract
The present study embarks from a case study methodology studying classic models of cultural communication in the territory of official Greek tourism websites. The paper based on UpToDate literature examines the degree to which cultural elements are embeded on the design of those websites looking at the presence of these websites as per the needs of their users. Key netnographical-methodological concepts have been applied the digital traces, the communication focus, the traces of tourism experience the stakeholders' narratives. The conceptual study fundamentals are triangulated between the structure, the content, and the features of the studies on website design. Key trends are identified and their significance is examined for the tourism sector. Through an exploratory qualitative research, the paper identifies the factors that affect user interfaces and argues that web possibilities are not adequately exploited to promote the Greek tourism product. Websites often do not sufficiently embed emerging technologies of the digital era to address increasingly sophisticated and technology-oriented publics. With this as the backdrop, a novel conceptualization of website evaluation is offered which can be tested empirically and evolved to support functions of cultural adjustment. The paper concludes with the conceptualization of the variables examined diagnostic findings and improvement recommendations for destination and professional web spaces. The paper looks forward to considering netnography for the development of this research endeavor.

Understanding the evolution of sustainable travel behaviors: a netnographic analysis of an online community.

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Extended Abstract
With the growing interest in sustainable tourism development, research has increasingly focused on tourists' attitudes and sensibility towards sustainability, as well as on responsible (Caruana et al., 2014) and sustainable travel behavior (Confente and Scarpi, 2020; Juvan & Dolnicar, 2016; Passafaro, 2019). Previous research has proven that tourists' commitment to sustainability issues (Han, 2021; Holmes et al., 2019) is particularly high for those tourists who have a higher income or education level, and for younger people (Schönherr & Pikkemaat, 2023; Holmes et al., 2019). Nonetheless, this attitude is frequently not translated into actual sustainable behavior while on vacation, resulting in what is known as the attitude-behavior gap (Holmes et al., 2019).

An in-depth analysis of tourists' understanding of sustainable travel is, however, still missing. This ongoing research aims to shed light on the conversations about sustainable tourism in online communities, aiming to identify different meanings and types of sustainable travel behaviors as perceived by tourists.

Netnography, an approach that involves observing and analyzing online communities, is deemed suitable for addressing the research aim. Being a broad methodology that offers a unique opportunity

to explore real-time discussions and opinions in digital spaces, netnography has been used in several disciplines and research areas, including tourism (Femenia-Serra et al., 2022; Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023; Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

Following Kozinets' (2002) guidelines to select a community of interest for the research objectives, with a large number of postings, we chose communities with a main focus on sustainability. Thus, the "Ecotourism" forum on TripAdvisor and the Facebook groups “Ecotourism, Sustainable Tourism and Responsible Tourism” and “Responsible Travellers" were selected, given their emphasis on sustainable practices and travel experiences (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023; Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

The data collection and analysis will include the following steps (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023):

- Initiation, where the research question will be defined.
- Immersion, where the researchers will familiarize themselves with the community. Researchers will keep an immersion journal, where reflective notes on their engagement with data, impressions and revelations will be noted, allowing for deep data to emerge.
- Investigation, where postings and comments will be collected until saturation is reached, likely spanning approximately 10 years (2013 to 2023) to capture evolving trends and perspectives.
- Integration, where data will be coded and analyzed by researchers separately, and results will be triangulated and compared (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023).
- Incarnation, where results will be represented and communicated.

Given that TripAdvisor is a public platform where users can remain anonymous, no explicit consent is required, aligning with ethical considerations in online research (Mkono & Tribe, 2017).

The outcomes of this research are expected to contribute to both academia and industry. Academically, it enriches our understanding of the underlying dimensions of sustainable travel behavior (Juvan & Dolnicar, 2016), providing nuances of different categories of sustainable travel behaviors through real data. Practically, this study will offer guidance to tourism stakeholders seeking to align their services with the different expectations and behaviors of a conscious consumer base.

Keywords: sustainable travel behavior, netnography, online community, tourist behavior

References available upon request

Acknowledgments
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Day 2 – May 30

9h00 – 10h30 – Full length presentations (Session 8) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Marie Kerekes
"Applying Netnography in Business and Education"

1) Rodriguez, L., Navigating Digital Realms: Unveiling Technology Appropriation through Netnography Exploration in Digital Service Startups.
2) Powierska, A., @JagiellonianUniversity, I have a question!. Brand auto-netnography on the example of the Jagiellonian University.
3) Marchowska-Raza, M., Kozinets, R.V., Pursuing a PhD with Netnography: Insights from Netnographic Doctoral Students.

Navigating Digital Realms: Unveiling Technology Appropriation through Netnography Exploration in Digital Service Startups.

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract
This paper contributes to the evolving discourse on netnography as a method of collecting and analysing data within the context of PhD research. The PhD research focused on investigating the Technology Appropriation (TA) phenomenon within the context of digital service startups (Rodriguez, 2017).

This paper focuses on the PhD's "Getting Immersed: Online Platform Observation" (phase two) of the data collection phase, arguing that netnography approaches are suitable for research when a phenomenon such as TA needs to be observed and examples collected of how users appropriate these digital services within the digital realms and platforms of the service.

To support this argument, this paper explains the background and context of the PhD research, followed by a description of its philosophical paradigm and approach. It then presents data collection methods and tools, demonstrating how and when netnography was applied.

This is followed by a discussion of the need and advantages of utilising netnography in technology appropriation research and its challenges and potential pitfalls. The paper concludes by explaining the main findings, limitations, and future research directions.

Background and Context
The PhD research examines technology appropriation (TA) awareness and identification in digital services start-up companies. Technology appropriation refers to the unexpected ways people adopt and adapt technology to serve their personal needs and motives (Rodriguez, 2017). The research questions are: (1) How can TA be identified within the development of digital services in the context of start-ups? (2) How aware are service providers of the phenomenon of TA? (3) What are the enablers for users' appropriation of services?

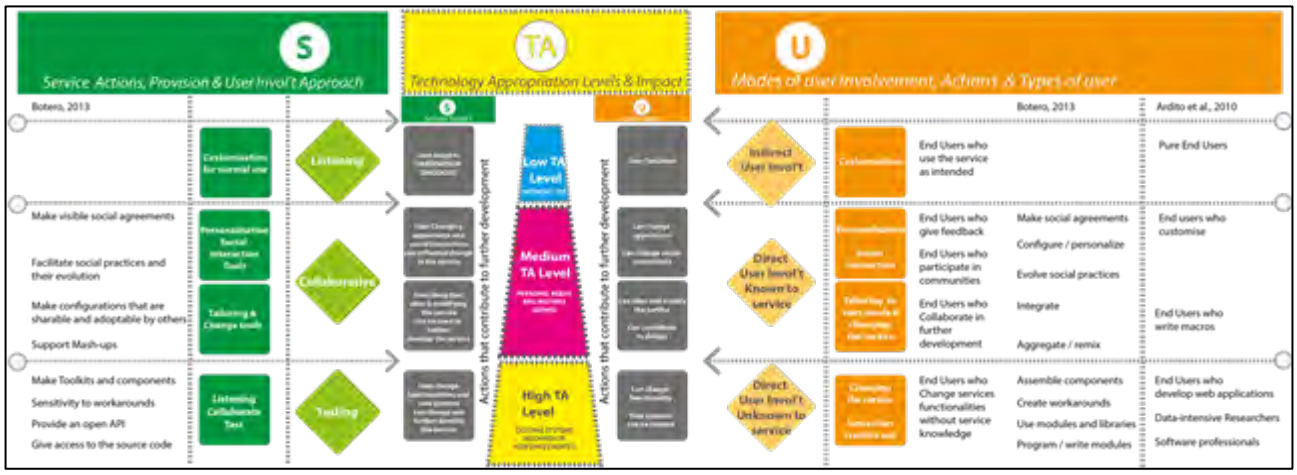
To address these questions, the thesis includes (1) an extensive literature review detailing the research context and explaining key concepts such as digital services, user involvement in their development,

technology appropriation, and levels of user engagement. (2) Specific methodological choices and custom research data collection and analysis tools (3) An exploratory study demonstrating user involvement in digital service development, highlighting the need for further research in Technology Appropriation (TA). (4) The introduction and design of a theoretical framework for TA (TF TA). (5) Five case studies form the main study, providing empirical data for the research's core findings. (6) A set of findings derived from comparing TA examples found in the case studies based on the TF TA framework, addressing the PhD questions. These findings establish each case study's level of TA awareness, outline a taxonomy of TA service types, and introduce emerging themes resulting from thematic analysis. Additionally, they propose enablers for TA within digital start-ups.

The thesis contributions to knowledge are (1) a newly tested and revised TA Level Framework **(Figure 1)** created by examining the empirical findings against the TA Theoretical Framework (TA TF). (2) a new TA Identification Method within the development of digital services in the context of start-ups, underpinned by the tools previously developed in the research.

This research identifies key Technology Appropriation (TA) awareness aspects, including the TA Concept, Systematic Programme of User Involvement, Mode of User Involvement, Identifying TA Actions, and TA Enablers (User Lead & Service Control). Users' actions and outcomes in technology adoption and adaptability can be classified into High, Medium, and Low levels based on their level of involvement in the service. Moreover, the awareness of TA among services and service providers is crucial, categorised as proactive, reactive, or inactive, depending on their understanding and fostering of TA within the service. Additionally, aspects of the TA Level Framework can serve as a method for identifying TA within services.

Figure 1 TA final TA framework (by the researcher based on literature and the first study of the research)



The study recognises that TA impact, reflecting the extent of service employment in the appropriation process, varies from high to low based on service providers' understanding and identification of TA. TA impact levels differ from TA Levels and are influenced by user actions, outcomes, and service changes. Furthermore, users' TA outcomes, representing tangible consequences of technology adoption and adaptation, are classified into Soft TA, Hard TA, and Soft & Hard TA. The research also outlines service providers' main approaches to user involvement, including listening, collaborating, testing, experimenting, and active observation. Lastly, users' actions regarding TA range from expected to engage to TA savvy, based on their involvement and technical skills in service development.

The Research Philosophical Paradigm, Approach and Methods

The research uses a qualitative approach under the constructivist philosophical paradigm. Constructivism could be considered the interpretive paradigm (Tracy, 2013), which emphasises understanding a phenomenon rather than explaining it as it happens in natural sciences (Given, 2008). Other paradigms, such as positivism, were contemplated to produce this research. However, under the social constructivism approach, the researcher's inquiries generate or develop a theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell, 2015) that suits this research more.

Constructivist characteristics include consideration of multiple participant meanings, social and historical construction, and theory generation within the context of the participants' social and cultural lives (Given, 2008). "Reality" in the constructivist paradigm is not "out there" as in science. The reality is not something that the researcher can clearly explain, describe, or translate into a research report (Tracy, 2013). Constructivism believes that an individual understanding of the world in which they live and work is subjective to their experiences. Hence, to understand the complexity of a phenomenon, the researcher needs to involve multiple participants' meanings that are disposed to expose their views of the situation being studied (Creswell, 2015).

This research has set up an inquiry into the participants' awareness of the TA phenomenon and the values of the participants' experiences. The qualitative approach was adopted to allow the researcher a subjective, immersive, and participatory approach. The researcher used naturalistic field research to immerse herself in the phenomenon's context.

Although this research involves online communities (in the context of using digital services), it does not focus on understanding the communities themselves. This research could not have used netnography as a unique study method because the main research question focuses on a phenomenon, not the online community or the social group. The decision not to explicitly incorporate TA users' perspectives during the data collection was made at the very beginning of the main study. After reviewing the literature, a knowledge gap emerged regarding the service providers; therefore, understanding service providers' perspectives on awareness and identifying TA within the services became this research priority. Also, the decision was taken to limit the scope of the research to that which was achievable in the set period.

This research gathers and codes online qualitative data to help create a holistic picture of the critical aspects of TA within the services and to find examples of TA within those communities when possible and accessible (not every service has a community forum or a members' platform). These observations were passive netnography since more core netnography-type practices would have demanded a deeper and more participative approach to the online culture and communities (Kozinets, 2010).

This research embraces a case study as the research method. The unit of analysis of this research is the service. The researcher invited ten companies to participate in the initial interview to find enough cases to compare. After this first interview, the research continued to study five companies for a period between one and two years, depending on the service circumstances; for example, some services were not live or were developing some of the digital platforms when the period of collection data started. During this period, the researcher observed crucial aspects of the phenomenon of TA. She incorporated insights from the initial study's data and conducted a literature review to draft the first framework.

These five services have some characteristics in common: They are start-ups within the first three years of their foundation and provide partiality of the service using online environments. The services

have a strong presence online, and they use different apps and social media tools (mashups: information and other services provided by a third-party service) to communicate and interact with their users. These companies are small, and therefore, the main participants of the study are the owner and service provider. These characteristics were used as criteria for selection because they had a solid online presence, which guarantees they fit the main study scope (provision of online digital services). Also, as they were small companies, it was easier to obtain access and engage with key service providers and staff members. New companies would have been advantageous since the service providers were willing to explore and study their services.

The Two phases of Data Collection

As shown in **Table 1** below, the data collection process had two phases. Each step used two data collection approaches: systematic observation and in-depth face-to-face interviews.

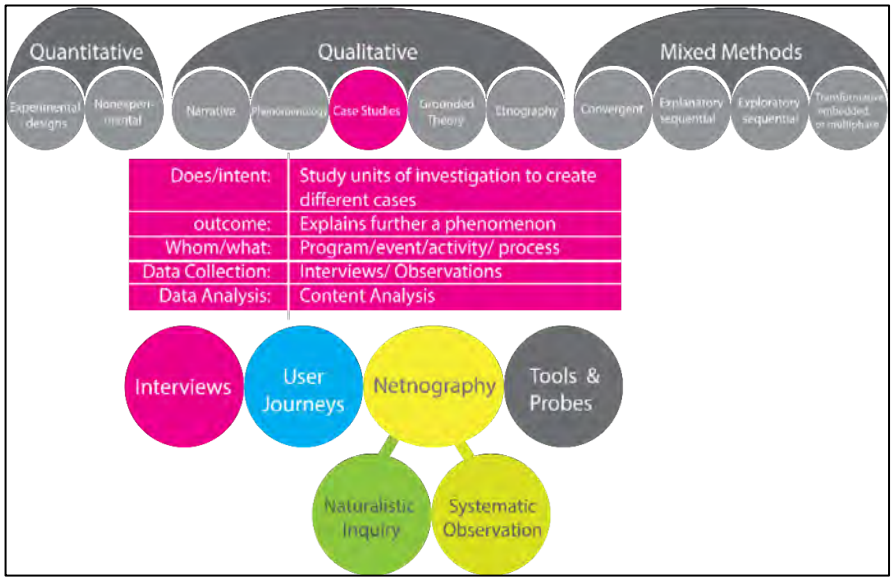
Table 1 Two phases of data collection (by the researcher)

	Phase one			Phase two	
	Getting Connected			Getting Immersed	Wrap up
	It focuses on getting to know and understand the type of services it provides. To access the service as any user could have.	It focuses on an in-depth understanding of the company, including the development process and user involvement. To gain access to the online platforms hidden from the general public or exclusively for members.	Access to restricted online platforms	Observation of these exclusive platforms.	With the knowledge gained previously. This interview focuses on the validation and verification of findings and insights.
	Online Observation 1	Interview 1		Online Observation 2	Interview 2
Understanding service provision	X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants			
Online presence	X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants			
Mashup	X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants			
Service touch points/digital	X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants			
Service User-Involvement approach	X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants			
Mode of user involvement				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
User Actions				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
Mode of User Involvement				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
TA enablers				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
-user leads				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
-TA fostering				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
-service change				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants
TA Examples				X	Verification of observations + Info provided by participants

The first phase took six months to develop and execute, and the second took another year. Each step had a different data collection focus and purpose.

This research uses a multi-method approach to collect the data (**Figure 2**). It includes in-depth interviews plus systematic observation of services' online platforms. Data was gathered from service providers during in-depth face-to-face interviews, meetings, and events such as the launch of services and gatherings with users. Recordings were used to collect the data, and transcriptions were used to analyse it. Data was also gathered from systematic observations of the services' most relevant digital touchpoints (platforms). The researcher used thematic analysis to analyse and make sense of the data content and constructed and visualised affinity diagrams.

Figure 2 - Case study and tools for collecting data (by the researcher based on literature)



Tools borrowed from service design, such as user journey maps, profiling, and building personas, were used to create plausible interaction scenarios between the different touchpoints of the services and the various service users while paying attention to the digital touchpoints. The samples of TA found within the immerse phase of the data collection helped to build a collection of scenarios that showcase not only the TA example but also where, who, and how the appropriation took place. These scenarios have also helped draw and visualise the services' flow and have been left as research by-products for the participants (service providers) as takeaways from the researcher. These tools have helped stimulate the researcher's and participants' dialogue and contributed to gaining new and complementing previous insights. The user journey maps have also marked the research's final point for data collection and served as a tool to validate the information gathered over time about the TA phenomenon within the services.

A. Phase One:
The first phase focused on the study of ten companies. Since it is hard to know if the companies selected were the perfect match to generate cases and considering that the researcher was looking to generate four or five cases to have enough evidence to compare and produce enough findings for the research, the following criteria were set up to look for these companies. Companies need to:

• Be a start-up company based on standard start-up phases criteria (Start-up Commons Organisation, 2013) that develops digital services in the macro context of the digital economy and the micro context of horizontal communication.

• The start-up delivers services digitally and strives to develop services within the digital realm. It provides a service.

• That involves using the internet in some way, partly or wholly, an online service. • The start-ups are exploring different business models.

• The start-ups develop their services in collaboration with their end user.

This research project sees start-ups (bottom-up initiatives) as the perfect context to study this phenomenon because start-up companies lead digital services (DS) development. Start-ups are hubs that function as labs for experimenting with new models of entrepreneurship (Lindtner, Hertz, & Dourish, 2014). Its proliferation is due to new funding models (like crowd-funding websites), physical spaces, new platforms, tools, and publications. This has given the opportunities to anyone who has an idea to get sponsorship to develop it, share it, communicate it, and create a business out of it. After the first phase, five companies met all the criteria above and were selected to continue in the study. The cases were drawn from them. The researcher developed tools for systematically collecting information from the most relevant services' online platforms. The researcher generated two matrices and two protocols (Boyce, 2006), one for each interview; these protocols will be explained in more detail in the main study development and planning (Rodriguez, 2017). The researcher focuses on getting to know and understand the companies in depth, including the type of services they provide and the type of users. In this first step, the researcher gained first-hand insights into what kind of service was provided, how it was delivered and the type of online platforms to which only members have access. The data for this first phase was collected in two forms:

•Exploratory observations of online platforms were done before the interview as part of the preparation.

•The first in-depth interview focused on getting to know the inspiration for the company, the development process and user involvement in its development.

B. Phase Two:
The second phase focused on perceiving the key aspects of the TA phenomenon within the members-only platforms and online communities and understanding how aware the service providers were of it. This phase focuses on five original ten start-ups (**Figure 3**). Important points to consider when choosing these five companies were the start-up development phase and the use of mashups that support and complement their services. Moreover, these five services gave the researcher access to communication and allowed users to exchange information (Internet) on platforms. Another essential characteristic of these five companies is that they need the users' knowledge and experiences [source it - (Hagen & Robertson, 2010b)] and need communities that openly share these experiences [open it- (Hagen & Robertson, 2010b)] to support the delivery of the service. These five have at least two different types of users; they have all shown preoccupation with the social impact of their companies, and three of them are social enterprises.

These five companies are WomenInFashion, C-Hack, WorkPower, MoneyVoucher and Account Me. The data for this second phase was collected in two forms:

Figure 3 Selection of criteria to find the case studies

- Online platforms were observed to find examples of the key aspects of TA. A chart was designed as a 'guide' for the observations and to help analyse the data. This data type takes the form of screenshots of the service's different online platforms. These pictures are accompanied by researchers' memos, notes, and annotations of observations, as well as insights into the enablers of TA.
- The second in-depth interview validated the information collected during the online observations. Data in this interview takes the form of a users' journey map constructed between the researcher and the service providers. It was recorded to help with the analysis.

Getting Immersed – Data collection phase two: Naturalistic Inquiry and Systematic Observation

Online Platform Observation: The second data collection phase started after the first interviews. The time spent observing the services varied between two years in two cases, one year in another seven cases, and six months in one instance. These differences in time observation were due to some services not being launched by the time the main study started or to the lack of availability of online platforms.

In this phase, the observation focused on perceiving the key aspects of the TA phenomenon within members-only platforms and online communities. Understanding the provision of the services, their online presence, and the platforms available to users was essential. The researcher set out to find examples of the key aspects of TA within these online platforms: examples of different modes of user involvement and examples of services and resources that support user involvement.

During the second phase of data collection, the researcher focused on studying digital service platforms that were hidden or exclusively for use by members of the service. A multi-method approach was employed, combining naturalistic and systematic observations, incorporating 'participant observation' whenever possible. The researcher naturalistically observed individual participants' online platforms, followed various links, and documented screenshots and notes on services and functionalities. If the service had a members' platform and the researcher obtained permission, she joined as a user (participant observer) to gain firsthand experience. Social interaction with other users was minimised, excluding co-created data collection.

A form based on the literature review's theory facilitated systematic observations (**Table 2**). This form was created, incorporating fundamental aspects of TA, service providers' user involvement approaches, and modes of user involvement.

Table 2 second phase online systematic observation form

Digital Touch Points / Digital Service			
Based on Dix (2010)			
-System interpretation			
-provide visibility			
-exposed intentions			
-support and no control			
-plugability and configuration			
-encourage sharing			
-Learning from appropriation			
Based on Hagen and Robertson (2009)			
Social technologies that help design or further develop the service with user involvement:			
Iterate it			
Emerge it			
Social technologies as a design tool			
Source it			
Open it			
Other Observations			
-Personalisation			
-Customisation			
-New Funtions			
-Encourage Creativity			
-Use of other widgets -mashup			

Systematic Observations Form — Liliana Rodriguez @ Loughborough University 2015

The form, based on the theory from the literature review, was created to facilitate the online services observations. This form helped reduce errors in data collection and provided a more reliable and systematic way of collecting it. The form warranted that the observation exercise was replicable and easy to reproduce by the researcher or any other researcher interested in continuing this inquiry.

This form has been created using theory based on the literature reviewed and the researcher's naturalistic observation points.

Based on Dix (2007), the researcher looks for evidence of:

-System interpretation
-provision of visibility
-exposed intentions
-support and no control
-plug ability and configuration
-encouragement of sharing
-Learning from appropriation

Based on Hagen and Robertson (2009), the researcher looks for evidence of:
-Social technologies that help design or further develop the service with user involvement:
a. Iterate it
b. Emerge it
-Social technologies as a design tool
a. Source it
b. Open it
Additionally to the concepts brought from the literature, other themes to observe were considered: -Evidence of actions and service provisions allowing the user to personalise and customise the service.
-Evidence of new functions
-Proof of space that allowed creativity
-Signs of use of other digital services features and information (mashup)

Observations of service sites followed netnography practices and techniques, such as identifying interaction areas, focusing on relevant research questions, and striving for sufficient data generation. These observations were recorded as notes and printed screenshots of digital platforms. Belk and Kozinets' (2016) practices were followed, emphasising interaction areas, relevant research questions, and generating sufficient data.

Screenshots, field notes, and annotations were taken as data, following Belk and Kozinets' netnographer guide. These notes were later analysed using data visualisations, affinity diagrams, and conceptual mapping (Kozinets, 2015a).

Discussion

The research problem the researcher addressed, focusing on TA within digital service startups, was understanding TA from the service provider's perspective. This study examines five start-ups' digital services and finds several examples of TA. The primary study provided examples of users' appropriation of social media and the Internet from the case studies, proving more critical in reviewing the theoretical framework and contributing to the TA discourse. These TA examples found in the services studied have helped to define the TA outcome types: soft TA, Hard TA, and a combination of Soft and Hard TA (Rodriguez, 2017). These TA outcomes seem to correspond to the creative aspect in which people use technology at the macro-level (social) and at the micro-level (technical), a classification proposed by Degele (Degele, 1997).

Finding TA examples within the digital platforms was essential to address the main question, and this guided the methodological choices. Netnography and its tools were critical in this task. By immersing in the different digital platforms and guided by the observation tools prepared in advance, the researcher could observe and study the characteristics of TA, understand how startups facilitate or inhibit TA and find examples of TA within the digital platforms. This immersive exercise has also allowed the identification of appropriate service features that can host TA within the digital platforms. These findings contribute to knowledge on TA and digital service provision and further development of digital service involving users.

Conclusions

In conclusion, this paper contributes significantly to the evolving discourse on netnography as a comprehensive method for collecting and analysing data in the context of a PhD research study. The focal point of the research was the investigation into the phenomenon of Technology Appropriation (TA) within the unique setting of digital service startups, utilising a combined approach of netnography and service design methods.

This study has some limitations: The selection of startups and their specific characteristics (size, industry, stage of development) may limit the generalisability of the findings. It takes time to find examples of TA within digital platforms. The decision not to engage deeply with online communities could have omitted insights into user-driven TA. Perhaps a more profound participatory method could have generated more examples of TA.

Perhaps some areas for further research are needed, building on the gaps and limitations identified in this study: Investigating TA in more varied contexts, including larger companies or those outside the startup phase; deeper exploration into the role of online communities and social media platforms in facilitating or hindering TA; and longitudinal studies that will observe how TA evolves as startups grow and their digital services mature.

In essence, by seamlessly integrating netnography and service design methods, this paper advances the methodological toolkit for researchers. It sheds light on the intricacies of TA in digital service startups. The findings and insights presented herein contribute to the ongoing evolution of netnography research methodologies, providing a valuable framework for scholars and practitioners engaged in similar explorations.

Keywords: Technology Appropriation, Digital Services, Data Collection Tools

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@JagiellonianUniversity, I have a question!. Brand auto-netnography on the example of the Jagiellonian University.

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Extended Abstract
Dino Villegas (2018) introduces the term *brand auto-netnography* to describe a type of auto-netnography in which the I/Self becomes a brand persona. This is the case, for example, for researchers who are also social media managers responsible for company's social media. In addition to my research activities, I have been the social media manager of the Jagiellonian University since 2016. Along with the team, I lay out communication strategies, coordinate and implement new media marketing activities. I am, therefore, heavily immersed in the managed profiles and the communities created around them on many levels, and for the past eight years, I have observed the changes taking place both in the platforms themselves and in user behavior. Some have progressed from candidate to student to graduate and are brand supporters. The aim of my research, conducted from the perspective of brand auto-netnography, is to illustrate on a timeline the changes in the characteristics of the community gathered around the Jagiellonian University's profiles on Instagram and Facebook, taking into account the affordances of the sites, the changes taking place within them concerning the introduction of new functionalities, the promotional activities and selected geopolitical events (e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic). In this way, I illustrate the community dynamics and show what conclusions there are for the practice of social media managers. These changes are particularly evident within closed groups, where in the early days, they were community and now have a strictly informational role, with more than 90 percent of members publishing their posts anonymously, replacing the group's traditional channels of communication with the university. Hence, based on the types of participation in the online community proposed by Robert V. Kozinets (2010), I describe the changing nature of the users gathered around the profiles of the Jagiellonian University, also taking into account the backward direction (some insiders over the years return to the position of newcomers due to a break in activity and changes in the platform and the community itself). I conduct my analysis from the perspective of agentic netnography (Gambetti, Kozinets 2022) to consider the causality of non-human actors. In a separate category, I include other university profiles that actively share content from the main university profiles, creating a system that I figuratively refer to as *the Jagiellonian constellation of social media profiles* - concerning Bree McEwan and Jesse Fox's (2022) notion of 'constellations of affordances' and to highlight their social functions in creating a community around the main profiles. As recommended in Villegas' Journey Guide to Auto-netnography (2018), I supplement the created timeline with visual materials.

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Pursuing a PhD with Netnography: Insights from Netnographic Doctoral Students.

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Extended Abstract
Across numerous academic fields, an increasing number of doctoral students are using netnography for their research projects, including their dissertations. We still know very little about their experiences using this ostensibly new method. Although several studies have used netnography to examine doctoral students' educational and social experiences, only Veríssimo and Costa's (2019) chapter in the context of a mixed methods study in tourism research actually considers the use of netnography—however, it does so solely from the experiences of one student.

In this research, we investigate the wider experiences of a set of PhD students who used netnography as a significant or the main focus of their dissertation research. We do so by conducting in-depth interviews with ten relevant research participants. The interviews, which were all conducted online using Teams, lasted between 1.5 and 2.5 hours in duration. Our interview guide navigated participants from a variety of academic fields through the process of using netnography, from first hearing about, then learning about the method to utilizing all six movements (if applicable), and focused on challenges faced and overcome. Interview participants were located in higher education settings in a range of different locations, including Europe, North America, and Australia.

Although we were expecting to find technical difficulties or confusion relating to implementing the six movements, the results were surprisingly more phenomenological and holistic than this. Three themes emerged from our data analysis. First was *the importance of mentors and mentoring*. This theme emphasized the significance of supportive mentors in the pursuit of a netnographic project. Without their support, it would be unlikely that the participant would learn about or have been able to pursue a netnographic thesis. However, there was a difference between supportive and proficient/knowledgeable mentors. There were various layers of competence in mentors which might or might not be realized, including competence with qualitative methods, digital methods, and conducting ethnography or netnography.

Students' quest for competence drove our next two themes. The second theme was *the quest for appropriate learning and background materials* regarding netnography. Participants detailed the source materials they used, which often included books but also included an extensive search for visual and video educational materials. YouTube videos and TED talks were frequently mentioned, and shorter video presentations that dove into the specifics of aspects of netnographic work were in high demand.

The same quest led participants to *the search for research role models of the appropriate matching process of inquiry*, which constitutes our third theme. Here, participants looked for research that reflected their desired academic field, topic, and platforms, leading to a dedicated and detailed search that often led them to only one or two published works, which were often analyzed extensively and highly valued in the dissertation project.

These empirical findings illuminate a process that has heretofore been unrecognized. This important knowledge will help guide institutional investments in resources and materials to better equip and support future doctoral students in their netnographic projects, potentially leading to a smoother and more positive process.

Figure 1

9h00 – 10h30 – Full length presentations (Session 9) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Mariam Humayun
"Netnographic encounters with generative artificial intelligence"

1) Von Richthofen, G., Who is Creative, Now? Generative AI in Advertising.
2) Sorbino, F., Gaur, A., Tonini, D., Zerbini, F., Colm, L., Cirrincione, A., Between Images and Words: Deciphering Sentiment on Instagram through Multimodal Analysis using Generative AI.
3) Dimitrova, I., AI, is that you? Bank customers' experience of AI assistant in Metaverse: an immersive netnographic approach.

Who is Creative, Now? Generative AI in Advertising.

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Extended Abstract
One way to explore the future of work – in line with William Gibson's saying that "The future is already here, it just isn't evenly distributed." – is to study the adoption of innovative technologies in the present workplace (Dries et al., 2023). Generative AI (GenAI) in the context of marketing is illuminative in this regard, as it is "hard to imagine an aspect of marketing practice that will not be touched by GenAI" (Peres et al., 2023). This may be especially true of advertising (Campbell et al., 2022), because GenAI constitutes a major disruptor of creative work (De Cremer et al., 2023), which is at the heart of advertising (West et al., 2019). The goal of this article is therefore to explore how advertising creatives adopt and experience GenAI, drawing on a combination of netnographic work on LinkedIn, reddit forums such as r/advertising, and interviews with advertising creatives, following guidelines by Kozinets (2020).

My analysis indicates that advertising professionals see potential in leveraging GenAI to augment the creative process, for example, by using it as a thought starter and to bounce off and refine ideas, referring to it variously as a "coach," "colleague," or half-jokingly as "junior on crack." At the same time, they perceive GenAI as a threat both on an individual level, as GenAI may be used to justify layoffs and on a field-level, as GenAI may accelerate the homogenization of advertising content. In response, creatives engage in multiple forms of boundary work, which involves defending the value of human creativity while simultaneously devaluing AI-content for its alleged lack of originality, humor, and cultural resonance as well as circulating imaginaries that highlight the continued importance of human creativity. According to one narrative, for example, GenAI will increasingly take over creation, while professionals remain essential to provide the initial idea or direction for the creative process and use their good taste to evaluate and edit the output. Implications for the burgeoning literature on AI and advertising and the future of work will be discussed.

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Between Images and Words: Deciphering Sentiment on Instagram through Multimodal Analysis using Generative AI.

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Extended Abstract
Images have emerged as a relevant medium for online conversations, offering insights into how users perceive and experience different phenomena and situations. In the context of urban mobility, images and the associated text represent an important instrument for conversations about the different

transport modes and urban mobility themes. In this paper, we propose a "visual listening" approach (Liu et al., 2020) based on an innovative method that employs generative AI algorithms for interpreting both the images and associated captions.

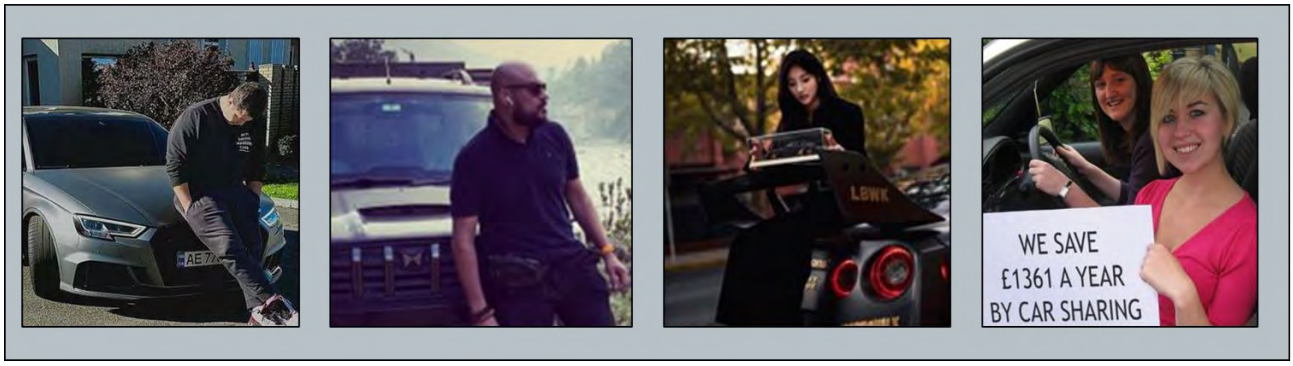
The research methodology adopted consists of two phases. The first phase focused on data collection and data cleaning. We developed a list of 55 most popular Instagram hashtags related to the domain of urban mobility; the hashtags belong to broad themes such as: urban micromobility, electric mobility, car rental, luxury mobility, automotive, and intermodality. Using these hashtags, a total of 160,000 images were extracted from public accounts on Instagram using 4KStogram software. Next, we developed a supervised algorithm based on a vision transformer to filter images that were advertisements. This filtering step ensured our focus on image content that is generated by users (both individuals and professionals): thus, a final sample of 40,000 non-advertisements images was reached.

The second phase focused on the measurement of the attributes of the images. In line with previous research on analyzing multimodal data (Singh et al., 2023), we examined the sentiment of the images (both of the humans inside the images and the associated captions), the context in which the image is displayed (urban or rural), gender and age of the people depicted, the objects and the brands within the images. The sentiment analysis of human expressions was conducted through a zero-shot image classification algorithm named CLIP, developed by OpenAI, while the sentiment analysis of the captions was conducted through GPT 3.5 turbo**.**

In analyzing the images, discrepancies emerged between the sentiment expressed in the captions and the facial sentiment of the people portrayed. Although Instagram is a platform in which users have control over what they post, carefully choosing captions and selecting the images to upload, the latter reveal, through facial expressions or choice of colors, features that let the users' true state of mind shine through. This allows us to go beyond what users intend to show, offering a deeper understanding of how they depict themselves: analyzing both sentiments reveals the existence of possible mismatches between what users write and portray.

This research opens avenues for future studies to explore the integration of visual and textual sentiment analysis, enhancing our understanding of digital consumer behavior in a visually dominated online landscape. To expand this research in the future, it would be interesting to examine users' expressions in relation to the brands they show themselves with, to better understand how brands are represented online. Analyzing the interactions between users and brands could reveal how brand representations influence users' online identity and, conversely, how users' self-presentation may influence the brand image.

Figure 1 - The many faces of mobility: a cluster of images depicting male and female individuals displaying negative, neutral, and positive facial sentiment.



Keywords: Multimodal analysis, Generative AI, Urban mobility.

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AI, is that you? Bank customers' experience of AI assistant in Metaverse: an immersive netnographic approach.

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Extended Abstract

It is just the beginning of the adoption and implementation of the Metaverse (i.e., three-dimensional virtual reality replicating real-world interactions) in the banking sector. Retail banks such as J.P. Morgan have already invested significant resources to buy a space in the Metaverse (Sahoo & Ray, 2023). Considering the rapid digitalization of financial services, Metaverse adoption comes together with artificial intelligence (AI) adoption. Previous studies (e.g., Hari et al., 2022; Lappeman et al., 2023) highlighted the use of AI such as chatbots in various services, including digital banking. Mozafari et al. (2022) investigated how the disclosure of bot nature of service chatbots influences customers' experience. This highlights the inability of customers to distinguish between an AI bot and a human being which is crucial for young bank customers' trust or distrust. Moving from chat to Metaverse service support, AI chatbots could be replaced by AI assistants (i.e. voice-based machine learning service support) in the digital banking context. The purpose of this study is, therefore, to reveal how young bank customers experience the AI assistant in terms of potential trust and distrust in the Metaverse. Young bank customers are represented by university students who will be prominent future bank customers in the digital era. Immersive netnographic observations followed by immersive interviews conducted in the Metaverse are considered suitable for a deeper understanding of young bank customers' experiences in a virtual reality context. Particularly, the data (i.e., the users' conversations with the AI assistant) can be collected via recording software and analyzed following the Kozinets' (2023) netnography guideline. This study could help business futurists to implement and manage AI assistants in their customer support giving insights into the AI assistant future scenario.

Keywords: AI assistant, Metaverse, Immersive netnography, Young bank customers, Experiences

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9h00 – 10h30 – Full length presentations (Session 10) [G 129 San Paolo]
Session Chair: Lena Cavusoglu
"Netnography to support business practices"

1) Hu, L., Olivieri, M., Filieri, R., The role of social media and LinkedIn in B2B startups' marketing communications: A netnographic analysis.
2) Castellini, G., Fontana, M., Paleologo, M., Graffigna, G., Unveiling Dynamics of Quality Milk Discourse: A Social Media Analytics Exploration in the Dairy Industry.
3) Bellotto, M., De Luca P., Consumers' knowledge sharing about sustainable coffee. A netnographic research on an online coffee community of practice.

The role of social media and LinkedIn in B2B startups' marketing communications: A netnographic analysis.

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Extended Abstract
In recent years, the rapid diffusion of social media in digital marketing has expanded outside consumer markets, involving business-to-business (B2B) markets (Cartwright et al., 2021). B2B buyers continuously seek information online, leaving numerous amounts of digital traces in their customer journey (Marvasti et al., 2021), which firms can collect and analyze to improve their marketing strategies. In particular, B2B startups, which traditionally have limited resources to invest in marketing and communication strategies (Pakura and Rudeloff, 2023), implement social media such as LinkedIn for various purposes (Cortez and Dastidar, 2022), including the increasing of the brand awareness, the identification of business opportunities, to build and maintaining business relationships with various stakeholders (Karampela et al., 2020). Benefits of social media have been widely recognized by both scholars and practitioners, however managing user-generated content (UGC) could be challenging for entrepreneurial teams often consisting of professionals without specific digital marketing and communications experience. As recently demonstrated by Vo et al. (2023), the authenticity of corporate content could easily be compromised on digital channels, due to a series of factors which are not under the firm's control.
Considering the growing importance of the digital traces of companies to interact with stakeholders (Alemany Oliver and Vayre, 2015), the aim of this study is to investigate the role of social media, and LinkedIn in particular, in the marketing communications strategies of B2B startups and entrepreneurs. To achieve this research aim, by adopting a purposeful sampling (Suri, 2011), we selected 3 initial B2B new ventures operating in the tech industry. According to this theoretical sampling technique (Mason, 2002), we chose these three startups as they share some common characteristics (i.e., the use of LinkedIn to present the brand and interact with various actors; and the usage of the founders' personal pages for business purposes), but they are also different in terms of technological products/services offered, size and location. Consistently with previous B2B studies (e.g., Pressey et al., 2014; Keränen and Prior, 2020), we conducted a netnography following the procedure theorized by Kozinets (2020), consisting of (1) an investigative phase, (2) an immersive

phase and a (3) data integration phase. In the first phase, we conducted an initial screening and an esploration of both the startups' social media pages and the entrepreneurs' profiles. In the second immersive phase, the researchers individually produced immersion journals mapping the research context in depth, with a particular focus on the conversations generated on LinkedIn, and combining empirical insights with theoretical abstractions (Gambetti and Biraghi, 2023). Finally, in the third phase of data integration, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the founders of the 3 startups. The interviews were conducted in 2023 online and transcribed *ad verbatim*. The transcripts of the interviews were analyzed with coding procedures.

Preliminary findings of this study highlight that social media and LinkedIn were central in marketing communications strategies of B2B startups to reach several objectives. For instance, entrepreneurs and startups leverage on their personal and corporate profiles to present the brand and the offering to the reference market, interacting with selected actors (for example, potential customers, partners, investors, suppliers) trying to establish transparent communication with them and an emotional bond through valuable content. To this end, in fact, the two startups on LinkedIn tell personal stories, such as the founders' participation in conferences and events; company updates, such as participation in trade fairs and the achievement of encouraging results, such as new rounds of financing; the innovations of their technological products.

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Unveiling Dynamics of Quality Milk Discourse: A Social Media Analytics Exploration in the Dairy Industry.

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Extended Abstract
The notion of quality milk has garnered significant attention from key experts in the dairy industry and consumers alike, evolving into a complex and multifactorial concept influenced by socio-relational and socio-cultural aspects (Petrescu et al., 2020). Online channels, including social media and discussion forums, have become privileged platforms where these themes are debated and shaped playing a pivotal role in shaping public opinion (Nyokabi et al., 2023).

This study aims to map and analyze the content and sentiments surrounding representations of "quality milk" in spontaneous discourse among consumers, farmers, and processors, focusing on the social context in which these discussions unfold. Additionally, the research seeks to compare social representations of "quality milk" among the key stakeholders in the dairy supply chain—consumers, farmers, and processors. The study explores the dynamics of mirroring and influencing activated through social communication among these three actors. It also aims to understand the similarities and differences between the concept of "quality milk" emerging from spontaneous online discourse and the themes developed in scientific research.

To achieve the outlined objectives, we employed a Social Media Analytics approach, encompassing the collection, monitoring, measurement, and analysis of data generated by social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) and online forums. The study has no temporal restrictions and focuses on the geographical context of Italy, serving as a potential pilot for broader research in European contexts. The research and analysis procedure involved creating a search string based on an initial exploration of "quality milk" discussions on major Italian social networks (Facebook and YouTube).

From 2012 to 2023, a total of 15,508 comments regarding milk quality were generated. Notably, a peak occurred in 2017 (n=2592), aligning with various events and news that triggered discussions on milk quality. Farmer discussions on milk quality, found on Facebook, were prominent in pages dedicated to industry magazines and breeder groups, comprising 5% of the overall comments. Processor comments on milk quality, also on Facebook, were featured on company pages, accounting for 8% of the remarks. Consumer discussions on milk quality, located on Facebook, were observed on consumer association pages, major dairy company pages, and in response to news from significant journalistic outlets, making up 87% of the comments. Additionally, certain consumer discourses on milk quality were identified on YouTube through video comments.

This research illuminates the evolving perceptions of "quality milk" in online discourse, offering insights into communication dynamics and influence within the dairy community, highlighting distinctions from offline themes.

Keywords: Quality Milk; Social Media Analytics; Dairy Supply Chain; Online Discourse; Consumer Perception

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Consumers' knowledge sharing about sustainable coffee. A netnographic research on an online coffee community of practice.

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Extended Abstract
The coffee sector is facing sustainability challenges concerning climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, water pollution, waste generation, low and volatile prices for green coffee, labor exploitation of farmers, and many others (Bager & Lambin, 2020; Bermudez et al., 2022; Samper & Quiñones-Ruiz, 2017). At the same time, consumers are becoming increasingly sensitive to sustainability issues, even in product evaluation, including coffee (Bartoloni et al., 2022; Maciejewski et al., 2019; Robichaud & Yu, 2022; Samoggia & Riedel, 2018;). To date, the notion of sustainable coffee does not seem to have a precise definition shared by all stakeholders. Generally, sustainable coffee "is perceived as an approach that addresses the major ecological, economic, and social impacts of coffee production and trade, seeking to reduce harmful 'externalities' while enhancing long-term benefits for people and the environment" (Rice & McLean, 1999, p. 41). This conceptualization, however, is not always clear to all consumers, who often show limited knowledge and some confusion regarding sustainability (Grunert et al., 2014; Schmuck et al., 2018). Consumers discuss these topics in their online interaction spaces, sharing stories, images, experiences, habits, practices, and solutions to recurrent problems. Among these spaces, social sciences literature recognizes a specific meaning to the Communities of Practice (CoP), defined as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner et al., 2015, p. 2). From a managerial point of view, customer knowledge and co-creation can nowadays be considered among the most important enhancers of a firm's competitive performance (Taghizadeh et al., 2018; Scandelius & Cohen, 2016). In this perspective, CoPs become interesting fields of observation to analyze consumer knowledge sharing and sustainable coffee consumption practices.

This research, through the lens of CoP theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), aims to explore knowledge and practice shared by consumers in an online CoP in relation to sustainable coffee. Specifically, from a consumer marketing perspective, relevant content is analyzed at different stages of the purchasing decision process, in particular, pre-purchase, purchase-consumption, and post-purchase stages (Kotler et al., 2014). Under these premises, the main research questions are the following:

- What relevant content and practices are shared about the pre-purchase phase of sustainable coffee?
- What relevant content and practices are shared about the purchasing/consumption phase of sustainable coffee?
- What relevant content and practices are shared about the post-purchase phase of sustainable coffee?

From the methodological perspective, netnography (Kozinets, 2002) appears to be an appropriate method, to analyze shared knowledge and practice about sustainable coffee by consumers in online CoPs (Breu & Hemingway, 2002; Koliba & Gajda, 2009; Pyrko et al., 2017). Data were collected by selecting an online coffee forum that meets the criteria of the CoPs (Hara et al., 2009; Sharratt & Usoro, 2003; Zhang & Watts, 2008). Once the most interesting conversations about sustainable coffee were identified, classification and coding were carried out using Atlas.ti software. The results show interesting aspects regarding the consumers' purchasing decision process. Firstly, there are relevant

insights on how coffee is recognized as sustainable and what are the most debated issues and attributes that affect the purchase choice. Secondly, interesting sustainable consumption practices emerge. Finally, in the post-consumption stage, consumers shared advice on disposal from a circular economy perspective. Organizations can exploit the study to orientate their sustainability communication strategies.

Keywords: Coffee, sustainability, knowledge sharing, communities of practice, netnography

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13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 11) [G 127 Pio XI]
Session Chair: Marie-Agnes Parmentier
"Netnography, AI, and Diversity: Immersions and Applications"

1) Kozinets, R.V., Ashman, R., Cyborg Thirst Traps: A Technovisual Auto-netnography of Generative AI Pornography.
2) Scott, R. Gretzel, U., The Netnographer's Peripheral Vision: Exploring the Shadows of Agentic Bodies in Digital Representation.
3) Kozinets, R.V., Cavusoglu, L., Belk, R., Diverse Barbies on Diverse Platforms: Platform Comparative AI-Assisted Netnography.

Cyborg Thirst Traps: A Technovisual Auto-netnography of Generative AI Pornography.

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Extended Abstract
In this work we explore the consumption of generative artificial intelligence (AI), by studying visual AI dedicated to pornography involving nonhuman images of cyborg female forms. The provision of AI pornography that can be attuned to the specifications and sexual peccadillos of its technologically astute consumers is in its infancy, but it is nonetheless a rapidly growing industry, with the porn industry as a whole worth $100 billion and the 'sextech' industry worth $31.4 billion in 2022. Little is known about this new source of consumer satisfaction. Often sour and dour, academics tend to be negative and dystopian about such satisfying possibilities. Instead, in keeping with the positivity of Netnocon's looking towards the future theme, we adopt a playful, pleasure-seeking, and paradoxical perspective on this particular pornographic pursuit.

Within the adult entertainment industry, AI porn generators allow users to create synthetic sexual images via the use of tags and prompts. These generators are sophisticated, with new tags and affordances added regularly to enable the instant fulfillment of hyper-customised sexual desires. However, their outputs can be odd and unexpected as well. Some AI porn generators possess public and private affordances that allow users to create personalised images based on their private desires, while the platform showcases these images within a public, refreshing carousel of content. The netnographic possibilities of these affordances were too enticing for us to resist!

Our theoretical approach is placed within prior theories of commercialized and mediatized consumer desire, particularly the Belkian/Lacanian and networked Deleuzo-Guattarian. In terms of methodology, we use auto-netnography, which Lyz Howard and others developed and in which the researcher's immersion merges with the subjective characteristics of the phenomenon. Our research

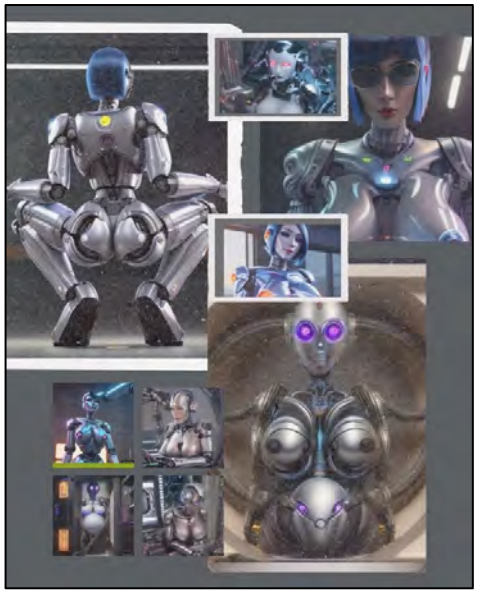
began in March 2023 when we scouted and investigated the major AI porn generation sites before focusing on sites such as Pornpen.ai and pornderful.ai. Since then, both authors have created individual immersion journals and collected a bank of images.

Our presentation develops findings in relation to the sub-genre of AI generated cyborg porn. We discover that generating AI porn images as immersed research is an imaginative and titillating interrelation with an agentic machine mind, albeit the mind of something that knows surprisingly little of anatomy, sensuality, or human imagination. Within this interrelation, there is always an asking and a response, but the response does not often answer what was asked. Once the AI generator receives an instruction, it uses creative agencies to produce porn at speed. Our results reveal a kaleidoscope of poses and forms, moving from the dominant to the submissive, in both human and realistic, yet sometimes machinic and abject forms (see Figure 1's collage). We find that we are more comfortable when the generated images appear more fleshy and human-formed than metallic and machinic. When the images are robotic and inhuman, they lessen in appeal and become eerie. As metal and flesh combine, and with more time spent as generators and voyeurs, nascent possibilities of transhuman relationships shift into focus.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Pornography, Auto-netnography, Sexuality, Cyborgs

References available upon request.

Figure 1



The Netnographer's Peripheral Vision: Exploring the Shadows of Agentic Bodies in Digital Representation.

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Extended Abstract

Methodological approaches often overlook the crisis of representation. A growing body of netnographic work foregrounds ways of seeing and knowing across a broad spectrum of human experiences (Kozinets 2019). However, despite the abundance of digital traces, not all individuals are equally represented online. Discussions of digital divides due to peoples' poverty, age, connectivity

and skills offer a starting point but remain limited. Inspired by the concept of the agentic body (Wong and King 2008) and post-qualitative research (Kuby 2020), we question whether netnographers reflect enough on issues of representation. Advocates of post-qualitative research suggest we need to broaden our data collection horizons to acknowledge digital traces emulating from bodies with different agencies. We ask: How do we become sensitive to representation issues in the process of a netnography?

Post-qualitative inquiry invites us to question conventional qualitative methodology by encouraging researchers to produce different insights and produce insights differently. Kuby (2020) highlights how traditional research training prevents us from acknowledging the 'new' that is already present in the world. The ever-evolving scope of netnography enables us to adopt a post-qualitative lens, integrate reflexive practices, and combine diverse digital and non-digital traces (Kozinets and Gretzel 2023).

The agentic body can be defined as an active agent, capable of generating its own agenda (Gadow 1980) in ways that supersede an individuals' mental abilities. Existing literature has looked at such bodily disruptions in contexts such as disability (Pavia and Mason 2012) and aging (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013). Of significance to understanding the powers of netnography is how agentic bodies change or block online engagement, behaviour and representation. We reveal how a post-qualitative stance helps netnographers reflect on agentic bodies.

We traverse ethnographic and netnographic methodologies in studying individuals that report suffering from electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS) to expose how agentic bodies impact representation. Acknowledging other bodily agencies that limit online engagement (e.g., dementia, Long COVID), we explore netnography's radical possibility to embrace an ideology of inclusivity for those that are not (fully or not always) represented online by dint of an agentic body.

Keywords: Post-qualitative research, the agentic body, representation

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Diverse Barbies on Diverse Platforms: Platform Comparative AI-Assisted Netnography.

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Extended Abstract

From ancient playthings to modern companions, dolls can hold significant cultural value. Often criticized for perpetuating narrow beauty ideals and lacking diversity, fashion doll and media franchise Barbie has been a central yet contentious pop icon. In response, Mattel's 2020 'Fashionista Barbie' line embraces inclusivity, offering dolls with various body types, skin tones, appliances like wheelchairs, and conditions like Vitiligo. The line includes diverse Barbies and Kens, reflecting societal shifts toward broader representation.

This netnography investigates consumer perceptions of Vitiligo Barbies and Ken by examining online posts for DEI concerns. Our study focused on representational issues and reactions to the dolls across six platforms: Amazon.com, Mattel.com, Wal-Mart, NYTimes.com, Reddit, and YouTube. The first three are product review sites. NYTimes.com hosts reader comments on a 2020 article about new Barbies, and Reddit and YouTube are social media with diverse Barbie-related discussions. We probed common themes and differences in consumer comments across these platforms. We gathered in-depth data, maintained immersion notes, and thoroughly reviewed posts and comments. We used Chat GPT 4.0 to advise on separate and comparative analysis and interpretation, and the deployed our collective human intelligence to develop the results.

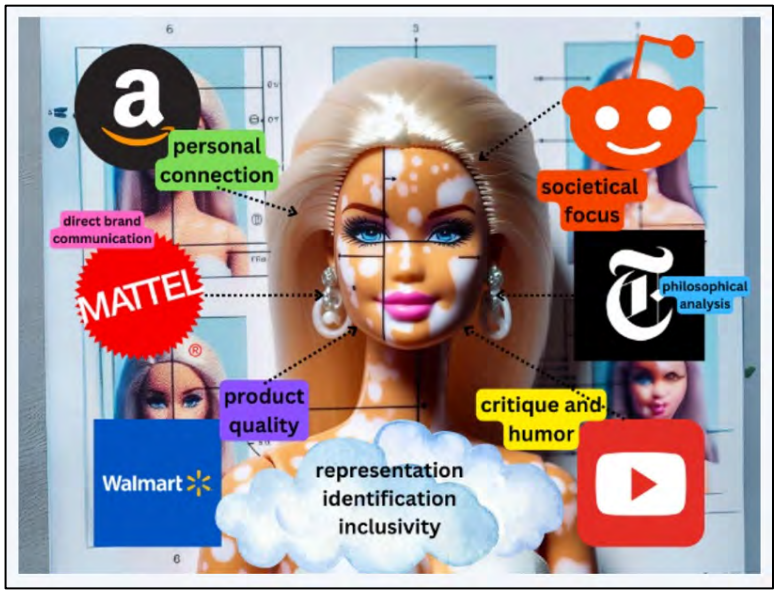
Across all platforms, a majority of users expressed positive sentiments about the inclusivity of the Barbie line. Many comments reflected elation and validation, particularly from people who have vitiligo themselves, have children with vitiligo, or know someone with who has it. For some the dolls are revelatory. A Reddit user noted, “Representation is magic,” while an Amazon reviewer stated, “Having Vitiligo and seeing this doll was everything.”

Unlike comments on other platforms, reviews on the Mattel site often included responses from the Mattel team, providing a unique direct line of communication between consumers and the brand. Ratings for specific features like “Quality/durability”, and specific details about the reviewers (e.g., number of children) were also unique to the Mattel site.

There was a clear desire for even more diverse representation and some criticism about Mattel’s commercialization of wokeness, reflecting dialogue in wider American society. These comments were especially prevalent on YouTube, Reddit, and nytimes.com. YouTube comments tended to be more quotidian, as in comments like, “Where's the barbie with the glasses and pimples?” or the request for “fat Ken”. YouTube and NYTimes.com comments were more interactive and engaged, involving replies and discussions. YouTube comments tend to be more varied and encompass a broader range of perspectives, including humor, political commentary, and a wider array of diversity requests. NYTimes.com comments assumed a more analytical or philosophical tone, with a divide between those seeing inclusive dolls as a positive and empowering step, and those viewing toys primarily as a means of fantasy and escapism that may not need to feature inclusion.

Although the core themes of representation, identification, and inclusivity were consistent across platforms and doll types, the nuances in the discussions varied meaningfully between platforms with the social media sites offering more societally-focused commentary and the review sites focusing more on individual user experience, personal connections, and issues of product quality.

Figure 1



13h30 – 15h00 – Full length presentations (Session 12) [G 111 Salvadori]
Session Chair: Matteo Corciolani
"Methodological journeys and developments"

1) Marchowska-Raza, M., Immersion journal journey through social media brand community research.
2) Jakovac, M., Hobbs, L., Rowe, E., Gaps and opportunities: A scoping-review-style literature review of netnographic research into K-12 teachers' agency and identity.
3) Leccio, B.J., Maniago, J., Crafting Methodological Rigor: A Framework for Netnography in Nursing Research.

Immersion journal journey through social media brand community research.

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Extended Abstract
An immersion journal is fundamental to every netnography (Kozinets, 2020), and is regarded as a core research operation in this field (Gambetti and Kozinets, 2022). Recording the researcher's thoughts and observations aims to uncover new meanings and connections, often focussing on identifying deep data (Gambetti and Kozinets, 2022). While many qualitative researchers initiate various forms of immersion journals, diaries or memos throughout their research journey, at times conceptualising the scope and structure of an immersion journal within one's study can present challenges, particularly for PhD researchers who are applying the methods for the first time, but also due to continuously evolving data sites (Kozinets and Gretzel, 2023).

The presented research, through netnography, investigates the role of Facebook-based social media brand communities in facilitating consumer engagement and value formation. This paper offers an

insight into the research process through an immersion journal perspective and showcases how recorded perspective through immersive journals aided and advanced data analysis and result writing. By doing so, it illustrates how engaging with an immersive journal can lead to more nuanced and in-depth findings. Therefore, it validates the importance of recording the researcher's thoughts and observations as a fundamental part of netnography and underlines the value of reflective and immersive writing in making sense of complex data. As such, this paper argues that the immersion journal becomes a dynamic narrative that evolves with the researcher's journey.

The value of the immersion journal in this context is two-fold. Firstly, it serves as a reflective tool, allowing the researcher to engage with their thoughts and observations critically. This reflective practice is crucial in making sense of complex data, particularly within the multifaceted realm of social media brand communities where consumer interactions and brand narratives are constantly in flux. Secondly, the immersion journal acts as a repository of the researcher's evolving understanding, capturing the process of discovery and understanding that occurs throughout the netnographic journey. This paper demonstrates the evolution of the immersion journal throughout the research process. It highlights how the journal guided the researcher in data collection, and offered a structured approach to interpreting complex interactions and trends within social media brand communities, as it emerged as a critical component in synthesizing and crystallizing the research findings, shaping the structure and substance of the findings chapter.

By providing the perspective from research within social media brand communities which employed immersion journals to derive findings, this paper adds to the discourse on the use of immersion journals in netnographic research, in particular PhD research. As such the hopes are that this paper adds practical insights into how immersion journals can be effectively used, offering guidance and inspiration to other PhD researchers and demonstrating how immersion journals can be leveraged as a means of fostering a deeper, more meaningful engagement with the research subject.

Figure 1

Gaps and opportunities: A scoping-review-style literature review of netnographic research into K-12 teachers' agency and identity.

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Extended Abstract
The pandemic propelled online K-12 education, with platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram and Reddit emerging as vibrant venues for teacher professional learning and development. Amid these digital discussions, netnography offers a powerful way to explore this research question:

- What research gaps exist in using netnography to explore K-12 teacher agency and identity work on social media?

Further questions:

- How have netnographers collected, analyzed and synthesized data from social media platforms to explore K-12 teacher agency and identity work?
- How do K-12 teachers utilize social media to express, negotiate, or challenge their professional agency and identity?
- What are the key research gaps in understanding the relationship between social media use and teacher agency/identity work that netnography can address?

Recognizing the vast, untapped potential of this online data, this literature review will follow scoping review principles (JBI and PRISMA-ScR frameworks) to curate and map netnographic research that has explored K-12 teacher agency and identity work expressed online.

Netnography is a relatively new methodology for education researchers. It has been utilised to explore issues spanning early education, K-12 schooling, self-learning, adult learning, remote learning, doctoral students' loneliness, high-school mathematics teaching, graduate students, and learning English as a foreign language, among many others. Netnography may offer potential to 'lift the hood' on the figurative engine of teachers' work and their ruminations in local to global contexts. However, the vast tracts of teachers' online narratives and discussions about their work, professional judgements, and professional learning can be overwhelming to laypeople, researchers, and policymakers alike to make sense of and identify emerging trends and issues. Yet this corpus of online data offers insights into lived experience about, for and of the profession.

Using the analytical lens of teacher identity/agency, the review will canvas scholarly literature, and grey literature (non-commercial, and non-academic content from entities which don't primarily publish, including government/industry reports). My literature review's objectives include:

1. How netnographers have delved into teachers' use of social media for agency and professional identity.
2. The nuts and bolts: Researchers' roles, research purpose, research paradigm, data collection domain, content types included, analysis approach.
3. Prominent researchers, their contributions and stated research gaps, as well as silences this researcher identifies.
4. Ethical considerations that netnographic researchers have stated.

Moreover, the review will identify research gaps that could guide further exploration and inform policy and practice. This resource could become a foundation for a playbook for netnographers delving into the K-12 space, encouraging broader adoption of this emerging technology to address systemic and other issues in education.

While a solo PhD project limits this presentation to only a literature review, it may broaden the appeal of netnography within the education research community.

Keywords: K-12 education | Netnography | literature review | teacher agency | online identity work

Crafting Methodological Rigor: A Framework for Netnography in Nursing Research.

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Extended Abstract
Netnography is a useful research method for nursing researchers who aim to comprehend the intricate social and cultural dimensions of healthcare (Witney et al., 2016). It involves studying online communities and social media platforms to gain insights into the experiences and views of patients, caregivers, and healthcare providers (Ebardo et al., 2022). These insights can then inform healthcare policy and practice, as well as nursing education that is gradually integrating technology and social media (DeGagne et al., 2021). Despite its complexities highlighted by Kozinets (2020), netnography is an indispensable, flexible tool in qualitative research, enabling detailed studies of online behaviors and virtual community dynamics, crucial for advancing research and education.

This study highlights the critical need for a refined methodological approach in netnography for nursing research, recognizing the evolving dynamics of online communities. Salzmann-Erickson et al.'s 2012 work introduced Lil EDDA, a six-step netnographic framework specifically designed for nursing science, comprising literature review, identifying research questions, locating online fields, ethical considerations, data gathering, analysis, and ensuring trustworthiness.

However, this approach requires updates to accommodate the diversity of social platforms beyond traditional forums, addressing the varied contexts of nursing professions (Frisch et al., 2019; Reinbeck et al., 2019) patient concerns (Mariano et al., 2017) and pedagogical enhancements (De Gagne et al., 2020). Ethical considerations must align with nursing research principles, emphasizing permission from online community gatekeepers, anonymity, and participants' rights (Polit & Beck, 2018). While initial data gathering focused on forum platforms, the rise of social media necessitates broader methodologies for data collection, reflecting the global increase in social media use (Statista, 2021, 2022). The shift from forums to a broader array of social media platforms acknowledges their central role in daily communication and the need for evolved data collection strategies, from manual printing to sophisticated digital extraction tools. Data analysis should remain question-driven but adapt to the evolving online environment, with an emphasis on achieving data saturation—a key quality indicator defined by the depth and richness of data rather than sheer volume (Polit & Beck, 2017; Saunders et al., 2018). Ensuring research trustworthiness involves adhering to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Extensive observation, meticulous data collection, and transparent reporting bolster a study's credibility, transferability, and the dependability and confirmability of findings (Polit & Beck, 2018).

Integrating data triangulation, upholding ethical standards, and applying methodological rigor are crucial for understanding online community complexities in nursing research. These practices, in line with Kozinets' (2020) refined methodology, are vital for netnography's inclusion in structured nursing research. Data triangulation, by merging multiple sources, ensures ethical management to uphold privacy and confidentiality. Comparative analysis across varied data sets highlights converging themes, thus bolstering the credibility and validity of the research. Articulating the triangulation process, incorporating nursing theories, and addressing implications for practice, education, and policy make netnographic research methodologically sound and relevant to nursing. This methodology propels significant healthcare evolution, channeling online community insights into meaningful advancements in nursing and patient care.

Keywords: Netnography, nursing research, trustworthiness, digital methodologies, online ethnography

15h30 – 17h00 – Plenary Session

Session Chair: Robert Kozinets
Interactive workshop 5-minute presentations [G 127 Pio XI]
"Consumer and Community focused Netnography"

1) Ribeiro, M.A., Netnography and the sick consumer on the internet.
2) Aksu Gungor, S., Alkaya, U., Ulker, G., Vasile, I., Grigoras, V., Harmony and Hurdles in ELNN Online Youth Community: The Encounter of Online Community Building and Online Ethnography.
3) Zagni, L.M., Pera, R., From Immersion to Invasion: a netnographic exploration of consumers' responses' to In-Game Advertising.

Netnography and the sick consumer on the internet.

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Extended Abstract
Technological advances have drastically transformed the relationship between consumer and product. With so much speed, we can interact with the best and worst of the internet in real time. And netnography stands out when exploring the behaviors and experiences of these super-connected consumers. In this context, the relationship between netnography and the phenomenon of the consumer who has access to everything all the time comes up against the prospect of global illness due to this accelerated use.

Netnography: A Global Perspective
Netnography takes an approach that allows researchers to understand the cultural and social practices of internet users. Originating in anthropological studies, netnography expanded to areas such as marketing, psychology and sociology, becoming essential for understanding consumer behavior in digital era.

The Sick Consumer: A Global Reality
The term "sick consumer" refers to the negative consequences that may arise from consumers' interaction with the online environment. Issues such as Infobesity, social pressure, constant comparison and cyberbullying contribute to the emergence of mental health problems among consumers.
And not only that, our excessive use of screens has led to problems of anxiety, depression and suicide.

But how do two such antagonistic themes talk about each other?
In the consumer, of course.
On the one hand, netnography creates business opportunities for companies to awaken our consumption both physically and virtually. And on the other hand, dependencies on technology are increasingly frequent, creating a cycle where consumers take out their frustrations, insecurities and distress in environments that should be about engagement.

Netnography allows an in-depth analysis of these phenomena, capturing data and revealing behavioral patterns that may go unnoticed in traditional research methods, verifying what is most noticeable in this consumer.

And why is our mental health deteriorating as we become a more connected society?

Why do we spend hours immersed in social media, games and videos of kittens? We don't need to browse the dark web environment to get exhausted. In 2022, “game disorder” entered the ICD 11 (international classification of diseases) as a pathology.

We work too much, sleep little, become sensory overloaded, lonely and devoid of meaning. This is how we perceive a scenario of health degradation when collecting data from networks such as Instagram, X and LinkedIn.

And all this amount of information? Beeps, flashes, infinite scrolling, notifications, texts, news feed, tiktokers. The mind cannot handle so much information and it turns out that this entire amount is slowly intoxicating users.

And who will a consumer like this complain to?
In fact, what we see when analyzing the data is that the social networks of big brands are flooded with angry comments because their order arrived 1 minute late.
In detractor ratings for companies that changed their logo during rebranding and the customer didn't like it.
Or even when a trend goes to the top not because it is a business opportunity or critical thoughts about society, but because it is binary extremism where a topic has only 2 bias, “like or not”

What now shapes consumer health is no longer just the digital, binary and limited message and medium. Depending on the whims of Big Tech, people's behavior can be shaped by algorithms to generate engagement with a certain product.

However, few people ask why consumers are getting sick like this. For every exponential leap in technology there are millions of consumers falling ill under James Barber's maxim “We are adultizing children and infantilizing adults”
And then we come to another subcontext. The speed imposed by technology is being used indiscriminately to create loyalty to products that are harmful to health, starting with the very use we make of our screens.

But why such a statement? It is known that in childhood there is no distinction between entertainment and advertising and this is a thriving environment for us to be hooked by brands and become more loyal to them.
We have never had so many children immersed in the digital environment at such an early age.
The screens impressed on fathers, mothers and those responsible for a minor, a need that their children need to be connected to their tablets and smartphones as soon as possible to be accepted in society.
And do you know what this does to little ones? It releases excess dopamine, creates the perspective that a screen is a toy and a legion of consumers is now starting to get sick in childhood because the market creates the expectation that having is more important than being.

International Studies on Consumption and Mental Health
International research highlights the complexity of this relationship. A study conducted by European researchers identified that increased exposure to social media is correlated with higher levels of anxiety and depression among children and young people. This conclusion highlights the need for a

global approach in understanding the impacts of the digital environment on consumer mental health as a tragedy is announced by major research.

The Contribution of Netnography in Global Research

Netnography, by delving into Instagram, TikTok and discussion forums about mental illness, offers a richer view of consumers' experiences. By analyzing forums, social networks and blogs, researchers can capture valuable insights into how digital interactions affect consumers' mental health across different cultures and regions.

For specialists who work with research and are immersed in digital, nerves need to be of steel. Critical sense needs to be exercised in environments other than digital. You can read a physical book, walk in the park or play with your child.

When managing their lives and being away from manipulative and artificial digital places, researchers need to have their mental health intact. This can be achieved with hobbies, music, friends and contact with nature.

Netnographers can never be numb by staring at a screen repeatedly, because they need to see beyond the obvious. They need to have time to contemplate even the little bird that landed in their window, to have clarity in their decision making. More than collecting data, its appropriate analysis creates bridges between business and a better and more conscious society.

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Resume:

Why is our mental health deteriorating as we become a more connected society?

In this study we will show why sick consumers are taking out their frustrations and worsening their mental health to the detriment of their behavior being shaped by manipulative environments and binary biases. All with the help of netnography that seeks to understand this consumer and their

environment so that in the future we no longer have sick consumers or researchers with their mental health deteriorating.

Figure 1

Harmony and Hurdles in ELNN Online Youth Community: The Encounter of Online Community Building and Online Ethnography.

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Extended Abstract
The European Lead by Nature Network (ELNN) is a collaborative initiative among European youth organizations, funded by the European Union. Rooted in shared values of quality, trust, and sustainability, ELNN aims to create a lasting community fostering learning, sharing, and growth. ELNN Research is a crucial component in Work Package 2 that focuses on advancing network development, fostering collaboration, and empowering youth through quality learning experiences. The research activity emphasizes proactive engagement with youth, listening to their needs, and empowering them to actively participate in projects. This approach encourages youth to take leadership roles, contribute to discussions with policymakers, and participate in transformative initiatives. ELNN Research plays a pivotal role in shaping a dynamic and inclusive community that responds to the evolving needs of young people across Europe. In response to challenges during the research design encompassing 20 organizations from 13 countries, and the introduction of the research procedure to partners ELNN Research outlined two specific topics with corresponding research questions regarding the concepts of future and engagement.

For the concept of the future, the research question is determined to be "How do young people perceive and conceptualize the future across psychological, cognitive, individual, and social levels?". This exploration focused on understanding perceptions of the future, emotional associations with it, personal visions and desires for change, and the role of technology as well as the impact of world events. For the concept of engagement, the research question is determined to be "How do young people define and experience engagement and motivation, regarding the factors contributing to or hindering their sense of motivation and engagement across personal, social, and contextual dimensions?" This investigation focused on domains such as engaging activities, recent engaging experiences, strategies for addressing disengagement, factors influencing engagement within groups, and expectations for maintaining sustained engagement, all of which are pivotal in understanding engagement and engagement definitions. These two topics are considered to provide a foundational basis for future investigations on the domains of the project's predefined concepts such as "making a difference", "sustainability", and "civic involvement". It should be noted that the abstract focuses on the methodology rather than the research questions or the findings of the research.

WP2 aims to build a dynamic community of over 1000 engaged youth from member organizations, utilizing Discord as the online community medium. Discord originated as a social platform that allows users to use video and voice channels and chat to communicate with each other. Therefore it is widely used by the gaming community, and the scope of the users continues to expand. The envisioned Discord server aimed to facilitate community building, research activities, and educational content development in various languages, emphasizing inclusivity despite the identified challenges. While initially planning to conduct all research activities exclusively via Discord, challenges arose, prompting the need for resolution. Discord stands out as a valuable resource for netnography due to its structure as a social platform featuring specialized channels known as servers. This setup allows for observation across various domains and topics. Additionally, during registration, users can craft virtual identities tailored to their interests, enhancing the platform's suitability for research purposes.

The first challenge faced in implementing the research on Discord involved three key levels of engagement. Addressing disadvantaged groups lacking access to digital tools or skills, directing social media users towards Discord, and encouraging active Discord users to join the ELNN server were pivotal concerns. The second challenge emerged from a shift in focus from research to community building, prompting a reassessment of the research approach. Consequently, the initial plan for an online ethnography was reconsidered in favour of prioritizing community development.

Although the proposed procedures integrate digital tools like menti.com and Google Forms, ELNN Research envisions a comprehensive online ethnography within the Discord community. The ELNN Discord server is a virtual environment where the youth community actively shapes its culture, interacts, and grows. Presently, the research primarily leverages digital tools without delving into the study of the online ELNN community. As the community expands, there's an anticipation of returning to the original plan in the second year. The dynamic Discord community is expected to provide an ideal space for engagement and insights into various research subjects. Discord will remain the primary platform for designing and implementing new research, fostering discussions on the methodological aspects of online community building versus conducting research within an established online community. This paper aims to contribute to the evolving discourse around effective methodologies for online youth research and community development. The discussion is shaped around the reciprocal relationship between online research and online community building.

From Immersion to Invasion: a netnographic exploration of consumers' responses' to In-Game Advertising.

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract
The integration of in-game advertising (IGA) has sparked debate among academic and non-academic gaming stakeholders. While some argue for its benefits (e.g., in terms of engaging gamers), others report on IGA's perceived interruptive effect. Reconciling this gap, this study investigates the role of IGA on consumers' engagement, exploring the conditions under which IGA stimulates optimal flow (vs. perceived psychological reactance). Deploying netnographic methodology, we examine two gaming communities on Reddit, which reveals that IGA predominantly triggers gamers' psychological reactance (vs. flow). Specifically, gamers were found to not only exhibit IGA-related irritation and frustration, but also anger and harassment. The findings indicate that when IGA triggers psychological reactance, its repercussions include the development of users' negative engagement in the game which manifests through negative electronic word-of-mouth, and calls to action (e.g.,

advocating for the game's or the advertised brands' boycott). Conversely, we uncover that when IGA attributes (e.g., content, format, style, frequency, or length) are effectively aligned with the gaming context, IGA boosts flow, contributing to deeper game-related immersion. We conclude by outlining key theoretical and practical implications that emerge from our research (e.g., by recommending the achievement of balanced IGA characteristics, in turn boosting game-related engagement and flow).

Introduction

"The ads shouldn't be there. We get bombarded on the regular by ads in our everyday life. We pay money to play video games and escape from the daily bullshit. This is a bridge too far. 2K has crossed the line by adding ads into our sacred place. Not worthy of outrage? I think we should be MORE outraged. They don't even have the excuse of saying "this is how we keep it free". It's not free. That's the point. We pay money and still get harassed. They are trying to have their cake and eat it too. If we don't stand against this, it will be the new norm". [killtheK]

This exemplary complaint captures the sentiment of consumers when IGA disrupts their gaming experience, leading to negatively valenced engagement. When consumers are immersed in a video-game, their physiological characteristics (e.g., heartbeat and senses) are in sync with the game, anticipating (un)expected events. Such an immersive state epitomizes the well-established concept of flow, where gamers are deeply engrossed to the extent that they lose their sense of time and place (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). Consequently, this momentum, characterized by players' full cognitive and emotional engagement, presents an opportunity for brands to interact with gamers (Welden et al., 2022). The number of engaged gamers has risen rapidly in recent years, reaching 3.2 billion in 2022 across gamers of all ages. In economic terms, the global gaming industry amounts to an annual net revenue of $185 billion, exposing its strategic and rising importance. Of this, IGA has been valued at approximately $65 billion (The Economist, 2023).

Owing to players' high engagement, IGA presents a pertinent revenue-generating opportunity (Hussain et al., 2021; Herrewijn & Poels, 2015), including by promoting relevant game-related complementary or add-on products or services. However, gamers may also find IGA irritating or disruptive of their immersive gaming experience, it can also backfire (e.g., by reducing [vs. raising] their engagement; Tran & Strutton, 2013).

While television viewers are able to disengage or divert their attention from advertisements (e.g., by zipping, zapping, flipping, or grazing; Cronin et al., 1992), gamers are typically unable to do so (at least, without suffering game-related consequences like falling behind in their game performance). Intrusive IGA is, therefore, more challenging to ignore or avoid, yielding gamers' heightened negative engagement. This observation aligns with the concept of psychological reactance (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Hollebeek et al., 2022), where perceived intrusions in the gaming environment may trigger a defensive response, leading players to resist or disengage as a way of reclaiming a sense of control and autonomy.

Video-game manufacturers and marketers seek to optimize their revenue from both video-game sales and IGA (Welden et al., 2022), which to an important extent exhibit opposing effects. For example, to boost gamers' engagement, they would typically prefer less (or no) IGA (Rutz et al. 2019; Abbasi et al. 2021), which would however minimize IGA revenue. The question therefore arises regarding the highest level of IGA that users will accept (i.e., that will see their continued elevated game-related engagement vs. inducing their negative engagement). Extending prior work, we aim to better understand IGA performance by seeking answers to the following research question: *How does IGA impact gamers' engagement*?

Addressing this issue, we adopt a qualitative netnographic approach by examining gamers' emotional responses elicited by IGA in online gaming communities. We investigate how gamers' cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social engagement intertwine (Brodie et al., 2013) to develop or execute strategies to cope with IGA. To better understand these issues, we integrate the flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977; 1990; Cowley et al., 2019) and psychological reactance concepts (Stewart

& Pavlou, 2002; Malhotra et al., 2021) to develop a conceptual framework that recognizes IGA's potential to either enhance (e.g., by raising consumers' awareness of relevant game-related add-ons or supplements) or disrupt consumers' gaming experience (e.g., by interrupting their game-play).

This research makes two main contributions to the consumer gaming literature. First, it highlights the primary role of emotional engagement in shaping consumers' elevated engagement (i.e., for positively perceived IGA) or negative engagement (i.e., for negatively perceived IGA). However, when consumers' positive gaming engagement emerged, behavioral engagement was found to fail to manifest. This implies that even when consumers experience positive emotions towards IGA during gaming, the subsequent behavioral responses, such as specific actions or behaviors, were not clearly and consistently manifested. This study reveals that the consequences of negative engagement go beyond such individual responses. When consumers perceive IGA as intrusive or harassing, the impact extends beyond mere avoidance; it prompts active negative engagement, such as expressing dissatisfaction through negative electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) and taking tangible actions, such as calls to boycott the game or the advertised brand. In essence, the study expands the theoretical understanding of the interplay between emotional, behavioral engagement, and the outcomes of positive and negative engagement in the context of consumer responses to IGA.

Second, adopting the concepts of flow and psychological reactance, we develop a spectrum of psychological responses to IGA, moving beyond simplistic categorizations like positive or negative responses. This framework helps in understanding the depth and complexity of gamers' psychological experiences with IGA, capturing the diverse responses of individuals to IGA.

When examining the dynamics of psychological reactance to and engagement with in-game advertising (IGA), the Rebel Paradox provides a profound lens through which to understand the complex behavioral patterns of gamers. This paradox reflects the dual nature of gamers' responses to IGA, as they simultaneously reject and accept market influences (Riedel et al., 2024). Our study suggests that gamers experience emotions beyond mere irritation and frustration, extending to perceived IGA harassment. However, we find that the effective alignment of IGA attributes (e.g., content, format, style, frequency, length) can also foster consumers' cooperative reactions and enhance flow. Thus, while some players may be resistant, as shown by their increased reactance to the perceived intrusiveness of advertising, others may show acceptance, which is consistent with instances of positive engagement in which IGA enhances the game experience. When IGA's attributes including content, format, style, frequency, and length effectively align with the context of the game, consumers not only exhibit a more tolerant and understanding posture regarding the benefits of advertising but also experience enhanced gaming immersion and engagement. Conversely, when IGA (1) lacks relevance, meaning, or context; (2) clashes with consumers' values, (3) is poorly executed, and (4) becomes excessive in terms of duration, frequency, and absence of opt-out options, it significantly detracts from the flow of the gaming experience, resulting to negative engagement. Thus, the paradoxical interaction highlights the complex relationship among IGA, psychological reactance and engagement. Moreover, underscores the importance of understanding not only the apparent responses of players to IGA, but also the underlying attitudes that drive these responses.

We next review key gaming and related literature, followed by an overview of our methodology. We then outline the main results, followed by a discussion of pertinent theoretical and managerial implications emerging from our work.

Theoretical underpinning: in-game advertising and engagement

In-game advertising

IGA refers to the integration of ads into video games, including product placements, banners, content sponsorship, interstitial advertisements or video ads (Terlutter and Capella, 2013; Van Berlo et al., 2022; Walden et al., 2022), is closely tied to the widespread diffusion of gaming and the metaverse (Chaney et al., 2018; De Pelsmacker et al., 2019). Previous studies have focused more on product placement in games (Jeong et al., 2011), which involves integrating brands or products directly into

the gaming experience of the consumer. Furthermore, content sponsorship involves the customization of game characters, especially in both multiplayer and free-play games, which is typically achieved through the purchase of items or skins. One notable example of this is the collaborations that Fortnite has engaged in over the years, such as with Air Jordan, Marshmello, Marvel Entertainment, and the NBA. Similarly, the luxury brand Louis Vuitton has partnered with 'League of Legends,' a multiplayer online battle game developed by Riot Games, to create exclusive character skins featuring branded accessories like earrings and handbags. Lastly, interstitial advertising refers to advertisements displayed between gaming sessions. While there may be benefits to IGA, it is important to be aware of the barriers and concerns surrounding the efficient placement of branded elements in video games while avoiding reactance.

Effectively implementing this strategy necessitates a thorough assessment of not only the attributes of the players and the gaming environment but also of the advertising characteristics (Dardis et al., 2018; Ghosh et al., 2022). From this perspective, the influence of elements such as congruence and intrusiveness on attitudes towards IGA is crucial. Advertisements that align with the game environment are perceived as less intrusive and are more likely to be effective in influencing consumer purchase behavior, as observed in studies (Verbeckmoes et al., 2016; Hussain et al., 2022). Considering that video games can be set in either fanciful or lifelike contexts with widely varying themes, the concept of congruence may become increasingly blurred.

In the context of IGA and its potential impact on consumer behavior, a comprehensive understanding of consumer gaming engagement becomes pivotal.

Understanding consumer gaming engagement

Consumer engagement is defined as "*a consumer's positively valenced brand-related cognitive, emotional and behavioral activity during or related to focal consumer/brand interactions"* (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 154). This encapsulates the psychological state in which consumers express their interactions with a company (Brodie et al., 2011). Consumer engagement embodies the favorable mental and emotional involvement, along with observable actions, that individuals undertake in the course of, or in connection with, their interactions with a particular brand or company. Specifically, the three pillars of consumer engagement break down as follows: cognitive engagement materializes when an individual becomes profoundly absorbed and focused on a gamified element (Suh et al., 2018). Emotional engagement, on the other hand, is characterized by the experience of positive emotions and pleasure during interactions with a gamified object (Berger et al., 2018; Harwood & Garry, 2015). As for behavioral engagement, it manifests when a person invests substantial effort, energy, and time into an activity, particularly within the context of a gamified object (Hollebeek et al., 2014).

The consumer engagement concept has emerged as a key business performance metric (Hollebeek et al., 2019). Specifically, within the gaming context, Rutz et al. (2019) indicate that consumer engagement plays a crucial role in increasing several key areas, including monetization, customer loyalty, marketing opportunities, and product development. Along the same lines Abbasi et al. (2021) show that consumers' affective and behavioral gaming engagement positively affects their consumption behavior, including heightened community engagement, purchase intent, coproduction, word-of-mouth and new player recruitment. Following the business benefits consumer engagement affords, unsurprisingly, many firms have sought to foster customers' engagement with their products or brands, including through online (e.g., social media) and offline platforms (e.g., retail stores) (De Vries and Carlson, 2014; Tseng et al., 2022). In accordance with Agnihotri (2020), this study posits that game producers and brands can seize the opportunity to engage customers in an innovative manner, transcending conventional physical channels. It suggests redefining gaming as a unique physical channel, diverging from its conventional role as a common research context.

Our primary focus is on the emotional dimension of engagement, acknowledging that emotions form the essence of gaming experiences; online games, as inherently experiential products, excel in evoking feelings of excitement, fun, and enjoyment (Albatati et al., 2023). These emotions encompass

a wide range of states, including joy, love, fear, and anger, and are essential for generating enjoyment and engagement during gameplay (Holbrook et al., 1984). Previous research has shown that positive emotions play a critical role in influencing immersive, social, and flow experiences, which in turn influence game satisfaction and retention intentions (Albatati et al., 2023). Moreover, these positive emotions, such as enthusiasm and amusement, enhance users' gaming performance by increasing playfulness (Behnke et al., 2022).
In comprehending the dynamics of emotional engagement in response to IGA two prominent theories, the state of flow and psychological reactance, converge to form a comprehensive framework.

Synergizing the concepts of Flow and Psychological Reactance
The integration of these concepts enables a nuanced exploration of what gamers undergo and how they respond to IGA interruptions. The state of flow sets the stage for optimal engagement, emphasizing the positive connection between gamers and the gaming environment. However, when psychological reactance comes into play, triggered by disruptive elements like IGA, it introduces a counterforce that challenges the seamless flow, prompting defensive reactions.
By conceptualizing video games as digitally immersive experiences, Welden et al. (2022) leverage the concept of flow as theorized by Csikszentmihalyi (1990), proposing that flow states are critical in connecting consumers' video game experiences to the cognitive and affective responses of interest to marketers. Flow is defined as the holistic sensation that people feel when they engage with an activity with total involvement (Csikszentimihaly 1977), and represents an optimal state achieved when an individual's skills align with the challenges presented, influencing therefore gaming experiences. Gamers' perception of their performance during gameplay influences the likelihood of experiencing flow (Steffen et al., 2013), impacting attitudes towards the game and advertised brands (Malhotra et al., 2021). This balance is crucial to the video game ecosystem because consumers are more likely to disengage from an experience in the absence of flow (Welden et al., 2022). Flow is tied to usability and user experience, creating immersion as players balance their skills with game challenges (Cowley et al., 2019). Flow is intricately linked to emotional states in gaming, with self-fulfillment, excitement, and happiness influencing attitudes (Hsiao & Chen, 2016; Nakamura, 2019; Schänzel et al., 2022; Shiau & Huang, 2022). These emotional values contribute significantly to shaping attitudes and drive players to seek self-fulfillment, excitement, and satisfaction in their gaming experiences (Schänzel et al., 2022).
Psychological Reactance, a pivotal concept in understanding consumer responses to advertising, denotes the adverse reactions individuals display when sensing a restriction on their freedom of choice. Extensively studied by Brehm and Brehm (1981) and Tran and Strutton (2013), this phenomenon gains significance in advertising, where brands perceived as overly controlling may elicit negative consumer attitudes.
Applying the concept of psychological reactance to IGA sheds light on the impact of ad invasiveness (Brehm and Brehm, 1981; Youn and Kim, 2019). IGA, as an additional element in gaming, can enhance or harm the player's experience.
In exploring the psychological reactance and engagement dynamics of IGA, the rebel paradox provides a theoretical lens to understand gamers' complex behaviors and how consumers respond to non-traditional advertising formats (Ghosh, 2016; Ghosh et al., 2022). This paradox is a multifaceted concept characterized by a series of contradictions and dualities in consumer behavior and marketing strategies. To apply this dichotomy with in-game advertising means that consumers may simultaneously appreciate the realism added by well-integrated ads, yet rebel against overtly commercial or disruptive advertising elements (Riedel et al., 2024).

Becker et al. (2023) highlight that intrusive IGA often leads to behaviors like ad skipping. However, when IGA aligns with the game's environment or benefits player performance, it can capture attention and evoke positive responses (Vashisht and Chauhan, 2017; De Pelsmacker et al., 2019). Conversely,

disruptive IGA can trigger Psychological Reactance, resulting in negative attitudes towards both the game and the advertised brand (Cho and Chen, 2004; Malhotra et al., 2021).
Understanding the intricate balance between achieving a state of flow and mitigate psychological reactance becomes imperative in comprehending consumer responses to IGA. In doing so, the rebel paradox allows to understand both the overt reactions of gamers to IGA, and the underlying attitudes that drive these behaviors.
This integrated conceptual framework not only provides a holistic view of gaming engagement but also informs strategies for enhancing the gaming experience by navigating the delicate equilibrium between immersive gameplay and external disruptions. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate the conditions that reduce the likelihood of psychological reactance, and therefore negative engagement. Following the conceptual development of this study, are research questions can be explicit as follows:

RQ.1: *How does IGA influence the emotional dimension of consumer engagement within gaming environments?*
Zooming in the unique features of IGA and their impact on the gaming experience, this study addresses our second research question:
RQ2.: *What kind of distinctive characteristics of In-Game Advertising (IGA) increase players' flow states, psychological reactance, and engagement within the game?*

Research context and method
The research adopts an interpretive phenomenological approach, emphasizing the lived experience of individuals and revealing their reflexive, subjective accounts (van Manen, 1990). The focus is on understanding the role IGA has on gamers' engagement. In alignment with this focus, we employ a netnographic approach, offering a unique perspective into individuals' experiences enabling the exploration of the diverse perspectives and narratives gamers share online in regard to being exposed to IGA. A cultural understanding has allowed not only recounting what was observed, experienced, or posted in the digital context, but explaining why it came to be—unpacking the forces behind the manifestation of positive vs negative engagement in gaming. Netnography promotes a holistic approach to research methods that emphasizes naturalistic observation, captures unfiltered user interactions, and provides rich contextual data (Kozinets et al., 2014). Considering the nature of the technoculture under study, characterized by an intensive use of digital platforms, netnography provides a powerful research method for a profound comprehension of the engagement dynamics under study. In addition, netnography exceeds the use of questionnaires by achieving a more naturalistic approach to data collection (Wang et al., 2017).
The study rigorously followed Netnography's stages (Kozinets and Gretzel 2023); *initiation* has been enacted through close interactions with different stakeholders, such as game publishers and developers, and also brands that invest in IGA.
For netnographic research purposes, social media has been broadly defined to: "*encompass sites, applications, and tools that permit users, even those who lack technical expertise, to connect with other users, create content, and circulate it*" (Kozinets, 2020a, 4). Platforms such as Reddit allow internet users not only to express themselves but also to read negative feedback from other consumers and this may affect their opinion about products and services they may be considering (de Campos Ribeiro et al., 2018). At the heart of netnography lies immersion in data sites. *Immersion* is a fundamental principle of the ethnographic spirit and distinguishes netnography from other forms of online research as well. The research objective required deep and intensive immersion, a process of experiencing, scouting, observing, reflecting, recording, and reflecting on data from various social media platforms and websites (Xie-Carson et al., 2023) and turning back to literature. To conduct netnographic data collection, authors joined five online gaming communities on Reddit. The immersion began at the beginning of 2023 and is still ongoing. Out of five online communities, we shortlisted two communities per shortlisting criteria (Kozinets, 2002), such as high posting traffic and relevant discussion about IGA. The study explored two Reddit communities: r/Gaming;

r/AssholeDesign, within which conversations around advertisements in video games were investigated. The former community, established in 2007 and comprising 39mln of gamers, is devoted solely to gaming. All content, including images and memes, is centered around the world of gaming. The latter community, formed in 2014 and including 3 million users, shares content perceived to be specifically engineered to exploit users for profit.
To preserve the authenticity of the study, the authors approached communities by adopting a shadowing technique to observe interactions. This allowed us to capture unaltered expressions and behaviors (Kozinets, 2019b).

Data investigation and interpretation
The study entered the investigation phase, which involves the search for, engagement with, and collection of a limited number of informative and revealing digital traces, events, and opportunities to experience. The research-as-instrument invokes the process of discovery, and the core action in this movement is *choosing* (Kozinets and Gretzel 2023). We used ParseHub as a data scraping tool to collect Reddit posts from these communities, allowing us to gather a large amount of relevant data and then choose to analyze a smaller subset in detail. From a pool of 3000 extracts collected using the data scraping tool (Reid & Duffy, 2018), we have identified a subset of 141 posts containing the most pertinent comments. During the netnographic study, we extracted both textual and graphic data from the selected Reddit posts and interactions. Given the nature of data interaction, we analyzed texts, images, captions, and memes as a *conversation,* adopting an interpretive stance that is simultaneously open, reflexive, skeptical, and pragmatic. Comments that were not in English, missing text, nonsensical, or irrelevant to source or content factors were excluded from further analysis during the first round of thematic coding. During the second round of thematic coding, we analyzed extracted data using an Excel spreadsheet, generating, evaluating, and grouping codes into common categories through an interactive coding and retrieval process (Xie-Carson et al., 2023). To provide a comprehensive analysis, the authors adopted open coding techniques during data processing. This involves an unbiased examination of the collected data, in which concepts, themes, and patterns have been identified and categorized without predetermined categories (Kozinets et al., 2014). This allowed us to identify the specific emotions elicited by IGA. By taking this rigorous approach, we were able to understand the emotional responses that players experienced when faced with these types of advertisements.

Findings
Consumer engagement is construed as the depth and quality of the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral connections among gamers, the gaming product, and IGA. It entails emotional investment, cognitive focus, and sustained interest and can be evidenced through various behaviors such as extended gameplay, social interactions within gaming communities, and a readiness to invest time and resources in the gaming experience.
To understand the role of the emotional dimension of engagement as a response to IGA we have analyzed the relation between the emotional response and its influence on the gaming experience. Figure 1 illustrates the coding system we followed, providing a description of the process. In the first stage of the analysis two researchers independently read and manually coded the online comments into a set of 1st-order emotion concepts We initially had separated categories for irritation, discontentment, and annoyance. After a discussion among the researcher group, we decided that irritation could include discontentment and annoyance. The same occurred to the emotional category of harassment, and to positive ones of contentment and enthusiasm. The second stage involved a 2nd-order analysis whereby the researchers sought to understand links between the emotional dimension of engagement and the influence it has on the gaming experience.
Figure 1 - Data coding exemplification of negative emotions

Illustrative quotes	**Emotion** First order coding	**Gaming Experience** Second order coding
Wait, what? Is that a thing now??? Unless its an app, ads in a video game should be illegal! *(opiatesandsuberbs, r/assholedesign)* *Its funny because I would be ok if that flashed a fake ad for a fake whatever like GTA. Its just so insulting when its clearly an actual ad (su5, r/assholedesign)* *The future is NOW. We're literally paying people to advertise to us. Don't support this shit or it's just going to get worse (rabidbasher, r/assholedesign)*	**<u>Irritation</u>** **Discontentment** **Annoyance**	**Interruption** IGA is perceived as a distracting noise
"We pay money to play video games and escape from the daily bullshit. This is a bridge too far. 2K has crossed the line by adding ads into our sacred place" (KilltheK, r/assholedesign) *Stop buying games from this fucking shitstorm of a company! Stop supporting them, stop looking at their playthroughs online, stop buy any of their products. Let them fade into nothing and be forgotten. (ChippedFace, r/assholedesign)* *Unfortunately, bad practices like this wont stop untill people start boycotting their games. It is absolutly damaging to gaming industry if crap like this becomes common place. Makes me more thankful for developers who still turn out top quality games without this kind of shit* *(The_Hangry_Dad, r/assholedesign)* *This is the future, either boycott or get used to it. People buy the games and complain instead of not giving them money. As long as the profits are up they have no reason to stop. (DressPrevious2233, r/assholedesign)* *Ads? No these are fucking COMMERCIALS. They've finally gone the last mile and are adding commercials to games. Any developer/publisher that pulls this shit does not get my money. If I have to watch fucking commercials, I am not going to pay for that privilege. Cable companies pull this shit and is the main reason I dropped TV service on my cable years ago. This*	**<u>Harassment</u>** **Frustration** **Hate** **Anger**	**Disruption** IGA is perceived as an invasion

doubling dipping shit can go fuck off. (skunkMonkey, r/assholedesign) *Every single person who bought this game needs to return it! This needs to be nipped in the butt right now. This is a test case for other games. If we don't fight it here now, it will end up in other games. We will need to pay more for games soon however instead. (timmy12688, r/assholedesign)*		

Negative emotions

In the gaming industry, it is common to create free-to-play video games where advertising serves as a primary revenue stream. Consequently, when ads are incorporated into a product that was initially purchased, it often elicits negative reactions from consumers. However, the intensity of the emotions expressed by gamers varies. The research identifies two primary categories of negative emotions, ranging from a milder sentiment of *irritation* to an intense emotion of *harassment*.

Regarding the first milder level of negative emotion, namely *irritation*, our research indicates that IGA is perceived as an injustice that manifests, however, merely as a disturbance, akin to a "noise" diverting attention from the gaming experience. Members express widespread dissatisfaction with being subjected to advertisements in a game that are not seamlessly integrated but do not disrupt the gameplay experience as a diminishing factor in overall value: *"If you stop the game, or put it in ridiculous places is when it becomes a problem, then it becomes an ad on game instead of an in game ad"* (Botinha93, r/gaming). This form of irritation is also associated with a feeling of helplessness, given gamers perceive to have little control over this aspect. As illustrated in the following excerpt, discontentment and annoyance are also rooted in the belief that IGA may backfire on the brand being promoted within the game: "*Personally, I wouldn't want to advertise this way if I were a company such as Adidas. It doesn't take a genius to know that people won't like having ads in their $60 game, and having your brand associated with those ads is probably just giving them the reverse of the desired effect"* (megjake, r/assholedesign).

The findings indicate that gamers express irritation toward IGA, perceiving it as a *distracting noise* during play. However, it is noteworthy that this annoyance is not substantial enough to significantly disrupt the overall gaming experience. The behavioral consequence of disapproval is mainly to complain (i.e. e-wom) about the issue within the community.

Advancing to the second more intense negative emotions, our research suggests that IGA has the capacity to induce feelings of *harassment* among gamers. This heightened frustration is defined by a sense of betrayal and the perception of being deceived by the presence of IGA, especially when they are paying to be exposed to additional advertising as expressed by rabidbasher in r/assholedesign *"The future is NOW. We're literally paying people to advertise to us"*. The onset of these emotions disrupts the gaming experience, adversely impacting gamer's state of flow, performance and overall game experience, as the following quote describes: *that small ad damages the game experience* (ComeRosconesDeLaVega, r/assholedesing). This breaking point is reached as players express anger toward game providers as stated by (killtheK, r/assholedesign):"*The ads shouldn't be there. We get bombarded on the regular by ads in our everyday life. We pay money to play video games and escape from the daily bullshit. This is a bridge too far. 2K has crossed the line by adding ads into our sacred place. Not worthy of outrage? I think we should be MORE outraged. They don't even have the excuse of saying "this is how we keep it free". It's not free. That's the point. We pay money and still get harassed. They are trying to have their cake and eat it too. If we don't stand against this, it will be the new norm"*. Along the same lines, the following extract represents the belief of being exploited by paying twice, both from the game itself and from the IGA: "*If a game I bought WITH MONEY had ads like this, I would be fucking livid. This is fucking ridiculous"* (Bowsrnight, r/assholedesign). Likewise, gamers perceive a sense of invasion as they feel hunted within the sacred world into which

they entered mainly for escapism. Harassment includes a perception that these strategies are beyond the control of individuals. Along these lines, members express a sense of disconnection between players and producers, complaining that producers don't seem to have clear in mind the motivation that is behind the game, as: "*They seem to have forgotten why we play"* (Lou_Mannati, r/assholedesign), and the expectations gamers have of not being merely spectators of a virtually reproduced show, but to be the protagonist of the game itself, as exemplified by SustyRhackleford (r/assholedesign): "*They have more than enough brand exposure opportunities that don't directly feel like an actual cut to commercial. It's like they forgot your supposed to feel like a coach and the players instead of the guy on his couch".*

As a result, consumers are harassed and frustrated by this approach. The strategy is defined as a "*complete scam*", leading to calls to action, such as boycotting "*boycott the studio*", and also towards the brand advertised: "*Unfortunately bad practices like this won't stop until people start boycotting their games. It is absolutely damaging the gaming industry if crap like this becomes commonplace"* (The_Hangry_Dad, r/assholedesign), *"It tells me what products to not buy, very usefull"* (LadyAlekto, r/gaming). Furthermore, internal conflicts within the community arise as a result of neglecting to address IGA, as illustrated by the preceding and subsequent quotes. Community members protest not only against the game producers but also against fellow members perceived to foster harmful and unethical practices that impact the gaming experience. "*For people who buy any EA game from now until the end of time: When will you learn? Stop buying their shit. Let them dissolve and the talent go to other companies who won't put profits over everything.*" (Aarondhp24, r/assholedesign).

Positive emotions

Conversely, the findings show that IGA also elicits consumers to experience mild and intense positive emotions as well which are characterized by *contentment* and enthusiasm (Laros and Steenkamp, 2005). It is noteworthy that these positive emotions are often less intense than their negative counterparts. Furthermore, in the digital conversation we analyzed, positive comments frequently come with disclaimers such as "*unpopular opinion*," "*I'm sorry,*" or "*I'm probably in the minority.*" This suggests a prevailing trend where the majority of consumers tend to lean towards negative emotional reactions.

The findings highlight two overarching categories of positive emotions that contribute to increased engagement, as displayed in figure 2.

Figure 2 - Data coding exemplification of positive emotions

Illustrative quotes	**Positive Emotions** First order coding	**Gaming Experience** Second order coding
The only tastefully done ads are the board ads in NHL that update and are relevant. Just like in the stadium. (A_Genious, r/assholedesign) *I actually think it's kinda cool. Like sure it's a bit scummy but it makes it look more like a real sports event* *(Insertnamehere—, r/assholedesign)*	**Contentment** **Tolerance** **Appreciation**	**Enhancement** IGA is perceived as a compromise that generates value.

"I think its fine because that is how they present ads during the fights. It is not a crazy intrusive thing." (Im_a_lizard, r/assholedesign)		
"So the real ads in the real life based game also flesh out the game then. It's literally like the actual ufc experience." *popped up yet on me* *"I kind of like it for the realism aspect. I mean, same type of animation you see in between rounds watching an actual fight card. WOW. Would maybe be annoying if it happened in career mode but without the real cars, games like Forza and Gran Turismo wouldn't feel as authentic. I don't feel like I'm playing a Ferrari advert when I'm driving one in Forza even though it is at its core, blatant product placement. I do feel like I'm seeing a bad Monster Energy ad whenever Sam drinks a can of radioactive sludge"* *(A_Sweatband, r/gaming)*	**<u>Enthusiasm</u>** **Optimism** **Joy**	**Immersion** IGA is perceived as a realism booster Belief that IGA improves the game experience by stimulating immersion

The initial category is defined by a sense of *contentment*, signifying a positive and rational acceptance of IGA. This suggests that gamers recognize the advantages associated with incorporating these advertisements, as they contribute to funding game development and help maintain stable retail prices over time. The sentiment is exemplified by the following experience: "*Unpopular opinion: This game is really good and it takes a lot of money to come keep up with the times and without loot boxes and ads, the game wouldn't be as good as it is. I've been playing 2k since the first one dropped almost 20 years ago and it is constantly evolving and it takes a giant team to accomplish what they have accomplished*" (ajwest153, r/assholedesign). Gamers recognize the trade-off and view IGA as a necessary compromise, as expressed by one player: *"If it supports developers and doesn't break the games (having you stop playing to watch ads or something stupid like that), I'm perfectly fine with that... Although I'd (obviously) prefer if they made the products fit in the games time setting, for example to advertise coca cola in a cyberpunk game, make it a cyberpunk soda etc!"* (Mr_Nilsson-85, r/gaming). Similarly, if an in-game advertisement is placed in a way that does not interfere with the game and is consistent with the graphical style of the game, it can generate player acceptance *"Doritos and Mountain Dew are both in COD Cold War. They implement it pretty well too. It' just sort of laying around in places where it would naturally and they use the packaging from the 80s."* (KingOfRisky, r/gaming). As demonstrated by the precedent experience, a portion of the community does not appear to undergo psychological reactance as long as the state of flow within the gaming experience remains unaffected.

A secondary level of positive emotions emerges, marked by *enthusiasm* for IGA. This enthusiasm is evident when advertisements are seamlessly integrated into the storyline or setting. In such instances, players are more inclined to engage with these ads organically, considering them an integral part of the overall gaming experience.

Mainly, a reason for positive feedback from customers is the feeling of complete immersion: "*I like it, makes the game more immersive as though I'm watching a real UFC match that has ads during some fights. Tempted to buy the game now*" (cawkmonglingwitch, r/assholedesign). In this perspective, advertisements are a crucial aspect of the sporting event. Thus, the embedment of IGA that accurately imitates the actual event leads to maintain immersion and makes consumers enthusiastic about experiencing such a high level of realism: "*I'm sorry but I love it. It's presented*

exactly like in the UFC" "*The ads are there to help maintain a feeling of immersion. When's the last time you watched a basketball game and didn't see commercials? Now the NBA games are more lifelike than ever before*", (Retro_Edge, r/assholedesign). Consequently, the inclusion of these advertisements is needed for heightened level of immersion, as expressed by A_Sweatband (r/gaming) perspective: "*Likewise, without the real cars, games like Forza and Gran Turismo wouldn't feel as authentic. I don't feel like I'm playing a Ferrari advert when I'm driving one in Forza even though it is at its core, blatant product placement*".

In conclusion, positive emotions, although more limited and less intense in comparison to negative ones, signal that IGA in a paid game can enhance a sense of immersion. This heightened immersion allows consumers to have a more realistic game experience. Additionally, positive emotions may arise when consumers recognize the added value provided by the game, with a stable price maintained over the years, thereby influencing their purchasing preferences. This perspective offers an alternative viewpoint to those expressing dissatisfaction with the inclusion of IGA in a paid game.

In-game attributes that trigger emotions leading to positive vs negative engagement

In this section, we delve into the specific aspects of IGA that lead to feelings of irritation and harassment among players when implementation lacks careful consideration. Through open coding, we categorized our findings into the following key areas: content, format and style, as well as frequency and length. We followed the same coding procedure described in the previous section in regard to emotion. Figure 3 illustrates the coding system we followed, providing a few exemplifications that support the description of the process. *Content* explains what elements should be included in the game environment, while *Format and Style* describes how these elements should be integrated into the game. Furthermore, *Frequency and Length* determines when advertising should be strategically displayed to optimize player engagement and maintain the game experience. This breakdown allows us to dissect and analyze the various factors contributing to negative player experiences in relation to IGA.

Content

The impact of IGA on consumer engagement is significant, as evidenced by the contrasting responses to different ways in which product placement is integrated into video games. advertising can lead to negative engagement, as demonstrated by the negative reactions to the placement of Monster Energy Drink in Death Stranding games. Consumers were frustrated and felt a disconnect from the post-apocalyptic setting due to the jarring presence of a modern product: "*Honestly the monster product placement in death stranding totally wrecked immersion for me. It was a jarring hit back to reality and most unwelcome*" (czechhoneybee, r/gaming). The dissonance in this case arises from the lack of alignment between the advertising content and the game's narrative and thematic elements: "*Like in Battlefield 2142 when they wanted to implement in-game billboards with real world ads. So you battle against an enemy titan in the year 2142 and then see an ad for the new Honda in 2006"* (lord_dude, r/gaming). The blatant juxtaposition of a familiar brand in an unfamiliar world disrupts the player's sense of disbelief and elicits a negative emotional response. Such placements totally wreck the immersion, underscoring the importance of thematic consistency in advertising content.

Conversely, IGA can enhance engagement and immersion when it harmonizes with the game's environment and storyline. For instance, a player stated about the detailed encounters and interactive advertisements within bars and restaurants in a game. These in-game advertisements offered a variety of whiskeys and foods with descriptive narratives that were congruent with the game's setting and enriched the player experience "*I remember playing Yakuza 3, I think, where you can go in a bar or restaurant and try every different type of whiskey or food that they have. Each one had a description attached. I loved those details and it made me feel so much more immersed*" (violet_hunter339, r/gaming). Integrating advertising content into a game can enhance the game's realism and deepen the player's connection to it. The positive reception of these details suggests that when advertising

content is seamlessly and coherently integrated into the narrative of the game, it can contribute positively to the gaming experience. Instead, when the IGA content strides with the game scenario, it is perceived negatively, as is not seen as lifelike "*If I'm playing a game in a city and their are ads on billboards I don't care, or like Pepsi in the fridge, stuff like that. Yet, if I turn on the Witcher and see someone ask for a Budweiser then we got a problem*" (Ticeben2, r/gaming).
In conclusion, the impact of IGA on player engagement depends on the alignment of the content with the game's environment and narrative context. Incongruent and intrusive advertisements can disrupt immersion and provoke negative engagement. On the other hand, congruent and well-integrated content can enhance the realism of the game world, fostering greater player immersion and engagement.

Format and style
The format and style of IGA include visual properties and how ads are integrated within the game environment, such as through billboards or product placement. Moreover, it also includes where ads are positioned. These characteristics are critical in either fostering engagement or causing negative engagement among consumers. As for the advertisement's content, the plausibility concept is also applied to the format and style. This includes realistic advertising integration in cityscapes or period-accurate product placement.
For instance, within games set in Earth-like environments, players expect to see the integration of elements that are common in real life, such as billboards and real products (eg. cars) "*If we're talking about a game that's nominally realistic and set on Earth then things like billboards, car logos/ badges, and liveried vending machines are fine because I expect to see those in real life*", "*If a billboard in game is like a billboard in real life (or what the devs believe it would be on the game setting) it is actually positive, that billboard would be there anyway, the product placement just means a bigger budget*" (zenith_industries, r/gaming).
In addition, since visual features also influence the gaming experience, the presence of an alignment with the period in which the game is contextualized enhances its engagement and immersion, as in the case discussed by KingOfRisky (r/gaming) "*Doritos and Mountain Dew are both in COD Cold War. They implement it pretty well too. It' just sort of laying around in places where it would naturally and they use the packaging from the 80s*". Thus, players find the IGA integration natural and unobtrusive because it does not disrupt the game's narrative.
On the other hand, IGA with visual characteristics or positioning that disrupts gameplay or is perceived as out of context can lead to negative engagement. In case of blatant advertising in which the product placement is too obvious or becomes the main part of the game, as edave22 (r/gaming) expressed: "*If it's a bottle on a table, fine. If you have a whole event centered around cup noodles like FFXV had then no thanks"*, a negative reaction can be provoked, as well as a character excessively promote a product: "*If they suddenly start going on about the "clean fresh taste" or "new and improved flavour" though, I'm uninstalling that game*" (zenith_industries, r/gaming). Similarly, IGA placed in critical areas of the game, can be a distraction element interrupting the gameplay experience as stated by Botinha93, (r/gaming): "*If you stop the game, or put it in ridiculous places is when it becomes a problem, then it becomes an ad on game instead of an in game ad*", and SuperSulf (r/assholedesign) "*They could've kept the ads on the ring's floor, as that doesn't bother me at all. The sweeping ads to start and end the replay is too much, and the little pop up above the score/timer is bullshit. I'm a game designer and that little ad draws the eye there during active gameplay, which is a terrible idea from a design perspective, unless your goal was to get people to look there (since it's an ad)*".
In summary, ads that are congruent with the game context and narrative will enhance engagement by increasing realism, while intrusive or contextually irrelevant advertising can be disruptive to the gameplay and lead to negative engagement. The aim is to find a balance in which the advertised content is naturally integrated and contributes to the game experience.

Frequency and length

Another issue in determining a consumers' level of engagement with a game depends on how frequently advertisements appear and for how long.

Negative engagement can occur when advertisements are too frequent or too long and interrupt the gameplay experience. As a result, players express frustration when ads are at the core, as stated by Dalmahr (r/gaming) "*If the ad is essential game play, I hate it*" or unavoidable to play, as phantomphang (r/gaming) said "*as long as its done well, im happy with it, id rather see a can of monster in my futuristic game over a thirty second unskippable ad THAT DOESNT PAUSE YOUR TIMING BASED GAME*", make the experience more commercial than entertaining.

Furthermore, having game logics that force the player to have forced interaction with a product too frequently can foster a breaking of immersion and generate negative engagement, as Holy5 (r/gaming) referred to the high consumption of an energy drink within the game "*I was mainly annoyed at how many he needs to chug to get the full benefits. Like that's an unhealthy amount of sugar and caffeine bro*". Similarly, the repeated appearance of a product placement that is not completely aligned with the narrative of the game may reduce the sense of realism and break the immersion, as expressed byakravets84 (r/gaming): "*YES! Those fucking Metro books and posters in every fucking corner in the Metro game series severely break the immersion for me*".

However, the impact of these IGA characteristics can be subordinate to the context of the game. As previously discussed, when advertising has content and meaning that fit with the game narrative, engagement is enhanced as an increased sense of realism is perceived by players. In some genres, such as racing games or sports games, it is not only acceptable but expected to include real brands, which can enhance the gaming experience while preserving authenticity, as pointed out by A_Sweatband (r/gaming) "*...without the real cars, games like Forza and Gran Turismo wouldn't feel as authentic. I don't feel like I'm playing a Ferrari advert when I'm driving one in Forza even though it is at its core, blatant product placement*".

In conclusion, while frequent IGA does not necessarily disengage players, it is important that they are managed in a way that is contextually relevant within the game. In the following figure (Figure 3) we provide illustrative examples of how the digital extracts have been coded in regard to IGA attributes and negative engagement during the data analysis process.

IGA attributes and negative engagement

Figure 3 - Data coding exemplification of IGA leading to negative engagement

Illustrative quotes	**First order coding: IGA attributes**	**Second order coding** **IGA categories**
That's what bothered me about the Death Stranding Monster cans. I'm having a hard time, I'm in this otherworldly place that has Monster Energy drinks. If this were a game about extreme sports I'd almost expect an energy drink ad. (goatanuss, r/gaming) *Personally it annoys me to the point of not wanting to play the game anymore sometimes. The fact that the health potions in death stranding is a f-ing monster ad threw me off completely and should NOT be in a full price $60 game.If it's in a free game, fair game. Otherwise GTFO or gimme my money back since I'm already providing ad revenue (mrAl_x, r/gaming)*	Out of place, out of context; Irrelevant and meaningless; Content that goes against the values of the community	**Content**

Honestly the monster product placement in death stranding totally wrecked immersion for me. It was a jarring hit back to reality and most unwelcome. (czechhoneybee, r/gaming) *Its frustrating if it doesn't fit the theme, as it just takes you out of the immersion of the game. I actually avoided death stranding for years because of the product placement. It makes no sense and is literally in your face. There's even modern day real life TV show advertising when the protagonist uses the bathroom. (RpTheHotrod, r/gaming)*		
"They could've kept the ads on the ring's floor, as that doesn't bother me at all. The sweeping ads to start and end the replay is too much, and the little pop up above the score/timer is bullshit. I'm a game designer and that little ad draws the eye there during active gameplay, which is a terrible idea from a design perspective, unless your goal was to get people to look there (since it's an ad). I hate it, but I'm also not part of the target demographic." (SupersSulf, r/assholedesign) *If it's a bottle on a table, fine. If you have a whole event centered around cup noodles like FFXV had then no thanks. (edave22, r/gaming)* *"If you stop the game, or put it in ridiculous places is when it becomes a problem, then it becomes an ad on game instead of an in game ad" (Botinha93, r/gaming)*	Fullscreen overlays; Clumsy implementations; Poor design that does not fit with game; Overall poor visual aesthetics Poorly executed ad campaigns	**Format and Style**
I was mainly annoyed at how many he needs to chug to get the full benefits. Like that's an unhealthy amount of sugar and caffeine bro. (Holy5, r/gaming) *yeah that's the thing, if i constantly get the same ads watching youtube and they're unskippable, i will associate your product with hatred and avoid it like the plague (erwillsun, r/gaming)* *as long as its done well, im happy with it, id rather see a can of monster in my futuristic game over a thirty second unskipable ad THAT DOESNT PAUSE YOUR TIMING BASED GAME (phantomphang, r/gaming)*	Bombarding gamers; Lack of opting out options; Excessively long; Seeing the same ads repeatedly	**Frequency and length**

In the following figure (Figure 4) we provide illustrative examples of how the digital extracts have been coded in regard to IGA attributes and Engagement during the data analysis process.

IGA attributes and positive engagement

Figure 4 - Data coding exemplification of IGA leading to engagement

Illustrative quotes	**First order coding IGA attributes**	**Second order coding IGA**
I remember playing Yakuza 3 I think, where you can go in a bar or restaurant and try every different type of whiskey or food that they have. Each one had a description attached. I loved those details and it made me feel so much more immersed. (violet_hunter339, r/gaming)	Well-placed, in context Relevant content that aligns with the values of the community	**Content**
I liked the Billboard ads in Mercenaries 2, where an optional objective was to blow them upI think they only became ads if you were connected online, similar to Burnout Paradise, otherwise they were generic VZ Military billboards (deltahalo241, r/gaming) *If I'm playing a game in a city and their are ads on billboards I don't care, or like Pepsi in the fridge, stuff like that. Yet, if I turn on the Witcher and see someone ask for a Budweiser then we got a problem. (Ticeben2, r/gaming)* *If a billboard in game is like a billboard in real life (or what the devs believe it would be on the game setting) it is actually positive, that billboard would be there anyway, the product placement just means a bigger budget (Botinha93, r/gaming)*	Minimal or non-intrusive backgrounds Subtle implementations, well-integrated design with the game, high-quality overall visual aesthetics	**Format and style**
I like them as long as they are just as coincidental as the aquafina in my hand right now and not a breakaway sponsor segment. It adds a layer of believability and realism, and without greed could theoretically replace some methods of monetization. (___Paladin___, r/gaming) *I doubt I would play Forza Motorsport if they DIDN'T have real cars (oweakshitp, r/gaming)* *As long as the game is enjoyable and entertaining i really don't care. (Eraboes, r/gaming)*	Moderate interaction with gamers, offering opt-out options Various advertisements Does not affect game experience, enhances performance and immersion	**Frequency and length**

If it supports developers and doesn't break the games (having you stop playing to watch ads or something stupid like that), I'm perfectly fine with that... Although I'd (obviously) prefer if they made the products fit in the games time setting, for example to advertise coca cola in a cyberpunk game, make it a cyberpunk soda etc! (Mr_Nilsson-85, r/gaming)		

General discussion

This paper illustrates how brands can leverage video games as a marketing channel by disentangling the potential value of IGA characteristics over more traditional alternatives. To achieve this, we have adopted a consumer-centric perspective, investigating the relationship between IGA and the construct of consumer engagement, which is believed to dramatically increase business gaming performances by affects several key marketing areas, including monetization, customer loyalty, e-word of mouth, marketing opportunities, and product development (Rutz et al., 2019 and Abbasi et al., 2021).

As depicted in Figure 5, our study reveals how the characteristics of in-game advertisements (IGA) can elicit both positive and negative emotions, shaping the gaming experience and contributing to either positive or negative engagement. The general discussion will first focus on the characteristics of IGA and subsequently discuss the reactions exhibited by consumers in response to it.

When IGA seamlessly aligns with the context of the game, consumers not only exhibit a more tolerant and understanding posture regarding the benefits of advertising but also experience enhanced immersion in the game. Tolerance and appreciation, or conversely criticism, for integrated advertising come from aligning the content, format and style, as well as frequency and length of ads with the narrative and environment of the game.

Firstly, the content element allows us to explain “what” can be integrated within a video game. IGA content must be carefully selected, as incongruent or inappropriate content can interrupt the player’s immersion and compromise the authenticity of the game environment, such as modern product placement in a fantasy context. Conversely, ads should favor the realism and immersion of the game, blending seamlessly with the narrative.

Equally important are the format and style of the IGA, which explain “how” the advertised content should be integrated. In order to ensure that ads do not appear as alien objects in the game environment, they should be designed and positioned according to the visual and graphic elements of the game. In doing so, IGA can switch from a mere intrusion to an integral element of the game, favoring the player’s engagement as the adaptation of product design in a futuristic environment.

Finally, it is also important to consider “when” IGA has to be displayed. In this perspective, the frequency and length may affect consumer engagement but are subordinate to the previous elements. Frequent or lengthy advertisements can disrupt the gameplay experience, leading to frustration and negative engagement, unless they are necessary to build up the game environment. In this instance, they increase immersion and realism, such as in sports or lifelike games. However, It is crucial to consider the appropriate timing and frequency of displaying advertising content.

In summary, the effectiveness of integrated advertising in video games depends on a delicate balance that respects the game's narrative and environment. The key to maintaining player engagement and acceptance is advertising that enhances the game experience without disrupting the flow. This requires a nuanced approach that ensures that ads contribute positively to the game's universe and overall player experience by considering the content, format, style, and timing of ads.

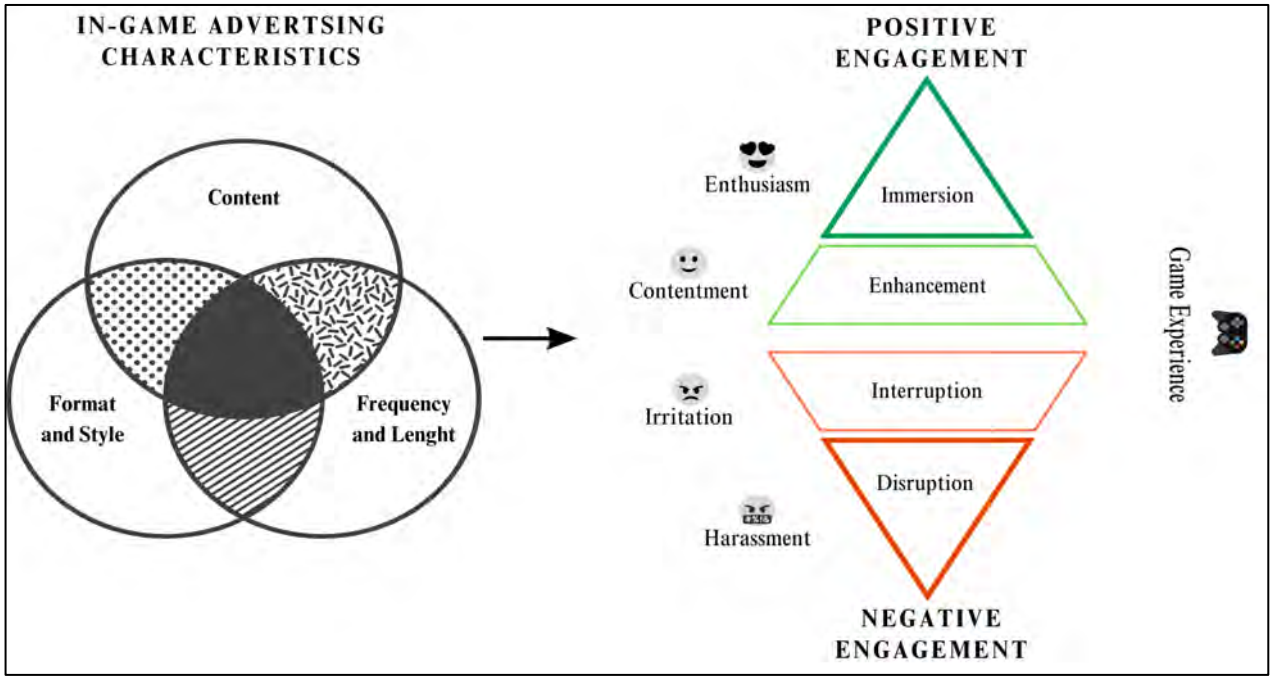
The findings of this study suggest that consumers predominantly express criticism towards the strategies and tactics employed by in-game advertisers for purchased games, which often disrupt the gaming experience and lead to negative engagement. The critique is not directed towards the concept of IGA per se. Negative emotions are identified in two main categories: a milder negative level of

irritation, which includes emotions like discontentment, annoyance, and helplessness; and a more intense negative level associated with **harassment**, including emotions such as hate and frustration. When community members express irritation, we note that the integration of IGA is perceived as an *intrusive interruption* of the gaming experience. This perception arises from the belief that such advertising negatively impacts concentration and immersion, creating a disruption that hinders the overall enjoyment of the game. However, it is noteworthy that this annoyance is not substantial enough to significantly disrupt the overall gaming experience. This milder emotion gives rise to a passive negative engagement, characterized by a desire for a smoother and more immersive gaming environment, free from interrupting distractions. Consequently, individuals adopt more passive behavioral coping strategies such as complaints, which, interestingly, do not appear to influence their decision to leave the community or boycott the brands advertised in IGA.

As we ascend the negative emotional spectrum, we encounter highly intense negative emotions of **harassment**, encompassing feelings of anger and hate. These emotions are rooted in the belief of being cheated and deceived, where IGA is perceived as an *invasion* in a purchased game, not only disrupting the individual gaming experience but also as a violation of the collective sacred space within the techno community itself. IGA is perceived as harmful, as it entraps gamers in an experience they no longer control, eroding the once-enjoyable communal aspect of gaming. As a result, our study extends Van Berlo et al. (2022), uncovering how this disillusionment activates behavioral negative engagement in response to IGA. Active negative engagement encompasses practices that include negative electronic word-of-mouth as well as calls for a boycott of game producers and sponsorship brands. Interestingly, the impact of IGA at this level extends beyond individual feelings of harassment, reaching into the very fabric of the gaming community itself. The sense of belonging to a close-knit, “sacred” community exacerbates the negative emotions, intensifying the anger due to a perceived moral aversion towards the intrusive "invader". This aversion often extends to fellow community members who are seen as complicit in nurturing the IGA ecosystem, casting them as inadvertent "traitors."

Conversely, our study reveals how the characteristics of IGA can elicit positive emotions, positively shaping the gaming experience and fostering engagement. Positive emotions are categorized into two main groups. Firstly, there is a milder level of positive emotions, specifically within the category of **contentment**, which includes emotions like tolerance and acceptance. This category of emotion is grounded in the belief that IGA provides utilitarian benefits to the game, such as improved gaming features or a lower price compared to a version without advertising. This perception leads to considering it as a necessary compromise or trade-off that enhances the overall gaming experience by not disturbing the state of flow for gamers. Secondly, moving further up in the emotional spectrum, our study uncovers how IGA can elicit emotions of enthusiasm that include joy and optimism. This emotional response is grounded in the belief that advertising serves as a potent *enabler* in enhancing the state of immersion in the game. Gamers experience a heightened state of flow, and the added realism provided by IGA contributes to intensified feelings of absorption and connection within the gaming experience. When consumers experience positive emotions, behavioral manifestations include positive word of mouth, increased willingness to make purchases, and extended playtime. As Figure 1 depicts, IGA has, indeed, the potential to be interpreted not only as providing utilitarian benefits to gamers but, importantly, when contextually relevant within the game, it can elevate the immersive gaming experience, leading to higher engagement.

Figure 5: Visual conceptual model of the relationship between IGA and engagement



This study raises theoretical and practical implications for the future of gaming and consumer gaming engagement research.

Theoretical contributions

By addressing our two research questions - firstly, exploring the influence of IGA on the emotional dimension of consumer engagement within gaming environments, and secondly, investigating the distinctive characteristics of IGA that contribute to players' flow states, psychological reactance, and overall engagement within the game - this study makes two original contributions to both the nascent fields of consumer gaming engagement research and the realm of IGA.

First, we contribute to the consumer gaming engagement research (Hollebeek et al., 2019), interpreting emotional reactions to IGA as potent catalysts for both positive and negative engagement in the gaming experience. While most research focuses on cognitive and attitudinal elements, there is rising interest in the impact of emotional experiences in decision-making processes (Han et al., 2010), particularly in the context of new-age marketing technology (Lim et al., 2022). While Rutz et al. (2019) and Abbasi et al. (2021) highlight the positive aspects of consumers' gaming engagement and how it favorably affects several key marketing areas, including monetization, customer loyalty, e-word of mouth, marketing opportunities, and product development, our research our research takes a contrasting perspective. While we recognize that IGA has the potential to induce positive emotions, in terms of contentment and enthusiasm, favoring immersive gaming experiences, and leading to engagement, our study suggests that its impact on negative emotions, particularly irritation and harassment, may be even more pronounced. These negative emotions act as catalysts for negative engagement. Moreover, within the framework of negative engagement, we underscore the substantial and tangible behavioral implications of emotional reactions. This spectrum ranges from expressions of dissatisfaction to more active forms of protest, such as boycotting both the game and the advertised brands within it.

Second, this study broadens the understanding of the concept of psychological reactance applying its principles to the distinctive channel of gaming, where consumer interaction with ads differs significantly from more passive traditional channels such as television, printed media, cinema, streaming platforms, etc. It sheds light on how the active, immersive, and interactive nature of gaming significantly influences the way consumers respond to advertisements, enriching our comprehension

of psychological reactance beyond traditional advertising contexts. Our study shows that IGA is able to disrupt this interactive flow, triggering psychological reactance but, at the same time, it is also able to maintain, and also to restore the state of flow. For this, we provide a needed and nascent classification of the psychological emotional reactions that establishes the presence of a much more intense aversion to advertising than previous accounts offered. In contrast to prior research in traditional contexts, which emphasized how advertising could prompt irritation, avoidance, and intrusiveness (Edwards et al., 2002; Li et al., 2002), our study uncovers a distinctive aspect of IGA. We find that IGA not only induces milder emotions of *irritation* that interrupt the gaming experience but also has the capacity to evoke more extreme emotions, such as feelings of *harassment*, ultimately disrupting the overall gaming experience. While acknowledging that the psychology literature has termed reactance as an equal and opposite reaction to every action, which in this study is IGA, our study suggests a nuanced perspective. Differently from the concept of reactance, IGA can act not only as a trigger for negative reactions but also, on the opposite end of our emotional spectrum, as an enhancer. It can serve to restore, maintain, or even increase the state of flow, acting as an enabler for more immersive gaming experiences. This implies that, despite the aversion, there's a positive aspect to the impact of IGA on the overall gaming experience that can be leveraged by marketing. The term "dual nature" encapsulates the idea that IGA is not a uniformly negative or positive force. Instead, when it is effectively leveraged by advertisers and marketing, it is a potent added value to the gaming experience. The second contribution of the study includes the first and novel theoretical categorizations of the distinct characteristics of IGA that constitute its dual nature, simultaneously evoking extreme aversion and enhancing immersive gaming experiences. This recognition highlights the complexity and multifaceted impact of IGA on gamers. The study identifies specific features or attributes of IGA that set it apart from other forms of advertising. This identification enriches the understanding of the concept of congruity, which plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of IGA (Verbeckmoes et al., 2016; Wang & Chu, 2019; Vashish, 2021; Walden et al., 2022; Hussein et al., 2023). We unpack the features that contribute to the optimization of congruity, which refer to: content, format and style, as well as frequency and length.

In extending previous contributions, we also examined how these features play a crucial role in aligning the advertisement with the overall gaming experience. Moreover, we provided insights about their complex interplay in influencing the balance between advertisement integration and game immersion. In detail, these elements are interdependent and shape the players' experience and engagement within the gaming environment.

In-game content must align with the game theme and narrative to foster an immersive experience and favor the state of flow. However, congruent content alone is not enough, as it needs to be presented in a format and style that is graphically coherent with the gaming environment. This makes the ad feel organic to the game context, rather than being perceived as an extraneous addition that distracts from the gameplay. Furthermore, players must be able to perceive and accept the presence of IGA as logically coherent with the game context. A lack of logical coherence, even if the content is congruent and appropriately presented, can disrupt immersion by interrupting the state of flow. Finally, the advertisement must be carefully calibrated in frequency and duration to avoid disrupting the game experience. Even well-integrated and contextually coherent content may be perceived as intrusive if presented too frequently or for too long. Likewise, advertising frequency and duration may enhance immersion and generate flow if they are balanced with the other features. In sum, when IGA (1) lacks relevance, meaning, or context; (2) clashes with consumers' values, (3) is poorly executed, and (4) becomes excessive in terms of duration, frequency, and absence of opt-out options, it significantly detracts from the flow of the gaming experience, resulting to negative engagement.

Practical contributions

Theoretical contributions inform our managerial implications. As IGA gains increasing prominence, exploring its potential becomes a growing and critical challenge for managers. Effectively navigating this landscape necessitates a thorough understanding of how IGA operates and the conditions under

which its implementation holds the most promise for gamers. In light of these considerations, our findings provide valuable insights along with important advice and cautionary notes for managers who intend to optimize IGA as a strategic marketing channel. By incorporating insights from this research, marketers can design communication strategies that not only effectively convey their messages but also enhance the overall gaming experience. This approach enables marketers to align their advertising efforts with the preferences and emotions of gamers, fostering a more positive and engaging interaction between brands and the gaming community. We structure this discussion around two broad categories: (1) maintaining the state of flow; (2) restoring and stimulating the state of flow. In pursuing (1), the main outcome is that game providers and developers aim to integrate advertising content that is aligned with the game's narrative and environmental context.

This makes the advertising experience feel like a natural part of the game world rather than an intrusive element, increasing player immersion and engagement. This approach would allow brands and products to be seamlessly integrated into the game, preserving the integrity of the gaming experience and the flow of the players. Furthermore, producers need to manage frequency and duration to avoid making these ads overbearing or prolonged. Moreover, graphic and stylistic coherence are crucial to preserving the authenticity of the game. In this perspective, brands could adapt their actual products to match the context and narrative of a video game. In doing so, companies could exploit storytelling techniques as well as immersive technologies to co-create immersive gaming experiences and improve player engagement with both the game and the brand. This could also be translated into in-game challenges or special missions that offer brand-related rewards while also exploiting the narrative transportation, leading to a stronger player's emotional connection with the game and brand (De Regt et al., 2021). Finally, to maintain flow, brand managers and video game producers need to cooperate to ensure that the final outcome will be an advertisement that reflects the image and meaning of both the sponsored brand and the game.

On the other hand, to achieve (2), getting players to experience the flow through IGA requires a different but complementary approach. These conditions lead individuals to actively seek information to attribute these emotions to an external cause. Under these conditions, IGA can play a key role in re-establishing flow states and could be viewed more positively by consumers. Strategically redirecting the player's attention away from the negative aspects of the game is key to leveraging advertising content in these scenarios. This redirection is achieved by presenting advertisements that provide a momentary diversion from the current game environment, placing the player in an alternative narrative or context that is different from the source of their negative experience. In addition, visual characteristics can be managed to create a calming atmosphere that may reduce any stress or frustration experienced during the game. This approach involves co-creating immersive experiences that draw players deeper into a new game's narrative. Advertising can be designed to blend seamlessly into the game using storytelling techniques, including rewards or incentives to engage players in brand related events within the game. These incentives allow the player to refocus on rewarding goals.

Finally, managers can also establish an ongoing dialogue with the player communities to gather insight about the perception and acceptance of IGA. This would allow strategies to be tailored to enhance players' game experiences and brand engagement.

Figure 6 - Managerial implications

Adv Characteristics	**Managerial potential strategies**	**Objective**
Content	Select content aligned with the game environment and narrative (*e.g. in a racing game set in a futuristic city, in-game billboards showcase advertisements for fictional futuristic products or services,*	Maintain the game's perceived sense of authenticity, avoiding negative engagement. Increase realism and immersion

	seamlessly integrating with the game's environment and narrative). (*e.g. in a life simulation game, in-game advertisements reflect real-world brands and products that players might encounter in everyday life*).	
Format, style and positioning	Use styles that complement the visual elements of the game Place advertising in proper places in the game and on the display screen. (*e.g. in a fantasy role-playing game, the in-game advertisements adopt a mythical style that complements the visual elements of the game, such as displaying magical potions or enchanted items in an unobtrusive manner*).	Ensure that advertisements do not appear as foreign elements within the game
Frequency and length	Manage the frequency and duration to avoid interruptions, unless essential. (*e.g. in a narrative-driven adventure game, short and infrequent in-game video ads appear during loading screens between levels. This approach manages frequency and duration to avoid interrupting gameplay while still providing exposure to advertisers*).	Minimize game interruptions and flow disruption Enhance realism and immersion

Limitations and further research

The current research, being exploratory in nature, has inherent limitations in terms of generalizability. Nevertheless, it contributes a novel theoretical perspective to our understanding of IGA, opening avenues for future research. A valuable suggestion for further exploration involves investigating the impact of different types of gaming experiences associated with IGA — ranging from disruptive and interrupting to enhancing and enabling heightened immersion — on levels of engagement. For instance, a controlled longitudinal field study could assess whether gamers, based on their IGA experience, exhibit behavioral changes, including potential community abandonment. Another potential research direction is to measure the correlation between specific features of IGA and sales performance. Furthermore, neuromarketing studies, utilizing measures like eye movements, facial coding, or galvanic skin responses, have the potential to provide reliable findings on the emotional reactions to specific conditions of In-Game Advertising (IGA) as identified in the study.

Keywords: Consumer engagement; In-game advertising; Gaming; Psychological reactance; Flow

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Day 3 – May 31

9h00 – 10h30 - Full length presentations (Session 13) [SA010 Barelli]
Session Chair: Chihling Liu
"Charting the extremes: netnographies of fandom, witchcraft and psychedelic cultures"

1) Ménard, F., Chartray, J., Etronnier, A., Lapierre, M., "Welcome [back] to New York": Taylor Swift Fans Expressing their Loyalty on TikTok.
2) Rinallo, D., Mimoun, L., Zanette, M.C., "The digital plane and the astral plane have converged": a longitudinal exploration of the witchcraft field combining netnography with in-person ethnography.

“Welcome [back] to New York”: Taylor Swift Fans Expressing their Loyalty on TikTok.

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[1]HEC Montréal, Montréal, Canada

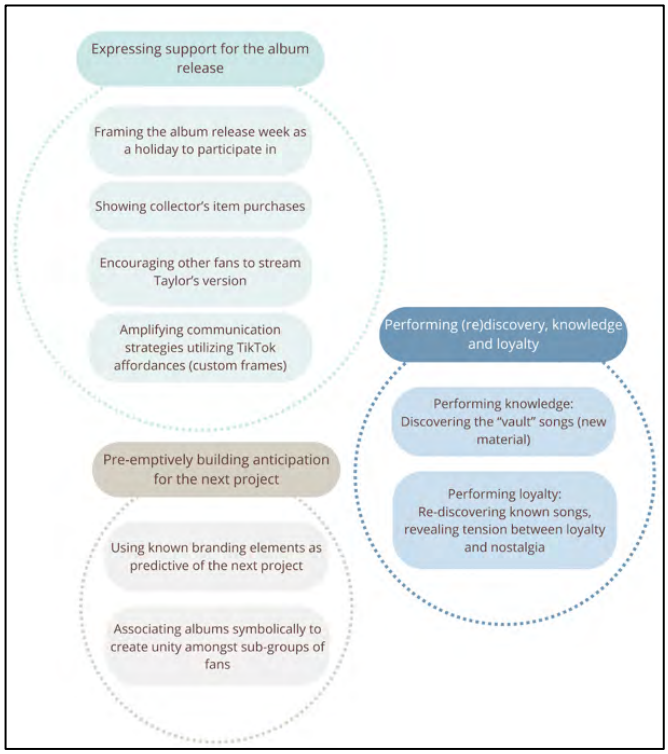
Extended Abstract
This study investigates practices fans use to express their loyalty towards Taylor Swift’s album re-recording initiative, focusing on the release of “1989 (Taylor’s Version)” (“1989TV”). Swift started re-recording her first six albums in 2021, following the sale of her masters by her former record label (Bruner, 2023). Fans’ loyalty as they shift their habits to listen to new versions of albums they knew and loved is crucial. How do Taylor Swift fans express this loyalty towards Taylor Swift and her album re-recordings through TikToks?

This team netnography brought all four researchers to participate in the data collection and analysis, allowing “the introspection of one team member [to be] balanced by the critical interpretations of other members” (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023: 9). Data (614 publications) were collected from TikTok between October 23rd and 30th 2023, focusing on fan-created videos surrounding the release of “1989TV” on October 27th, 2023. Each researcher collected data through their TikTok FYP (“For You Page”), inducing it to show relevant “1989TV” content by viewing previously identified fan accounts and interacting with publications (“Likes” and “Saves”). Interval sampling reduced the dataset to 60 for coding. Some of Jenkins’ fan practices (1992) (fan modes of reception and fan interpretative traditions) guided the initial analysis. Obiegbu et al. (2019) also previously demonstrated that fans of the band U2 use discursive resources and practices to articulate their loyalty to the band in a digital context (length of time as a fan, obsession, obligation/choice dichotomy).

Fans express their loyalty to Swift and her music through three main practice categories visible in TikToks: expressing their support for the album release, turning their discovery of new music into a performance of knowledge and loyalty, and pre-emptively building anticipation for Swift’s next project. Furthermore, tensions arise between loyalty and attachment to Swifts’ works as fans discover new versions of beloved songs. Finally, contrary to previous findings (Obiegbu et. al, 2019; O’Reilly et. al, 2013), these fans do not use the longevity of fandom participation as hierarchy. Abundant playful speculation, outward demonstrations of obsession, and extensive knowledge, seem just as valuable to Swift’s TikTok fans.

This research contributes to understanding expressions of fan loyalty and attachment in the novel context of a major album re-recording initiative. It also expands knowledge of the fan communities on TikTok, and how those fan communities integrate typical fan practices with practices common to TikTok users.

Figure 1



Keywords: social media, team netnography, TikTok, music fandom, loyalty

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"The digital plane and the astral plane have converged": a longitudinal exploration of the witchcraft field combining netnography with in-person ethnography.

Diego Rinallo[1], Laetitia Mimoun[2], Maria-Carolina Zanette[3]

[1]Emlyon Business School, Lyon, France. [2]ESCP Business School, Paris, France. [3]NEOMA Business School, Paris, France.

Extended Abstract

Past imaginaries sometimes haunt the present; surprising as it might sounds, a growing number of consumers identify as witches (James et al., 2023; Zanette et al., 2023). Contemporary witchcraft encompasses a religious movement (Wicca, emerged in the 1950s, commonly practiced in small

groups) and a more widespread spirituality, often practiced individually and predominantly online. This paper, building on work on the consumption of spirituality and religion (Rinallo and Santana, 2023; Santana et. al. 2022), investigates the influence of social media on the meanings and practices of witchcraft. Our research team includes a native Wiccan researcher, one with acquaintances practicing forms of witchcraft, and a researcher new to the field. Methodologically, our study combines longitudinal in-person ethnography, mostly led by the native researcher, with netnography and long interviews conducted by the entire research team in multiple languages with people identifying as witches.

We found significant differences in how witchcraft is practiced online compared to in real life (IRL), along with variations across social media platforms due to their specific affordances and algorithms shaping content and interaction patterns. We also found that social and symbolic capital are not easily converted from real life to the online world, and between social media platforms. IRL witches have limited visibility on platforms like Instagram or TikTok, dominated by younger witches who are better visual or video content creators, ultimately influencing the perception and practice of witchcraft. Moreover, the transfer of status from Instagram to TikTok is uncommon, as TikTok is dominated by 'baby witches' (an emic term) proposing distinct narratives on witches' identities and practices.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemics, we observed a convergence in the practices of IRL and online witches. Lockdowns posed challenges for the IRL to meet in person, prompting an unprecedented surge in experimentation with Zoom rituals and live directs. At the same time, online witches, typically inclined towards individual practices, explored with new forms of communal digital interaction, including massive online healing rituals. Collective rituals once confined to the 'astral plane' (an emic term for the invisible spiritual realm surrounding the material world) and enabled by visualization practices have increasingly been digitally facilitated. Emically, the astral and the digital planes have somewhat merged, leading practitioners to explore innovative approaches to digitally facilitated witchcraft. Our study underscores how longitudinal netnography, coupled with in-person ethnography, can unveil the impact of social media platforms on the shaping of consumer identities, meanings, and practices in ways not captured by traditional netnographic approaches.

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9h00 – 10h30 - Full length presentations (Session 14) [SA115 Paolo VI]
Session Chair: Rachel Ashman
"Understanding contemporary influencer culture"

1) Costa do Nascimento, T., Morais, I., Scussel, F., Social Media Influencers as Socio-Economic Intermediaries in Beauty Consumption.

2) Scussel, F., Costa do Nascimento, T., From experience to monetization: the professionalization of social media influence process.

3) Naz, F., The Role of Instagram Influencers in Altering Brand Consumption: A Conflict Context Case.

Social Media Influencers as Socio-Economic Intermediaries in Beauty Consumption.

Thaysa Costa do Nascimento[1], Isabela Morais[2], Fernanda Scussel[3]
[1]COPPEAD, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. [2]UFOP, Ouro Preto, Brazil, [3]UFSC, Florianòpolis, Brazil.

Extended Abstract

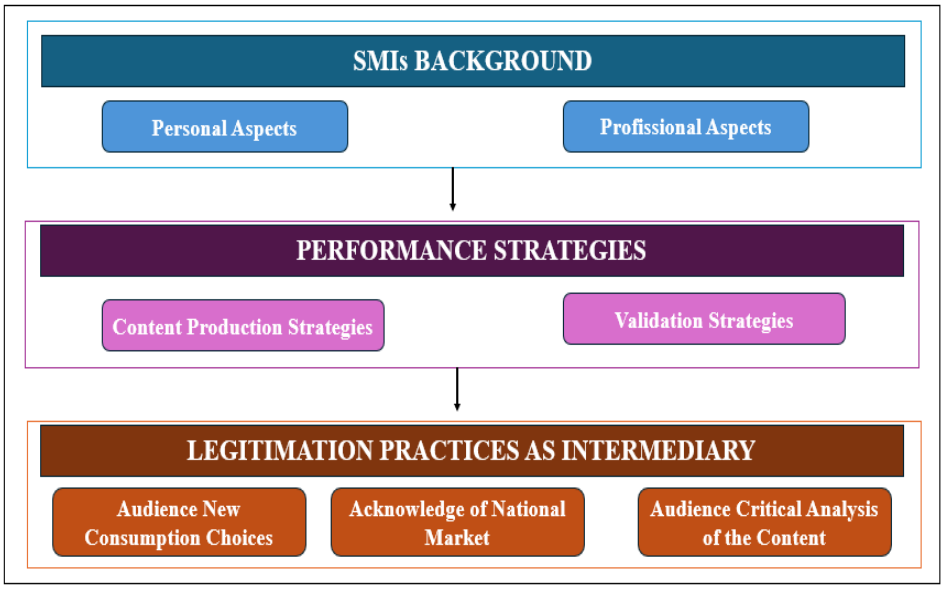
Social Media Influencers (SMIs) are individuals who achieve a great audience on social media, through content sharing, and receive not only financial compensation, but also develop cultural capital, acting as references and managers of their own social media, creating connections with their audience and market actors (Campbell & Farrell, 2020; Erz & Christensen, 2018). SMIs also act as opinion leaders, tastemakers, and reference groups.

Recently, research has identified social media influencers as cultural intermediaries (Collucci & Pedroni, 2022). Cultural intermediaries are tastemakers who add value through the qualification of goods, thus validating and legitimizing certain consumption practices (Bourdieu, 1984). However, little is known about other possibilities for social media influencers to act as intermediaries. Deepening this knowledge would allow us to anticipate the institutionalization of new forms of taste and consumption practices, as in segments such as beauty, for example.

Given this scenario, this research, therefore, seeks to identify how social media influencers act as socio-economic intermediaries, allowing people to consume makeup products and be part of this market. A netnography (Kozinets, 2019) was carried out from August/2023 to January/2024, on the profiles of 20 Brazilian SMIs in the beauty segment on Youtube, a video content platform that allowed us to observe the construction of SMI's performance as a socio-economic intermediary. The immersion and investigation stages of Kozinets (2019) were conducted, with the researchers each preparing their own immersion journal. Data collection in the format of videos and prints of comments made it possible to observe the SMI's performance as a socio-economic intermediary. The data were analyzed via coding with a hermeneutic approach.

From the data analysis it was possible to realize that the social media influencer plays the role of socio-economic intermediary when sharing content aimed at accessibility to beauty consumption practices in economic terms and guaranteeing performance. The role of socio-economic intermediary, however, is socially co-constructed between the SMI and his/her audience through a process composed of three stages that occur in a correlated manner. Figure 1 presents the process of building the role of socio-economic intermediary by the SMI. This research aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of SMIs as social agents of change, in addition to their role as brand endorsers.

Figure 1. SMIs' socio-economic Intermediaries Process



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From experience to monetization: the professionalization of social media influence process.

Fernanda Scussel[1], Thaysa Costa do Nascimento[2]

[1]Federal University of Santa Caterina, Florianòpolis, Brazil. [2]Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Extended Abstract

In response to the individualized nature of modern motherhood (Schmidt et al., 2023), women increasingly turn to social media for support, giving rise to the phenomenon of "mommy influencers" (Burke-Garcia et al., 2018; Orton-Johnson, 2017), who play a pivotal role in shaping consumption practices and altering market dynamics (Kozinets et al., 2010). However, the professionalization of digital influence remains a largely unexplored area (Cambpell & Farrell, 2020). To bridge this gap, our study aims to comprehend the evolution of social media influence, from personal experiences to monetization.

Employing a netnography framework (Kozinets, 2019), our data collection spanned from March 2021 to July 2023. We followed prominent mommy influencers through three phases: exploratory, investigative, and immersive. The exploratory phase involved social media content analysis to

identify influencers addressing maternity themes. The investigative phase categorized influencers, selecting profiles for in-depth analysis. In the immersive phase, we conducted longitudinal data collection, observing influencers' journeys on social media and the temporal unfolding of their routines. Our analytical corpus comprised 77 videos (exceeding 18 hours of content) and 610 screenshots of posts and comments, coded and analyzed following Kozinets' (2019) guidelines.
Our findings unveil the professionalization trajectory of social media influence. Beginning with individual experiences (former influencers, activist influencers, and aspiring influencers), this trajectory shapes the nature of produced content – ranging from shared routines and motherhood journey to market curation and specialized content. These initial phases establish the influencers' positioning within the community as a content creator, entrepreneur, or technical professional. The culmination is the monetization phase, characterized by collaborations with brands, brand creation, and the development of infoproducts.
Our major contribution lies in presenting the professionalization of social media influence process, with three main implications. First, we highlight the outcomes of content sharing, unveiling the strategic role of content production in community formation through shared identification with similar experiences. Second, we illustrate the development of novel market dynamics resulting from the monetization of digital influence on social media. Lastly, We showcase the creation of digital positioning within a community, introducing a recursive interplay between a micro-level analysis concerning the community, meso-level analysis regarding market relationships, and macro-level analysis considering the underlying logics and norms of maternity that will influence consumption dynamics.

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The Role of Instagram Influencers in Altering Brand Consumption: A Conflict Context Case.

Farah Naz[1]
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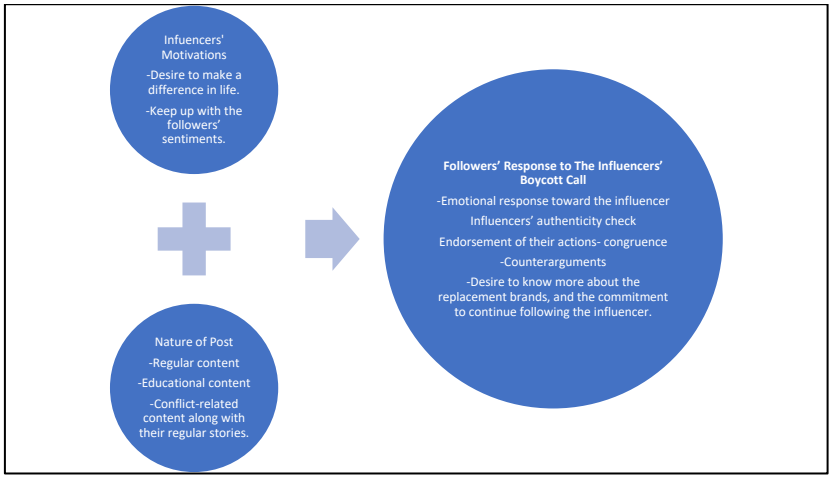
Extended Abstract

Influencers have many followers on their social media platforms because of the content they share (Lou et al., 2023). Their ability to reach a specific audience enables them to monetize this influence (Gräve, 2019), as marketers can reach relevant target audiences through them (Khan, 2022). Genuine content creation (Guan & Li, 2021; Bakker, 2018) and relatability are key reasons that enable influencers to create connections and employ their impact (De Veirman et al., 2017). Individuals who are inspired by influencers try to imitate them (Dinh & Lee, 2022) to showcase their loyalty (Chan, 2022). There is a dearth of research regarding social media influencers' role in changing brand

consumption. Specifically, despite the availability of boycott-related literature (Sari et al., 2017; Kintu Ben-Slimane, 2020), there is a paucity of research regarding the role of social media influencers in creating a boycott movement in a conflict context. Hence, this research explores the motivations of Instagram influencers to talk about the Gaza situation through their Instagram reels and stories, as well as how consumers respond to their content about Gaza and their call to boycott certain brands that fueled the Palestinian genocide. The researcher was interested in the topic due to an extensive discourse surrounding the conflict on social media and in the researcher's day-to-day life. Instagram was chosen as a social media platform because of its acceptance and popularity among people of all ages. Moreover, it is one of the most popular social media channels among marketers for influencer marketing programs (Geyser, 2022). The criterion for choosing the Instagram influencers was based on the number of followers of at least 50,000. This research theoretically draws on social learning theory and everyday activism (Vivienne & Burgess, 2012). Empirically, this research utilized netnography as its central methodology to analyze publicly available reels, posts, and stories of six Instagram influencers. The data collection started a week after the October 7, 2023, crisis and continued till January 3, 2024. The researcher followed the influencers' content during this time. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis. Influencers' motivation to post content was inferred based on the content showcased on their Instagram handle. The influencers' inferred motivations, the nature of their posts, and the followers' response to the influencers' boycott calls are characterized in Figure 1. There were differences in influencers in their narrative about the conflict in Gaza and how they adapted the form of the brand consumption messages to their regular tone of voice. This research shows how the contextual content posted by Instagram influencers enables the public to develop a sense of commitment and attachment to the influencer. This research contributes to the influencer marketing literature through the impact of influencers' content on brand consumption. It reveals the relationships between influencers' brand boycotts/ conflict content and the followers' responses on Instagram. It elaborates on how social media influencers' content and their potential to exert agency in how the platform is used impacts their respect, authenticity, and bond with their followers.

Figure 1



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9h00 – 10h30 - Full length presentations (Session 15) [SA 116 Schuster]
Session Chair: Valentina Primossi
“Netnography for enhancing nursing and mental wellbeing”

1) Leccio, B.J., Maniago, J., Nursing in the Social Sphere: A Netnographic Study of Online Nursing Communities and their Impact on Professional Development.
2) Garwood-Cross, L., Influencing Health: A Netnography of Social Media Health Influencer Cultures.
3) Obispo-Salazar, K., Rozo-Bernal, V., Figueroa, P., Gómez, V., Cabas-Hoyos, K., Human and virtual influencers in Mental Health: A Netnographic Study.
4) Hoyland, C., Navigating care on the digital ‘stage’: Young people's online peer-to-peer support networks for mental health and wellbeing - unpacking ethical considerations in non-participatory netnography and researcher reflexivity.

Nursing in the Social Sphere: A Netnographic Study of Online Nursing Communities and their Impact on Professional Development.

Bherlyn Joy Leccio[1-2], Jestoni Maniago[2]
[1]Oman College of Health Sciences, North Batinah, Suhar, Oman. [2]St. Paul University Manila, Manila, Philippines.

Extended Abstract

The evolution of social and educational transactions, fueled by information technology, has revolutionized traditional learning environments. Email and web-based applications like Listserve (Rolls et al., 2019) and InspireNet (Frish et al., 2014), and social platforms such as Facebook (Reinbeck et al., 2019; Siddiqui et al., 2018), LinkedIn (Farsi, 2021), and Twitter (Chiu et al., 2020) now offer active learning environments free from location or time constraints (Rukavina et al., 2021). These platforms serve as instructional tool for improving patients’ health conditions (O’Connor et

al., 2020) through information dissemination and as discussion forums for health-related concerns (Farsi et al., 2021). Moreover, they serve as innovative instruments for the continuing professional development of healthcare professionals in clinical practice (Reinbeck et al., 2019).

Healthcare professionals, including nursing practitioners, have embraced this shift, using personal linkage and information technology for learning and networking (Hazzam et al., 2018). While several studies have explored social media use by nurses in clinical practice for knowledge exchange and collaboration (Rukavina et al., 2021) limited attention has been given to unmanaged Facebook groups, particularly in peer-to-peer interactions among nursing professionals. Nevertheless, these platforms offer nurses opportunities to interact, collaborate, share expertise across specialties, and stay updated on advancements in their field (Rolls et al., 2019; Siddiqu et al., 2018).

This study uses netnography to understand nursing practitioners' perspectives on existing digital communities on Facebook. It focuses on active Facebook groups for nurses in clinical practice that have been active for more than a year, with at least five hundred members and daily discussions, providing a naturalistic setting for data collection (Polit et al., 2018).

Participants are selected using maximum variation sampling to represent diverse characteristics such as age, gender, educational background, clinical experience, and geographic location. Recruitment is done through social media platforms, and online nursing communities, following Kozinets' phases.

In the investigative phase, online observation, archival data, and text mining techniques offer a comprehensive view of selected Facebook groups, informing the creation of an interview guide for individual online interviews in the interactive phase.

In the immersive phase, online journaling documents events, interactions, practices, and norms within the groups. Data analysis, including content and thematic analysis, reveals that Facebook groups effectively facilitate nursing professionals' professional development. Knowledge exchange and shared experiences enhance theoretical understanding and practical application in clinical practice.

The groups served as platforms for continuous learning and collaboration, fostering professional growth. Shared cultural backgrounds, particularly among Filipinos, are reflected in the language used, blending English and Tagalog, strengthening community bonds. Religious sentiments are also prominent, with many users attributing their successes to divine intervention, particularly Catholicism, highlighting the strong association between personal success and religious practices.

This community provided valuable opportunities for ongoing professional development and enhanced learning. Professional networking expanded, creating avenues for career advancement and job opportunities. Administrators play a pivotal role in ensuring the quality and relevance of shared content, grounding materials and discussions in experiential knowledge and evidence-based practices, enhancing the overall learning experience.

Keywords: Online Groups, Facebooks, Nurses, Nursing, Private Groups

Influencing Health: A Netnography of Social Media Health Influencer Cultures.

Lisa Garwood-Cross[1]
[1]University of Salford, Manchester, United Kingdom

Extended Abstract

Social media has become increasingly embedded in our health information ecosystems (Rich et al., 2020; Lim et al., 2022). Therefore, scholarship has started to consider the role social media influencers have in influencing their audience's health (Cheng et al., 2019; Bonnevie et al., 2020; Guo et al., 2020; Ratwatte & Mattacola, 2021; Pilgrim & Bohnet-Joschko, 2019; Sabbagh et al., 2020; Gil-Quintana et al., 2021; Sofian, 2020; Topf & Williams, 2021; Ngai et al., 2020; Zou et al., 2021) as they build trust relationships with their audience (Cunningham & Craig, 2017; Garwood-Cross, 2022). However, there are concerns about influencers' role in the spread of health-related misinformation and who is qualified to disseminate health information online (Yeung et al., 2022; Ratwatte & Mattacola, 2021; Gil-Quintana et al., 2021).

This paper expands on the growing scholarship around social media health influencers by presenting the early findings of a study that combines netnography (Kozinets, 2020) and the Walkthrough Method (Light et al., 2018) to investigate social media health influencer cultures across multiple health concerns and digital platforms. The study considers a variety of digitally-mediated health influencers including patient influencers, healthcare professionals, and other lay-influencers with followings of different types, to shed light on social media health influence across a variety of contexts. Rooted in Actor-Network Theory (Latour, 2005), the paper explores the ways individuals, technology and organisations interconnect to influence the health of social media users. The study uses the walkthrough method to explore platform affordances of different social media platforms for health communication, and how the features and governance of these spaces, as well as their dynamic algorithmic structures (Duguay & Gold-Apel, 2023) impact how actors in the assemblage of health influencer cultures are brought together. Drawing particularly on the use of netnographic immersion journaling from the researchers immersion in social media health influencer cultures, and the process of reconnoitering in such a broad sociotechnical landscape, the paper demonstrates the value of netnography in exploring multifaceted social media cultures to understand both telescopic and microscopic aspects of these cultures (Kozinets, 2020).

The initial findings reveal concerns about the role and depiction of qualification in health influencer narratives, the techniques used by social media health influencers to build trust, and the role of 'relatable' content in curating audiences. The netnography findings also demonstrate the myriad of ways that social media health influencers communicate with their audiences, across a variety of platforms, and how audiences respond to health influencer content.

Human and virtual influencers in Mental Health: A Netnographic Study.

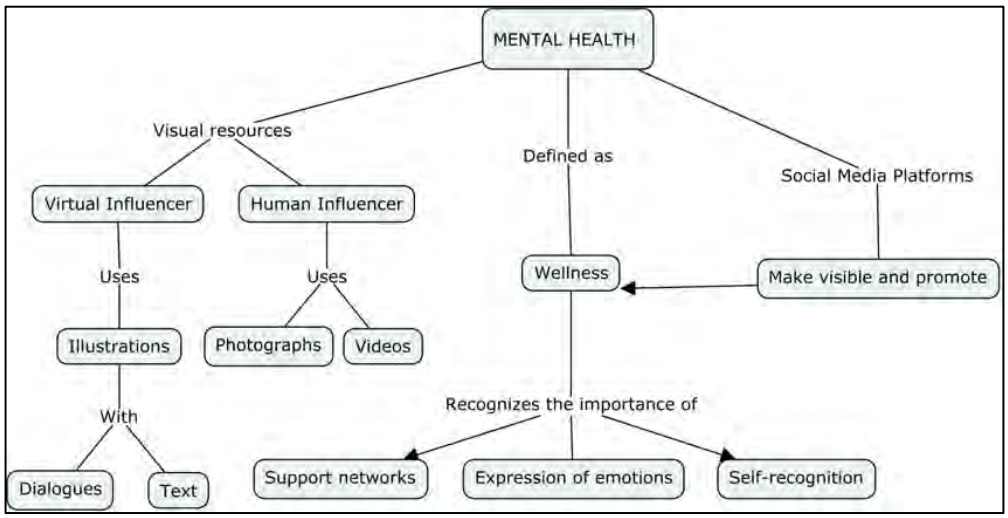
Kelly Obispo-Salazar[1], Valentina Rozo-Bernal[2], Pablo Figueroa[2], Vivian Gómez[2], Kattia Cabas-Hoyos[1]
[1]Universidad del Magdalena, Santa Marta, Colombia. [2]Universidad de los Andes, Bogota, Colombia

Extended Abstract
Social media platforms have evolved into powerful tools for creating and disseminating content across various topics, such as fashion, sports, lifestyle, and more. Furthermore, they have become a frame for expressing mental health issues, especially during and after the Covid-19 pandemic. This study aims to explore how mental health is portrayed by human and virtual influencers in their content on Instagram. Human influencers are individuals who have built a network of followers; they are trusted and occasionally brands seek them out for product endorsements (Atiq et al, 2022). Virtual influencers, on the other hand, possess the characteristics of human influencers and are represented by avatars or virtual agents, with their entire world and personality created artificially (Mirowska & Arsenyan, 2020).

The selected methodology for this study is netnography (Kozinets, 2020). Applying its three particular elements: investigation, immersion, and interaction. The investigation stage involved searching Instagram for influencers who met the selection criteria. Immersion and interaction movements were merged, as a passive role was maintained in the conversations with other users within the community. Netnography was adapted to analyze videos, captions and images of posts constituting an observational endeavor in order to understand how influencers share content related to mental health with their followers. Participants were selected by convenience sampling, with inclusion criteria requiring that they had shared mental health related content from the beginning to the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, they were spanish speakers, and they were active at the time of the study. The search of influencers were conducted over four months, reviewing the content they generated. In total, four influencers were selected, two virtual and two human. Subsequently, the posts of each influencer were retrieved from January 30th, 2020 until April 24th, 2023, a timeframe in accordance with official times of the Covid-19 pandemic as defined by the World Health Organization. Out of all the content, the eight posts with the most "likes" of each influencer were selected focusing on topics related to mental health. Finally, for the incarnation stage of netnography, the data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006, cited by Mieles et al., 2012), all with the support of the Atlas.ti software.

Analyzing the posts, it was found that there is a difference between visual resources for generating content between both types of influencers. In the case of virtual, due to their nature, they create illustrations that have phrases or dialogues. Meanwhile the human influencers, express themselves through videos or photographs accompanied by text and hashtags. In general, the content is focused on mental health from a wellbeing perspective, highlighting the importance of self-recognition, support networks and expression of emotions as shown in the mental map of figure 1. Mental health has found a platform for its visibility and promotion in social media.

Figure 1: Mental health from the perspective of human and virtual influencers



Keywords: Netnography – Influencers - Instagram - Mental Health

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Navigating care on the digital 'stage': Young people's online peer-to-peer support networks for mental health and wellbeing - unpacking ethical considerations in non-participatory netnography and researcher reflexivity.

Charlotte Hoyland[1]
[1]University of Manchester, Manchester, United Kingdom

Extended Abstract
This work draws on my PhD research focusing on young people's mental health, wellbeing, and peer-to-peer support networks, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the UK, the pandemic response placed restrictions on face-to-face interactions, with 'social distancing' restrictions limiting access to traditional support networks. As a result, many young people turned to online networks as a source of both peer, and professional, support.

Largely conducted during the height of the pandemic, this research considers how young people engage in peer-to-peer support within a singular online support community. Through the lens of Goffman's dramaturgy, I consider how young people practice and perform care within online peer-to-peer settings for mental health and wellbeing support. Within this abstract and subsequent presentation, I draw on two themes from the Call for Papers; navigating research ethics in sensitive topic netnography and researcher reflexivity in sensitive topic research.

Netnography is often credited for its unobtrusive nature, real-time naturalistic data collection, and enabling access to potentially sensitive topic research. When designing my research approach, it was important for me to find a way to research mental health and wellbeing without intruding (both physically and psychologically) in my participants' "safe spaces" and without creating additional pressure to participate in research during an already uncertain time. Adopting a non-participatory approach to netnography has enabled me to access rich, insightful data whilst prioritising the potential needs of my participants, allowing site members to continue using the site for their needs without interference. This, of course, presents its own ethical challenges in terms of how to protect and respect participants' space in non-participatory netnography, but the priority of participant wellbeing remained at the fore.

A personal ethical challenge when working with sensitive topic discussions was that I could not express sympathy, empathy, care or other emotional support to members (nor do I have the qualifications to provide professional support). Thus, when I was selecting the community for data collection, it was crucial that members had access to professional support, if needed, and discussions were moderated by trained volunteers who upheld community guidelines and could intervene in distressing or triggering interactions, if necessary. Furthermore, during the final year of my PhD, I continue to navigate the ethical challenges of how to represent the contributions and interactions of members within the community in a way that promotes member contributions without applying my own assumptions of member characteristics.

Adopting a non-participatory approach to netnography also presents challenges in terms of the role of the researcher and, within sensitive topic research, researcher wellbeing and potential vulnerability.

Reflections on my research to date acknowledge the challenges that I have faced when researching mental health and wellbeing within online support communities, both from the perspective of my participants, but also acknowledging and promoting my own wellbeing. Through my presentation, I would like to draw on this experience and begin to consider some of the ways in which we, as researchers, might begin to address care, wellbeing and vulnerability in netnography.

11h00 – 12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 16) [SA 010 Barelli]
Session Chair: Robert Kozinets
"Exploring gaming and livestreaming"

1) Quadri M., Andreini, D., Live streamers and where to find them: roles and purposes in influencer marketing.
2) Humayun, M., Belk, R., Navigating Brave New Worlds: Spatial Constructs in the Metaverses of Animal Crossing and Axie Infinity.
3) Beccanulli, A., Auto-Mobile Ethnography to unveil destination images in tourism live-streaming netnography.
4) Walker, R., Translating Ethnography to Netnography in the Social Sciences.

Live streamers and where to find them: roles and purposes in influencer marketing.

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Extended Abstract
The contemporary marketing landscape is witnessing the rise of new digital intermediaries, named creators, that are playing a bridging role between users and brands (Delbaere et al, 2021). The role of creators includes anyone who can influence other users' preferences, driving their purchases, through the creation of original content online (Cunningham and Craig, 2021). So far, the most studied creators are the so-called content creators and the influencers. The formers are engaged in social media branding, and the latter in personal branding (eg. Kozinets et al. 2023). However, many various practices in social media are still under investigated, such as in the case of live streamers. Considering the pivotal role of influencers as role models for countless online communities, the online advertising industry is facing new challenges since the trans-para social relationship between streamers and viewers has a great impact on the online experience (Lou, 2022).

This study aims to position streamers in the influencer marketing landscape, highlighting their characteristics, aims, and the following conceptual and managerial implications. The video game industry is used in this study as an observational research standpoint (Merton, 1973). Data have been collected and analyzed employing a phenomenological approach (Thompson et al, 1989) and using nethnography prescriptions (Kozinetz, 2020). Streamers are interviewed and observed during the live sessions on Twitch and the data has been analyzed through thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

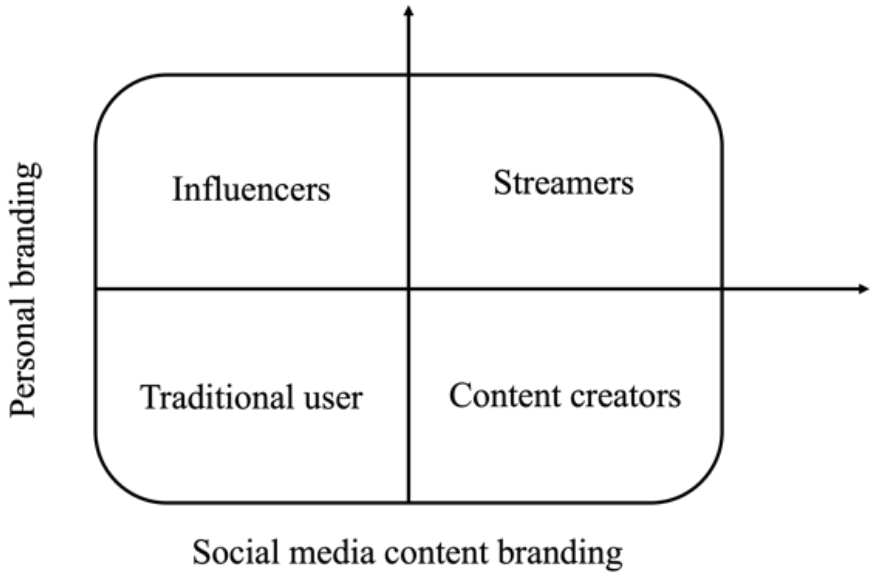
Initial results show common grounds between creators, influencers, and streamers related to self-presentation and relationship marketing theories (eg. Shau and Gilly, 2003). However, descending from gaming practices that are based on a public performance (Tammy et al, 2019), streamers differ from other creators by performing a new type of real-time, highly interactive, and long-lasting practice that engages followers for a huge amount of time (on average four hours). Hence, they are

deeply committed to building a tight relationship with followers through interactive rituals (Jodèn and Strandell, 2022), allowing the creation of a social, community-driven engagement much stronger than that created in "traditional" social media (Hilvert-Bruce et al, 2019). Accordingly, we propose to frame live streamers in the industry as proposed in Figure 1, where they extremize the so-called "consistent flow of content" of creators (Kozinets et al., 2023). Hence, they pursue what we define as "endurance experience branding".

Therefore, due to the extremization of creators' activity, the correct fit between brands and streamers must be more accurate than ever. Since they build loyal niche communities of followers, they are not required to be macro or mega influencers to be effective, as other creators should (Campbell and Farrell, 2020). Finally, the emergence of streamers challenges the digital marketing field: creators and influencers can effectively replace "traditional" digital agencies as intermediaries (Arriagada, 2021).

From a marketing and advertising perspective, streamers surely represent a new way of reaching online audiences. From a conceptual standpoint, this research seeks to contribute to the social media literature by introducing the streamers' role in the influencer economy, deepening the knowledge of the underlined mechanism of digital advertising.

Figure 1



Navigating Brave New Worlds: Spatial Constructs in the Metaverses of Animal Crossing and Axie Infinity.

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Extended Abstract
The exploration of space in consumer culture has been of interest to scholars for some time. In both utopian spaces (Kozinets 2001; Maclaran and Brown 2005) and retail spaces (Sherry et al. 2001) there are unique complexities involving consumer culture. However, prior research around space tends to be focused on physical boundaries (Castilhos, Dolbec, and Veresiu 2017; Grant and Handelman

2023). But as Sherry (2000) and Kozinets (2019) note, digital spaces now warrant attention. As we look toward the future, there's a growing acknowledgment that our digital environments should be regarded as "spaces" imbued with complexities akin to those found in physical spaces (Castells 1996). This shift is epitomized in the emergence of social media platforms, which have redefined traditional notions of space. The concept of living "rent-free" in someone's mind or the metaphorical shouting in Twitter/X town squares exemplifies the transition to a digital-first mindset in spatial interaction. Coupled with advances in technology like VR and AI, within 10 years we might all be living in the metaverse (Belk, Humayun, and Brouard 2022; Belk, 2024; Hadi, Melumad, and Park 2023).

Building on Henri Lefebvre's (1974) "The Production of Space," this paper extends his theoretical framework to the digital domain, particularly the burgeoning metaverse. Netnographically we exemplify Kozinets' (2023) idea of immersive netnography. By examining two popular video games, Animal Crossing and Axie Infinity, through netnography and ethnography, the paper employs a comprehensive analysis of Lefebvre's spatial triad: spatial practices, representations of space, and spaces of representation in these virtual worlds.

Animal Crossing represents an exemplary case of Lefebvre's lived space. It offers a digital canvas for personal identity, social relations, and community building through in-game activities. This interaction demonstrates the embodiment of lived spaces in a virtual setting. Axie Infinity, on the other hand, showcases conceived space, where economic strategies and blockchain technology intersect, revealing new dimensions of spatial conception in the digital era. This game represents a virtual marketplace, underscoring the complex nature of virtual spaces as sites of economic activity and strategic planning.

The comparative analysis of these games highlights how different virtual environments can emphasize various aspects of Lefebvre's spatial theory. Animal Crossing focuses on the subjective and emotional attachment to space, while Axie Infinity accentuates the strategic and a play-to-earn virtual economic environment. This approach reveals the complex nature of virtual spaces in the metaverse and their diverse manifestations.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for understanding the metaverse. It posits that virtual spaces in the metaverse are not mere digital extensions of physical spaces but are complex social constructions that reflect and influence human behavior and societal norms. Our exploration challenges traditional notions of spatial interaction and community building, paving the way for further research into the societal and cultural impacts of the metaverse. The study's use of immersive netnography highlights the varied ways in which virtual spaces are created, experienced, and utilized, reflecting broader social, economic, and cultural dynamics.

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Auto-Mobile Ethnography to unveil destination images in tourism live-streaming netnography.

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Extended Abstract
In a culture obsessed with nowness, live-streaming is the dominant content format, expected to continue expanding in the upcoming decade (Lin et al., 2022). Particularly, tourism live-streaming, featuring travel live streamers (TLS) creating and sharing real-time destination images while interacting with viewers (Deng et al., 2021), has proven highly successful. Its effectiveness lies in providing extensive and perceived authentic views of destinations (Deng et al., 2021) and in its limited post-transmission availability, encouraging active viewer participation during broadcasts.
The success and potential for crafting destination images have fueled the interest of smart tourism research (Zhang et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2022) in exploring the role of tourism live-streaming in the tourist journey. Studies highlight its contribution in the pre-travel phase, as the destination images created in this format inspire viewers to engage in future physical tourism behaviors (Zheng et al., 2022). However, current research lacks an in-depth exploration of the visual and discursive strategies employed to form these inspiring destination images and the specific meanings and motivations they evoke in viewers.
This study explores the place-presentation strategies enacted by TLS in constructing destination images in tourism live-streaming and the attached meanings, desires and behaviors elicited in consumers. The researcher conducts a netnography (Kozinets, 2020) in the context of cultural tourism, which extends into an auto-mobile ethnography, as the latter has proven effective for "transient experiences" research (Muskat, 2020). Specifically, she develops real-time investigative and immersive data collection and interaction (Kozinets, 2020). She participates in archeological sites and city tours broadcasted on Twitch (total of 273 hours), engages in messaging with viewers and TLSs, and uses her smartphone to capture screenshots of meaningful moments and comments as they unfold (276.909 comments) and to record audio messages describing her live consumption experience (Muskat, 2020).
Preliminary findings reveal that TLS craft destination images through three recursive broadcast segments: (i) the destination's street-view segment; (ii) the sight-seeing segment; (iii) the dramatization segment. Each segment acts as a trigger of specific meanings and desires. The first nurtures desires for acculturation, the second evokes nostalgia, prompts self-narratives on past travel experiences, and inspires future travels, while the last creates a sense of physical proximity to the TLSs, as if viewers were experiencing the journey alongside them.

In this study, the incorporation of auto-mobile ethnography into netnography is pivotal, allowing the integration of the immediate temporality of the lived experience with that of data collection, immersion, and interaction (Kozinets, 2020). This approach enables the researcher to actively participate in the event and crystallize revelatory moments before they dissipate, for subsequent immersion and retrospective analysis. Additionally, it facilitates chronicling these revelatory moments during their fruition, fostering the generation of vivid, clear, detailed, and unfiltered field notes.
As a result, this study presents a methodological blueprint, wherein smartphone usage gets integrated in netnography as if it were an intrinsic affordance of the method, to explore nuanced practices and cultural experiences within the evolving landscape of live video formats.

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11h00 – 12h30 – Full length presentations (Session 17) [SA 115 Paolo VI]
Session Chair: Magdalena Marchowska-Raza
"Empowering diversity and addressing vulnerabilities"

1) Marnfeldt, K. "The word dementia is a stigma on its own": a Netnographic Analyis of the Dementia Diaries.
2) Mattias, G., Bagna, G., Pera, R., Mind the Gluten: A netnographic study on trust in vulnerable consumers.
2) Primossi, V., Mulvey, M., Skyward inclusion: Transforming the aviation ecosystem for people living with dementia and their travel companions.
3) Santanni, M., Pera, R., Quinton, S., From stigma to being cool: Neurodiversity in social media.

"The word dementia is a stigma on its own": a Netnographic Analyis of the Dementia Diaries.

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Introduction: Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) is recognized as one of the most pressing global health problems of our time. ADRD is a family of disorders characterized by a progressive decline in multiple areas of cognition, including language, memory, orientation, comprehension, learning capacity, and mental processing that significantly interferes with a person's

ability to function independently over time. The distress of receiving a dementia diagnosis is commonly described in terms of lost identity and self-worth, combined with shame, and triggered by a deeply felt sense of stigmatization.

Efforts to reduce dementia-related stigma often emphasize tragic narratives, perpetuating the misconception that a diagnosis equals the end of a meaningful life; moreover, participation of people with dementia (PWD) in stigma reduction campaigns is rare (Marnfeldt, Unpublished Abstract, 2024).

Purpose: The present study calls this practice of exclusion into question through netnographic immersion in an online platform called the Dementia Diaries. It aims to capture the lived experience of dementia stigmatization among PWD, to identify its underlying mechanisms, and to investigate the efficacy of active participation by PWD in campaigns aimed at ending dementia stigma.

Ethical considerations: Diarists who contribute to the Dementia Diaries have publicly identified themselves on the site by posting a photograph and including their first and last names, however, analyzing publicly available data without explicit consent still requires the researcher to uphold the principles of respect, beneficence, and justice.

Methods: This study uses netnographic methods and qualitative content analysis to analyze data from the DD's digital archive where Diarists record their day-to-day reflections and experiences, which are subsequently transcribed, posted to the site, and shared widely on social media. Recordings are made via participants' telephone, or a 3-D printed phone designed together with PWD for safe, easy, and secure recording of diary entries. A single search term, "stigma" was used to search the diary entries in the immersive stage of analysis.

Preliminary findings: Between 2015 and 2023, 2,946 entries by 109 diarists were posted to the site. The number of diary entries per person ranged from 1 to 332, with the average number of posts at 64.04 (SD = 93.63), indicating considerable variability in the data. The search term "stigma" returned 57 separate entries where 29 diarists used the word a total of 74 times to describe stigmatizing encounters with friends, family, professionals, the general public and in the media. Overarching themes driving stigmatizing behaviors and attitudes toward PWD are avoidance, abandonment, and invisibility, alongside transformative effects of advocacy efforts. The Diarists reported that their engagement in awareness activities fosters humanization and shifts societal attitudes, promoting inclusion, empathy, and solidarity.

Contribution: Elevating the voices of these PWD, who have been bravely and generously sharing with the public since 2015, contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that drive stigmatizing behaviors and attitudes toward PWD and offers a new framework for developing targeted interventions for reducing dementia-related stigma and improving the well-being of PWD.

Keywords: Alzheimer's disease, dementia, stigma, netnography, qualitative content analysis

Mind the Gluten: A netnographic study on trust in vulnerable consumers.

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Full Conference Paper

Abstract

Despite the growing body of research on consumers' vulnerability and the marginalising nature of service experiences for certain groups of consumers, the construct of trust remains unchallenged. This paper is situated within the growing field of transformative research, building what we term *transformational trust* in service marketing in order to develop a roadmap towards improved accessibility and inclusion of vulnerable consumers in the service marketplace**.**

The findings show that when vulnerable consumers experience the integration of both exclusive and inclusive trust, encompassing emotional, cognitive, behavioural, physical, and social dimensions, the outcome is a transformative service that ultimately enhances consumers' well-being. In addition, the research indicates that when trust is absent, the consumer experience gives rise to feelings of dread. In essence, the opposite of trust is identified as dread, rather than distrust.

Introduction

Despite the increasing focus on consumers' vulnerability and the marginalising nature of service experiences for certain groups (Husemann et al., 2023), there is still a lack of understanding regarding the role of trust when vulnerable consumers participate in a service, especially when it involves exposing their health. Well established theories on trust in the fields of marketing and consumer research don't seem able to fit when applied to vulnerable consumers who may have potentially serious health consequences because of service providers' behaviours.

The aim of the study is to conceptualise trust within the Transformative Service Research framework for vulnerable consumers (Anderson et al. 2013; Ostrom et al. 2021). Through an in-depth and exploratory insight, we intend to define the phenomenon of trust building, as an empathic concern for and respect of another.

To investigate the role that trust has for vulnerable consumers we have focused on the increasingly large vulnerable community of coeliac consumers who aspire to lead a normal life. While gluten-free products are easily available, eating out still presents huge challenges and threats, affecting coeliac's social and professional life. Indeed, as much as it is a medical recognized condition, people with celiac disease very often face unpleasant situations because of the lack of knowledge about their condition, which is often dismissed as a simple intolerance. Trust in service providers is particularly crucial for individuals with celiac disease because their health depends on strict adherence to a gluten-free diet and the potential health consequences of consuming gluten are relevant.

Previous theories that define trust and outline its dimensions (XXX) and the phenomenology of lived experience of this study intersect to shed light on the following research questions: (1) *How is trust experienced by coeliac consumers along the eating-out journey, and which psychological dimensions build it? (2) Which are the main risks coeliac consumers perceive along the eating-out journey that generate distrust?*

By employing the netnographic research method, this study has undertaken an interpretive phenomenological approach, which is appropriately concerned with the lived experience of human beings, and with revealing their reflexive and subjective accounts (van Manen, 1990) of what it is like to expose one's health to someone while away from home.
This study highlights the need for service providers and for public policy to better understand gluten disease, et . Trust influences the decision of vulnerable consumers to participate in social activities like dining out. Building trust ensures that these consumers can enjoy a social experience without feeling excluded or anxious about their dietary restrictions.The construct of trust is crucial for vulnerable consumers like those with coeliac disease when eating out due to its impact on health, psychological well-being, social inclusion, and overall dining consumer experience. Public policy

and marketing strategies can contribute to building and maintaining this trust, benefiting both consumers and businesses.

Theoretical underpinning

This paper is situated within the growing field of transformative research, building what we term trust service marketing in order to develop a roadmap towards improved inclusion of vulnerable consumers in the service marketplace.
As such, the overarching framework that guides this study is Transformative Service Research (TSR). Transformative Service Research is a dynamic and interdisciplinary approach that encourages researchers to engage in a profound reimagining of their subjects, methodologies, and goals, with the ultimate aim of catalysing substantial and positive societal change (Anderson et al. 2013; Corus and Saatcioglu 2015; Alkire et al. 2020).

Within the Transformative Service Research framework, the profound enhancement of consumer well-being stands as a central theme (Anderson and Ostrom 2015; Rosenbaum 2015; Rahman 2021), often analysed through the possible applications of social marketing (Russell-Bennett et al. 2019; Cheung & McColl-Kennedy 2019; Johns 2020), value co-creation paradigms (Black and Gallan 2015; Dietrich et al. 2017; Hurley, Trischler and Dietrich 2018; Xie, Li and Keh 2020), and servicescapes design (Sheng, Siguaw and Simpson 2016; Patricio, Gustaffson and Fisk 2018; Rosenbaum et al. 2020).

Addressing vulnerability under the Transformative Service Research lens

Consumers frequently encounter vulnerability when engaging in service contexts, stemming from diverse factors such as economic, physical, social, and emotional considerations. Consumer vulnerability is indeed a multifaceted concept that has been addressed at length and from different perspectives in the marketing literature. As a working definition, we refer to the one developed by Baker et al. (2005, X), who defines it as:

> a state of powerlessness that arises from an imbalance in marketplace interactions or from the consumption of marketing messages and products. It occurs when control is not in an individual's hands, creating a dependence on external factors (e.g., marketers) to create fair- ness in the marketplace. The actual vulnerability arises from the *interaction* of personal states, personal characteristics, and external conditions within a context where consumption goals may be hindered and the experience affects personal and social perceptions of self.

Transformative Service Research takes on a vital role in the contemporary discourse surrounding vulnerable consumers, as it offers a promising avenue to address and ameliorate the unique challenges they face (Cheung and McColl-Kennedy 2019; Johns 2020). Vulnerable consumers are defined as consumers who are deemed to be disadvantaged in some manner, which could lead to their exclusion from or difficulty in obtaining services (Ng, Chuah & Nungsari 2022), unfair treatment while using services, or difficulties in withdrawing from services (Rosenbaum et al. 2017; Dodds et al. 2023).

Vulnerable consumers and trust

In specific situations, consumers may depend on an external party to make product choices, particularly when products are integral to a service encounter. During these instances, the concept of trust becomes especially significant, particularly when the consumer is in a vulnerable position. There is an extensive literature on the concept of trust in sociology and in market relationships: in this section we attempt to summarize some of the main theories and develop a definition that is useful for the purposes of this study. In his seminal work Trust and Power, Luhmann identifies the role of trust in managing complexity within decision-making processes; trust is what allows certainty to be created in an uncertain situation, thus enabling the individual to act (Luhmann 1979). Drawing on Luhmann's theory, Barber describes trust as a general expectation of a particular behavior from others over which

we have no control (Barber 1983). In accordance with this idea, Holmes and Rempel (1985) define it as the confidence to find what is desired rather than what is feared.

Trusting behavior has been broken down into different dimensions, depending on whether the motivation is positive affection for the object of trust (emotional trust) or rational reasons why it deserves trust (cognitive trust); very often it is the intersection of these two types of trust that produces different boundary states, ranging from panic (absence of both) to ideological trust (high levels of both) (Lewis and Weigert 1985). Johnson and Greyson (2005) expand by adding to the affective and cognitive ones a third dimension, the behavioral one. Again from a sociological perspective, Misztal takes a step beyond Luhmann (1979) by identifying three distinct roles that trust has in social life, namely habitus, passion, and policy (which links to three dimensions of social order: stability, cohesion, and cooperation); trust, for Misztal, is not something automatic, but is rather something that must be built and maintained (Misztal 1996). Drawing on this tradition, it is safe to posit that trust is something that without a certain amount of vulnerability would be unnecessary, since outcomes would be inconsequential for the trustor (Moorman et al. 1992).

In sum, in this study we initially interpret trust as the confidence and reliance placed in the service provider, with the expectation that he or she will act in the consumer's best interest, ensuring safety. It encompasses a sense of security and assurance that the service provider will consider and safeguard the well-being of the consumer, recognizing and addressing their vulnerabilities. Trust, in this sense, is a critical component in establishing relationship continuity and enhancement between service providers and vulnerable consumers. To comprehensively examine the dynamics of trust-building, this study investigates the interactions that vulnerable consumers experience throughout their consumer journey.

Exploring trust-centric touchpoints through customer journey mapping

In concert with the exploration of trust throughout their transformative service experiences, we examined the literature of Customer Journey Mapping (CJM). This model, sourced from the domain of service design, offers a structured framework for visualizing and comprehending the intricate pathways and touchpoints that consumers traverse during transformative service encounters (Tuenrat et al. 2021; Siebert et al. 2020). Customer Journey Mapping is therefore a visual depiction of the sequence of events through which customers may interact during an entire purchase or consumption process; touchpoints are depicted horizontally in accordance with a service timeline (Rosenbaum, Otalora and Ramirez 2016). Service design tools such as Customer Journey Mapping, often framed as a prototype within the design domain (Liedtka 2014; Følstad and Kvale, 2018), are useful to better understand consumers' behaviors and feelings; according to the Customer Journey Mapping model, the customer experience is structured in three distinct moments: preservice, service and after-service (Micheaux and Bosio 2019). The experience has in-situ transitional times both before and after it. Value is created by participation at this point, which is also likely the most intense time for interactions between the provider and the consumer (Yachin 2018). Customer Journey Mapping serves as a valuable model for not only identifying but also mitigating consumer vulnerability. By visualizing touchpoints where vulnerability may surface and potentially impact the consumer experience, this model becomes instrumental in addressing these concerns (Wunderlich et al., 2020).

Consequently, by leveraging customer journey mapping, this study is sustained by a detailed representation of out-of-home dining experiences for vulnerable consumers.

Research context and method

For the purpose of this study, the research context focuses on consumers with coeliac disease, a lifelong autoimmune disorder requiring a strict gluten-free diet (Ainsworth and Soon, 2023). Beyond health challenges, these individuals face lower quality of life, especially during travel (Muñoz-Mazón

et al., 2021; Fuentes-Moraleda et al., 2022) and events (Weber and Lugosi, 2021). The constant need for hypervigilance results in increased stress and fatigue (Wolf et al., 2018), intensified by social exclusion due to dietary requirements (White et al., 2016). Trust in service providers is vital for individuals with coeliac disease, ensuring genuinely gluten-free and safe food consumption. Trustworthy providers take precautions to prevent cross-contamination in their preparation processes.

The research adopts an interpretive phenomenological approach, emphasising the lived experience of individuals and revealing their reflexive, subjective accounts (van Manen, 1990). The focus is on understanding what it's like for vulnerable individuals to expose their health during a service encounter. In alignment with this focus, we employ a netnographic approach, offering a unique perspective into individuals' experiences enabling the exploration of the diverse perspectives and narratives coeliac consumers share online. The study rigorously followed Netnography's stages (Kozinets and Gretzel 2023); *initiation* has been enacted through close interactions with different stakeholders, such as the Italian national coeliac association, gastroenterologist and nutrition experts. In addition we were able to focus the research on a phenomenon engaging service providers that offer gluten-free menus. In this stage we also sought ethics approval. The research object required deep and intensive immersion, a process of experiencing, observing, reflecting, recording and turning back to the literature and to the stakeholders we engaged with initially.

The *investigation* phase, focused on extracting pre-existing digital footprints, involved the stages of search, discovery, and selective collection of digital traces (from the end of 2022 to present). The digital exploration triangulated different sources of data, ranging from industry reports, forums, and blogs before being channelled towards social media. The latter emerged as fertile ground for the exposure of users' personal experiences, providing a platform for storytelling and mutual engagement. Facebook, TikTok, Reddit, Instagram, and Twitter were the primary social media platforms analysed, totaling over 400 content items. Subsequently, Instagram and Twitter were excluded due to insufficient rich data on the topic signalling overall a less interactive and immersive data sites (Kozinets and Gretzel, 2023) Consequently, the research focused exclusively on Facebook, TikTok, and Reddit, platforms favoured by the coeliac community to share thoughts, ideas, and testimonials in both textual and visual formats. These digital spaces are rich sources of data relevant to the research, marked by a high level of community activity and interaction. Despite similar levels of activity and interaction across all three, the nature of data on each platform exhibits qualitative differences (see Table 1). Following a meticulous screening process, a total of 92 digital contents were identified, forming the basis for subsequent reflections. Consistent with the Customer Journey Map method, the collected testimonies were categorised into three temporal segments: *pre-consumption, during consumption,* and *post-consumption.* This chronological classification facilitated a thorough examination of the emotional, cognitive, and behavioural dimensions, recognized in the literature as the pillars of trust. The qualitative data have revealed the presence of additional dimensions, specifically the health and social dimensions, which hold particular relevance for vulnerable consumers. The three researchers, one of which coeliac, took an immersive journal along with the research. This tool allowed the researchers to have a common understanding of the ongoing research insights and led to the necessity to deepen specific aspects (interaction phase). In specific, one member of the research team was active in the interaction with coeliac members, eliciting specific aspects that were emerging from the ongoing analysis.

Table 1: Platforms, type of posts, narration and interaction

Platform	Type of posts	Role in narrating the experience	Interactions
TikTok	Short videos with overlaying text, role playing, rants	By adopting a mimicked narrative and physically showing oneself to the community, creators establish a more direct relationship and immediate empathy	Those who interact with such content show gratitude and solidarity with the creator, using the stylistic canons of TikTok

Facebook	Textual evidence, with fairly detailed and straightforward narratives, reviews, rants	Through didactic descriptions of experiences, users mainly try to convey useful information; the approach is less emotional.	Comments showing solidarity, expressing support and thanking for providing information.
Reddit	Different kinds of stories, rants, advice, memes	High level of irony and internet language, emotional storytelling	Textually rich comments, sharing of similar experiences

We systematically organised the data by categorising them according to the chronological order of events occurring during the out-of-home dining experience for individuals with celiac disease. The 92 digital traces have thus shaped a structured and dense customer journey of the celiac consumption experience at a restaurant.

Three temporal phases characterising the journey were delineated: the pre-consumption phase (comprising 32 digital contents), the consumption phase (comprising 30 digital contents), and the post-consumption phase (comprising 30 digital contents). Within these phases, micro-phases were highlighted: 1: The pre-consumption phase is characterised by: Information search, Community comparison post-research, Call: inquiry/reservation, Pre-ordering: observation of the venue and food safety habits, Ordering. 2: In the consumption phase, the various steps include: Dish preparation, Arrival of the dish at the table, Home delivery, Consumption. 3: In the post-consumption phase, we find: Staff-consumer interaction, Payment, Immediate post-consumption reaction, Long-term post-consumption reaction.

Due to length constraints, we present one table (Table 2) out of the three describing the coding process across the pre-consumption, consumption, and post-consumption phases. This table exhibits illustrative quotes corresponding to the well-established trust dimensions the literature offers (e.g. Misztal 1996) and the two novel dimensions that this study uncovers.

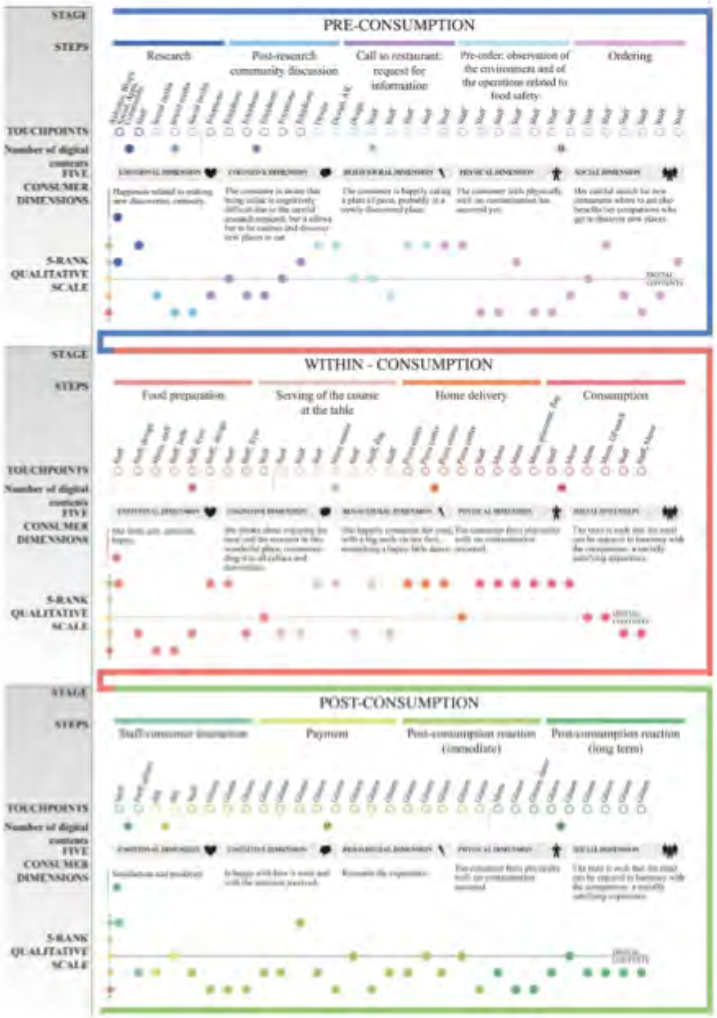
Table 2: pre-consumption coding description

STEPS	FIRST ORDER CONCEPTS	SECOND ORDER THEMES	AGGREGATED DIMENSIONS
Research	*"I was about to cry thinking about my celiac disease... Then I remembered. It allows me to be curious and discover many new places to eat."* - From TIKOTOK	The phase of finding a place suitable for coeliacs is experienced in a positive way because it allows the consumer to be curious and to find out about new places to eat.	**COGNITIVE DIMENSION**
Post-research community discussion	*"Restaurants are a crap shoot. People mean well but don't have the proper knowledge to make the call on GF or not. Even chain restaurants with initiatives to help us have individuals who don't care, don't believe gluten is really a problem, or they just mess up."* - From REDDIT	The discussion with the community highlights shared thoughts about the lack of trust in restaurants, which are seen as unsafe places to eat, due to staff often untrained to handle GF food and careless about coeliac disease, which is often underestimated.	**COGNITIVE DIMENSION**
Call to restaurant: request for information	*"I was told by a restaurant 'We don't accept celiacs here'... Not accepting someone in a public place, because of their disease and more, is a great form of discrimination."* - From TIKTOK	The restaurant staff tells the consumer that he is not welcome as a coeliac, causing him a strong sense of social exclusion and discrimination.	**SOCIAL DIMENSION + COGNITIVE DIMENSION + EMOTIONAL DIMENSION**

Pre - order: observation of the environment and of the operations related to food safety	*"I feel comforted that they have a separate oven and that they are an AIC point'.'* - From FACEBOOK	Thoughts comforted by the sight of the separate oven and AIC certification: the consumer thinks he is in a place prepared to receive coeliacs in the right way.	**COGNITIVE DIMENSION + EMOTIONAL DIMENSION**
Ordering	*Waitress to consumer: "But are you celiac a lot or a little?"* - From TIKTOK	The staff's incompetence in interacting with and serving the coeliac consumer causes her anger, frustration, and contamination alertness.	**EMOTIONAL DIMENSION + BEHAVIOURAL DIMENSION**

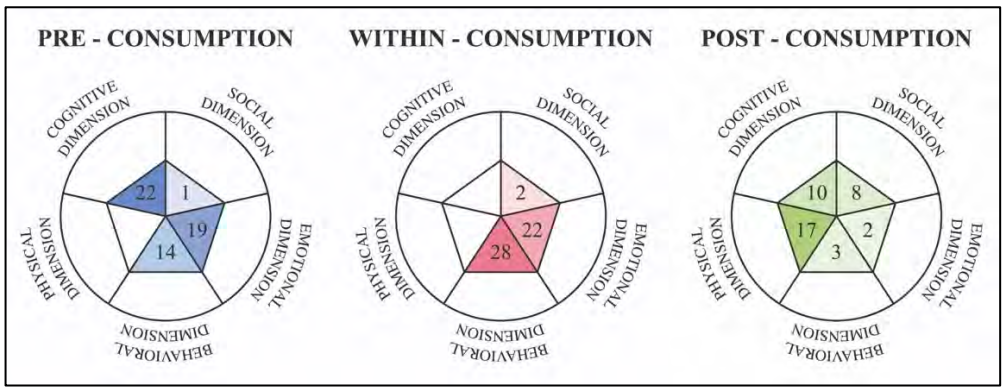
Figure 1 details the initial *integration phase* where analysis meets interpretation (kozinets and Gretzel, 2023). This phase where the 92 digital traces (video, screenshot, quote, comment) were analysed according to the corresponding touchpoints in the service, as well as the emotional, cognitive, behavioural, physical, and social dimensions. The data delineate the most relevant frustrations and pleasures that vulnerable consumers experience when dining out. Utilising a qualitative scale to indicate whether the experience represented low or high trust, we were able to define trust and its counterpart and opposing concept.

Figure 1: Data structure and analysis



The results have identified five distinct dimensions that encompass the multifaceted nature of trust among individuals with coeliac disease when dining outside their homes. Figure 2 positions the contents coeliac consumers share online within each phase of the customer journey.

Figure 2: Trust dimensions



Findings

Trust is crucial for coeliac consumers because their health depends on strict adherence to a gluten-free diet. The daily life of a coeliac is marked when eating out by heightened vulnerability, involving meticulous scrutiny of ingredients, communication of dietary restrictions, and a hyper vigilance against cross-contamination. Our findings show that this constant alertness affects self-esteem as individuals grapple with reconciling dietary limitations with their sense of self. Indeed, balancing the need for self-expression with the practical demands of their condition becomes an enduring internal struggle. Coeliac consumers face challenges extending beyond avoiding gluten-containing foods, with social implications often taking centre stage. Dining out can be daunting, leading to feelings of exclusion and a sense of being different or stigmatised. Economic challenges arise, as gluten-free options tend to be more expensive, impacting overall food expenses and sometimes causing issues with bill division. However, at the core of these challenges is the paramount issue of health. Consuming even a tiny amount of gluten can lead to debilitating health problems, fostering a hyper-vigilant approach to dining out. The fear of accidental gluten exposure, known as "getting glutened," contributes to the social and individual struggles coeliac individuals face.

Trust pillars in vulnerable consumers

The findings of our study have given rise to a consumer journey characterised by high trust, as well as an opposing consumer experience, characterised by dread and fear. When vulnerable consumers encounter trust, the following dimensions are positively fulfilled. The foundational dimensions of trust within the context of consumers who are considered vulnerable are synthetically described below.

Cognitive Dimension

The cognitive dimension of trust revolves around the acquisition and processing of information along the consumer journey. Coeliac consumers engage in extensive information-seeking behaviors, which include researching product reviews, electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM), and interacting with restaurant staff. Clear and precise communication from restaurant staff regarding the measures taken to safeguard the health of individuals with coeliac disease is vital within this dimension. Trust in this context is contingent upon the accurate and transparent dissemination of information.

Affective (Emotional) Dimension

The affective (emotional) dimension of trust pertains to the style and tone of communication. It involves the empathy and emotional connection that restaurant staff can establish with coeliac customers. Effective communication that conveys empathy and understanding is key to building trust. Additionally, testimonials and experiences shared on social media platforms, characterized by a more emotional and empathetic style, can influence trust perceptions in this dimension.

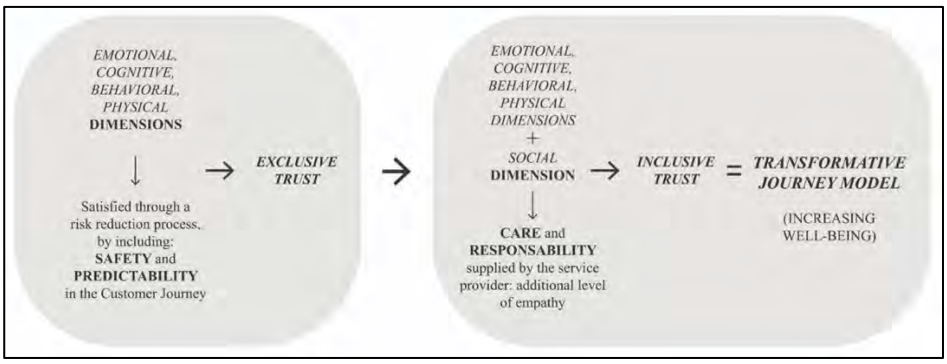
Behavioural Dimension
The behavioural dimension encompasses the observable evidence of attentiveness to vulnerability and adherence to safety protocols. This dimension includes elements of service design and the physical manifestations of meticulous adherence to safety and dietary requirements. Trust in this dimension is contingent upon the visible commitment to providing a safe dining experience for individuals with coeliac disease.

Social Dimension
The social dimension delves into the realm of social inclusion and exclusion, both in interactions with service providers and in peer-to-peer relations with fellow diners. Certain attitudes and behaviours can impact the self-perception of individuals with coeliac disease within social settings, potentially leading to feelings of marginalisation and unpleasant dining experiences. Trust in this dimension is contingent upon feeling socially included and accepted.

Physical Dimension
The physical dimension primarily concerns the health and well-being of individuals with coeliac disease. It typically occurs post-consumption and is characterised by the desire to avoid adverse health consequences. Coeliac consumers live with a baseline level of stress, as they are aware that even a minor oversight in food preparation or handling could lead to uncomfortable or even severe health issues in the aftermath of consumption. Trust in this dimension is closely tied to the preservation of psychophysiological health.

As Figure 3 shows, trust in vulnerable consumers can be defined as the result of experiencing a safe, predictable service that satisfies emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and physical dimensions, leading to a first partial version of "exclusive" trust. When the social dimension as well is addressed, a higher level of trust, an "inclusive" trust, occurs. The consumer is engaged in an empathic relationship with both fellow diners and the restaurant staff and is aware of a service provider who takes responsibility with care. The proposed model suggests that when vulnerable consumers experience the integration of exclusive and inclusive trust, a transformative service is enacted and leads to an enhanced consumers' well-being. A full engagement in the consumption journey is characterised by a lessening of stress in favour of well-being, directing the individual towards a sense of hedonic and social pleasure.

Figure 3: A transformative journey model - from consumers' exclusive to inclusive trust



Our findings emphasise that when focusing on vulnerable consumers who expose their health, the opposite experience of trust is not merely distrust or mistrust. The construct this research offers goes far beyond the idea of a simple low-trust scenario. When trust is absent, it gives rise to feelings of dread in the consumer. In essence, the opposite of trust is identified as dread, rather than distrust.

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Skyward inclusion: Transforming the aviation ecosystem for people living with dementia and their travel companions.

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Extended Abstract

To promote individual well-being, it is essential to develop inclusive service models that specifically address the needs of marginalized and disadvantaged consumers (Fisk et al., 2018; Patrick & Hollenbeck, 2021). Transformative service research (TSR) suggests that adopting a strengths-based approach can empower customers, enabling them to actively participate in breaking down structural and systematic barriers (Fisk et al., 2023). This is a societal mission that involves multiple stakeholders across different contexts (Field et al., 2021). This study focuses on the aviation industry, specifically addressing people living with dementia (PLWD) and their travel companions, as they are often marginalized consumers. The study has three objectives: First, to ensure universal access to air travel services, mitigating marginalization. Second, to broaden consumer engagement with air travel services, especially those with unique needs like PLWD. Third, to promote cultural understanding and empathy in service design and delivery.

We conducted a netnography (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2023) to collect personal air travel stories of PLWD. Setting up a private research forum on Reddit, we invited ten participants, including PLWD, their travel companions, and family members. We chose Reddit as our platform because it was free, easily accessible, widely used, and allowed participants to remain anonymous. This study lasted for six weeks.

Our analysis revealed six prominent themes: (1) having skilled service personnel is crucial in recognizing and addressing the needs of PLWD; (2) disclosure can empower PLWD and secure tailored support; (3) navigating the digital divide by welcoming alternatives to self-service technologies among less tech-savvy PLWD; (4) accessibility champions such as airports, airlines, retailers, and collaborators can proactively create environments and services supporting PLWD; (5) the impact of global awareness on interactions between PLWD and fellow passengers; and (6) crowdsourcing solutions, leveraging insights from PLWD and advocates to generate ideas for enhancing inclusivity and accessibility.

This research advocates for developing service systems that are tailored to enhance the well-being of PLWD, utilizing netnography for inclusivity. The findings will inform the redesign of air travel services to address the specific challenges of this group, with the ultimate goal of providing barrier-free travel experiences.

Keywords: air travel, customer experience, netnography, service inclusion, service research

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From stigma to being cool: Neurodiversity in social media.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction and purpose

The social model problematizes neurodiversity not as an individual medical condition but as a phenomenon that is socially constructed. Being neurodivergent is just a different expression of human existence, involving different ways of sensing, communicating, and socializing. It is increasingly being recognized, moreover, that these differences are not necessarily a disadvantage to the individual (Ortega, 2009) but are alternate and acceptable forms of human neurology.

This paper investigates how social media platforms play a significant role in challenging the stigma (Arsel et al., 2022; Eichert et al., 2022) associated with a neurodivergent condition (Go and Ahmed, 2022), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) by fostering awareness, providing support, and promoting understanding. Social media seems to erode a social stigma of shame and defeat through easily digestible, rapid-fire information. However, ADHD is also increasingly portrayed and embraced as a socially trendy, fun, and even desirable condition. What role does social media play in shaping these contrasting perspectives?

Methodology
The research adopts an interpretive approach, emphasizing the lived experience of individuals and revealing their reflexive, subjective accounts. The focus is on understanding how ADHD consumers experience and share online the condition of neurodiversity. In alignment with this focus, we employ a netnographic approach (Kozinets and Gretzel, 2024), offering a unique perspective into ADHD's experiences enabling the exploration of the struggles and coping strategies that are shared on Reddit and on TikTok. To ensure a phenomenological approach and understand the nuanced meanings embedded in the shared narratives, this study employs interactive, in-depth interviews. The participants include 8 individuals diagnosed with ADHD and 8 non-diagnosed counterparts, all exposed to ADHD-related content on social media.

Findings
While recognizing that the social media digital traces we've examined represent trends in the use of visual media and digital space, not broader societal trends, a paradox still appears to emerge. The preliminary results of this study highlight that individuals with ADHD encounter more than just societal stigma; the most significant impact often arises from self-stigmatization. In this process, individuals with ADHD internalize negative stereotypes, expressing sentiments such as "I just can't make it". Nonetheless, while social media provides a platform for individuals with ADHD to express and confront this stigma, it also fosters an intense identification among non-diagnosed individuals who resonate with the symptoms discussed online. This shared connection appears to serve as a justification for daily frustrations, failures, and inefficiencies, functioning as a coping strategy that de-responsibilizes individuals from these challenges.

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14h00 – 15h30 - Full length presentations (Session 18) [SA010 Barelli]
Session Chair: Rebecca Pera
"Navigating branding opportunities and tensions through netnography"

1) Almaghrabi, T., Heller, M., Chelekis, J., Memes in Marketing: A Study on the Legitimate Use of Internet Memes by Brands.
2) Biraghi, S., Gambetti, R., Cova, B., Fangame Netnography: When Brand Hijack Fosters Brand Revitalization.
3) Heinze, A., Malevicious, R., Serwanski, T., Netnographic insights into woke washing: how to increase the transparency in brand communications.
4) Arshad, M.H., Exploring why Brand Hate is expressed on Brand Publics.

Memes in Marketing: A Study on the Legitimate Use of Internet Memes by Brands.
Tala Almaghrabi[1], Michael Heller[2], Jessica Chelekis[1]

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Extended Abstract
This research adopts a community perspective to explore how brands can use internet memes legitimately. Internet memes are important artefacts for online socialisation, with over 1 million memes shared daily on Instagram alone. Shaped by ongoing communication and shared insider knowledge, memes both mirror and mould the culture of online communities. As brands venture onto social media, their goal is often to actively participate in online conversations, capitalizing on viral trends and memes. However, a disparity exists between the perspectives of marketing practitioners, and online users. While practitioners value memes due to their ability to generate "viral content," online users signal the "demise" of a meme when adopted by corporations, whose usage of memes is deemed inorganic.

Memes and their relevance for marketers have gained traction amongst researchers: Malodia et al. (2022) and Teng et al. (2021) provides valuable insights into the strategic usage of memes to enhance brand engagement online. However, they tend to place a strong focus on virality, potentially oversimplifying the intricate dynamics of online communities. Additionally, Sharma's (2018) study explores consumer motivations for engaging with brand memes, with a specific emphasis on individual behaviour. This perspective contrasts with Kozinets' (1999) emphasis on collective interactions shaping online digital culture. Our study seeks to contribute by foregrounding the networked structure of online communities when exploring the interplay between brands, memes, and communities, enhancing understanding of memes' role within brand-consumer dynamics.

The paper explores the interactions between brands and users within the Curly Hair Community. The researcher observed the community's utilisation of memes, and their interaction with brands' memes on Instagram over 18 months. Data was collected via screenshots of posts, comments, and field notes. Discourse analysis was employed to analyse the data at three levels: linguistic, discursive, and social practice (Fairclough, 2013), building an understanding of the processes through which authenticity is constructed within the sociocultural context of the community, and how this enables or restricts brands from engaging with meme culture.

Findings reveal that brands use memes to align with the lived experiences and cultural meanings significant to community members. This cements the brand into the collective memory of the community, which enables them to legitimately mobilise shared meanings through memes. This paper holds value for marketing researchers and social media marketing managers, providing insights into the dynamics of brand integration within online communities.

Keywords: internet memes, social media marketing, discourse analysis.

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Fangame Netnography: When Brand Hijack Fosters Brand Revitalization.

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Extended Abstract

Like any other organism, brands are subject to a cycle of adaptions, transformations, and evolutions. To manage their life cycle brands can enact revitalization strategies (Dion & Mazzalovo, 2016). However, alterations can be done by consumers who take ownership of brand meanings, values, symbols, and offerings. In some extreme cases of appropriation, brands are hijacked by consumers (Wipperfürth, 2005, Nakassis, 2013). Extant literature on brand revitalization and brand hijack have been developed as two separate bodies. But are these two phenomena truly separated?

Our research investigates how a brand hijack can lead to and even speed up brand revitalization. We explore the micro-creative forces and social powers that are in actions and come to interplay when a declining brand is hijacked by consumers.

For our study we have chosen the brand Festival di Sanremo. Although the Festival represents the major singing event in Italy and an iconic brand platform that is capable of mobilizing cultural, business, and media attention, it has been facing a major decline. Starting from 2022, a fantasy fan-made game – FantaSanremo – in which players create teams out of the competing artists to gain bonuses and maluses, which are awarded based on actions performed by the artists or events during the Festival, has been capable of shaking the dust out of the Festival.

Considering the social and conversational essence of the dynamics activated by the Festival and FantaSanremo, we are conducting a longitudinal netnography (Kozinets, 2020) to unpack how brand hijack can lead to an immediate revitalization of a declining brand. We engaged in an immersive and multimodal collection of the digital traces of the interactions that FantaSanremo generated since its inception. In our investigative phase, we started with retrieving FantaSanremo archival material published from February 2022 to 2024. We followed FantaSanremo owned channels. We generated a set of hashtags that we used to locate relevant social media discussions, topics, users, artists, celebrities, influencers, brands, and sponsors. We collected data from Instagram, TikTok, X, Telegram, Youtube, Facebook, and Threads. This investigation led us to uncover broad networks of interplays among the actors involved in the fan-game and Festival experience that continuously expanded the boundaries of our data site mapping, making us wonder if web crawling/scraping tools were necessary to optimize and complete our data collection.

We kept immersion journals and we produced thoroughly curated multi-textual artifacts that facilitated comparisons, reflections, and interpretations.

To better understand how Fantasanremo has altered how the Festival is perceived and experienced we designed an interactive phase in which we created Whatsapp groups where we collected real-time observational and interactive data with selected participants, who have created their FantaSanremo teams. We also took part in the live Telegram group dedicated to Fantasanremo.

Our longitudinal netnography is still under construction and we are now collecting data from edition FantaSanremo2024 to investigate over a broader span of time the trajectory of appropriation, friction, and co-option that are at play in the revitalization of the Festival di Sanremo brand.

Netnographic insights into woke washing: how to increase the transparency in brand communications.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

In the face of escalating trigger events like wars, pandemics, and social movements, corporations are under increasing pressure to act responsibly and uphold shared values. Often these communications are without base - what is referred to as "woke washing". By incorporating a cultural understanding of these practices through netnography (Kozinets, 2020), the paper aims to significantly reduce the risk of deceptive communication and increase transparency.

Literature Review

This study builds upon established research, such as Creating Shared Value (Porter, Kramer, 2011) and Stakeholder Management Theory (Freeman, Harrison and Zyglidopoulos, 2018). But especially the latter theory was developed first in the age of non-digital world - now it has a different meaning with the emergence of technocultures (Kozinets, 2022) and online environments playing a major impact on brands and their long term strategies. Organisations are expected to communicate openly and act as activists at the intersection of culture and society (Gambetti and Biraghi, 2023). This shift has left many unprepared, resulting in a surge of "woke washing" (Vredenburg et al., 2020). The challenge lies partly in the absence of a universally accepted sustainability-related communications framework.

Methods

To initiate our research, we utilised comprehensive and regularly updated publicly available databases on corporate responses to to Russian aggression, such as decision to stay or leave in the market, maintained by the Yale School of Management and the Kiev School of Economics. Three netnographers immersed themselves in the brand communities of McDonald's, Auchan, and Nestlé in France, Poland, and the UK, utilising social media platforms such as LinkedIn, X, Instagram, and Reddit. Russia is not used in the sample since the use of social media is highly restricted, censored and policed with a lot of disinformation. Using the PLANET framework (developed for a forthcoming publication; see Figure 1), we meticulously analysed corporate communications and actions during the ongoing conflict. In contrast to other studies, we complemented qualitative discourse analysis (QDA) of organisational messages with an extensive netnography of the brands' online communities, exploring and identifying new issues which might not be present in the earlier studies.

Findings

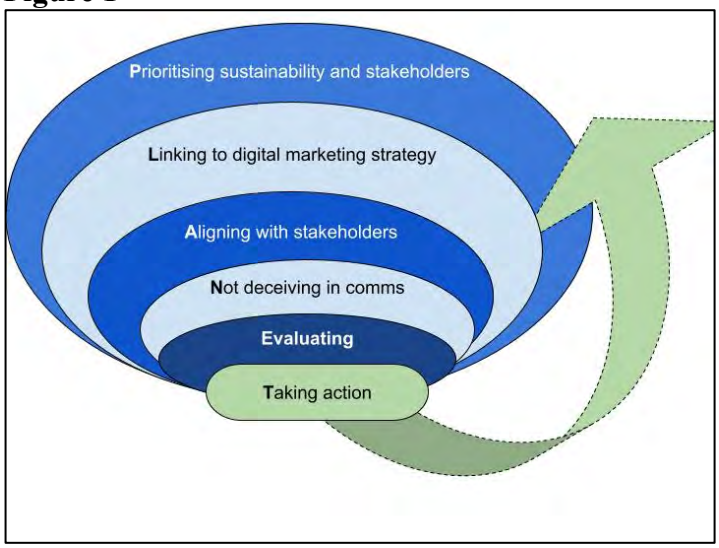
The data insights provide rich perspective on the three ideal types representing different organisational behaviour within the PLANET framework, : companies that behaved commendable in the face of new events ("The Good Company"), those that lost their way ("The Lost Company"), and those that simply behaved poorly ("The Ugly Company").

Discussion and contributions

The ongoing conflict presents a significant ethical dilemma for organisations, especially large multinationals struggling to meet the demands of all stakeholders. In navigating the increasing public pressure to be ethically responsible amongst external events like Black Lives Matter, the Russia-Ukraine war, the Israel-Palestine conflict, and the #MeToo movement organisations require a

profound cultural guide. The PLANET framework, empowered by netnography, offers a practical guide to help organisations systematically navigate this ethical decision-making process and prevent "woke washing".

Figure 1



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Exploring why Brand Hate is expressed on Brand Publics.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction and Research Aim
This study aims to explore why consumers express the brand hate on brand publics in the context of fast fashion brand H&M. Brand hate is defined as the constellation of negative emotion felt and expressed towards the brands (Kucuk 2021). Brand Public is defined as the media space where brand related content is generated and circulated on social media platforms (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016). The study focuses on why brand hate is expressed on brand publics.

Methodology
This study employs netnography to address the research aims, building on the common use of netnographic methods in exploring anti-consumption within consumer culture studies (Cova and White 2010; Dessart and Cova 2021; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Popp et al. 2016). The initial phase involved selecting H&M as the focal brand, chosen after a thorough evaluation process that shortlisted leading brands based on size and market dominance (Kucuk 2008). H&M, as a prominent brand in the fast fashion industry, was expected to attract more instances of brand hate, given the negative double jeopardy effect.
The chosen social media platforms for data collection were YouTube and Twitter, aligning with the passionate expressions found on these platforms (Kozinets 2019) . YouTube videos featuring anti-

H&M content were selected, and their transcripts, along with comments, were obtained using VOSON and Google API key. For Twitter, thirty-five search queries were developed using negative terms and expressions associated with H&M, drawing from previous studies (Mondal et al. 2017) and identification of negative emotion expressions on anti-brand websites (Kucuk, 2008). The data collected spanned from 2016 to 2022, covering major H&M controversies related to racism, greenwashing, copyright infringement, and more.
Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase thematic analysis method was applied to analyse the collected data, aiming to identify patterns and themes related to anti-consumption dynamics directed at H&M.

Findings
The findings uncover several reasons behind the expression of brand hate on public platforms. Firstly, individuals utilize brand hate to assert their distinctiveness from mainstream consumers, emphasizing a refusal to conform to the crowd. Secondly, consumers feel excluded and ostracized by the brand, prompting expressions of brand hate. The third reason revolves around the celebration of one's self-transformation, leveraging brand hate as a marker of personal growth. The fourth reason for expressing brand hate is rooted in the desire to showcase superior taste, positioning oneself as a discerning individual. The fifth reason involves empathy, as consumers express brand hate in solidarity with those who have felt negatively about themselves due to the brand. Lastly, the sixth reason for brand hate pertains to the rejection of imposed standards by brands, reflecting a stance against norms deemed unacceptable. These diverse reasons elucidate the motivations behind consumers' expressions of brand hate on brand publics

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14h00 – 15h30 - Full length presentations (Session 19) [SA 116 Schuster]
Session Chair: Michael Mulvey
"Digital visibility and authenticity"

1) Sanyal, J., Consumer Visibility: How visibility dynamics shape identity in the SMI marketplace.

2) Ahmed, I., Alwi, S., Asaad, Y., Visibility through clutter: How could brands cut through advertising clutter on Instagram?.
3) Campbell, V., Maximising social media engagement in the future: Building authentic relationships via Facebook. A not-for-profit case study.

Consumer Visibility: How visibility dynamics shape identity in the SMI marketplace.

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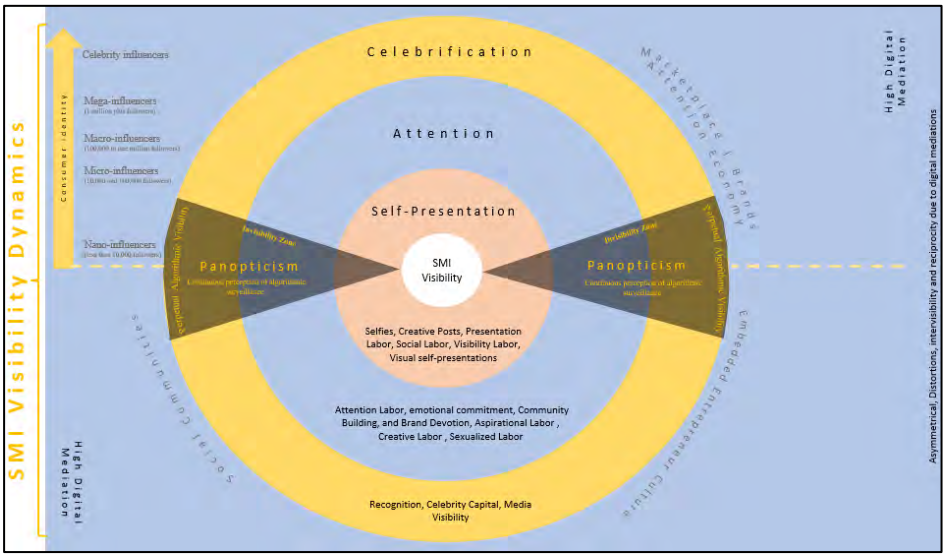
Extended Abstract

Visibility is a paramount phenomenon in consumer society. The relevance of consumer visibility has significantly increased in recent days, along with the emergence of self. Over time, individual selves have started exploring their boundaries on digital environments massively, allowing consumer identities to extend their selves (Belk 1988, 2013), functioning with multiple digital identities (Kerrigan & Har, 2016) and giving birth of new visual culture (Peñaloza,1998; Iqani,2013). The recent developments in social media technologies have made it conceivable for ordinary consumers to reach a mass audience; a new form of consumer visibility trend has been noticed in the last decade or so (McQuarrie et al., 2013). One of the prevalent practices in today's visual culture is the influence of creators and influencers on consumers (Kozinets, Gretzel & Gambetti, 2023). The SMI capital (Freberg et al., 2011) has continued to gain prominence as a crucial part of businesses' digital marketing strategies as consumers depend more and more on collaborative communications. Furthermore, for campaigns to be developed successfully for businesses in 2023, an understanding of social trends and adjustments to influencer marketing techniques will be essential, along with an understanding of consumer visibility dynamics (Forbs, 2022). Thus, the increasing prevalence of social media culture has made consumer visibility a decisive factor in SMI practices.

Figure 1 - Visibility dynamics framework for SMI practices



Consumer identity (Kerrigan & Har, 2016) manifests various visibility dimensions (Fig. 1) on social media platforms based on efforts (Goffman, 1959, Anderson et al., 2016; Abidin, 2015, 2016; Duffy, 2016) and follower-size (Freberg et al., 2011). Nevertheless, self-presentation (Goffman,1959; Abidin, 2016, 2021; Wies et al., 2023), attention (Goldhaber, 1997; Nelson-Field, 2020; Duffy 2021; Kubler, 2023), celebrification (Bourdieu, 1986, 1993; Boorstin, 1961; Heinich, 2012; Driessens,

2013; Brooks et al., 2021) and panopticism (Foucault,1977; Bucher, 2012; Bishop, 2019) are the most prominent ones. Self-presentation-based SMI visibility is the foundation on which influencers start manifesting their selves on numerous digital platforms by adding glorifying images, circulating selfies (Duffy & Wissinger, 2017), textual content, video filters, attractive video thumbnails, storytelling ideas (Suhr, 2014), and thus gradually attain web-based visibility (Audrezet et al., 2020). Furthermore, attention as SMI visibility is a crucial aspect of consumer visibility, which deals which high-end self-presentation along with monetization (Goldhaber,1997). At this stage, the consumer (SMI) identity evolved and manages the attention of followers and fans on a regular basis. The idea of visibility as surveillance in SMI literature is deeply inspired by Foucault's Panopticism concept, the architectural construction of visibility (Foucault, 1977). Lastly, SMI visibility as celebrification, when the SMI gets attention and involves in monetizing visibility (celebrity capital), hence, achieves celebrity status.

The aim of the research is to find out how consumer visibility shapes identity in SMI marketplace. With the help of netnographic research and online interviews with nano and micro-level influencers from heterogeneous fields, we will examine the various visibility factors responsible to enhance the SMI identity w.r.t key SMI visibility dimensions i.e., self-presentation, attention, and panopticism. In our fieldwork, we are not considering the SMI visibility dimension as celebrification.

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Visibility through clutter: How could brands cut through advertising clutter on Instagram?.

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Extended Abstract

Rationale and Gap: Emerging restaurant ventures increasingly turn to Instagram to enhance their brand visibility, drawn by its intuitive interface, cost-effectiveness, and broad accessibility. This trend is especially notable in the Middle Eastern food and beverage sector, which has emerged as one of the world's fastest-growing food service markets, offering opportunities for both local and international restaurant chains (Allen, 2017). However, amid this rapid growth, many small-scale eateries encounter difficulties in attracting consumer attention to their Instagram pages, primarily due to the abundance of advertising clutter (Kusumasondjadja & Tjiptono, 2019).
One potential solution to mitigate this clutter is to provide marketers with clear guidelines on executing a "prelaunch marketing campaign" rather than a "post-launch" strategy (Marvel et al., 2020). Rathore and Ilavarasan (2020) explain that post-launch marketing techniques are not applicable during the prelaunch phase, as they rely on factors such as consumer feedback on social media following product or service trials. Conversely, prelaunch initiatives aim to generate anticipation and excitement around forthcoming offerings. Nevertheless, empirical research on

effectively conducting prelaunch campaigns and identifying the essential elements for capturing attention remains limited.

Objective: Therefore, the study aims to delve into the prelaunch framework and provide insights to restaurant owners on effectively garnering consumer attention on their Instagram page, enhancing engagement, and driving foot traffic to their establishments from the earliest stages of their operations.

Method: This research employs a mixed methods approach, namely (1) netnography, (2) in-depth interviews, (3) experiments and (4) Survey. First, to identify the critical factors for customers during the prelaunch campaign, we conducted an exploratory netnography study to gauge Arab peoples' perceptions of food advertisements on social media, along with in-depth interviews. Netnography is crucial for exploring Arab consumer culture online, given the significant cultural role of food in Arabic society (Rearick, 2009). Specifically, we observed reviews and comments from several online communities, using publicly available postings to study selected phenomena (Kozinets, 2019). The first stage involved observing communication in trending webpages about the critical elements leading to the "intention to explore" and "intention to engage". Subsequently, these reviews and comments were analysed using NVivo. Six main Instagram pages were utilised, representing online reviews from food bloggers, chefs, and food influencers (e.g., pages such as @FajerHayat, @AlaaAlsafi, @yo3aan, @kravekw, and @Bal3ah). Finally, we collected 1573 reviews and upon analysis, a research framework is developed.

Findings: Our netnography findings mainly reveal fascinating rituals, motivations, and meanings that Arab foodies attribute to food adverts. For example, Arab foodies engage better with ironic novel food adverts than traditional adverts. Additionally, the interview findings guided us to an experiment where a specific factor—irony—was tested with 60 samples (using two experimental designs). The final step involves validating the entire model through a causal investigation.

Contribution: Theoretically, a prelaunch advertising campaign model is developed and tested; practically, the study sheds light on the advertising messages to convey within the Arabic food business in the early stage of brand positioning and guides practitioners on designing a prelaunch via Instagram.

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Maximising social media engagement in the future: Building authentic relationships via Facebook. A not-for-profit case study.

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Extended Abstract

The World Health Organisation (WHO) says that breastfeeding is the "ideal food for infants" and yet, less then 50% of babies globally, are exclusively breastfed at 6 months (World Health Organisation, n.d.). In Australia, 96% of babies are breastfed at least once but, only 35% are exclusively breastfed to 6 months of age (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023). The health, environmental and economic benefits of breastfeeding are well documented (WHO, n.d.; Smith 2019; Pereyra- Elías et al. 2022) and the Australian government has a published strategy advocating to support breastfeeding in the community "for as long as the mother and child desire" (NHMRC, 2015). A non-profit, volunteer powered organisation called, Australian Breastfeeding Association (ABA), provide nation-wide support for Australian mums and their families who wish to breastfeed. They are "Australia's leading authority on breastfeeding" (Health Direct, n.d.) and the only nation-wide support service offering a 24-7 breastfeeding hotline (1300 MUM 2 MUM) and a network of qualified breastfeeding counsellors who can support families in their own communities.

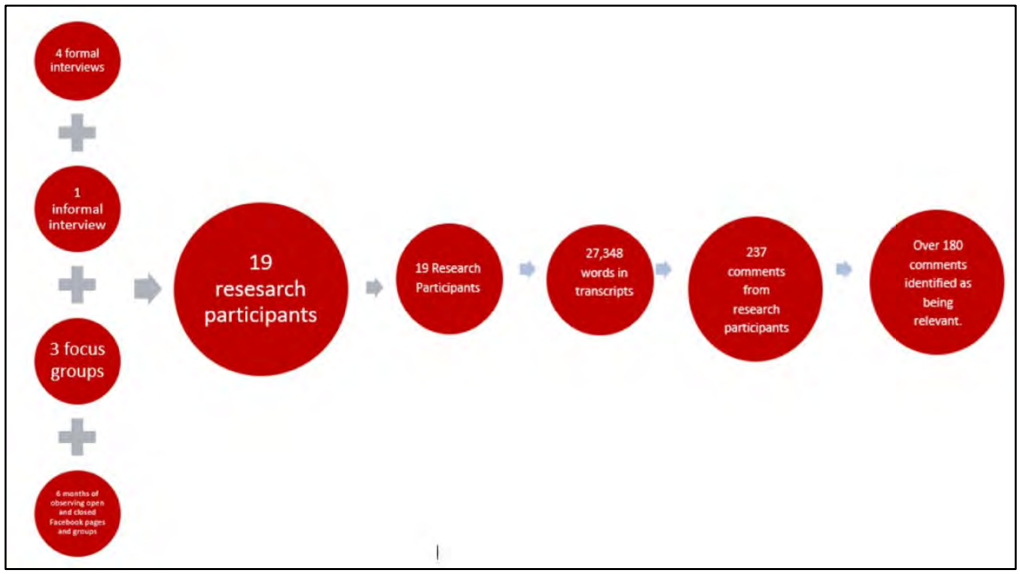
ABA, like many Australian not-for-profits are experiencing challenges in building authentic relationships that see their social media followers engage with the organisation in real life (Haruvy & Popkowski, 2024). There is increased competition for donations and funding (Davis, 2023; Farrow & Yuan, 2011) as well as challenges recruiting and retaining volunteers (McLennan, 2005) which has intensified since Covid with 42% of Australian charities feeling they won't achieve pre-Covid levels of volunteering (Volunteering Australia, 2021).

This research project used a netnographic case study to explore what ABA could do through their Facebook communication to build stronger online relationships that in turn would motivate followers to develop real world participation in the organisation. This real-world interaction could result in increased participation in mother-to-mother support events, increased membership, recruiting trainees and receiving donations. These manifestations help not-for-profits remain relevant, viable and in a position to help those who they were established to assist.

Schoenmaker's (2014) framework of conversing, sharing, connecting, engaging and relating was used to conceptualise a progression of different levels of relating from online connection to physical world relationship. It also used Bridges' (2016) categorisation of the engagement increasing factors of support, community, complementary and immediacy, to understand how to foster relating via Facebook communication. Feelings of relating a fundamental in building authentic relationships.

The research found that Facebook followers who share their experiences, respond to others, and engage in dialogue are more likely to feel invested in their Facebook community, and are more willing to explore relating to the not-for-profit in real life. These sharing and dialogic outcomes are more likely to occur in closed Facebook groups than open, public pages and sites. Users feel that the experiences, interactions and relationships are more authentic in closed Facebook spaces and therefore they are more inclined to build authentic relationships due to feeling safe and respected by the online community. It also found that the promotion of events via Facebook is a multiplier for online followers to move to real world engagement. Facebook pages and Facebook groups serve different communication purposes. Pages are good for one-way communication (Grunig, 1992) in which the association relays organisational messages revolving around education, sales, calls for donations and branding (Macnamara, 2014). Whereas a closed Facebook group is good for encouraging co-creation and is more likely to foster two-way communication (Grunig, 1992).

Figure 1: Research process at a glance.



Keywords: authentic, relationships, Facebook, Engagement, charities, connecting

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Mañago Maria Margarita
Mattias Giada
Ménard Frédérique
Qian Shiyu (Ann)
Rabio Alia
Rozo Bernal Valentina
Santanni Matteo
Soler Alvarex Beatriz
Zagni Luca Matteo