



HAL
open science

Moments of luxury: Hedonic escapism as a luxury experience

J. Holmqvist, C. Diaz Ruiz, L. Peñaloza

► **To cite this version:**

J. Holmqvist, C. Diaz Ruiz, L. Peñaloza. Moments of luxury: Hedonic escapism as a luxury experience: .. Journal of Business Research, 2020, 10.1016/j.jbusres.20 . hal-03415205

HAL Id: hal-03415205

<https://hal.science/hal-03415205>

Submitted on 21 Jun 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Moments of Luxury: Hedonic escapism as a luxury experience

Jonas Holmqvist

Kedge Business School
680 cours de la Libération,
33400 Talence, France
jonas.holmqvist@kedgebs.com

Carlos Diaz Ruiz

The University of Auckland, Graduate School of Management
Owen G. Glenn Building, 12 Grafton Road,
Private Bag 92019, Auckland 1142, New Zealand
c.diazruiz@auckland.ac.nz

Lisa Peñaloza

Kedge Business School
680 cours de la Libération,
33400 Talence, France
lisa.penaloza@kedgebs.com

Moments of Luxury: Hedonic escapism as a luxury experience

Abstract:

Understanding how consumers experience luxury represents a challenge; despite the rapid growth of luxury experiences over the past decade, luxury research remains focused on a product-logic. In responding to calls for more research into luxury experiences, we draw from a three year ethnographic study in theorizing “moments of luxury,” which we define as a collectively based, consumer-driven experience that features hedonic escapism and modifications to conventional luxury characteristics. Consumption experiences become luxurious as consumers forge an unconventional form of exclusivity that builds upon aesthetic dress and movement, authentic history and decor, and exclusivity-by-practice, in achieving temporally brief, hedonic escapes from everyday life. The findings provide insights for providers of consumer experiences and for established luxury brands, both through the focus on the role of hedonic escapism in forming consumers’ luxury experiences and through the identification of an alternative form of exclusivity.

Key Words: Luxury, experience, escapism, hedonism, ethnography,

“Dance, like you’ve never been hurt, like you’ve never been sad, baby,

Dance, like this beautiful moment is all that you have”

Mark Wills, Like There’s No Yesterday

1. Introduction

How do consumers experience luxury, and what do we mean by experiencing luxury? Most luxury definitions focus on high-quality products sold at exuberant prices (see Ko, Costello, & Taylor, 2019 for a review of luxury definitions), and the conventional understanding of luxury remains centered on how wealthy consumers display signals to convey social exclusivity (Grossman & Shapiro 2008; Han, Nunes & Drèze 2010; Kapferer & Bastien 2009). In contrast to this conceptualization of luxury as signals of wealth, the last decade has witnessed an increased interest in luxury as a consumer experience, to include how consumers experience “little luxuries” through personal indulgences (Bauer, von Wallpach, & Hemetsberger, 2011; Hemetsberger, von Wallpach, & Bauer, 2012), and how the luxury experience is transformative (Llamas & Thomsen 2016). This article posits an alternative conceptualization of the luxury experience as a hedonic escape from the worries of everyday life. We argue that the role of escapism is cardinal to understanding consumer experiences, yet poorly conceptualized in the literature (see Cova, Carù & Cayla 2018).

As luxury experiences now represent the fastest-growing part of the luxury industry (Müller-Stewens & Berghaus 2014), an experiential approach is gaining ground in luxury research, with research on experiences such as wine tourism (Vo Thanh & Kirova 2018), designer boutiques (Atwal & Williams 2009), and hospitality services (Pullman & Gross 2003). One common theme in the emerging literature on luxury experiences is that the luxury experience is hedonic. For example, Atwal and Williams (2009) show that consumers may enhance everyday life with a taste of luxury by adding hints of hedonism to break their

everyday routines. This aspect of consumption is widespread, as evident in infusing hints of luxury into everyday life through small indulgences (Bauer et al. 2011; Hemetsberger et al. 2012), such as self-gifting a barista-brewed craft coffee during an otherwise monotonous workday. The little luxury thus becomes a small hedonic break.

In this article, we recognize that hedonism is crucial, yet we argue that hedonism alone is not enough to characterize a “moment of luxury”. We build on Kapferer and Bastien (2009) who argue that the literature on democratization of luxury is mistaken in saying that indulgence is enough. According to Kapferer and Bastien, exclusivity, in the form of social stratification, is crucial for luxury, yet missing from mere indulgence. If the luxury moment were only about hedonism, then every fun moment would be luxury. Something more is required to define the experience, but there is a gap in the current research on how this experience might look. We set out to address this research gap through the following question: what constitutes a moment of luxury for consumers? More precisely, what are the elements and processes that come together to form the experience of the moment of luxury?

To answer this question, we conducted a three year ethnographic study immersed in communities engaging in a hedonic experience: salsa events. Salsa is not luxury in a conventional understanding, yet definitions of luxury evolve over time (Cristini et al. 2017). A high price is often seen to define of luxury (Han et al. 2010). However, Kapferer and Bastien (2009; 2012) argue that price alone is not enough for luxury. Something more is needed; they propose that exclusivity is key to luxury, but recognize aspects including hedonism, aesthetics and authenticity. We extend this understanding by positing that not only is price not the *only* determinant of luxury – perhaps price is not needed for all luxury? We agree with Kapferer and Bastien (2009) that exclusivity is crucial, and we extend their definition by arguing that exclusivity can be achieved in other ways than price. Hence we do not propose that all salsa is luxury, but rather that salsa events in which consumers combine

classic luxury aspects such as a hedonism, aesthetics and authenticity with an alternative form of exclusivity can become the escapist experience we term moments of luxury.

Salsa socials serve as an appropriate context for study because here consumers combine modified versions of classic luxury attributes, including hedonism, aesthetics, authenticity, and exclusivity with escapism to transform the experience into a *moment of luxury*. Our main contribution thus consists of (a) identifying and developing elements constituting the moment of luxury, and (b) conceptualizing this brief, hedonic escape from the routines of ordinary life.

We structure our article as follows: we start by reviewing the multiple definitions of luxury, in extracting core attributes of luxury. Next, we review the literature on consumer experiences to further derive key aspects of the luxury experience. For our empirical study, we mobilize an ethnographic approach using participant observation and in-depth interviews in the context of salsa events. Analysis identifies the key elements and processes by which consumers produce such moments of luxury. Theoretical contributions of this work add to knowledge of the experiential dynamics of luxury consumption by emphasizing its collective scope and distinct forms and processes of hedonism, aesthetics, authenticity, exclusivity and escapism. Managerial implications and suggestions for further research conclude the article.

2. Literature review

2.1 Characterizing the luxury construct

Defining luxury is notoriously difficult (cf. Tynan, McKechnie & Chuon 2010; Vigneron & Johnson 1999), as perceptions of luxury change over time (Cristini et al., 2017). Han, Nunes, and Drèze (2010, p. 16) build on Grossman and Shapiro (2008) in defining luxury as pertaining to "goods such that the mere use or display of a particular branded product brings the owner prestige apart from any functional utility". This definition emphasizes the

importance of prestige. However, we argue that there are multiple forms of prestige, and not all include financial wealth. To characterize the luxury construct fully, we must decouple it from its close association with a goods-logic. To do so, we use a cross-sectorial literature review (see Holmqvist and Diaz Ruiz 2017) to first identify the attributes in the literature that defines luxury, and then review key features of consumption experience in consumer research.

While “there is no single definition of luxury” (Kapferer 2010, p 43), researchers recognize the following core attributes of the luxury construct: (1) *Aesthetics*, (2) *hedonism* (Kapferer, 2010), (3) *exclusivity* (c.f. the essential attribute of luxury for Kapferer and Bastien, 2009), and (4) *authenticity* fostering the credibility of luxury brands (Beverland, 2006). Common to these attributes is their origin in studies of product functions and appearances, and their reliance on a managerial perspective. Moreover, Ko, Costello, and Taylor (2019, p. 2) propose five attributes distinguishing luxury brands: (1) high quality, (2) authentic value, (3) prestigious image, (4) premium price and (5) a connection with the consumer. While Ko et al. (2019) acknowledge that these attributes can apply to services and include emotional aspects, their conceptualization of luxury attributes depends on what the brand does and how the brand communicates prestige, and emphasizes premium pricing and product quality. In sum, in the literature on luxury, core attributes include hedonism, aesthetics, authenticity, and exclusivity, in addition to the product characteristics of premium quality and price. As such, when detached from the product, these attributes were important considerations in our investigation of the composition of consumers’ luxury experiences.

A second stream of literature focuses on the social signifiers (Kapferer & Bastien 2009; 2012) that luxury brands communicate. The consumption of luxury objects, primarily but not exclusively via high pricing (Keller 2009), communicates social status to both outsiders and insiders (Roper et al., 2013). However, the traditional association between high price and

prestige (Grossman & Shapiro 1988) is insufficient. Recent research shows that those “in-the-know” use luxury brands to create barriers between outsiders and insiders (Parguel, Delécolle & Valette-Florence, 2016), and to foster the desirability of a group (Vickers & Renand, 2003; Nunes, Han & Drèze, 2011). From this stream, we note that luxury has become a source of social signifiers not only for the wealthy but also to signaling membership within and between a broad range of social groups, as consumers integrate luxury into their lives (Hemetsberger et al., 2012).

A related stream of work takes an inclusive approach to luxury (Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003; Silverstein & Fiske, 2003), as conveyed in the term *masstige* (from *mass* and *prestige*), in combining attributes of prestige with affordability (Danziger, 2005). The “democratization” of luxury refers to the targeting of luxury brands to a middle-class audience, in infusing more affordable versions of products with exclusivity or authenticity (Twitchell, 2002; Vickers & Renand, 2003) to appeal to consumers’ desire to attain a higher social status (Han et al. 2010; O’Cass & Frost, 2004). From this stream, we note that brand strategies may incorporate luxury attributes as firms strive to appeal to the aspirations of middle-class consumers. This analysis of definitions of luxury provides a valuable list of criteria in investigating the luxury consumption experience that is usefully supplemented with previous studies of experience in consumer research.

2.2 Towards an anatomy of luxury consumption experience: hedonic escapism

Hedonic experience is a well-developed construct in consumer research. Early work by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, p. 132) recognized the relevance of “hedonic responses” and of the “escape from reality” (Hirschman & Holbrook, p. 98) as fundamental parts of consumption experience. Adapting consumer experiences to luxury, Atwal and Williams (2009) built upon Pine and Gilmore’s (1998; 1999) work in retailing by emphasizing

hedonism as a means by which consumers add a taste of luxury to their lives. Further, in contrast to literature conceptualizing consumption as need-fulfilling, utility-maximizing, reasoned choices, Belk, Ger and Askegaard (2003, p.3263) argued that highly intense emotional states and desires constitute “the motivating force behind much of contemporary consumption.” Likewise, Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p.267, 271) proposed that experience-driven activities and “experiential rewards” generate consumption, as “music, art, poetry, and dance [constitute] the creative energy of the new economy.”

While hedonism has received extensive attention in the literature on consumption, escapism in consumer experiences is equally relevant, yet understudied (Cova et al. 2018). Extant consumer research argues that consumers escape the realities of their lives in rather mundane hedonic consumer experiences such as shopping (Babin et al. 1994) and in more extraordinary experiences, such as river rafting (Arnould & Price 1993) and surfing (Canniford & Shankar 2013). Key to such escapism is liminality, literally the contrast between particular social categories and associated ways of being (Turner 1969; 1974), and the concept of consumer escapism is used in a rather broad sense in the consumption literature (see Cova et al. 2018 for a review).

Building on Tumbat and Belk’s (2011) critique, Cova et al. (2018) distinguish between ‘escaping from’ and ‘escaping to’, and further categorize mundane escapes, restorative escapes, and Turnerian, dramatic rites of passage and even violent war-like escapes. According to this view, consumers may escape ‘from’ social settings and structures when the primary motive is to get away, and escape ‘into’ something where the purpose is the immersion in an alternative experiential context (see also Carù & Cova 2007). These distinctions are helpful in exploring the importance of escapism in luxury consumption.

Similarly, in including forms of hedonic escapism that break routines in their conceptualization of luxury consumption, Atwal and Williams (2009) pointed to consumers’

impressions of luxury stores and hotel designs and their pleasurable, hedonic experiences that departed from ordinary routines (see also Hansen & Wänke 2011). However, Atwal and Williams did not elaborate how luxury experiences break a routine. In investigating such consumption processes, we further draw from Dube and Helkkula's (2015) distinction between extraordinary and mundane consumption experiences, even as we question whether luxury consumption need be *either* extraordinary *or* mundane. In taking into account Hemetsberger et al.'s (2012) work noting that luxury experiences can punctuate mundane routines, we henceforth use the qualifier "extra-ordinary" quite literally, to mean experiences that punctuate, break, or escape ordinary daily routines, albeit temporarily.

In addition, previous research on extraordinary experiences has documented their transformative effects. Celsi et al. (1993) noted consumers' thrilling experiences in the high-risk activity of skydiving, while Arnould and Price (1993) noted such transformations at the level of the individual and group in river-rafting and pointed to the importance of the service provider as "guide in orchestrating the delivery of an extraordinary experience." In also noting the work of firms in facilitating and designing extraordinary consumption experiences, Goulding et al. (2009) described how nightclub managers manipulated interior decoration and sound and even tolerated illegal drugs.

While previous consumer research has demonstrated the important role of firms together with consumers in facilitating extraordinary experiences, the majority of luxury research either anchors the experience in the attributes of the luxury object or describes it in overly general terms as hedonic. One exception is Hemetsberger et al.'s (2012), research on "little luxuries," in which consumers experience luxury through indulgence and self-gifts. However, it remains unclear how consumers punctuate their routines. For Scott, Cayla and Cova (2017, p.34), studying grueling experiences at obstacle courses, highly social and physically stimulant experiences constitute windows that consumers use to break away from the dull

monotony of increasingly banal white-collar jobs, adding, “when they are in the obstacles, participants are totally focused on their body and their pain.”

Previous research also shows that extraordinary experiences disrupt and alter perceptions of time. For example, Woermann and Rokka (2015) investigate the time distortions experienced by athletes when fully absorbed in their activity, an experience the authors call timeflow. Contributing to the timeflow experience of snowboarders and paintballers are alignments of material and discursive practices, bodily routines, teleo-affective body and mind coordination, and cultural discourses.

Our review of the consumption literature highlights expressions of hedonism and escapism in river-rafting (Arnould and Price 1993) and skydiving (Celsi et al. 2013) that are not luxurious in any way. Hence it follows that while relevant, a combination of hedonism and escapism is not enough to turn the consumer experience into a moment of luxury. Something else is needed, and we posit that enriching the hedonic escapist experience with hints of traditional luxury is key to turning it into a luxury moment for consumers.

In summary, we draw from the literature on luxury and on experiential consumption in exploring empirically the elements and processes by which consumers produce *moments of luxury*. (1) In extending the research on luxury, we demonstrate how classic luxury attributes, such as aesthetics and exclusivity (Kapferer & Bastien 2009) combine with hedonic escapism in ways somewhat distinct from conventional understandings of luxury and from hedonic little luxuries (Hemetsberger et al. 2012). (2) In building on the research on consumption experience, we elaborate the transient and transformative properties of extraordinary consumption (Arnould & Price 1993), as consumers use extraordinary experiences to escape from banal and dull routines (Scott et al., 2017). We next describe the research methods.

3. Method

To study consumers' moments of luxury, we carried out an ethnographic study of salsa dancing. Dancing salsa is an activity in which people typically engage to enjoy themselves and, as our findings show, salsa dancing takes on many traits of classic luxury. The study primarily entailed participant observation and in-depth interviews carried out over three years by the first two authors with two different communities of salsa dancers, with more limited observations of other salsa communities. The focus of study was evening salsa parties, for their dress and interaction codes, although we also observed and participated in informal salsa practice sessions.

Ethnography is a widely used research method in consumer (Schau, Muñiz & Arnould 2009) and marketing research (Cayla & Peñaloza 2012; Cayla & Arnould 2013), allowing researchers to take on the roles of participants and observers (Jorgensen 1989) in documenting the social significance of consumption (Arnould & Price 2006). Regarding participant observation, the first two authors immersed in respective salsa communities, with periodic visits to six other dance communities. In addition, we attended over 75 salsa parties and festivals. Our immersion consisted of participation in salsa classes three to four times a week in different dance schools in Canada, Finland, France and Italy, and over 300 hours of observations in the salsa parties. We further participated in international salsa festivals in Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki, London, and Stockholm. Finding that the hedonic escapist moment looks strikingly similar in different communities, we do not further develop differences between salsa communities.

In-depth interviews with sixteen participants complement the participant observation (Lofland et al. 2006). In order not to bias the results, we never asked about any of our key terms, such as 'luxury', 'escapism', etc., and instead asked the respondents to talk freely about their experiences dancing salsa. The interviews followed a life-story approach

(Atkinson 1998) in which respondents talked about how they got into salsa, and their experiences of dancing salsa.

Observing that the experience was very similar for most dancers, we selected interviewees to increase diversity regarding professional and cultural backgrounds. Respondents represent both genders and eight countries: China, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Russia, and Ukraine. Their ages range from 24 to 43 years old, an age span representative of the salsa communities we studied. The professional backgrounds include postgraduate students, business people, software developers, and social workers. We observed that virtually all dancers in the communities we studied had completed higher education. The proportion of expatriates was much higher in all salsa communities than in the countries in which the salsa communities are based, possibly reflecting that many expatriates turn to collective experiences such as salsa to foster social connections. Four of our informants also perform salsa; the others dance only socially in salsa events. Most of our informants are active salsa dancers, as could be expected at any salsa party, but we further interviewed two informants who are not active dancers but sometimes attended salsa events with friends. By interviewing professional dancers, social dancers and non-dancers at salsa events, we attempt to capture an overarching view of the experience. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents; all names are pseudonyms.

Analysis focuses on identifying the elements that characterize informants' salsa dance experiences, and then deriving the processes by which the elements combine. We were struck by the presence of classic characteristics of luxury at the salsa events, albeit in a completely different configuration than in the luxury literature. We sought to clarify in further iterations of analysis how such characteristics are driven by the collective of consumers, and to distinguish consumers' efforts from that of firms as consistent with the product focus that is predominant in the literature on luxury. We then proceeded to analyze the spatial-temporality

of the combinations of elements, as differences between the salsa setting as compared to informants' daily lives and the temporality of the combined elements help us understand how consumers engage with each other to collectively construct their moments of luxury.

Table 1 here

4. Findings

In the next several sections we present empirical findings on how participants in salsa events live their experience. We detail the five characteristics of moments of luxury: collective hedonism, aesthetics of clothes and movement, authenticity in history and locale, exclusivity-by-practice, and escapism from chores of daily life.

4.1 Collective hedonism

Our first impressions when entering most salsa events are of fast-paced Latin music and people laughing and smiling, enjoying themselves together in a highly intense and joyful atmosphere. Our interviews confirm this impression, as all informants emphasize the pleasure they take in dancing salsa. Illustrating how the salsa experience may appear to somebody attending for the first time, below Sofia recalls her first impression of going to a salsa event and the collective experience she found.

“I guess that the atmosphere was the first, people are happy. For some reason, people are happy and smiling on those classes. I guess that it is the music, that makes you feel happy, it is a happy music, it is not sad or dramatic, or anything like that, it is very joyful”

Here Sofia points to the combination of upbeat music and smiling dancers in contributing to the atmosphere of the experience. In addition, we note that participants engage with each other and construct the atmosphere together. In addition, teachers from the salsa schools facilitate consumers' interaction by acting as DJs, intermingling and dancing with participants, and performing or presenting dance performances. The actions of the salsa school that facilitate the experience are similar to those noted in research on value facilitation (Grönroos and Voima 2013) and research on the servscape and how the setting of the service experience influences consumers (Bitner 1992).

While such hedonism has individual features, we emphasize its collective aspects. Indeed, the overall atmosphere of people dancing and smiling continues to provide the backdrop throughout the evening, and interactions at the person-to-person level soon take precedence. For most participants, we find that these human interactions are what lend their salsa experience its hedonic touch. The emphasis on hedonism achieved in dancing with others permeates all our interviews. For example, Anna sums up what she considers to be the very essence of dancing salsa, "*For me, it [dancing salsa] is about complete enjoyment of music and company.*" Alexander explains how coming together with other people enjoying the same experience strengthens his hedonic moment.

"Everybody needs like eight hugs a day to stay happy, and in dancing you get them automatically. Plus, the people who go dancing are into actually having some fun, and it is nice to be around people who are fun and to have fun yourself."

Most informants tell us that this hedonic aspect of salsa dancing is the main reason they chose to engage in this activity. By engaging in salsa dancing, consumers take part in creating their hedonic moment. Consistent with research on how shared experiences foster hedonism

(Carù & Cova 2015), the quotes from Sofia, Alexander, and Anna emphasize their joy, and further point to how sharing the experience with others increases their own enjoyment. In addition, as consistent with research on collective services (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2015), our findings provide evidence of the collective, shared nature of such hedonic experience. Our observations of salsa dancers living their experience together support this view, as their enjoyment is evident when observing the couples dancing across the dance floor.

Moreover, the observations and interviews confirm that dancing salsa is an intense and involving experience, in line with Atwal and Williams's (2009) conceptualization of luxury, and this experience allows consumers to indulge in the moment. The music and the rhythm are fast and engaging, and the dancers immersed in the experience. As an intimate, passionate dance, salsa also brings dancers closely together physically, and this close and personal connection further contributes to the atmosphere. Both the interviews and the observations thus show that consumers come together with other consumers to construct the hedonic part of the moment of luxury.

These findings confirm how the hedonic aspect of the experience, as noted by Arnould & Price (1993) and Holbrook & Hirschman (1982), is played out in dancing salsa, as an essential aspect of the salsa dancers' moments of luxury. As importantly, we emphasize the collective basis for hedonism as one of the telling characteristics of moments of luxury, in contrast to the individual hedonism of much of the extant research on luxury. However, just describing the experience as hedonic or constructed with other consumers would not contribute to luxury research, as there is a considerable literature on hedonism. In the following sections, we further decompose this moment to understand its other components, as this composition of different parts is crucial to understanding how the experience becomes a moment of luxury

4.2 The aesthetic experience

The movements of the couples on the dance floor are aesthetic and sensual, at times even seductive. Officially, salsa events do not have dress codes, yet we find that most dancers do dress up, and that wearing particular clothing in dancing salsa contributes to the aesthetics of the experience. The women wear more elaborate and conspicuous clothes, and most male dancers wear slacks and dress shirts that differ from their everyday work and casual clothes.

Aesthetics is an important part of luxury (Kapferer and Bastien 2009) that tends to be focused on the aesthetics of products (Smith & Colgate 2007; Tynan et al. 2010). In contributing to the luxury experience in dancing salsa, we find aesthetics taking on a more active role as the aesthetics become enacted by the dancers themselves. By combining beautiful clothes with aesthetic and sensual dance moves, male and female dancers perform roles that emphasize masculinity and femininity in their dance. Our informant Hanna tells us about her desire to become able to use her dance to attract attention, just like the couple she just observed dancing together.

“I wish that I could be like them one day. He must be like super strong because he was lifting her so easily, and she looks so beautiful and feminine, almost floating in his hands. They really make it look so easy and beautiful”

Hanna’s description after watching the couple’s performance emphasizes her appreciation of the beauty in the dancers’ skills and appearances. This impression of striking masculinity and femininity is characteristic of the salsa experience, as dancers combine their bodily expressions, clothes, and accessories to manifest an aesthetic sensuality in their dance.

Regarding the dress code at salsa socials, the clothes and accessories emphasize masculinity for male dancers and femininity for female dancers in line with the Latin origins of salsa. Figure 1 provides an example of the aesthetic femininity characterizing the

experience. Our analysis of the picture follows Peñaloza and Cayla (2006) in situating place and time while identifying artifacts and the positions of the dancer's body.

Figure 1 here

First, we note that the photo in Figure 1 was used by one of the dance schools in marketing its classes on social networks. The caption, "*Come to be a star on the dance floor*" provides an invitation to readers to partake in a transformative special moment apart from ordinary life. In addition, the photo advances the aesthetics of dress-- the elegantly fitted cocktail dress-- and radiant lighting in evoking an ephemeral status for would-be dancers. The focal point of the picture is the dancer's welcoming smile and her hand in synch with her partner, her sophisticated attire and bodily position stand out against the backdrop of other dancers.

In addition to the element of beauty and aesthetic appeal, dancers' combination of body, clothing, and accessories is important in transforming an archetypical illusion of masculinity and femininity fueling consumers' fantasies and aspirations. The desire to be seen as attractive is common, and the possibility to dress up and perform at the center of attention appears to be an essential part of the enjoyment many dancers derive from the experience.

Observing salsa parties, we find a dual functional aspect for some of the clothing beyond its aesthetic appeal in contributing to the experience. The dancing heel for female salsa dancers, illustrated in Figure 2, is a ubiquitous artifact of the salsa experience and plays a vital role in performing the aesthetic salsa moves.

Figure 2 here

Many female respondents tell us how wearing dancing heels greatly contributes to the experience, in enabling them to perform effortless and gracious dancing while feeling beautiful. For the female dancer, the salsa shoe helps her to immerse fully in the experience by enabling her to reach desired attributes such as assertiveness and femininity when performing her dance. Arina explains how her use of dance shoes add to the aestheticism and to how she feels about herself while taking part in the salsa experience and putting on her dance shoes and skirt.

“[laughter] - now I am like, I look sexy and I have my heels on. My feminine side. [...] of course how I look is an emotional part. I think. Now I feel like this thing going. [laughter] Skirt is different.”

Just as a long scarf symbolizes the elegant style of Audrey Hepburn, dance heels help female dancers embody the ideal of how a salsa dancer looks on the dance floor and how she integrates beauty in her movements. Freja reflects on how her dance shoes play a part in helping her achieve her desired transformation (see Carù & Cova 2003) from ordinary life into becoming a gorgeous, aesthetic salsa dancer on the dance floor.

“When I have my heels on me, I feel that I can... [Laughter] My hips move better, and it creates a posture, and it gives me the feeling.”

As our observations and interviews show, aesthetics, so vital to classic luxury (Kapferer & Bastien 2009), also play a vital role as part of the means by which dancers infuse their experience with a hint of luxury. Here, salsa dancers use artifacts such as the dance shoes and exquisite clothing in performing elegant dance moves that enhance the aesthetics of the experience, elevating it to a moment of luxury. In analyzing further our observations and interviews, we distinguish this aesthetics, forged in the clothing, movements, and

mannerisms that enable dancers to feel like a star, as distinct from the aesthetics noted in product settings as an integral part of luxury (Berthon et al., 2009), and from ‘just’ another fun consumption experience.

4.3 Authentic experiences

Our analysis of a Cuban salsa school shows how the school attempts to create an authentic setting to further make the experience special. Authenticity plays an important role in strengthening the image of luxury brands (Beverland 2006) and reinforcing the heritage setting luxury apart (Kapferer & Bastien 2009). In line with research finding how invoking authenticity benefits expatriate service providers seeking to offer an experience of their home country (Kraak & Holmqvist 2016), the Cuban salsa school employs their ties to Cuba to enable this Cuban heritage to reinforce the consumers’ experience. The founder of the school is Cuban, and recruited several Cuban dance teachers to the school.

In order to enter the salsa school (four dance halls), we pass through a small restaurant called La Habana. Its owners are Cuban, and the site functions as a meeting place for the city’s Cuban community. The salsa music and Cuban decor inside help set the mood, in ways consistent with previous research showing how inspiring interiors appeal to consumers looking for hedonism (Kaltcheva & Weitz 2006; Holmqvist & Lunardo 2015). We observe that students at the dance school gather in the restaurant after classes for a meal or a mojito. The cooperation with the Cuban restaurant helps the school lend the experience an authentic flair, bringing the origin of salsa to mind even at this Northern latitude. As Martin explains

“I didn’t even know this place [the restaurant] existed before, but it’s just like opening a door into Cuba. It’s just like some small sleepy Cuban restaurant. A few Cuban regulars, mojitos, those faded pictures from Havana and Che Guevara.”

By fostering authenticity, the dance school makes an effort to connect to its Cuban heritage. Even when speaking English to students, dance teachers use Cuban slang for all dance moves, and between themselves, all teachers speak Cuban Spanish. This conscious effort to provide an authentic servicescape appears to strengthen the consumer experience. Several salsa dancers tell us that they are learning Spanish to get a deeper feel for the salsa heritage. Anna explains how her desire to connect with the authenticity of genuine salsa plays a part in her impressions of the dance school.

“I realized that parts of the real salsa culture were also present here [at the school] as the teachers are Cubans. I learned more about the culture behind salsa by getting to know them. And I started learning Spanish, I felt it would help me understand this whole thing better.”

To further connect to the heritage and authenticity of salsa, the dance school offers its students the possibility to travel with two of the Cuban teachers to Havana to discover the history and heritage of authentic Cuban salsa where it first developed, and to connect with the local Cuban salsa community there. Anna explains why she decided to take two weeks off to go with the salsa school to Cuba.

“I wanted to go on this trip [the salsa trip to Cuba] because I wanted to discover the roots of the dance. And there in Havana, we met and danced a lot with local dancers and learned more at a deeper level. My image of salsa took on a deeper meaning, I felt I could understand it better.”

The findings show that connecting to the origins of Cuban salsa contributes to a feeling of authenticity that further strengthens the experience. In building on research showing

perceptions of authenticity to play a decisive role in consumer perceptions of service (Kraak & Holmqvist 2016) as well as in strengthening luxury brands (Beverland 2006), we extrapolate from our findings in pointing to the importance of authenticity as one of the characteristics by which consumers elevate their experience into a moment of luxury.

4.4 Exclusivity by practice

In many luxury definitions, exclusivity is the *sine qua non* of luxury (Kapferer & Bastien 2009). However, this understanding of exclusivity is usually limited to that attained by procuring a product by paying a high price (Berry 1994; Han et al. 2010). In contrast to relying primarily on price, our findings indicate additional ways to achieve exclusivity through achieving mastery of particular skills. We term this sense of achievement ‘exclusivity-by-practice’ to complement ‘exclusivity-by-price’ in the luxury literature.

We further build on Cova and Cova’s (2002) description of ephemeral groups distinguished from others by a shared passion, in emphasizing that dancing salsa requires hard work, and becoming a good dancer involves costs in form of both time and practice. Unlike a dance party in a club that anyone can attend, a salsa party includes specific limitations. No one is turned away; quite the opposite, most parties begin with an hour of teaching so that beginners can receive instruction and learn at least some basic dance moves. Even so, being able to engage with other dancers and synchronize movement require practical skills.

Interviews with two non-dancers who accompanied friends to salsa events help illustrate the notion of exclusivity-by-practice. John joined salsa-dancing friends for a salsa party after hearing the friends comment on how warm and inclusive the atmosphere is. However, instead of an open and welcoming atmosphere, John reported feeling excluded.

“I felt handicapped not knowing how to dance salsa. Besides, anybody can come and ‘borrow’ the lady that you were talking with.”

Contributing to John’s exclusion was his lack of required skills and unfamiliarity with the codes of the community, which dictate that dancers accept dance invitations even in the middle of conversations. A similar view concerning the crucial importance of mastering the dance skills comes from Lena, who sometimes joins salsa-friends for parties. Unlike John, Lena has taken some basic solo salsa classes in her gym, though not in a salsa school, and she admits to being a complete beginner concerning dancing salsa in a couple. Lena, a tall, blonde girl who attracts attention, admits that *“When I first came to the parties, many guys immediately asked me to dance.”* However, she added that her lack of the required skills effectively excluded her from enjoying the salsa party in the way she can see her friends, experienced dancers, doing.

“Nobody asked me to dance twice, never! And after the guys had seen me dance, or try to dance, with other guys, they all stopped asking me.”

These observations by non-dancers show how lacking the required skills can render the experience exclusive, and further, how the skills gain an aura of desirability. Illustrating how the exclusivity of the dance skills can tempt beginners to venture further, Ling explains how salsa first attracted her when she saw friends dance; the skills of the dancers made her intimidated yet also determined to learn the same skills.

“The first time that I went to a salsa party was quite intimidating [I felt that] I am not good enough to go, I felt quite intimidated, but I saw that people had fun when they can dance, so I have more motivation to learn more [...] I saw my friends enjoying so much that I wanted to feel like that, too”

The insights from both non-dancers and dancers who have moved past the beginning stages show that taking part in a salsa party can be a challenge they find appealing. Looking at more advanced dancers, the case of Sofia is revealing. Sofia is an accomplished dancer who came third at the 2013 World Salsa Championship at the Hong Kong Salsa Festival, and whose performance appears in Figure 3. Even though Sofia now is a world-class amateur dancer, she still recalls the first salsa party she attended, after taking some introductory salsa classes, and how she felt excluded during this first party.

“I was terrified... and I sat there in the corner the whole evening thinking that I cannot do that. And I did not dance even one song. My sister was dancing and I was feeling petrified.”

Figure 3 here

In three years, Sofia went from feeling that her lack of skills excluded her to become a world-class dancer whose skills draw admiration and fuel the desire to emulate her. This sense of achievement contributes to the exclusivity-by-practice at the heart of moments of luxury. The dancers have mastered a desired skill, which in turn becomes a social signifier (see Kapferer & Bastien 2012) of status within the community. Even though not all dancers will reach the same level as Sofia, most of the hundreds of dancers in the events we attend demonstrate agility and competence as the result of extensive practice. Pride is evident in both many interviews and in the ways that salsa dancers post videos and pictures of their dancing on social media. Their sense of achievement at having mastered a skill that at first seemed both intimidating and impossible, as Ling explained, plays a role in allowing them to enjoy the experience even more. These skills in turn become desirable inside the

community and exclusive to outsiders; dancers admire the skills of the very best dancers, elevating their skills to a social signifier within the community, while the shared skills and codes renders the community exclusive to outsiders.

Our findings further elaborate differences between this ‘exclusivity-by-practice’ and the more conventional ‘exclusivity-by-price’ in the research on luxury. Unlike conventional exclusivity that is achieved only by wealth and ability to pay a high price, exclusivity-by-practice is achieved in effort; this meritocratic ethos gives a particular quality to the salsa community, as with other consuming tribes (see Cova et al. 2007). Given enough time and practice, people can master these skills. Not only does mastering the dance moves help bridge the exclusivity-by-practice, but it also adds a sense of pride in their achievements. Both the exclusivity-by-practice and this sense of achievement contribute to the moment of luxury.

4.5 Temporal and Spatial Escapism

Thus far, we have described characteristics of the moment of luxury that resonate with characteristics of luxury products as described in the literature on luxury: hedonism, aesthetics, authenticity and exclusivity, with attention to key differences that result from their application in a collective consumer experience. While these characteristics are all part of the moment of luxury, we argue that they are still not enough. The most crucial part is still missing: the escapism that enables the temporality of the moment is what marks the difference of the unconventional experience as a *moment* of luxury. For Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999), escapism is the most active and immersed form of retail experience. In contrast, Turner (1974) emphasized the liminal state as a temporary event apart from everyday reality, in the case of a cultural event or coming of age ritual.

In drawing from Pine and Gilmore and Turner in analyzing these data, we find that the short temporal duration of the salsa experience enables consumers to create luxurious moment by briefly escaping everyday routines for a different reality, even a different and temporal identity. By temporality, we refer to the limited time of the event and the disrupted sense of time that consumers can experience while the moment lasts, as noted by Woermann and Rokka (2015) among consumers immersed fully in an activity. In contrast to more conventional luxury understandings in which luxury is tied to a social hierarchy, and often anchored in ascribed social class characteristics (Mandel, Petrova, & Cialdini, 2006), here we find people from all backgrounds coming together to experience salsa, de-emphasizing or ignoring ascribed social classifications. Part of the experience is that the participants are just salsa dancers who interact with each other for the duration of the event, and after the salsa ends they revert to their daily lives. Sara, an assiduous salsa dancer, uses salsa to escape her routines for as long as the salsa party lasts:

“I like that when I go to salsa parties, I am only Sara. Nobody knows anything else about me, except that I am a good partner to dance with, or not. I can leave all the problems at the door since nobody is going to ask me how I am dealing with my divorce.”

Sara leaves her personal and financial worries behind for a few hours, and salsa provides her with a temporal escape from daily responsibilities, an interlude from ordinary life. This view is echoed by Emma, who also explains how she perceives a temporary escape from daily routines as her special moment of just enjoying herself.

“Thursday is my day; it is Emma’s day. I go to my salsa class, and I dress up because after the class we have a social event in the same place”.

Salsa dancing provides Emma with an opportunity to reassert herself in this limited space and time, far from the responsibilities of her daily life. Salsa becomes a temporary space in which she integrates aesthetics to display her fashionable dresses, shoes, and accessories bought for salsa. This escapist experience is particularly striking in winter: salsa dancers arrive at salsa events in ordinary winter clothes, but then completely transform themselves. This aesthetic transformation is most apparent for female dancers who exchange coats and winter boots for exquisite dresses and high-heeled shoes, but many male dancers also bring special dance shoes, tight shirts, and accessories such as small gold chains to “latinize” their appearance. Both our observations and the interviews reveal that changing clothes and associated transformations in ways of being are integral parts of the escapist experience for the dancers, in which they engage fully in a moment of luxury, even if just briefly, as Emma explains.

“I like to dress up for salsa because I normally have to gear up for the weather every day because of my work. It is good to leave the jeans behind and wear a cute dress for a change.”

This temporal transformation further enables the construction of ephemeral identities, another crucial part of salsa dancers’ hedonic escape. In the literature on consumption, several researchers have pointed to the identities that people construct in consumption in relation to and as apart from ascribed categories of gender, class, and race (Thompson 2014). In salsa dancing, part of the escapist experience for some informants is temporarily inhabiting an alternative identity and embodying it in dance tradition for their enjoyment; an otherwise timid person can take the lead on the dance floor. Ari explains

“When I am dancing salsa, I pretend to be a dark and charming Latino, although I am nothing like that at all [laughter].”

Ari thus uses the salsa party to take on a new identity, as he ‘escapes’ into an identity very different from his real-life persona for the duration of the party. This temporal transformation into a new and different identity is mirrored in another interview, this time from the perspective of a female dancer. Sara emphasizes how the salsa experience becomes a temporal transformation for her, allowing her to escape ordinary life for a brief moment by engaging in the experience.

“I negotiate my own identity with myself, and I express it outwards [...] and in dancing... I am a diva, or I am a really sexy foxy lady if I want to be. So it is about taking up different roles and having fun being able to be whatever you want on the dance floor.”

In dancing salsa, dancers temporarily step out of their ascribed identity as they construct and experience themselves anew. Sara’s story emphasizes both the temporal transformation and the escapist hedonism interlaced with luxury hints such as the aesthetics that this transformation allows, showing the role of the temporal and liminal in creating moments of luxury. Our observations of salsa dancers reveal that similar temporal transformations are common in salsa parties. People who otherwise go for beer when out with friends now instead sip mojitos and introject Spanish terms in their conversations. The language and costume, together with other exclusive, hedonic, and authentic practices and aesthetics, as defined and reproduced in the community are the means by which they experience the escapism that characterizes their transformation at salsa events.

5. Discussion

In detailing how consumers immerse in the collective experience of salsa dancing to break away from day-to-day worries, we characterize an emerging form of experiential luxury. In characterizing the construct “moments of luxury,” we modify somewhat existing attributes of luxury, namely hedonism, authenticity, aesthetics, and exclusivity (Kapferer 2010; Ko et al. 2019), to yield an experiential, collective and escapist manifestation of luxury.

Salsa parties enable temporal, spatial, hedonic and escapist luxury experience because they offer a liminal social structure where worries of daily life are set aside for a brief time. Dancers enjoy themselves in an authentic salsa setting by constructing their aesthetic experience with other dancers, together forming an ephemeral community exclusive to those outside. The problems, chores, and routines of everyday life will remain, but for the duration of the party, the moment of luxury permits an out-of-ordinary escape.

In the extant literature, luxury remains anchored in the product attributes of pricing and quality (Han et al. 2010), aesthetic aspects of design (Ko et al. 2019), and the prestige that demarcates exclusivity via social class (Kapferer & Bastien 2012). Our findings extend current understandings of the luxury experience by detailing the anatomy of moments of luxury as captivating indulgences that punctuate the monotony of everyday life. See Table 2 for a listing of the characteristics of moments of luxury.

The construct “moments of luxury” represents a hedonic and intense escapist experience that is necessarily brief, liminal, and ephemeral. This transient, collective, consumer-driven characterization of the luxury experience offers further insight into the processes underlying the taxonomy that opposes passive-active participation and absorption-immersion (Vo Thanh & Kirova 2018). Our analysis provides an account of how escapism allow consumers to collectively produce and engage with key aspects of luxury—hedonism, aesthetics, authenticity, and exclusivity, in experiential consumption. In addition, the types of engagement with such characteristics suggest that reducing consumer involvement hardly

benefits the experience; instead, we argue that active consumer participation is beneficial for the luxury experience – simultaneously engaged and immersed. By drawing from extant research on how consumers seek extraordinary experiences to momentarily escape dull routines (Goulding et al., 2009; Scott et al., 2017), our findings identify escapism as the *sine qua non* of the moment of luxury.

Table 2 about here

A second contribution is that, by decoupling luxury attributes from a goods-logic, we conceptualize the escapism of experiential luxury with more nuance than previously available, in line with recent calls for more precision in research on consumer escapism (Cova et al. 2018). While most attributes of this moment of luxury require modifications to conventional definitions of luxury, we identify two new attributes crucial to the luxury experience: escapism and collective hedonism, that combine with the others in articulating exclusivity-by-practice, as distinct from most conventional luxury definitions based on a high price and a focus on product quality (Han et al. 2010; Ko et al. 2019). There are some modest costs involved in dancing salsa, such as enrolling in classes, entrance fees to salsa parties, and buying clothes for salsa, yet we emphasize the acquisition and mastery of skills, rather than the price of items as the basis for the exclusivity in moments of luxury. Our conceptualizations of both exclusivity and hedonism in the moments of luxury differ from prior luxury research to contribute to understanding the experience, as we identify exclusivity-by-practice rather than exclusivity-by-price, and a collective rather than individual hedonism. We elaborate these distinctions below.

Exclusivity is common to both conventional luxury and the moment of luxury, but the meanings differ. The extant luxury literature views exclusivity as limiting access to social

signifiers through high prices (Kapferer & Bastien 2009; 2012). This approach, which we term exclusivity-by-price, is a cornerstone of the extant luxury literature (cf. Berry 1994; Han et al. 2010), even called the *sine qua non* of luxury (Kapferer & Bastien 2009). Exclusivity-by-price makes luxury objects inaccessible, and therefore socially immobile. Most people lacking the means to buy a Ferrari today will likely lack the means to buy it for the conceivable future, producing a static exclusivity. Our findings extend the meaning of exclusivity, while showing that it still limits access. We show that learned skills serve as both a social signifier within the community and as a barrier to outsiders, thus replicating the dual roles of exclusivity in the luxury literature but with an investment of time and practice instead of money. However, this alternative form of exclusivity is no longer static. While not everyone can become an excellent dancer, anyone prepared to invest time and effort can achieve a level to engage in the experience, and thus enjoy dancing salsa, with their sense of achievement contributing to their enjoyment.

Just as exclusivity looks different in the moment of luxury, we also identify important differences for hedonism. The extant luxury literature treats hedonism as the pleasure *individual* consumers derive from products (Hagtvedt & Patrick 2009). In contrast, we conceptualize the moment of luxury as including a *collective* hedonic experience. We find the salsa community to be a collective where consumers come together to create their hedonic escape by engaging with others, approaching previous research on consumer tribes (Cova et al. 2007) as well as collective consumer experiences (Carù & Cova 2015; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2015). By focusing on consumer-to-consumer hedonism, even a form of tribal luxury, we complement previous literature that only conceptualized hedonism as personal indulgence. Furthermore, we argue that hedonism is a required but insufficient condition of the luxury experience; hedonic experiences can become luxurious only when they allow consumers to punctuate the worries of everyday life with hints of luxury.

We identify aesthetics as one of these hints of traditional luxury adding to the experience. Aesthetics play a role in the luxury literature in its fascination with fashion, style, and prestige (cf. Brown 2009; Wilson 2007). Emphasizing the relevance of luxury aesthetics, Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p.35) even argue that aesthetics is essential for luxury. Whereas aesthetics in conventional luxury definitions refer to product design (Smith & Colgate 2007; Tynan et al. 2010), we find that aesthetics in the consumer experience are not only phenomenological and transformative, but also embodied. Dancers express their aesthetics in their dresses, in their movements and through their own bodies. Dressing up for the salsa event becomes part of their experience; they report feeling more special when wearing fashionable clothing and performing sensual dance patterns. So while conceptualizations of conventional luxury emphasize firm-provided product aesthetics in ways that render consumers as passive, as in Atwals and Williams's (2009) description of a Prada store where the aesthetics influence consumers but without them taking center stage, we find that a moment of luxury embodies aesthetics into the experience: a beautiful moment for oneself.

Finally, and most importantly, we find that the main component of the moment of luxury is the temporary escapism. In conceptualizing the luxury experience as a *moment*, we emphasize its brevity and its ability to offer consumers an escape. Its liminal rarity is the crux of the experience. The expression and exact form differ, as in Ari's becoming Latino, Sara's sexy foxy lady, Emma's break from her divorce or Arina's emphasized femininity, but common to all of these is that the experience allows the consumer a hedonic escape that they know will last for only a short time. Extending Dube and Helkkula's (2015) distinction between extraordinary and mundane experiences, we argue that brevity is essential for luxury escapism. Consumers escape from routines to "create new identities and realities for themselves" (Atwals & Williams 2009, p. 343). By fostering brief, ephemeral breaks from

routine, consumers punctuate monotony; hence, consumers can experience *moments of luxury* regardless of financial means.

Returning to the distinction between the ‘escape from’ and the ‘escape into’ (Cova et al. 2018), our findings provide ample evidence that both forms of escape are prevalent among consumers’ moments of luxury. Rather than one excluding the other, they complement each other. While respondents like Emma or Sara clearly use the salsa experience as an escape *from* daily chores, this does not mean that their escape does not also become a hedonic moment with hints of luxury, and thus something that they also relish escaping *into*. Our findings thus lead us to conclude that both the *escape from* and *escape into* are highly relevant to understand luxury escapism. They can reinforce one another so that the consumer is allowed both to briefly escape from reality, and also escape into an enjoyable moment, making the experience all the more appealing.

Managerial implications, limitations and future research

As outlined at the start, our conceptualization of moments of luxury represents an unconventional understanding of luxury, an understanding that is driven by what consumers do collectively and how such collective activity informs their luxury experience rather than luxury as achieved by procuring products with certain attributes. Our findings carry strong implications for service providers of different types of engaging experiences, as we show how consumers transform an experience in ways that accomplish both hedonic and escapist luxury features that render it truly enjoyable and transformative for them.

In addition, we suggest that our analysis carries important implications for managers dealing with conventional luxury servicescapes and products. We emphasize that the intense consumer experiences we have detailed are not limited to unconventional consumer activities and communities. Quite the opposite, we posit that moments of luxury are highly relevant and

informative for conventional understandings of luxury. No matter how exclusive and exquisite a luxury product may be, we argue that the consumer's experience in using it matters at least as much, if not more than buying it. Hence we believe that more traditional luxury brands could benefit from our findings to strengthen their consumers' experiences.

Rather than asking if hedonic escapism in salsa is luxury, established luxury brands could benefit from asking: how do we provide an experience that is both hedonic and escapist. Established luxury brands already possess many of the attributes of moments of luxury: aesthetics, authenticity, and exclusivity. The challenge for them is to better understand the contours of consumers' hedonism and escapism. We suggest that future luxury research could benefit from studying the servicescapes offered by luxury firms, with attention to the attributes of moments of luxury.

We recognize that our focus on a highly participative experience taps key aspects of luxury consumption experience: hedonism, aesthetics, authenticity, exclusivity, and escape. Future research could investigate to what extent the consumption of luxury products requires active, imaginative participation. Throughout our study we find that the experience is remarkably similar for salsa dancers, as they emphasize its hedonic and intense qualities as key to escapism. As such, future research can investigate luxury experiences in settings in which consumption experience requires less involvement and intensity.

Furthermore, our respondents repeatedly mention their temporary transformation, as key to their escapism. In our analysis of the findings, we conclude that enabling this temporary transformation is a defining aspect of the *moment of luxury*. Future research can investigate to what extent this escapism applies in other luxury settings. By studying luxurious escapism in multiple settings, researchers could advance our knowledge of the differences between luxury objects and luxury experiences, outlined in Table 2 above.

Future research can also focus on better understanding the essence of what luxury *does* for consumers, as opposed to defining what luxury *is*. We posit that our analysis of the moment of luxury is a step towards conceptualizing luxury experiences, but future research can conceptualize how hedonic and extraordinary moments become luxury experiences. As this article is limited to one form of unconventional luxury, future research could analyze to what extent the *moment of luxury* represents a desirable form of experience for consumers, as well as analyzing moments of luxury in other contexts.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their detailed, critical and helpful comments to improve the manuscript, as well as the guest editors Sylvia von Wallpach, Andrea Hemetsberger, and Thyra Thomsen who handled it.

Jonas especially wishes to thank his students in luxury marketing at Kedge Business School for their active and insightful comments during the presentation of this project as part of their courses; their comments and interest for the topic played a key role in forming this article.

References

- Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (1993). River magic: extraordinary experience and the extended service encounter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), 24-45.
- Arnould, E. J., & Price, L. L. (2006). Market-oriented ethnography revisited. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 46(3), 251-262.
- Atkinson, Robert (1998), *The Life Story Interview*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Atwal, G. & Williams, A. (2009). Luxury brand marketing - The experience is everything! *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5/6), 338-346.
- Babin, B.J., Darden, W.R. & Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or fun: measuring hedonic and utilitarian shopping value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), 644-656.
- Bauer, M., von Wallpach, S., & Hemetsberger, A. (2011). My Little Luxury. *Marketing ZFP*, 33(1), 57-67.
- Belk, R. W., Ger, G., & Askegaard, S. (2003). The fire of desire: A multisited inquiry into consumer passion. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 30(3), 326-351.
- Berger, J., & Ward, M. (2010). Subtle signals of inconspicuous consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37(4), 555-569.
- Berry, C. J. (1994). *The idea of luxury: A conceptual and historical investigation*. New York, USA: Cambridge University Press.
- Beverland, M. (2006). The 'real thing': Branding authenticity in the luxury wine trade. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(2), 251-258.
- Berthon, P., Pitt, L., Parent, M., & Berthon, J. P. (2009). Aesthetics and ephemerality: Observing and preserving the luxury brand. *Business Horizons*, 51(1), 45-66.
- Bitner, M.J. (1992). Servicescapes: The impact of physical surroundings on customers and employees. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(2), 57-71.

- Brown, J. C. (2009). *Glamour in six dimensions: Modernism and the radiance of form*. New York, USA: Cornell University Press.
- Canniford, R. & Shankar, A. (2013). Purifying practices: how consumers assemble romantic experiences of nature. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 1051-1069.
- Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2003). Revisiting Consumption Experience: A More Humble but Complete View of the Concept, *Marketing Theory*, 3(2) 267-286.
- Carù, A. and Cova, B. (Eds) (2007). *Consuming Experience*. Routledge, Oxon.
- Carù, A., & Cova, B. (2015). Co-creating the collective service experience. *Journal of Service Management*, 26(2), 276-294.
- Cayla, J. & Arnould, E. (2013). Ethnographic Stories for Market Learning. *Journal of Marketing*, 77(4), 1-16.
- Cayla, J. & Penaloza, L. (2012). Mapping the Play of Organizational Identity in Foreign Market Adaptation. *Journal of Marketing*, 76(6), 38-54.
- Celsi, R. L., Rose, R. L., & Leigh, T. W. (1993). An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(1), 1-23.
- Cova, B., Carù, A., & Cayla, J. (2018). Re-conceptualizing escape in consumer research. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 21(4), 445-464.
- Cova, B., & Cova, V. (2007). Tribal marketing: The tribalisation of society and its impact on the conduct of marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(5/6), 595-620
- Cova, B., Kozinets, R.V., & Shankar, A. (2007) *Consumer tribes*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Cristini, H., Kauppinen-Räsänen, H., Barthod-Protade, M., & Woodside, A. (2017). Toward a general theory of luxury: Advancing from workbench definitions and theoretical transformations. *Journal of Business Research*, 70, 101-107.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). *Beyond boredom and anxiety*. Jossey-Bass.

- Danziger, P. N. (2005). *Let Them Eat Cake: Marketing Luxury to the Masses*. New York, US: Dearborn.
- d'Arpizio, C., Levato, F., Kamel, M., & de Montgolfier, J. (2017). *Luxury Goods Worldwide Market Study, Fall-Winter 2017*. Bain&Company report.
- Dube, A. & Helkkula, A. (2015). Service experiences beyond the direct use: indirect customer use experiences of smartphone apps. *Journal of Service Management*, 26(2), 224-248.
- Fournier, S. (1998). Consumers and their brands: developing relationship theory in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(2), 343-73.
- Goulding, C., Shankar, A., Elliott, R., & Canniford, R. (2009). The marketplace management of illicit pleasure. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(5), 759-771.
- Grossman, G. M., & Shapiro, C. (1988). Foreign counterfeiting of status goods. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 103(1), 79-100.
- Grönroos, C. & Voima, P. (2013). Critical Service Logic: Making Sense of Value Creation and Co-Creation. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 41(2) 133-50.
- Hagtvedt, H., & Patrick, V. M. (2009). The broad embrace of luxury: Hedonic potential as a driver of brand extendibility. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 19(4), 608–618.
- Han, Y.J., Nunes, J.C. & Drèze, X. (2010). Signaling Status with Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence, *Journal of Marketing*, 74(2), 15–30.
- Hansen, J. & Wänke, M. (2011). The Abstractness of Luxury. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32(3), 789–96.
- Hart, C. (2005), *Doing a Literature Review. Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination*, Sage, London.

- Helkkula, A., Kelleher, C., & Pihlström, M. (2012). Characterizing Value as an Experience: Implications for Service Researchers and Managers. *Journal of Service Research*, 15(1) 59-75.
- Hemetsberger, A., von Wallpach, S. & Bauer, M. (2012). 'Because I'm Worth It' - Luxury and the Construction of Consumers' Selves. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 40.
- Hirschman, E.C. and Holbrook, M.B. (1982). Hedonic consumption: emerging concepts, methods and propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(3), 92-101.
- Holbrook M.B, & Hirschman E.C. (1982). The Experiential Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 132-140.
- Holmqvist, J., & Diaz Ruiz, C. (2017). Service ecosystems, markets and business networks: What is the difference? A horizontal literature review. *The TQM Journal*, 29(6), 800-810.
- Holmqvist, J. & Lunardo, R. (2015). The impact of an exciting store environment on consumer pleasure and shopping intentions. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 32(1), 117-119.
- Jorgensen, D. L. (1989). *Participant observation: A methodology for human studies*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Kaltcheva, V.D., & Weitz, B.A. (2006). When should a retailer create an exciting store environment? *Journal of Marketing*, 70(1), 107-118
- Kapferer, Jean-Noël (2010), "Luxury after the crisis: Pro logo or no logo?", *The European Business Review*, September-October 2010, 42-46.
- Kapferer, J-N. & Bastien, V. (2009). The specificity of luxury management: Turning marketing upside down. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16, 311-322.
- Kapferer, J. N., & Bastien, V. (2012). *The luxury strategy: Break the rules of marketing to build luxury brands*. Kogan page publishers.

- Keller, K.L. (2009). Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 15(2/3), 139-155.
- Ko, E., Costello, J.P., & Taylor, C.R. (2019). What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature. *Journal of Business Research* (forthcoming).
- Kraak, J.M., & Holmqvist, J. (2017). The authentic service employee: Service employees' language use for authentic service experiences. *Journal of Business Research*, 72(1), 199-209.
- Lageat, T., Czellar, S. & Laurent, G. (2003). Engineering Hedonic Attributes to Generate Perceptions of Luxury: Consumer Perceptions of an Everyday Sound. *Marketing Letters*, 14(2) 97-109.
- Lipovetsky, G & Roux, E. (2003). *Le luxe éternel*. Paris, France : Gallimard.
- Llamas, R., & Thomsen, T. U. (2016). The luxury of igniting change by giving: Transforming yourself while transforming others' lives. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 166-176.
- Lofland, J., Snow, D., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. (2006). *Analysing Social Setting: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Wadsworth, Belmont, CA.
- Mandel, N., Petrova, P.K., & Cialdini, R.B. (2006). Images of Success and the Preference for Luxury Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 16(1), 57-69.
- McColl-Kennedy, J.R., Cheung, L. & Ferrier, E. (2015). Co-creating service experience practices. *Journal of Service Management*, 26(2) 249-275.
- Müller-Stewens, G., & Berghaus, B. (2014). The market and business of luxury: an introduction. in Berghaus, B., Müller-Stewens, G., & Reinecke, S. (Eds.). (2014). *The management of luxury: A practitioner's handbook*. Kogan Page Publishers.
- Nunes, J.C., Drèze, X. & Han Y.Y. (2011). Conspicuous Consumption in a Recession: Toning it Down or Turning It Up?, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21(2), 199-205.

- O'Cass, A. & McEwen, H. (2004). Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 4(1), 25-39.
- Parguel, B., Delécolle, T., & Valette-Florence, P. (2016). How price display influences consumer luxury perceptions. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(1), 341-348.
- Peñaloza, L., & Cayla, J. (2006). Writing pictures/taking fieldnotes: Towards a more visual and material ethnographic consumer research. in Russel Belk (Ed.), *Handbook of qualitative research methods in marketing*, Edward Elgar, Glos, 279-290.
- Pine, J.B. & Gilmore, J.H. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(4), 97-105.
- Pine, J.B. & Gilmore, J.H. (1999). *Experience economy: Work is theater and every business a stage*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Pullman, M.E. & Gross, M.A. (2003). Welcome to your experience: Where you can check out any time you'd like but you can never leave. *Journal of Business and Management*, 9(3), 215-232.
- Roper, S., Caruana, R., Medway, D., & Murphy, P. (2013). Constructing luxury brands: Exploring the role of consumer discourse. *European Journal of Marketing*, 47(3/4), 375-400.
- Schau, H. J., Muñiz, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73, 30-51.
- Scott, R., Cayla, J., & Cova, B. (2017). Selling pain to the saturated self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 44(1), 22-43.
- Silverstein M.J & Fiske, N (2003). Luxury for the masses. *Harvard Business Review* 81(4):48-57.
- Smith, J.B., & Colgate, M. (2007). Customer value creation: a practical framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 15, 7-23

- Thompson, C.J. (2014). The Politics of Consumer Identity Work. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(5), iii–vii.
- Truong, Y., McColl, R., & Kitchen, P.J. (2009). New luxury brand positioning and the emergence of masstige brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(5/6), 375-382.
- Tumbat, G. & Belk, R.W. (2011). Marketplace tensions in extraordinary experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(1), 42-61.
- Twitchel, J.B. (2002). *Living it up: Our love affair with luxury*. New York, US: Columbia University Press.
- Tynan, C., Mckenchie, S., & Chhuon, C. (2010). Co-creating value for luxury brands. *Journal of Business Research*, 63(11), 1156–1163.
- Turner, V.W. (1969), *The Ritual Process: Structure and anti-Structure*, Aldine, Chicago.
- Turner, V.W. (1974). Liminal to liminoid in play, flow and ritual: an essay in comparative symbology. *Rice University Studies*, 60 (3), 53-92.
- Vickers. J.S. & Renand, F. (2003). The Marketing of Luxury Goods: An exploratory study – three conceptual dimensions. *The Marketing Review*, 3, 459-478.
- Vigneron, F., & Johnson, L. W. (1999). A review and conceptual framework of prestige seeking consumer behavior. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 99(1), 1–15.
- Vo Thanh, T. & Kirova, V. (2018). Wine tourism experience: A netnography study. *Journal of Business Research*, 83, 30-37.
- Wilson, E. (2007). A Note on Glamour. *Fashion Theory*, 11(1), 95-108.
- Woermann, N., & Rokka, J. (2015). Timeflow: How consumption practices shape consumers' temporal experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(6), 1486-1508.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

Table 1 : Informants

<i>Name</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Timespan for salsa dancing</i>
Ling	Chinese	Female	26	Entrepreneur	less than 2 years
Arina	Russian	Female	25	Business graduate, trained in ballroom dances	2-5 years
Hanna	Finnish	female	37	Holistic healer	less than 2 years
Mario	Colombian	male	35	Salsa instructor	Professional (dances for a living)
Sofia	Finnish	female	34	Ph.D. in chemistry	2-5 years
Jade	French	female	24	Stage performer (dance and acrobatics)	2-5 years
Freja	Swedish	female	29	Ph.D. candidate	+5 years
Maria	Finnish	female	30	Graduate student in bio- sciences	less than 2 years
Emma	Danish	female	34	High-school teacher	less than 2 years
Sara	Finnish	female	27	Journalist	2-5 years
Juha	Finnish	male	33	Business manager	2-5 years
Martin	Finnish	male	43	Academic manager	less than 2 years
Matti	Finnish	male	34	Salsa instructor	Professional (dances for a living)
Ari	Finnish	male	36	Business researcher	+5 years
John	British	male	32	PhD-student (non- dancer)	Not a salsa dancer
Lena	Swedish	female	30	Political secretary (non- dancer)	Not a salsa dancer

Table 2: Moments of Luxury: Luxury as consumer-driven escapist experiences

	<u><i>Product oriented luxury</i></u>	<u><i>Consumer oriented luxury</i></u>
Key constructs		
<i>Classic constructs of luxury goods</i>		
<i>Price</i>	A premium price	<i>(marginal*)</i>
<i>Product</i>	High quality products building on craftsmanship	<i>(marginal*)</i>
<i>Shared constructs (but with different meanings)</i>		
<i>Hedonism</i>	Individual Product offerings designed around indulgence	Collective A moment of pleasure to break the routine
<i>Aesthetics</i>	The beauty, sophistication, and taste of the luxury product	Consumers aspiring to experience and display beauty in their own life
<i>Authenticity</i>	Manufacturer's heritage and founder's vision relays credence to the brand	A disconnection from consumerism in that the moment of luxury is not just purchased but constructed
<i>Exclusivity</i>	Manufactured scarcity and high prices to signal social prestige	A sense of achievement through practice to signal social prestige
<i>New construct to understand luxury experiences</i>		
<i>Escapism</i>	<i>(marginal*)</i>	A brief moment of imaginary transportation to enable a escapism from everyday life

**'marginal' does not mean that these constructs are absent. For example, some luxury experiences can be expensive. However, we posit that these constructs are not required, hence marginal.*