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IRVINE

Disruptive Marketplaces:
A Framework and Investigation of the Role of Place in the Disruption of Social Norms

DISSERTATION

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Management

by

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DEDICATION

To my family and friends who encouraged me to keep using the machete to forge new paths.

Making space for us.

A mi familia y amigos que me motivaron a seguir usando el machete para forjar nuevos caminos.

Creando espacio para nosotros.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Disruptive Marketplaces:
A Framework and Investigation of the Role of Place in the Disruption of Social Norms

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in Management

University of California, Irvine, 2020

Assistant Professor Tonya Williams Bradford, Co-Chair

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Marketers construct environments—physical and digital marketplaces—that frame consumption activities, affect customer behavior, and encourage particular forms of social interaction. Implicit in studies of the effects of place on consumer experience are notions of disruption. Missing in that literature is an explanation of disruption and its impact on consumer experiences of marketplaces. This dissertation is composed of three essays that develop a framework for the analysis of the disruptive capacity of marketplaces and investigate this empirically.

The first essay (Chapter 1) is titled, "Consuming Order in Marketplaces: A Conceptual Model of the Disruptive Capacities of Place." This conceptual essay introduces and defines the notion of "disruptive marketplaces." Further, an analytical framework is developed that can be used to investigate how different elements of marketplaces affect consumer experience.

The second essay (Chapter 2) is titled, "The Thrift Store as Disruptive Marketplace: The Effects of Place on the Consumer Experience through a Mix of Solid and Liquid Consumption Characteristics." This essay utilizes the framework in Essay 1 in an ethnographic study at a thrift store. Through the employment of the framework, solid and liquid consumption characteristics

are analyzed as they relate to the three different elements of place. Essay 2 provides preliminary evidence for the utility of the conceptual framework.

The third essay (Chapter 3) is titled, "Structure and Agency in Place: Consumer Experience and Subject-Object Relationships in a Thrift Store Environment." This essay builds on our understanding of how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world around them within marketplaces, and the structures that shape social norms. This essay contributes a three-step analysis on how the transposition of schemas (or consumer creativity) is encouraged in a thrift store environment.

Contributions to the marketing and consumer research literatures as well as marketer-related implications are expanded on throughout the three essays and include a broader understanding of the effects of place on consumer experience, consumer expectations, consumption characteristics, and consumer creativity. This dissertation contributes a new perspective of place that involves three interrelated elements that affect social norms—emplacement, spatial, and temporal dimensions of place. Furthermore, an ethnographic study at a thrift store uncovers how consumers are influenced by these elements in this particular marketplace as they engage in a mix of solid and liquid consumption practices. Finally, a focus on how consumers relate to structures at the same time that they demonstrate agency reveals how the transposition of schemas within a thrift store environment, or consumer creativity, is enacted.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of place in consumer experience. The study of space and place is crucial to a better understanding of consumption, given that place affects elements of meaning, nature, social relations, agency, and perspectives (Sherry, 1998). This dissertation extends prior research by developing an analytic framework that can be used to approach the study of place with the aim of systematically investigating its disruptive capacity in relation to contextual social norms. Notions of disruption are implicit in studies of place in consumer research, however, missing in that literature is an explanation of what actually affects this capacity and how this influences consumer experience. This research answers the questions 1) What elements of marketplaces affect the disruptive capacity of place? 2) How do the different elements of place affect consumer experience? 3) How does place affect subject-object relationships in marketplaces? This dissertation answers these questions across three different essays.

This dissertation is composed of three essays presented as chapters 1, 2, and 3. The first essay is a conceptual paper that develops the Disruptive Marketplace framework that is referenced in the empirical analyses of papers two and three. The first essay has been invited for revision and resubmission at the *Journal of Consumer Research* with my dissertation co-chairs, Professor Tonya Williams Bradford and Professor Alladi Venkatesh, as my co-authors. The most recent version of the paper is included in this dissertation. This paper is the foundation for essays two and three. Research opportunities created by the Disruptive Marketplace framework are presented in essay 1 and explored empirically in essays 2 and 3 using ethnographic methods at a thrift store.

The first essay (Chapter 1) is titled, "Consuming Order in Marketplaces: A Conceptual Model of the Disruptive Capacities of Place." This essay lays out the notion of "disruptive marketplaces" along with an accompanying conceptual framework, which includes three main components that researchers should consider when exploring the role of place in consumption. In order to examine the overall disruptive capacity of marketplaces in their ability to disrupt consumer expectations of familiar orderings of society, three elements should be considered in interdependence with each other. These elements include emplacement, spatial, and temporal dimensions of place. The theoretical foundations of this perspective of place are motivated by the Foucauldian (1998) notion of heterotopia and his description of different places in contemporary society and their functions in relation to one another. This essay answers the question "What elements of marketplaces affect the disruptive capacity of place?" The three elements of marketplaces are theorized to work interdependently, influencing perceptions of social and cultural order. Research opportunities created by this framework are presented and discussed.

The second essay (Chapter 2) is titled, "The Thrift Store as Disruptive Marketplace: The Effects of Place on the Consumer Experience through a Mix of Solid and Liquid Consumption Characteristics." Through an ethnography of a thrift store, this research uncovers how elements of place affect the consumer experience. A range of ethnographic methods were employed at a thrift store to develop a thick description of and analyze the consumer experience. Those methods include participant observation, shopping with consumers, projective tasks, and interviews. Findings of the ethnographic study employed the disruptive marketplace framework from Essay 1. In addition, solid and liquid consumption characteristics (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) are analyzed as they relate to the three different elements of place. This essay answers the question "How do the different elements of place affect consumer experience?" This research

contributes to secondhand consumption perspectives, the effects of place on consumer experience and expectations, and how solid and liquid consumption characteristics manifest in this marketplace.

The third essay (Chapter 3) is titled, "Structure and Agency in Place: Consumer Experience and Subject-Object Relationships in a Thrift Store Environment." This essay further examines the question of how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world within marketplaces, and the structures that shape social norms. Theoretical foundations are motivated by Sewell's (1992) theory of structure and change. Findings of the ethnographic study at the same thrift store in Essay 2 address the structure-agency regenerative loop empirically. Specifically, this essay investigates the spatial element of the thrift store, an explicitly dynamic structure. Such dynamism encourages the active transposition of schemas that are found to contribute to consumer creativity and subject-object relationships. This research answers the question "How does place affect subject-object relationships in marketplaces?" Contributions to the consumer research literature include an explanation of how place affects the consumer experience while consumers contribute to its shaping by: 1) breaking down the spatial element of the marketplace, including differences in objects and publics; 2) determining how explicitly the dynamic nature of social structures may be accessed; and, 3) analyzing the level in which the active transposition of schemas (or consumer creativity) is encouraged.

Together, these three essays contribute a novel understanding of place in the marketplace. Through the development of the "disruptive marketplace" approach to research and my employment of the framework within the context of thrift, this dissertation contributes to research in marketing and consumer research that is concerned with consumer experiences of space and place. Conceptually, I explain how three interrelated elements impact the established

social norms in marketplaces—emplacement, spatial, and temporal dimensions of place. In two empirical essays, I investigate and explain relationships between consumers and place as they participate in one particular type of marketplace.

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CHAPTER 1

Consuming Order in Marketplaces:

A Conceptual Model of the Disruptive Capacities of Place

Abstract

Markets are systems that organize value, and place is where value is materialized. Implicit in studies of place are assumptions of the role marketers play in presenting cultural and social order. Firms recognize their role in structuring place for consumer experience, which includes the categorization of different components of daily life within marketplaces. Marketers construct environments—physical and digital places—that frame consumption activities, affect customer behavior, encourage particular forms of social interaction, and influence the social value transposed onto the objects and subjects within the site. However, marketers also recognize the value of disruption to maintain customer engagement. But how much disruption is enough to influence engagement, but not so much as to be unsettling? There is an opportunity to investigate the disruption of perceived social and cultural norms that is engendered by place. This paper develops the notion of 'disruptive marketplaces,' along with an accompanying theoretical framework to investigate the disruptive capacity of place. Three elements—emplacement disruptions, spatial disruptions, and temporal disruptions—are identified and defined. These elements are theorized to work interdependently, influencing perceptions of social and cultural order. The research opportunities created by this framework are then presented and discussed.

Keywords: Place, Space, Disruption, Heterotopia, Order

Disruption is used by marketing practitioners to maintain customer engagement. Consider, for example, the case of Universal Studios, whose recent messaging focused on how much it has changed, promising that everywhere you turn, there is something new and unexpected; or Marshall's recent commercial: "Why shop at Marshall's? Because shopping should thrill you… with unexpected finds… Marshall's is never boring and always surprising!" Similarly, implicit in studies of the effects of place on consumer experience are notions of disruption. Those studies theorize how consumers are affected by certain aspects of place. However, an explanation is needed of both the different types of disruption engendered by place and their impact on consumer experiences of marketplaces.

The effects of place as seen in studies on consumer experience begin when perceptions of order(s) are disrupted. Consumers manage the order that they encounter within diverse marketplaces in various ways. Order is characterized by "the extent of organization, coherence, fittingness, congruity, legibility and clarity of an environment" and is often discussed in terms of opportunities for retailers to reduce the complexity of an environment through categorization or to control the levels of complexity and order (Gilboa and Rafaeli 2003, 198). For example, assortment organization affecting preference among items (Poynor Lamberton and Diehl 2013), perceptions of high and low assortment variety affecting consumer satisfaction (Morales et al. 2005), environmental disorder threatening an individual's sense of personal control (Boyoun and Rui 2014), and complexity and order of visual cues affecting perceived variety and quantity consumed (Gilboa and Rafaeli 2003) have all been explored in consumer research. Marketers thus recognize their role in structuring marketplaces, or the spatial dimensions of consumption (Peñaloza 1998), to affect consumer experience. Indeed, though not always referenced explicitly in terms of 'order,' the work of firms to constantly categorize different components and symbols

of daily life within marketplaces is clearly one involving the shaping and presentation of social order. This work provides insight to the questions: What types of disruption are engendered by place? What major disruptive elements of marketplaces contribute to the experience of place that characterizes them as either following or challenging expected social and cultural norms? How can consumption sites be examined to unpack their disruptive capacity?

Markets are systems that organize value (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006) and marketplaces are where value is materialized. Marketers construct environments—physical and digital places—that frame consumption activities (Bradford and Sherry 2015), encourage particular forms of social interaction (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999), affect customer behavior (Mari and Poggesi 2013), guide the appropriateness of behaviors (Higgins and Hamilton 2018), and influence the social value transposed onto the objects and subjects within the site (Chin 1998). In this way, marketers constantly reproduce and present complex social order. But organization/disorganization and order/disorder and their subsequent effects all deal with the notion of disruption.

The potential impact of place is receiving attention by scholars and marketers seeking to understand and influence consumer behavior. Kotler's (1973) work on the influence of atmospherics on consumers has inspired consumer researchers to explore specific components of the physical environment such as sight, sound, smell, or touch (Mari and Poggesi 2013), the physical environment's importance in service organizations, or servicescapes (Bitner 1992), consumer experiences of different types of marketplaces (Sherry 1998; Skandalis, Banister, and Byrom 2016), and different place-based social forms (Bradford and Sherry 2015). Implicit in such studies is that different types of disruptions engendered by place interrupt taken-for-granted assumptions of social order(s).

Common across these studies of place is the notion of heterotopia, which refers to a place in which other sites "that can be found within the culture are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed" (Foucault 1998, 178). Rather than focusing on radically marginalized places that contest mainstream social order from a distance, this paper investigates "the relational 'difference' from, or transformation of, the ordinary" (Johnson 2012, 3). As the Marshall's and Universal Studios commercials depict, marketers employ various techniques in the attempt of transforming places beyond the ordinary to influence consumer behavior. This phenomenon presents an opportunity to approach the study of place by examining its disruptive elements. More specifically, we explore elements of marketplaces that arise from the fragmentation of consumer society to develop a framework for the study of how marketer-constructed environments affect consumer perceptions of order.

When the predictability of daily life is disrupted, the normative ways in which society is organized are brought to the surface and exposed as malleable cultural productions. For example, in the context of routine practices, "the taken-for-granted nature of these routines is rarely contemplated by consumers—until these routines are disrupted. Thus, it is unsettling when a storm brings down electrical lines and there is no light, warmth, or entertainment. It is unsettling to turn on the kitchen faucet only to find it dry" (Phipps and Ozanne 2017, 361). Similarly, the taken-for-granted assumptions related to the structure of marketplaces (i.e., their presentation of social and cultural order) are brought to the surface when specific dimensions of place are interrupted.

Positioned at the intersection of literatures focusing on place, heterotopia, and disruption, this paper develops the notion of "disruptive marketplaces" as sites found within dominant consumer culture that operate through market rules and values at the same time as they represent

and contest social relations. Along with the notion of 'disruptive marketplaces,' this paper develops an accompanying theoretical framework to investigate the disruptive capacity of place. Three main elements—emplacement disruption, spatial disruption, and temporal disruption—compose the theoretical framework of disruptive marketplaces, providing additional streams of inquiry for examining how consumers experience marketplaces. The three elements thus identified function interdependently, influencing consumer behavior, identity construction, and perceptions of social and cultural order.

In sum, this paper reviews prior studies on the effects of place and how disruptive elements are embedded within these perspectives; presents the notions of heterotopia and disruption that motivate this research approach; delineates the disruptive marketplace framework, together with its three main elements; and concludes with a discussion on how this perspective contributes to consumer research and allows new extensions for future research on consumer experiences of place.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This study of marketplaces begins with the premise that consumer experience is influenced by the effects of place, which is permeated with an essence of heterotopic distinction in consumer culture. Various approaches have been utilized to study the effects of place on consumer experience, with different types of disruptions most often implicit in those analyses. The notions of space and place, heterotopia, and disruption in consumer research that inspire this theoretical lens are presented. The development of the disruptive marketplace model is entwined with this literature review.

Space and Place in Consumer Research

The evolution of the study of place reflects "our gradual acknowledgement of the absolutely pervasive nature of the influence exerted upon consumers by the built environment of marketing" (Sherry 1998, 8). While place may be construed as a mere backdrop where consumption activities happen, this research foregrounds place in the consumption experience, given that places "are constantly shaped by activities related to them or that they determine" (Roux 2014, 62). Prior work in both marketing and consumer research speaks to this perspective, although its foci varies.

A recognition of the basic distinction between the notion of 'space' and 'place' has also been established. Space is more abstract, given that it is both a historical product of interrelations and a process that is continuously reproduced (Castilhos, Dolbec, and Veresiu 2017). In contrast, the notion of place refers to "a concrete and limited space that is acknowledged, understood, and invested with meanings and value" (Castilhos et.al. 2017,11). In fact, the transformation of the more abstract notion of space to place relates to the fact that "physical space embodies symbolic properties [and] meaning is continually emplaced in consumers' experience" (Sherry 1998, 4). Consumer research treats consumption spaces as sites where meaning is emplaced. However, meanings are constantly interrupted within these environments.

Past research on marketplaces has greatly expanded our understanding of the effects of place. For instance, research on the constituency of place illuminates the various effects on consumer behavior such as a marketplace's particular atmospheric components (Kotler 1973; Mari and Poggesi 2013), symbolic meaning within marketplaces (Levy 1959; McCracken 1986),

and the differences in structures and functions of marketplaces (Sherry 1990; Sherry 1998). Examining different types of marketplaces such as themed flagship brand stores (Kozinets et al. 2002), servicescapes (Bitner 1992; Sherry 1998), and virtual market spaces (Ballantyne and Nilsson 2017), has also contributed to our understanding of the influence of place. Exploring consumer experiences of different place-based social forms (Bradford and Sherry 2015) and their roles in place-making (Bradford and Sherry 2015; Chatzidakis, Maclaran, and Bradshaw 2012) has further extended our understanding of how place can also influence meaning and social relations. In this same vein, research analyzing how place affects identity construction (Roux 2014) and social norms (Chin 1998; Higgins and Hamilton 2018) has greatly contributed to consumer research by expanding our understanding of the capacity of marketplaces to influence individual consumers, but also, society at large. Still, whether research examines the effect of a specific environmental cue within a marketplace or societal effects involved with a particular place-based social form, there are different types of disruptions most often implicit within those processes.

For instance, research on atmospherics examines "the effort to design buying environments to produce specific emotional effects in the buyer that enhance his purchase probability" (Kotler 1973, 50). Studies such as Kotler's (1973) examine how physical environments can operate to produce emotional effects through the senses of sight, sound, smell, or touch (c.f., Mari and Poggesi 2013). The effects of environmental cues within marketplaces have been examined independently and in interrelation with each other to explore "the existence of the fit between environmental cues and the encounter" (Mari and Poggesi 2013, 178). However, the importance of studying the simultaneous presence of multiple environmental cues is gaining greater recognition "based on the idea that a given system cannot be explained by

considering its component parts separately from each other" (Mari and Poggesi 2013, 180). The meanings associated with certain smells speak to emplacement disruptions, such as why certain smells are associated with Christmas (Spangenberg, Grohmann, and Sprott 2005). Other components of marketplaces also engender emplacement disruptions when they include representations of other places such as the home (Bradford and Sherry 2015) or museums (Peñaloza 1998). In addition, whether environmental cues have certain effects on consumers speaks to an implied spatial disruption within marketplaces.

Various types of marketplaces have been identified according to their structures and functions, ranging from informal (garage sale) to formal (stock market) and from economic (classified ads) to festive (leisure venues) (Sherry 1990). These discussions illuminate how social order, as presented within marketplaces, affects expectations of social interaction and even taste (Skandalis et al. 2016). Marketplace components are treated as indexical markers (Murphy 2015), which implies an avoidance or embrace of their disruptive capacity in relation to other places in society. The same holds true in the case of virtual market spaces (Ballantyne and Nilsson 2017), although epistemological considerations differ.

Another stream of research has focused on the importance of what has been termed 'servicescapes,' the physical environment for service organizations (Bitner 1992; Sherry 1998). Research establishes that it is possible to "influence consumer behavior through manipulating a store's servicescape" (Mari and Poggesi 2013, 176). Researchers have also explored several types of servicescapes to understand the diversity of consumer encounters with specific marketplaces (Sherry 1998). These encounters are affected by dynamic servicescape components and include consumer experiences in non-western cultures (Sayed, Farrag, and Belk 2003), consumer experience based on the familiarity of the servicescape (Fowler, Wesley, and Vazquez

2007), and servicescape encounters of people with disabilities (Baker, Holland, and Kaufman-Scarborough 2007; Rosenbaum 2009). These studies highlight the complexity of consumer experience of place, and whether the influence of the built environment is intentional, they imply there are levels and types of disruption operating in tandem that affect the different responses observed. Even ordinary places—small, informally branded, or unthemed stores or restaurants (Borghini, Sherry, and Joy 2011; Weijo, Martin, and Arnould 2018)—carry with them certain expectations of place that either conform to or disrupt contextual social norms.

In addition, different types of place-based forms have been explored, including spectacle (Peñaloza 1998), festival (Kozinets 2002), carnival (Belk 1994), and vestaval (Bradford and Sherry 2015). Bradford and Sherry (2015) provide a summary of each form, delineating their characteristics as used in consumer research specifically. The spectacle has received the most attention, as it refers to the "subjugation of the world to the economy, the fetishism of goods, reification, alienation, ideology, and specifically, how images, representation, [and] entertainment prevent authentic life from coming into being" (Bradford and Sherry 2015, 131) . The "themed, public celebrations" (Bradford and Sherry 2015) of festival have also been investigated extensively. Carnival has been researched as a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order [marking] the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" and being prominently enacted through satire (Bradford and Sherry 2015, 132). The vestaval is a domestic place-based form that "consists of turning the home inside out to embrace and transform the public… and putting the interior workings of the household on public display, so that family, friends, and strangers may interact in intimate quarters to redefine the polity" (Bradford and Sherry 2015, 134) . Research that examines

consumer experience of place-based forms comes closest to explicating disruption from the effects of place, given that these forms fundamentally challenge social order.

Studies examining symbolic meaning within marketplaces (Levy 1959; McCracken 1986), place-making (Bradford and Sherry 2015, 2017; Chatzidakis et al. 2012), and how place affects identity construction (Roux 2014) and social norms (Chin 1998; Higgins and Hamilton 2018), also come close to an explicit recognition of how perceptions of social and cultural order are disrupted by the materiality of place. However, the examination of the disruptive capacities of place on the consumer experience tends to either focus on specific environmental cues or provides a cursory analysis of the material environment while foregrounding social and cultural considerations.

This gap in the literature provides an opening for exploring disruption from the effects of the materiality of place. Implicit in studies of place is an understanding that the materiality of marketplaces impacts varying levels of disruption that initiate with individual consumers. To examine the different elements of marketplaces that contribute to their disruptive capacity, the notion of heterotopia aids in this theorization since it "provides a better account of the spatial and material dimensions of place" while also emphasizing contestations of social order (Roux Guillard, and Blanchet 2017, 2).

Heterotopia

Unlike utopias—fundamentally unreal places—heterotopias are material sites that can be found within society. While the notion of utopia has been explored extensively in consumer research (Bajde 2013; Brown, Maclaren, and Stevens 1996; Kozinets 2001; Maclaran and Brown

2005), considerably less scholarship in consumer research examines the implications of heterotopia (Chatzidakis et al. 2012; Gilboa and Rafaeli 2003; Hewer and Brownlie 2006; Rokka and Canniford 2016; Roux 2014; Roux et al. 2017). Utopias are unreal places: the mere attempt to refer to them enhances their unreal nature. The utopian imaginary is possible because it is constructed by perceptions of what real spaces lack or fall short of. The utopia is able to present society in a perfected form, or reversed, through referencing the real places in society in which we interact in everyday life. While utopias cannot be realized independently of the real, heterotopias are real places in which "all the other real emplacements that can be found within the culture are, at the same time, represented, contested, and reversed" (Foucault 1998, 178). A focus on the real/unreal aspects of utopia and heterotopia has dominated consumer research, especially with inspiring work surrounding the hyperreal and spectacle in consumer culture. However,

> If we expand our focus to include not only the nature of the space itself but also the kinds of practices it can afford, we can see in Foucault's text an attempt to elaborate a concept of space and spatial difference based not necessarily on the *organization* of space, but on the *experiential effects* [emphasis in original] that movement into and through the space could enact (Murphy 2015, 195).

Studies that have utilized the notion of heterotopia in consumer research tend to focus on the radical alterity of places based on Hetherington's (1997) and Harvey's (2000) interpretation of the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia. As a result of this, the notion of heterotopia has been mainly utilized to examine non-mainstream places such as the unique Athenian neighborhood of Exarcheia (Chatzidakis et al. 2012) or marginalized consumption sites such as the sidewalk outside of people's homes (Roux et al. 2017). More specifically, Chatzidakis et al. (2012) present the Athenian neighborhood of Exarcheia as a heterotopian place from a perspective that treats space and place as essential to the analysis of ethics, ecology, and politics. The authors investigate Exarcheia as an 'agent for transformation,' disrupting what it means to consume

ethically (Chatzidakis et al. 2012). Roux et al. (2017) explore the concept of heterotopia in public space in their analysis of a consumption site that forms on the sidewalk just outside of people's homes where unwanted objects are laid out temporarily on Bulky Item Collection (BIC) days. The authors theorize a 'parasite heterotopia' as "a place that is temporarily appropriated by a tactical use of a regulated space so as to challenge its surrounding environment" (Roux et al. 2017, 3). The BIC system creates consumption sites from the circulation of goods among strangers and disrupts how normative consumption spaces form and look. Similar to Chatzidakis et al. (2012), they focus on marginalized places that contest mainstream consumer culture.

Our research is inspired by the Foucauldian notion of heterotopia that emphasizes "the relational 'difference' from, or transformation of, the ordinary rather than retaining the connotations of radical alterity or spaces that are fundamentally 'other'" (Johnson 2012, 3). The present research is more in line with the recognition that "in his critique of traditional approaches to the history of ideas, Foucault systematically undermines notions that refer to any sense of a hidden depth. The relational 'difference' from, is in keeping with his overall approach to his studies that reject notions of a radical 'Otherness'" (Johnson 2012, 3-4). Building on this line of research, we seek to contribute to the study of consumer experiences of place with a theoretical framework that can be used to examine a wide array of physical and digital sites for those interested in investigating the disruptive potential of places found within consumer culture.

Foucault developed six defining principles of heterotopias (Foucault, 1998). While his examples of heterotopias differ significantly from one another, each "involves all the principles to some extent," and "all refer in some way or another to a relational disruption in time and space" (Johnson 2012, 9). Further, it has been suggested that some examples are 'highly

heterotopic' (Johnson 2012, 8). Table 1a lists these principles and Foucault's (1998) explanation of each.

Table 1a: Foucault's (1998) Defining Principles of Heterotopias

Principle	Foucault's Description
1.	"There is probably not a single culture in the world that does not establish heterotopias: that is a constant of every human group" (179).
2.	"In the course of its history, a society can make a heterotopia that exists and has not ceased to exist operate in a very different way" (180).
3.	"The heterotopia has the ability to juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves" (181).
4.	"More often than not, heterotopias are connected with temporal discontinuities; that is, they open onto what might be called, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronias. The heterotopia begins to function fully when men are in a kind of absolute break with their traditional time; thus, the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopian place, seeing that the cemetery begins with that strange heterochromia that loss of life constitutes for an individual, and that quasi eternity in which he perpetually dissolves and faces away" (182).
5.	"Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at the same time" (183).
6.	"They have a function in relation to the remaining space" either as a heterotopia of illusion or of compensation (184).

Foucault's (1998) principles provide insights into the characteristics of heterotopias. These characteristics guide our extrapolation of those principles to develop types of disruptions found in marketplaces.

Consumer research has explored the disruption of time and space in consumption sites in a variety of ways. For instance, Sandikci and Holt (1998) approach the mall as an archetype of the constant oscillation between reality and representation that forms an 'utter dislocation of place.' Although Sandikci and Holt (1998) do not explicitly make use of the notion of

heterotopia for their analysis, the impact of disruptions of time and space as observed within mainstream places in consumer culture is evident (i.e. the mall). Analyzing place as a heterotopic entity thus serves as an appropriate starting point for investigating the disruption of order in marketplaces.

Disruption

Central to the notion of heterotopia is disruption, given that heterotopias "are always embedded within the structure of a society and serve some collectively acknowledged purpose, but also in so doing somehow significantly alter normative relations" (Murphy 2015, 183). As consumers experience different types of marketplaces, their normative assumptions of quotidian order are at times disrupted (Phipps and Ozanne 2017). The marketing and consumer research literatures examine marketplace disruption as observed through consumer actions such as boycotts (Jost, Langer, and Singh 2017; Sen, Morwitz, and Gürhan-Canli 2001), anti-consumption movements (Handelman and Kozinets 2004; Varman and Belk 2009) countervailing market responses (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007), or green consumption practices (Veresiu and Giesler 2014). However, such reactions emerge from the underlying groundswell of disruption that begins with individual consumers and varies in degree within familiar marketplaces.

On a daily basis, consumers navigate marketplaces such as grocery stores that may carry products primarily imported from countries outside the U.S., allowing the store a claim of 'authenticity' in its offering of items targeted at particular ethnic groups. Or consider the availability of fresh produce in grocery stores located in impoverished areas in the U.S. versus

the plethora of Whole Foods Market-types in higher income areas. On a daily basis, consumers navigate marketplaces whose characteristics influence consumer identity construction and perceptions of social order. Marketplaces located within dominant consumer culture thus have the potential to disrupt mainstream social order reflected in contextual norms of time and space.

Disruptions are at times engendered through embodied performance. With a focus on the disruption of the embodied performance of the routine, Phipps and Ozanne (2017) demonstrate that individuals adjust to disruption of routines by reworking their practical and discursive understandings. People feel ontologically and existentially secure "when they feel a sense of order and predictability about their place in the world" (Phipps and Ozanne 2017, 362). The predictability of the world plays out in the routine order of daily life—or the ordinary profane (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). When the predictability of the world is interrupted, normative assumptions of quotidian order are made explicit (Phipps and Ozanne 2017). Recall the example of how unsettling it is when a storm brings down electrical lines. This example illustrates the embodied performance of walking into a room with an automatic arm and hand motion to turn the light switch on being disrupted. Similarly, embodied performance of traditional marketplace behaviors may be disrupted by an entirely different model of navigating a marketplace such as what IKEA introduced, or by the increased availability of self-checkout lines, or with the removal of cashiers and checkout lines altogether in Amazon Go stores. We posit that marketplaces have the capacity to disrupt social norms through the effects of the materiality of place as they expose the taken-for-granted order of daily life.

Disruptions manifest variously in routines. Daily routines often include participation in marketplaces such as grocery stores and malls. In fact, even the notion of 'public space' has been commodified by such marketplaces as shopping malls, which people go to frequently both to

shop for specific items and to pass the time and socialize (Sandikci and Holt 1998). Indeed, occupying fragmented marketplaces that have "ordered disorder, an exaggeration of play, a borderline between reality and representation" (Sandikci and Holt 1998, 309) is part of the daily routines of a fragmented consumer subject.

Scholars have considered both the positive and negative aspects of this fragmentation of life. The more positive perspective emphasizes that this fragmentation of "life, experience, society, and, most important, of the metanarratives" is the key to the liberatory potential of the consumer subject of postmodernity (Firat and Venkatesh 1995, 253). A darker view of the consequences of this experience of the world seems to focus more on the moments before any liberatory potential is achieved. As Sandikci and Holt (1998) observe in their analysis of the mall,

> Faced with the hyperreal spectacles and images coupled with contrary definitions of time and place, the individual in the mall is fragmented, lonely, and depthless… The self in the shopping mall is a fragmented and uncommitted one seeking to build an integrated self through consumption (Sandikci and Holt 1998, 309).

Both perspectives hold true in the context of disruption from the effects of place, given that the incommodious part of disruption must come before any liberatory potential can be achieved.

Both the marketing and consumer research literatures suggest that there are varying levels of disruption based on the observed effects of place. At a lower level of disruption, "one notices discrepancies from expectations, feels that things are somehow not "right," sees them arranged in unfamiliar patterns, and acts in uncommon ways" (Murphy 2015, 185). The cosmetics company Mary Kay illustrates an example of a lower level of disruption. At the company's inception, consumers purchased Mary Kay products from 'independent beauty consultants' in someone's home. In so doing, the consultants transformed the private space of the home into a consumption site where behaviors associated with the marketplace were emplaced. However, given the

changing role of consumer behaviors engendered by the digital age, firms like Mary Kay recalibrate the notion of emplacement and assess how decisions resulting therefrom may impact the consumer experience. For Mary Kay, this recalibration took the form of offering consumers added options of shopping via email, over the phone, or online.

At higher levels of disruption, one is shaken from the assumptions of the normative orderings of society that, like an earthquake,

> the upheaval jars you out of the cultural trance and the spell of the collective mind-set… When two or more opposing accounts, perspectives, or belief systems appear side by side or intertwined, a kind of double or multiple "seeing" results, forcing you into continuous dialectical encounters with these different stories, situations, and people. Trying to understand these convergences compels you to critique your own perspective and assumptions… Every paroxysm has the potential of initiating you to something new, giving you a chance to reconstruct yourself, forcing you to rework your description of self, world, and your place in it (reality) (Anzaldúa 2003, 547).

As an example of a marketplace with higher disruptive potential, antique malls illustrate additional spatial and temporal disruptive elements. Antique malls may house several independent dealers who lease booths. The mall may be organized by geographic region, time period, product type, or aesthetic theme at each vendor booth. Vendors select inventory on the basis of what they believe is popular among their customers or what the vendors themselves are individually passionate about or interested in. Thus, consumers may encounter objects from a time in American history where racist depictions of black Americans were accepted as a social norm. Although those objects were once sold as regular, unproblematic household items and consumers may fully understand that these objects represent a past time, they are also confronted with the fact that the objects are again occupying a marketplace in the same way consumers may purchase lamps today. Although the 'antique' title signifying the store type may imbue the objects with some form of legitimizing historicity, the mere presence of such items within a

marketplace (as opposed to a museum) taints the object, the space, and the participants with a certain type of vulgarity and quotidian normalcy that monetary transactions symbolize.

Within an antique mall, consumer negotiations of meanings are more complex considering that the items have also transformed from acceptable, mass produced items, to despicable representations of a discriminated group of people, and now to highly desirable collectibles (Baker, Motley, and Henderson 2004). Such a mall exemplifies how social relations associated with other sites in society are emplaced, several symbolic representations are juxtaposed under one site (adding a spatially disruptive component), and several temporal representations are also present. Still, at a glance, there is just organized chaos—or 'ordered disorder' (Sandikci and Holt 1998). There seems to be no cohesive logic of ordering in marketplaces with higher levels of disruption.

However, the antique mall example illustrates how the elements of emplacement, spatial, and temporal disruption work interdependently to bring to the surface the consumer's present, unquestioned assumptions of what 'ordinary' means. Thus, rather than assuming that consumers can inherently or effortlessly reconcile the contradictions of a fragmented marketplace, it is critical to pay attention to the ramifications of marketplace disruptions, particularly when they heavily influence consumer perceptions of self and society. Places have the capacity to disrupt assumptions of social order, and marketplaces are uniquely positioned to do so in significant ways, given their position within consumer society. In other words, disruptive marketplaces do not simply operate from a distance as extraordinary places; they work through dominant consumer culture at the same time that they mirror and contest it. Building on these literatures, the present work proposes a theoretical framework that can be useful to investigate the disruptive potential of physical and digital places.

DISRUPTIVE MARKETPLACES

Expanding on the role of place and its effects on consumer experience, we present the notion of 'disruptive marketplaces' as heterotopic sites that are localizable in society and contest the normative ways in which consumers order the world. Disruptive marketplaces are a type of heterotopia with varying disruptive capacities, affecting consumer experiences of place, identity construction, and social relations. Consumers manage social difference as these marketplaces represent, contradict, and reverse the social order that can be found within other places in consumer culture such as the home, retail spaces, digital spaces, workplaces, and even marginalized consumption sites.

Disruptive marketplaces encompass heterotopia principles in particular ways. Foucault's principle one generalizes heterotopic sites as being "a constant of every human group," while principle two clarifies that they operate differently depending on the culture in which they are found (Foucault 1998). Disruptive marketplaces are a specific type of heterotopia that is born out of a mid-1970s, 'post-Fordist' era, which is

> Characterized by the progressive loss of dominance of mass production and by the (re)emergence of alternative organizations of production [and are] able, by virtue of their flexibility, to tap into markets that are either too fragmented or changing too rapidly for mass producers (Cenzatti 2008, 5-6).

Out of these new organizations of production, which need "both constant change and inspiration for it," evolved new heterotopias (Cenzatti 2008, 6). For instance, 'heterotopias of difference' emphasize the juxtaposition of different publics within one site and are "characterized by a multiplicity of changing spaces with changing populations" (Cenzatti 2008, 11). Similarly, disruptive marketplaces are a new form of heterotopia that exist through market mediation and that through their specific management of difference (both social and material), influence

perceptions of social order. We extrapolate Foucault's (1998) defining principles of heterotopias to disruptive marketplaces of consumer culture (see Table 1b).

Table 1b: Extrapolating Foucault's (1998) Defining Principles of Heterotopias to Disruptive Marketplaces

Principle	Foucault's Description	Disruptive Marketplace Category
1.	"There is probably not a single culture in the world that does not establish heterotopias: that is a constant of every human group" (179).	Emplacement Disruption Spatial Disruption
2.	"In the course of its history, a society can make a heterotopia that exists and has not ceased to exist operate in a very different way" (180).	Emplacement Disruption Spatial Disruption
3.	"The heterotopia has the ability to juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves" (181).	Emplacement Disruption Spatial Disruption
4.	"More often than not, heterotopias are connected with temporal discontinuities; that is, they open onto what might be called, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronias. The heterotopia begins to function fully when men are in a kind of absolute break with their traditional time; thus, the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopian place, seeing that the cemetery begins with that strange heterochromia that loss of life constitutes for an individual, and that quasi eternity in which he perpetually dissolves and faces away" (182).	Emplacement Disruption Spatial Disruption Temporal Disruption
5.	"Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that isolates them and makes them penetrable at the same time" (183).	Emplacement Disruption
6.	"They have a function in relation to the remaining space" either as a heterotopia of illusion or of compensation (184).	Emplacement Disruption

We extrapolate three main categories of disruption of relevance to marketplaces from Foucault's (1998) approach to the study of place and from what is found in the marketing and

consumer research literatures regarding the effects of place on consumer experience. These main categories are emplacement disruption, spatial disruption, and temporal disruption.

First, we develop 'emplacement disruption' characterized as the relationship between marketplaces to other spaces in society. Foucault's fifth principle states that heterotopias have systems of opening and closing "that both isolates them and makes them penetrable" (Foucault 1998, 183). In marketplaces, this occurs through the subject's participation as 'consumer' and functions in relation to the remaining space outside of the market system as heterotopias of illusion or of compensation. The disruption of space is evident in Foucault's (1998) entire description of heterotopias, both in terms of emplacement (how these sites relate to other sites in society), but also in terms of the order[ing] within them.

Second is 'spatial disruption' characterized by the inclusion of various (and often competing) representations of different orders into a common ground. Emphasized by Foucault's (1998) principle three, the inclusion of several representations of other sites within one place exposes the malleability of the ways in which individuals classify the world—what we refer to as the 'ordinary.' Bringing together several seemingly unrelated parts that reflect very different orders into one common ground—a normalizing ground—renders the ways in which people normalize other classifications of quotidian life just as arbitrary. Here, the stark juxtapositions expose the ground from which individuals build order precisely because the representations of various places are organized next to each other in a common space.

Third, 'temporal disruptions' are characterized by experiences of time manifested in a marketplace. This temporal element of place is described as a significant component in Foucault's (1998) descriptive system, given that it influences the full potential of heterotopias.

Some examples of heterotopias that he provides include places of indefinitely accumulating time (such as museums and libraries) and those that exist only fleetingly (like festivals).

In addition to these three elements, analysis of disruptive marketplaces requires an explicit recognition of the role of materiality. Implicit in "the recognition that space is not an inert support of social action, but participates in the social action itself" (Cenzatti 2008, 9) is a theoretical recognition that a process of materiality is also at work. The present approach, in line with material culture analyses (Miller 2005), includes an understanding that the concepts of 'subject,' 'object,' and 'society' do not exist in a vacuum but are continuously co-constructed by each other. Those concepts are continuously produced and affected by the presence of the other. Indeed, with respect to social order and identity construction, "the individual does not create order out of nothing. They themselves have been created through processes of socialization, some social, some parental, some from peer groups at school" (Borgerson 2009, 163). Essential to the disruptive markeplace framework is a notion of materiality that includes implications for subject-object relationships.

It is also important to highlight that this referencing of the 'materiality' of the world differs from the necessity of the physicality of marketplaces. For instance, cyber spaces can also be disruptive marketplaces, considering that although they are not physical spaces, they are still very much real in the sense that "architecture conditions and coerces every movement; from user interfaces and navigational paths... [cyber spaces] are not incorporeal dream worlds, but real artefacts that are experienced through the senses" (Lehdonvirta 2010, 885).

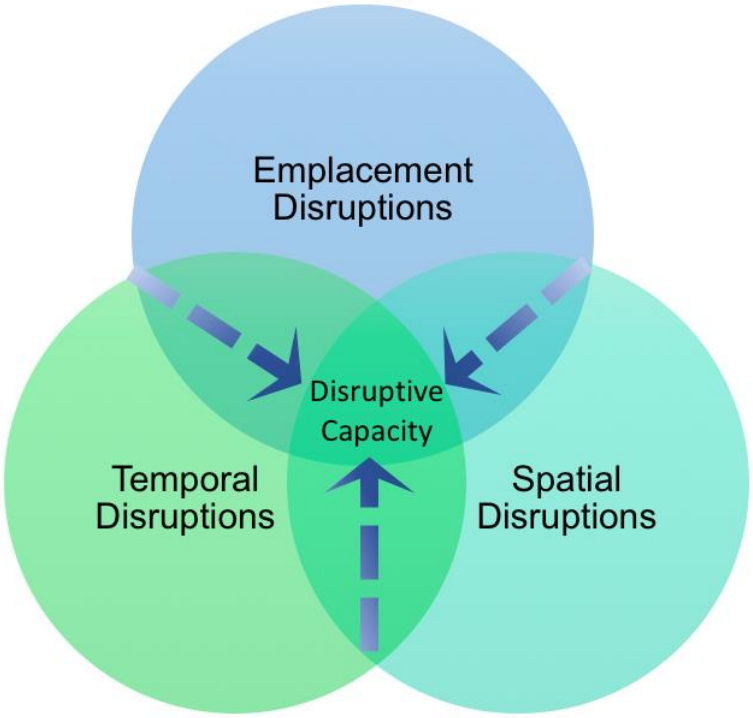
Disruptive marketplaces contest our familiar notions of time and space by making quotidian classifications explicit, exposing the malleability of social ordering. With a focus on difference rather than radically marginalized places that challenge social order from a distance,

the present approach focuses on places that function within mainstream consumer culture. The management of difference within disruptive marketplaces influences the site's potential to disrupt social order. However, the potential for disruption varies among marketplaces depending on particular emplacement, spatial, and temporal disruptive elements.

THREE ELEMENTS OF DISRUPTIVE MARKETPLACES

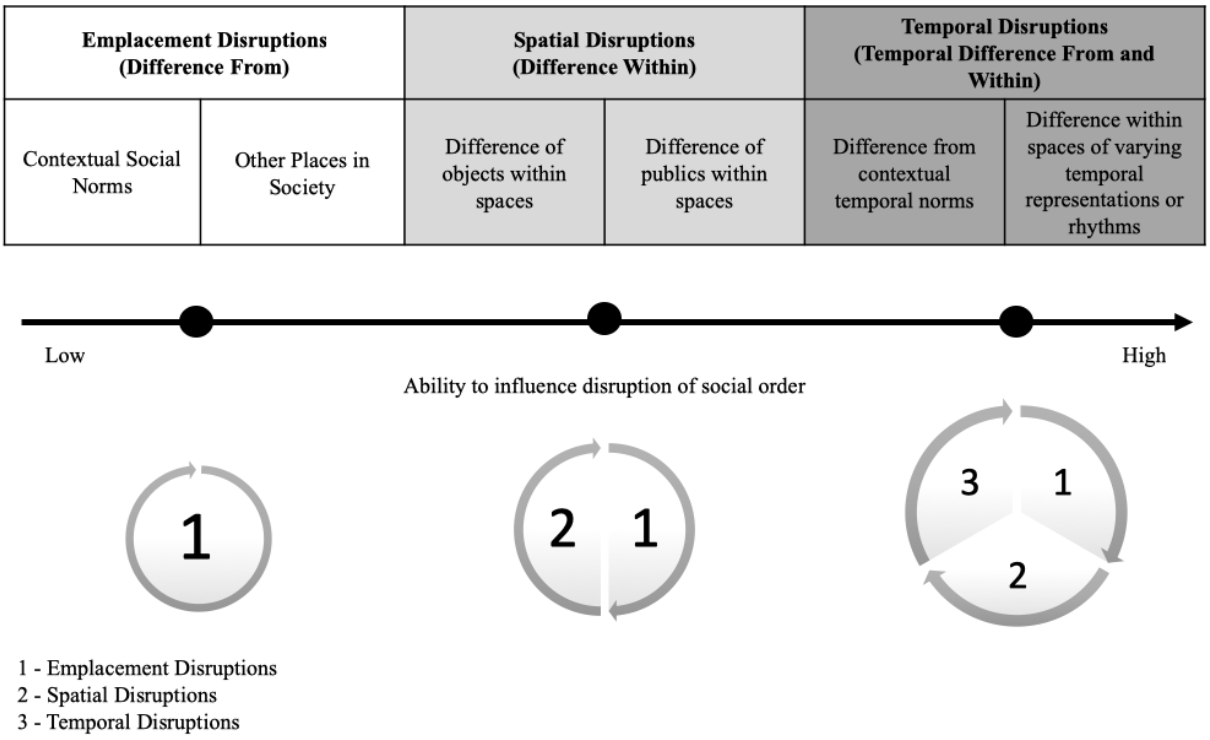
Disruptive marketplaces are marketplaces that challenge consumer assumptions of everyday order given the site's position in society, its material composition, and temporal dimensions. We identify three categories of disruption—emplacement, spatial, and temporal—that may enable researchers to more fully understand and explicate consumer experience of place (see figure 1a).

FFIGURE 1A: THREE ELEMENTS OF DISRUPTIVE MARKETPLACES



We posit that disruptive marketplaces most likely include more than one element such that the three categories of disruption work interdependently. The more elements that are present, the greater a site's ability to disrupt social order. Figure 1b illustrates the three types of disruption, their components, and the varying levels of the disruptive capacity of marketplaces.

FIGURE 1B: VARYING LEVELS OF THE DISRUPTIVE CAPACITY OF MARKETPLACES



All three elements are concerned with the management of difference—both in terms of how firms present difference and how consumers experience and deal with this difference. Emplacement disruptions refer to how the site in question differs from others in society. Spatial disruptions refer to the concentration of difference within sites with both objects and publics representing different social orders. Finally, temporal disruptions refer to varying temporal representations within spaces where either the disruption differs from contextual norms or where more than one temporal rhythm is represented within the same site. For study context examples

found in the consumer research literature that illustrate the three elements see Table 1c. Next, we describe each element, their interdependence, and implications for analysis.

Table 1c: Three Types of Disruption Observed in Marketplaces and Study Context Examples

Type of Disruption	Examples in the Literature	Studies	Study Contexts
Emplacement Disruption	Inside/Outside the Market	(Kozinets 2002)	Burning Man
	Public/Private	(Bradford and Sherry 2015)	Tailgating
	Marketer-produced brand assemblages vs. consumer re-interpretations	(Rokka and Canniford 2016)	Instagram Selfies
	Traditional service encounter vs. extraordinary services	(Arnould and Price 1993; Roux 2014)	River Rafting, Tattoo Parlor
	Third places	(Rosenbaum 2009)	Video Arcades, Coffee Shops
Spatial Disruption	Atmospherics	(Spangenberg et al. 2005)	Christmas Smells
	Environmental disorder	(Boyoun and Rui 2014)	Self-regulation and Consumer Well-Being
	Virtual market spaces	(Ballantyne and Nilsson 2017)	Social Media Avatars
	Crowded/not crowded and interior design	(Sayed et al. 2003)	Egyptian Shopping Mall
	Assortment variety	(Morales et al. 2005)	Assortment Organization in Retail Sites
Temporal Disruption	Ephemeral Time	(Kozinets 2002)	Festivals
	Accumulation of Time	(Joy et al. 2003; Peñaloza 1998)	Museums, Nike Town
	Temporal Rhythm (Slow, Fast)	(Woermann and Rokka 2015)	Paintball and free-skiing
	Transformational Temporality (Before, After)	(Roux 2014; Türe and Ger 2016)	Tattoo parlor, Heirlooms
	Past, Present, Future (Mix or Emphasis)	(Wallendorf and Arnould 1991)	Thanksgiving

Emplacement Disruption ('Difference From')

The element of emplacement disruption refers to how the site in question is *different from* contextual social norms or from other places in society. Difference from contextual social norms can be seen in the Amazon Go store where the marketplace is different from a social expectation of cashiers at grocery stores. Difference from other places in society is evident in the attempt by retailers to differentiate from other retailers and in the fundamental difference in social expectations from places such as the home or workplace.

Emplacement Disruption ('Difference from') Contextual Social Norms. One aspect of the emplacement disruption element deals with the analysis of contextual social norms surrounding the marketplace in question. In the context of physical space, many have focused on normal/abnormal binary divisions and extended heterotopia to refer to or to study marginalized spaces in society and their function in relation to mainstream sites (Johnson 2012). In contrast, disruptive marketplaces in contemporary culture operate within a consumer culture in which "the social norms from which deviance emerges (that deviance mirrors) have become more flexible, and deviance a more transient concept" (Cenzatti 2008, 4). Accordingly, it is important to clarify that the notion of emplacement within the context of disruptive marketplaces does not concern an a priori moral statement or definition of 'normal space' or 'normal marketplace.' Instead, considering emplacement disruptions involves questioning difference from some established social norm within the particular context in question. For example, a social norm surrounding a clothing retailer may be that the clothing and textiles industries do not often take into consideration aspects of clothing that may facilitate consumption for individuals with differently-abled bodies. For example, the Tommy Adaptive fashion line modifies clothing by replacing

zippers and buttons with magnets while offering fashionable styles for individuals with different physical needs. With new clothing designs aimed at facilitating the daily routines of individuals with differently-abled bodies entering a mainstream arena, the considerations for the experiences of individuals with various physical needs become legitimized by the market in more ways than just as a function of utility.

At the individual level, the significance of the disruption that is arbitrated by place varies among consumers, for which the disruptive marketplace framework allows some flexibility through its underlying notion of materiality. Consumers are constantly confronted by the material composition of the world, creating tensions between the agency of the subject, the seeming independence of objects, and what this seeming independence communicates about social norms. These tensions tend to affect general populations and are particularly significant for marginalized groups such as low-income populations, racial minorities, and those whose bodies do not comport with mainstream fashions (i.e., differently-abled, fat, skin color).

Emplacement Disruption ('Difference from') Other Places in Society. A second aspect of the emplacement disruption element deals with how a particular site relates to society, including other sites that operate through market mediation and those that do not. This aspect of the emplacement disruption element also encompasses the attempt to differentiate a retail site from competitors, given that to achieve some level of differentiation, a certain amount of disruption is required.

In practice, retailers deal with this dimension of the emplacement disruption element when they attempt to 'differentiate' themselves (just enough) from other retailers and from what they themselves offered in the past. Thus, they involve themselves with changing store layouts

and inventory each year, season, month, day, according to trending fashions, and even between morning and afternoon in order to motivate consumer excitement and exploration. In fact, the 'thrill of the hunt' for treasures that has been observed in places like thrift stores (Bardhi 2003), where one's experience of a store seems different at every visit, is a strategy that has been adopted by many retailers who recognize this exploratory behavior. There is an implicit embrace of a certain level of disruption—or significant difference—by both marketers and customers. But how much change from a past visit and difference from other retailers is disruptive enough to influence excitement, but is not too disruptive so as to be unsettling? These are the types of questions that the emplacement disruption element motivates and how the concept of 'differentiation' fits into a more positive view of the disruptive marketplace framework. Other examples include marketer-produced brand assemblages versus consumer re-interpretations in the context of Instagram selfies (Rokka and Canniford 2016), and traditional service encounters versus permanent/radical transformations of the body in the context of the tattoo parlor (Roux 2014).

How marketplaces differ from other places in society outside market mediation (i.e., home, school, workplaces, churches, community-driven gardens, youth centers) also falls within the emplacement disruption element since the disruptive capacity of marketplaces is also based on how social expectations differ/relate to expected norms within other places in society. Marketplaces often reflect and contest the social relations that non-market mediated places engender, which contributes to their disruptive capacity.

Spatial Disruption ('Difference Within')

The element of spatial disruption is about the organization of representations of multiple social orders in one place—or how the site is *made up of difference*. The element of spatial disruption deals with the juxtaposition of contradicting symbolic meaning within one site. It deals with the fragmented consumer subject, their management of cultural contradiction, and the point at which the stark juxtaposition of several incompatible representations of cultural norms within one site, becomes significantly disruptive. This element encompasses the containment of various publics within a site and the containment of various objects within a site.

Spatial Disruption ('Difference within') of Objects. Marketing practitioners spend a great deal of time organizing disparate cultural components within a site. Consider a quick trip to a local CVS pharmacy. In a short trip and within a relatively small retail space, a consumer is exposed to pharmaceutical drugs, holiday decorations, food supplies, pet supplies, beauty products, and can even get a passport photo. This concentration of difference is what the spatial disruption element refers to in the context of objects. In this sense, marketers who make decisions on how space is organized manage cultural difference, as represented by the commodities within the site.

The inclusion of an object in a market-mediated site transforms the artefact into a 'product,' homogenizing cultural difference. While, in one sense, the appropriation of cultural difference into mainstream consumer culture represents sameness or homogenization, the varying representations of several social orders that are found within a site also persist as concentrated difference. In this way, the concentrated difference within disruptive marketplaces is at the same time real and unreal. Furthermore, the greater the cultural difference contained within one site, the more arbitrary the ground from which consumers build social order becomes

and, thus, the more disruptive the place. In this way, marketers act as arbiters of cultural difference (Appadurai 1990), and the element of spatial disruption speaks to this as it refers to the management of difference that is contained within a site.

It is often assumed that consumers are inherently able to effortlessly reconcile material and cultural tensions arising from the constant cultural contradictions they experience as they are confronted by the materiality of consumer culture. This assumption comes with the understanding that a fragmented consumer identity is constructed by this same cultural contradiction. Places can influence social relations and identity construction through their management of difference, which can become significantly disruptive—even to a consumer subject who has been socialized to manage a sort of identity schizophrenia as a consequence of living in a consumer culture (Firat, Dholakia, and Venkatesh 1995). People both consume and reproduce cultural contradiction in the places they navigate on a daily basis. However, it is not fully understood how the effects of place produce tensions that are more or less disruptive. The spatial disruption element of the disruptive marketplace framework suggests that the greater number of incompatible representations of social orders that are juxtaposed within the same site, the more disruptive the place.

This element can be illustrated through an example of a disruptive site found in a thrift store. Thrift stores often receive their merchandize in the form of donations from the surrounding community, which makes each thrift store (even if it is part of a larger organization) rather unique in relation to other retail sites. Every two weeks, or depending on how often inventory turns, the spatial configuration of the marketplace changes significantly as the types of donations received vary. Because of this particular level of randomness, it is not uncommon for consumers

to encounter displays that juxtapose disparate objects arranged side by side, exposing the malleability of ordering in social conventions. For instance, consider the image in figure 1c.

FIGURE 1C: EXAMPLE OF SPATIAL DISRUPTION



The photograph in figure 1c was taken at a thrift store in the U.S. and captures a display of golf clubs, clutches, cleaning tools, and other long objects. The employee who arranged this display might have concluded that it made sense to select the objects that would go in the bin on the basis of shape (i.e. all long objects) as opposed to intended use. This site is disruptive not so much because the particular items included are radical or extraordinary, but because the objects are representative of very different social orders, which are all brought together and juxtaposed side by side within the same display.

In this way, this aspect of the spatial disruption element considers material representations of social difference within a site. When examining a particular marketplace,

however, it is also important to understand the level of difference that is expected by consumers. Understanding consumer expectations also illuminates the capacity of disruption in relation to the varying ranges of difference within stores and across store categories.

Spatial Disruption ('Difference within') of Publics. Although the social component is an implicit feature of all three elements of disruptive marketplaces, the diversity of people within a site also contributes to the disruptive potential of place. Similar to Cenzatti's (2008) 'heterotopias of difference,' which "are characterized by a multiplicity of changing spaces with changing populations," the spatial disruption element of the disruptive marketplace framework also addresses how an individual's experience of place can be affected by the multiplicity of publics found within the site (Cenzatti 2008, 11). For example, consumer presence and active participation in the co-creation of place affects how disruptive a site can become, especially given place-based rituals and the social forms to which they give rise (Bradford and Sherry 2015). How places can be transformed through various consumer rituals in addition to the mere presence of different groups of people within a site demonstrates "how much fragmented, mobile, and changing the production of space is" (Cenzatti 2008, 9). For instance, an ordinary city street may be transformed into a dynamic marketplace for local art every first Friday of the month complete with salsa dancing in the evening. This same space may be again transformed every Sunday morning by local restaurant booths and the presence of local growers that contribute to the production of a weekly farmer's market.

In practice, marketers constantly seek to monitor this aspect of the spatial disruption element to some degree, as they are able to recognize the transformation of place by different publics and can cater to or match promotions to the different types of crowds they notice at

different times of the day, week, or season. For example, local business owners in South Texas can anticipate the arrival of elderly 'winter Texans' who move south during the winter months and can thus cater promotions that may appeal to this demographic.

Still, how this dimension affects consumer experiences of place is still theoretically and empirically underdeveloped, as "the ability of space to change, vanish and reform has assumed a new relevance… [and] globalization can be added to the mixture" (Cenzatti 2008, 6-7). The concentration of social difference influences spatial disruption because "the layering of public spaces in the same physical location brings counter-publics in contact and confrontation with each other" (Cenzatti 2008, 12). In practice, mangers should explicitly question how the site is transformed by the different publics that congregate in and transform the space at different times.

Around the mid-1970s in the U.S., "the decline of mass production and success of the new industrial organization could be explained as a consequence of increasing social fragmentation and self-identification" (Cenzatti 2008, 6). Social fragmentation refers to "a differentiated and changing population of consumers" (Cenzatti 2008, 6). Tensions arising from the cannibalization of sameness and difference (Appadurai 1990) can also be seen in how the

> different lifestyles, social, cultural, or sexual identities in most cases emerge out of struggle for recognition, but at the same time they are also inserted (or can be inserted) in the machinery of production and consumption, as niche markets, as pools of labor, as source for new commodifications (Cenzatti 2008, 6).

However, the disruptive potential that arises with the diversity of populations also speaks to "the spaces that the new identities, interests and needs produce," given that "the same physical location can take on different spatial meanings according to the social groups that occupy it—often at different times, sometimes simultaneously" (Cenzatti 2008, 11-12). Indeed, the constantly changing multiplicity of publics can transform a space from a very different place at nine a.m. than at four p.m. For example, a restaurant may observe an older demographic coming

in the morning during weekdays and more families in the evening when children are out of school. “The social relations taking place in the different instances produce different ‘lived moments’—different spaces—of representation” (Cenzatti 2008, 8). In this context, Foucault’s (1998) “mechanisms of opening and closing” also translate into systems “of access and exclusion, entrance and exit” and to “temporal systems, responding to the presence-absence of lived space” (Cenzatti 2008, 9). Similarly, McCracken (2008) describes the production of a situational identity that arises from the social fragmentation and interaction of various publics.

Questions also arise at the individual level relating to how consumers experience a place when it is mostly composed of a homogenous group of people versus a diverse group (e.g., of differing ethnicities, genders, nationalities, age, physical ability, class). What is the effect of this experience on a person from a traditionally marginalized social group? What are marketers actively doing to attract some groups and not others? What are managers and researchers doing to facilitate or limit the social production of disruptive places as “opportunities for the confrontation, contestation, and negotiation between publics that forms the basis for cosmopolitanism” (Cenzatti 2008, 12)?

This aspect of the spatial disruption element considers the effects of the concentration of social difference through varying publics within a site. Figure 1b suggests that in relation to the element of emplacement disruption, the element of spatial disruption impacts the disruptive capacity of place in a greater way. This is because the spatial disruption element considers the direct contestation of competing representations of social difference closely juxtaposed whereas the emplacement disruption element considers the contestation of other places in society that may or may not be immediately evoked.

Temporal Disruption

The element of temporal disruption within the disruptive marketplace framework is concerned with how the consumption of space is affected by temporal discontinuities. This element deals with how the site in question differs from contextual temporal norms or rhythms and how the juxtaposition of varying temporal representations is experienced within the site. As the previous examples have shown, the three elements of disruptive marketplaces are strongly intertwined and often exacerbate one another.

Temporal Difference from Contextual Norms. In the antique mall example, temporal disruptions are present in both its name—which signals that older products are found there—and how the inside of the store is organized. The first temporal discontinuity relates to its 'antique' framing, or assignation, of objects. This framing makes the site different from contextual temporal norms that frame marketplaces that predominantly sell items symbolizing present time. Furthermore, although the example of the antique mall includes the accumulation of time with its 'antique' framing, it also involves an emphasis on a distant past. This distant past is a different temporal dimension than the 'past' in the thrift store example. It is also a different 'past' than is seen in museum-worthy artefacts.

Even unintentionally, marketplaces have certain symbols of temporal positioning in the aesthetics and technologies that are found within the site. For example, consider the temporal differences that are represented in a boutique in New York City showcasing the latest fashion trends versus the temporal representations found at an independent thrift store located in a small town in the Midwest. In the case of the thrift store, the temporal element is evident in objects

representing a past time as opposed to representations of a present and future time, which tend to be more available to higher social status consumers. What are the perceived social distance implications of these temporal elements in the experiences of low-income consumers who may frequent sites that are mostly representative of the past—a past that is not quite as valued as an 'antique' kind of past?

Temporal Difference Within Spaces. In addition, the antique mall also includes the juxtaposition of varying temporal representations observed in the collection of different vendor booths. One vendor booth may be decorated to represent a romanticized 1960s, while an adjacent booth may contain items representing a 1990s punk culture. This temporal disruption generates a distortion of linear time associated with traditionally understood historical descriptions of events. The distortion can manifest as a cycle or as random sequences. In the antique mall, there is some historical distortion in the juxtaposition of different versions of the same time period presented side by side and in the juxtaposition of different time periods.

In the discussion of spatial disruption caused by the presence of different publics, the temporal disruption element was involved in the description of how place is transformed when different publics occupy the same space at different times. In addition, when place-making rituals are added to the mix, spatial ephemerality is made more apparent. Consider Instagram stories, where different publics (and individuals) construct ephemeral digital spaces. "Daily stories"—a feature popularized by the social media platform Snapchat, in which users upload pictures and videos, sharing their day with friends and followers—are automatically deleted 24 hours after posting. Daily stories can be treated as extremely ephemeral digital places. Here,

different publics make up places that vary in composition at any given time during the day, and which, furthermore, disappear altogether every 24 hours.

In these ways, the temporal disruption element can affect the overall disruptive potential of the marketplace in question, pointing to how a place is different from contextual temporal norms and rhythms and/or how it involves their juxtaposition. In the discussion of principle four regarding temporal discontinuities, Foucault (1998) describes two types of 'heterochronias.' To contrast with heterotopias of accumulating time such as libraries and museums, Foucault (1998) discusses those that are linked "to time in its most futile, most transitory and precarious aspect, and in the form of the festival" (Foucault 1998, 182). Foucault (1998) describes these heterotopias as breaking with traditional time because of their ephemeral quality (e.g., festivals may run only for a particular summer week on the outskirts of a city, thereafter disappearing). In addition, different types of temporal discontinuities have been addressed in consumer research.

One type of temporal disruption involves ephemeral time, as observed in the context of festival (Kozinets 2002). A second type of temporal discontinuity deals with the experience of temporal rhythms, such as slow and fast. This type of disruption can be identified in such service contexts as paintball and free-skiing (Woermann and Rokka 2015). A third type of temporal discontinuity involves a transformational temporality experienced as a 'before' and 'after.' This type is observed in the context of the tattoo parlor (Roux, 2014), where 'before' and 'after' discourses of transformational temporality affect perceptions of the alteration of the body through tattoos. A transformational temporality is also encountered in the 'rejuvenation' of heirlooms (Türe and Ger 2016). And, a fifth type of temporal disruption involves either a mix of 'past,' 'present,' and 'future' temporalities or an emphasis on one of them. For example, in both Murphy's (2015) analysis of IKEA and Wallendorf and Arnould's (1990) study of Thanksgiving,

the contexts in question involve temporal discontinuities that include some mix or emphasis of these three different notions of time.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The disruptive marketplace framework facilitates the examination of the disruptive capacities of place that affect consumer experiences and perceptions of self and society. Understanding the effects of place on consumer experiences as different types of disruptions of varying degrees allows for a broader examination of place. This theoretical lens allows for new research questions that may widen our understanding of continuity and degrees of difference. The management of social difference in its consumption and production varies with individual actors, but the general categories of the disruptive marketplace framework allow for a systemic approach to the study of place that encompasses a wide array of places including both physical and digital sites.

Furthermore, it provides some clarity on the different interdependent components that affect the experience of more complex sites. This is a substantial consideration especially with regards to technological innovations that are driving new forms of sociality in both online and offline spaces such as how consumers relate to each other, how consumers relate to brands, how consumers relate to artificial intelligence (i.e. AI actors who have full personalities on social media and interact with their followers the same way human celebrities do), how consumers relate to smart objects (i.e., Alexa), and future research may even extend the disruptive elements to explore the anthropology of objects in cases where smart objects relate to each other without human interaction.

All of these relations involve varying types of consumption decisions that are constantly transforming the places consumers occupy in daily life and new technologies are transforming the socialities that researchers have traditionally explored within marketplaces. For example, the emplacement disruption element, or the ways marketplaces relate to other places in society, continues to evolve as new technologies provide us with new opportunities to transform spaces in more efficient ways. The spatial disruption element of place, or the concentration of competing representations of different social orders within one site, is seeing an incremental capacity to juxtapose more and more representations of social orders as new technologies allow the containment of vast amounts of data within a site. At the same time, digital places are also introducing temporal discontinuities that are becoming more routine.

Another aspect of consumption that the disruptive marketplace framework allows us to examine is the relationship and transformation of 'marginal' to 'mainstream' (and vice versa) fashions, practices, behaviors, or offerings. The present perspective does not begin with the assumption that the marginal consumption spaces that contest mainstream consumer culture are fundamentally 'other.' Therefore, the research questions that the current perspective allows with regard to these relationships involve how the different sites relate to mainstream consumer culture, are shaped or influenced by it, or even exist because of the power relations that the center-periphery tensions manifest. Some examples of these dynamics include changing consumer sentiments towards tattoos and cannabis consumption. In this way, the disruptive marketplace elements aid in theorizing these cultural transformations.

In relevance to managerial decisions to support certain forms of socialities in social media platforms, the disruptive marketplace framework may aid in examining the type of disruptions that consumers are already dealing with and the support that firms can provide to

encourage certain types of communication and interaction. If the managerial focus is the consumer-brand relationship, the framework can be utilized as a lens to classify the various moving parts of the relationship, especially considering the ease with which consumers contribute to the transformation of brand assemblages online by simply sharing a picture or a meme. In a similar way, Rokka and Canniford (2016) analyze Instagram selfies as heterotopian practices. With a focus on brand assemblages, the authors find that selfie practices in social media pose new challenges for the management of brands, given that the images "can destabilize spatial, temporal, symbolic, and material properties of brand assemblages" (Rokka and Canniford 2016).

In addition, precisely because disruptive marketplaces work with and through consumer culture, when disruption occurs in the middle of shopping and a person is forced to continue participating in the same environment that contests itself, a hyper-awareness of one's own positioning in society occurs. Future research may explore the disruptive capacities of marketplaces in direct relation to marginalized consumers navigating these spaces and how marketers can make a space more inclusive (Saatcioglu and Ozanne 2013). At the same time that marketplaces can provide a sense of agency in the form of consumer choice (Appadurai 1990), marketplaces also contain symbols that reproduce a sense of low autonomy in relation to systemic social inequalities.

Although symbolic meaning has been studied in the concrete contexts of retail environments, less emphasis has been placed on the material artefacts that make up consumer culture. When the subject is raised, the inquiry is relegated to a managerial discourse whose paradigmatic assumptions often exclude important cultural considerations. In consumer research, subject-object relationships have been explored and debated, especially since the idea was

brought forward that possessions play a role as extensions of the self (Belk 1988). Fundamentally, the significance of the object in shaping social relations is due in part to its durability, which at times translates as an apparent independence. Specifically, it is the durability of objects "which gives the things of the world their relative independence from men who produced and used them… [Material objects] endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living markers and users" (Arendt 1958, 137). This durability distinguishes artefacts (manmade objects) from consumer goods in that even "the most flimsy pair of shoes… do not spoil if I do not wear them, that they have an independence of their own" (Arendt 1958, 138). Furthermore, aside from this seeming independence of the object, as Arendt (1958) suggests, individuals

> can retrieve their sameness, that is, their identity, by being related to the same chair and the same table. In other words, against the subjectivity of men stands the objectivity of the man-made world rather than the sublime indifference of an untouched nature… Without a world between men and nature, there is eternal movement, but no objectivity (Arendt 1958, 137).

How the material environment creates us as subjects is also particularly important with regard to the notion of agency, especially because "it's through relationships with material objects that human beings can create their own cosmologies" (Borgerson 2009, 162-163). As the consumer is confronted with the materiality of the world, a notion of individual agency is brought to the surface. In fact, this process is a significant component of the disruptive potential of place because disruptions arise from the tensions between the consumer's agentic role, the material world's apparent independence, and the reproduction of social norms. In other words, disruptive marketplaces make the malleability of social ordering explicit at the same time that they make our own agentic roles among the reproduction of social norms evident. The emplacements that are represented within a disruptive marketplace (in the form of particular objects or displays) question the position of the site relative to the rest of society but also raise

questions on the position of the individual among larger social orderings, given that "space emplaces diverse temporary power arrangements" (Castilhos et al. 2017, 11). In this way, disruptive marketplaces influence perceptions of social order but also identity construction and may in turn affect the likelihood of collective reactionary responses such as boycotts.

CONCLUSION

This research approaches the work that marketers engage in as the management of difference and analyzes the disruptive potential of place to understand how consumers experience the tensions that arise from the fragmentation of consumer society as materialized in the constructed environments by marketers.

Positioned at the intersection of place, disruption, and heterotopia literatures, the notion of disruptive marketplaces and its accompanying framework extend our understanding of consumer experiences of place and disruption as they navigate marketplaces. This paper conceptualizes 'disruptive marketplaces' as places found in consumer culture that disrupt perceptions of social order, consumer behaviors, and identity construction. The examples presented throughout emphasize the tension between order and difference as influenced or impacted by disruptions. This lens brings to light new research questions to emerge and expand our understanding of the experience of place.

The disruptive capacity of marketplaces shakes us from the familiar orderings of society by breaking significantly with traditional notions of time and space, making the cultural malleability of quotidian order disturbingly explicit. Disruptive marketplaces involve three main interrelated elements—emplacement disruptions, spatial disruptions, and temporal disruptions.

This research contributes to theories that examine pockets of social disruption by studying places that work through dominant consumer culture and the tensions that arise in marketplaces as a result of their management of cultural difference. Future research could utilize a more strategic approach of disruptive marketplaces in order to affect specific consumer experiences, which may include important considerations for marginalized consumers. This research lays the foundation for inspiring future questions for research related to experiences of place with the aim of examining its disruptive capacity.

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CHAPTER 2

The Thrift Store as Disruptive Marketplace: The Effects of Place on the Consumer Experience through a Mix of Solid and Liquid Consumption Characteristics

Abstract

Secondhand consumption is evident in a range of offerings, such as with markets for homes, cars, antiques, vintage, and thrift. While a significant part of the market, such consumption has been academically marginalized and often positioned beneath new product buying. However, a focus on purchases of new offerings limits our insight of the broad range of consumer experiences in a world characterized by a rapid flow of goods that may encompass various owners. Extending literature on secondhand consumption, this paper investigates the effects of a thrift store marketplace on consumer experience. This paper answers the question, "How do the different elements of this marketplace affect consumer experience?" The Disruptive Marketplace framework is employed in the analysis of the findings of an ethnographic study at a thrift store and solid and liquid consumption characteristics are analyzed as they relate to three different elements of place. This research contributes to secondhand consumption perspectives, the effects of place on consumer experience and expectations, and how solid and liquid consumption characteristics manifest in a thrift store marketplace.

Keywords: Secondhand consumption, Place, Liquid consumption

"… we cannot rely on the supposed hidden hand of the market to guide us, nor always on the visible (first) hand of the gift. Rather it is often our own second hand, a receiving as well as a giving hand, a hand that moves value on, that matters most."
-(Hetherington 2004, 171)

Retail is a source of provisioning that shapes and is shaped by consumer expectations and social norms. Secondhand retail, specifically, has become such a core component of contemporary society that the used goods industry even outperformed the overall retail market for over five years leading into 2019, with an overall industry revenue of $20.5 billion in the U.S. alone, and with continued growth expectations (Henry 2019). Even then, these figures take into account only the "used goods industry," which "includes thrift stores and pawnshops but excludes stores that sell secondhand motor vehicles and parts" and other forms of secondhand consumption that have not been categorized as "secondhand" but that include previously owned possessions such as real estate (Henry 2019, 2).

Despite these societal trends, consumer research continues to marginalize secondhand consumption through its main focus on new objects. This may be due to the used goods industry having "historically performed countercyclically to the overall economy, but as income levels and consumer confidence have increased over the past five years, industry revenue has continued its upward climb" (Henry 2019, 5). In addition to income levels and consumer confidence, the used goods industry is expected to continue to grow as "changing consumer and fashion trends have led to an influx of young consumers… and social media outlets and TV shows dedicated to altering or 'flipping' used merchandise have become popular over the past five years" (Henry 2019, 5). This gap between the academic marginalization of secondhand consumption and the growing trends of the used goods industry reflected in society prove secondhand consumption a fruitful area of study with particular attention to consumer experience. In practice, goods often continue to circulate through several owners, and it is important that academically, researchers

do not miss the opportunity to further examine (as the opening quote describes) our own second hand, a giving hand, that moves value on.

Importantly, "secondhand consumption" continues to designate a wide array of consumption avenues such as thrift, flea markets, and garage sales. This nebulous umbrella continues to be academically marginalized and treated as a second-order market system as reflected in the dearth of research undertaken in this area. This creates a gap in our understanding of consumer experiences with secondhand consumption as it involves a wide variety of avenues, goods, and modes of exchange. The marginalization of secondhand consumption in consumer research is not only a disservice to our understanding of the complexity of how individuals relate to this type of consumption, but also prevents us from better understanding the social and subject-object relationships affecting consumer sentiments towards other areas of consumption that deal with using previously owned items or using something that belongs to another person, such as with car-sharing services or Airbnb.

This paper focuses on thrift as a specific type of secondhand consumption. The history of thrift in America has evolved through the same production and cultural systems as traditional retail since the early twentieth century (Tucker 1991). However, thrift has also evolved in tandem with the changing cultural sentiments toward the sharing economy, eco-friendliness, and the resourcefulness component that has been a defining feature of thrift. In this paper, thrift is not approached as a second-order marketing system. This paper treats thrift as another type of retail that operates within the dominant marketing system whether the stores are for profit, nonprofit, large chain stores, or independent retailers.

The circulation of goods today is characterized by the global flow of objects, and the places in which used goods are sold become hubs of concentrated heterogeneity. At times, goods

flow through some thrift stores so rapidly that workers are not able to assign them social categories in time before the objects are on their way to a new destination and new ownership. Those involved in these exchanges (i.e., employees, dealers, and consumers) are confronted by the nature of categories and social norms when

> social order has changed from a question of shared properties or susceptibility to relation into a question of how relation may be forged at all. Just like a game of cards or dominos, social order is composed out of the always provisional combination of heterogenous elements, rather than the concatenation of homogeneous elements (Hetherington 2000, 175).

Because of the heterogenous nature of these sites, this paper organizes the findings of an ethnographic study at a thrift store utilizing the Disruptive Marketplace framework (Zavala et al., 2019) to explore how the different elements of this marketplace influence consumer experience. Importantly, because this marketplace involves "transience, flows, and fluidity of boundaries, categories, and materials," findings are also analyzed utilizing the solid and liquid consumption perspective (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017).

The perspective of liquidity of an uncertain and rapidly changing world (or liquid modernity) is utilized in this paper through the use of the solid-to-liquid consumption spectrum that Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) propose. Solid consumption is characterized as "enduring, ownership-based, and tangible," while liquid consumption is "ephemeral, access based, and dematerialized" (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 582). Because digital technologies exist as a prominent feature of contemporary life, liquid consumption emphasizes the dematerialization of daily life. Therefore, on Bardhi and Eckhardt's (2007) consumption spectrum, consumer value at the product level in liquid consumption resides in being flexible, adaptable, fluid, mobile, light, detached, and fast while consumer value at the product level for solid consumption resides in size, weight, fixity, security, attachment, and commitment (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 587).

Together with the Disruptive Marketplace framework with its focus on the effects of place, this paper leverages the solid-to-liquid consumption framework with its focus on consumption characteristics to orient the ethnographic findings at a thrift store. Thrift stores have emerged to influence other types of retail just as much as they have been shaped by the traditional markers of new-product retail stores. This paper investigates the disruptive capacity of a thrift store marketplace to disrupt social norms and consumption expectations through solid and liquid consumption characteristics. For this study, ethnographic research methods were employed and included participant observation, interviews, shopping with consumers, and projective tasks.

This paper begins by outlining thrift within the broad definition of secondhand consumption. Next, the solid and liquid consumption spectrum is discussed. Findings of the ethnographic study are then presented with implications for research on secondhand consumption and thrift. To conclude, contributions to consumer research are presented and future research areas are suggested.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

This section includes the main areas that shape the positioning of this research. First, thrift is outlined within the vast umbrella of secondhand consumption. Given that consumer researchers often refer to the nebulous ‘secondhand’ market, the following is a succinct summary of what is known with an attempt to categorize the characteristics of secondhand consumption and plot various types accordingly. Following this, the liquid and solid consumption spectrum is discussed as it relates to the thrift store context.

Categorizing Secondhand Consumption and Thrift

The increased interest in used-product buying in recent years has influenced the significant growth in the number of retail stores that sell used merchandize— "about ten times the rate of other stores" (Roux, 2006). Table 2a below summarizes some types and aspects of secondhand consumption that pervade many parts of contemporary life. This table is constructed from observed examples in different industries as well as previous research involving secondhand consumption. This table does not include secondhand consumption that involves gifts or intergenerational objects.

Table 2a: Secondhand Consumption

Discursive Type	**Previous Others' Touch**	**New/Not New (Ownership)**	**New/Not New (Age)**	**Places**	**Use**	**Product Examples**
Secondhand	Few others	One previous owner	Never opened/ used (Recent)	Retail stores (brick-and-mortal only)	Visible wear and tear (light to heavy use)	Clothing, shoes, and accessories
Used	Many others	Many previous owners	Never opened/ used (Old)	Online Retail Only	Perceived use (contamination)	Household
Thrift	One benevolent other	No previous owner	Never opened/ used (Antique)	Physical stores with online presence		Toys/play/ outdoor activities
Antique	One malevolent other	One current owner	Used (Recent)	Online options (Amazon, usedbooks.com, etc.)		Electronics
Vintage	Alive Others		Used (Old)	Space outside the home (walkway)		Cosmetics
Couture Consignment	Deceased others		Used (Antique)	Parking lots, festival grounds		Houses, Apartments

Pre-loved	Historical others			Streets, parks		Motor vehicles and parts
Shared/ rented				Temporary vs. permanent		
Garage sales						
Flea markets						
Refurbished (store returns)						

The prevalence and growth of secondhand shopping has inspired researchers to explore some of the motivations behind this type of shopping. Some of these include the more commonly understood motivations of sustainability and thrift, but they also include playfulness, treasure hunting, practicality, and buying secondhand as a political statement (Bardhi, F., 2003; Shaw and Newholm, 2002). However, the general academic marginalization of secondhand consumption as something tangential to dominant or mainstream consumption patterns carries an assumption that research implications will not be as broad in scope as those stemming from research in marketplace contexts that sell new items. It may be time to reconsider this academic position as the used goods industry continues to grow and compete with mass retailers such as Target, Walmart, other e-commerce retailers, and the e-commerce and Online Auctions Industry (Henry 2019).

For example, Sherry (1990) was able to re-direct a limiting discussion on alternative and conventional markets to focusing instead on marketplace structures and functions through his illuminating ethnographic work at a flea market. Sherry (1990) instead differentiates marketplaces by plotting them unto a continua of marketplace structure and function. Sherry's (1990) continua involves marketplace structure (represented by the formal-informal dialectic) and function (represented by the economic-festive dimension). Methodologically, Sherry (1990) was able to provide a new depth in understanding of social relations and exchange that were

previously overlooked by researchers who did not expand on what they, on the surface, witnessed as 'non-rational' exchange at places like a flea market. Still, even with Sherry's (1990) contribution, the expansion of this literature in terms of coming away from the mainstream/alternative focus remained stagnant. Table 2a includes characteristics of secondhand consumption that have not been explicitly mapped into our understanding of this type of consumption (e.g., many previous owners, deceased others) in part to motivate a wider range of research questions regarding secondhand consumption and the consumer experience that are broader in scope than what a center-periphery focus allows. In relevance to this paper, while Sherry (1990) explains marketplace structures, missing is an understanding of how those structures influence experiences of place.

Specifically, the history of thrift in America has evolved through the same production and cultural systems as traditional retail since the early twentieth century (Tucker 1991). The historical foundations of thrift in the U.S. can be traced back to Christian-based social reform groups. Secondhand goods in thrift included both the moral and physical aspects of their exchange from the inception of the first thrift stores in the U.S. during the period of 1894 to 1930. Indeed, "Upper- and middle-class consumers who donated their cast-offs were encouraged to think of themselves as virtuous helpmeets in the Progressive Era's reform agenda, while poor, 'ethnic,' or disabled individuals were transformed into an army of workers as well as a niche market to be tapped" (Tucker 1991, 195). This foundational focus persisted in academic perceptions of thrift for the rest of its history. For most of the 20th century and leading into the 21st century, this understanding of thrift remained as if the social relations persisted unchanged and static for all of those years. As a result, prior research on thrift has focused either on how it is mainly an arena for the poor or for tangential consumer motivations such as a focus on fun or on

the thrill of the hunt. Lacking is an understanding of thrift as an arena where the rapid flow of heterogenous goods with fluid categories create particular types of marketplaces that affect consumption expectations.

Liquid Consumption

Most consumer research has an implicit assumption that consumption is solid, meaning that ownership is unchanging. As new opportunities for consumption emerge, the notion of ownership is also transforming. Because of this, the liquid consumption perspective brought forward by Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) proved useful to address research phenomena situated within an uncertain and rapidly changing world. In addition, this approach leads to a better understanding of "how consumers develop in liquid consumption the security/stability traditionally associated with the solid" (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 586).

Solid consumption is defined as "enduring, ownership-based, and material" (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 585). At the product level in solid consumption, consumer value is placed in product size, weight, fixity, security, attachment, and commitment (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 587). By contrast, liquid consumption is defined as "ephemeral, access based, and dematerialized" (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 582). At the product level in liquid consumption, consumer value is placed on being flexible, adaptable, fluid, mobile, light, detached, and fast (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017, 587).

Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) also acknowledge middle points in which consumption can be both solid and liquid depending on the four conditions they identify—relevance to the self, the nature of relationships, accessibility to mobility networks, and the nature of precarity (Bardhi

and Eckhardt, 2017). These conditions are not exclusive but are used to define some boundary conditions of the concepts. Although solid and liquid consumption characteristics are not as neatly cut at first glance in the context of the thrift store experience, the solid-to-liquid consumption spectrum serves as a useful orienting lens for this investigation.

Building on this literature, this paper examines the thrift store as it affects consumer experiences and expectations in a marketplace characterized by a rapid flow of goods and the fluidity of boundaries and categories. In particular, relevance to the self and the nature of relationships are the two conditions most relevant to this study that Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) identify to determine whether consumption is either more solid or liquid. These two conditions are analyzed through an organization of the findings that utilizes the Disruptive Marketplace framework that includes three elements of place—emplacement, spatial, and temporal dimensions. Through the lens of solid and liquid consumption and utilizing the disruptive marketplace framework, this paper addresses how the thrift store marketplace influences consumer experience, and what social norms and expectations are followed or disrupted within this type of marketplace.

METHODOLOGY

Context and Site Selection

Secondhand consumption as both a research topic and popular topic has and continues to vacillate between marginalized and mainstream. It is both looked down upon in contrast to new product buying but also hailed for its sustainability and eco-friendliness. Because of this,

secondhand consumption was selected as a fruitful context in which more could be uncovered regarding consumer expectations and social norms. It was important to identify a context where there was an opportunity to observe how place affects the consumer experience in terms of what social norms and expectations are followed or disrupted.

To select a site, participant and non-participant observation was conducted at several secondhand stores located in Southern California in the U.S. Secondhand stores included consignment shops, thrift stores (including cause-focused thrift, e.g. American Cancer Society), used furniture shops, antique malls and shops, and high-end couture consignment shops. Whereas trendy and couture consignment shops focus more on brand value, the independent thrift store includes a wide variety of brands and some unbranded objects as well.

At the antique shops and malls, there is greater emphasis on the agency of objects found there. In fact, their mere presence within a marketplace that frames them as "antique" legitimizes having to treat the objects with a lot of care. This is evident, for example, when customers have to look for someone who works at the store and that has a key (sometimes employees have to look for the manager) to unlock glass displays in order to more closely inspect objects. The chosen thrift store on the other hand, has more areas in the store where customers can comfortably look through merchandize without worrying about disorganizing (although consumers sometimes do show concern for this). At the same time, there are also a few glass cases to which customers react similarly as in the antique shops and ask permission to open them even though they are not locked.

Small, cause-based thrift stores that exist to support local charities or organizations that help the community in some way, have management teams that are very much focused on the charity aspect of the store. Objects at these stores are elevated by the fact that (seemingly) better-

off managers engage in an otherwise inferior type of retail because they are contributing to a societal good. Instead of a focus on low-priced offerings for customers, the primary and highly evident objective at these stores is raising funds for a particular charity they support. The social cause tends to dominate conversations at the stores, which appears deliberate in order to justify the higher prices that customers should be happy to pay.

Although some thrift stores that are part of larger, national chains are also cause-based (i.e. Goodwill, Salvation Army), they have large systems in place that allow them more flexibility with their store management than small caused-based thrift stores. At these large thrift store chains, the price of items is comparable to prices found at large discount retailers that sell new products such as Walmart. For these reasons, customers who shop secondhand primarily for economic reasons actually lament that they no longer shop at these stores because they appear to be moving in a different direction with their intended target market. Because of the retailers these stores compete with, these large chains aim to emulate marketplaces that sell new items in their organization and displays. For instance, the "Goodwill Boutique" even offers the upscale version experience of Goodwill's regular thrift stores with more designer brands, carefully arranged displays, and updated store interior.

Out of the myriad of secondhand consumption types, a small, independent thrift store was selected based on the clarity it could afford this study in terms of social norms and expectations in retail. At the selected small thrift store, customers are not pulled in one direction or another regarding the positive social impact of the store or having to pay higher prices as a result. Prices are kept low so that inventory moves through quickly. At the selected thrift store, there is so much concentrated difference in merchandize that it is significantly difficult to emulate other stores in terms of organization. The selected thrift store has some clear, general categories such

as shoes, women's and men's clothing, and toys and the owner advices workers to have same-color clothing hung together like other secondhand stores, but this is not consistently achieved.

In sum, the characteristics of the selected thrift store provide a wider scope for the study on how social norms and the consumer experience are affected by place. The chosen thrift store contains a wide variety of objects that represent vast cultural difference as they are contained within a small marketplace.

Data Collection

To develop a thick description of the thrift store environment and to understand the relationships within it, a variety of ethnographic methods are employed. More specifically, the ethnographic research methods utilized included participant observation, interviews, shopping with consumers, and projective tasks (Venkatesh et al. 2017).

Participant and non-participant observation was conducted before interviews with more frequent visits to the store during the last five months of a 17-month period. Field notes were taken at the store and include descriptions of objects, store organization, general consumer and vendor behavior, and researcher experiences of working at the store. During that time 476 photographs were taken to complement written descriptions of objects, the store layout, signs, organization, displays, storefront, and the street in which the store is located.

Non-participant observation involved standing or sitting and merely observing and writing notes. Participant observation involved interacting with workers, volunteers, the owner, and customers as both a customer and a worker at the store. Working at the store included responsibilities such as helping customers when they inquired about the prices of unmarked

items and about item characteristics, ringing up customers' purchases at the front of the store, assisting the elderly, moving items around the store so they are more visible, dressing mannequins, and setting prices.

Individuals were solicited through flyers and snowball sampling to participate as interview subjects for the study. 24 participants including customers, workers, volunteers, and owner were interviewed. Customers varied in experience with thrift shopping and the frequency at which they visit the store. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to understand their experiences at stores that sell secondhand items. Interviews consist of both short and extended interactions, ranging from 15 to 120 minutes.

Interviews and observation occurred in parallel. Interview questions stemmed from observations and initial interviews, which were performed using the Shopping with Consumers method (Lowrey et al. 2005). Shopping with consumers involve accompanying a shopper through an entire shopping trip. Some questions include how they came to shop at these retail spaces and their feelings toward this retail environment in general. Initial interviews using the Shopping with Consumers method uncovered such themes as imagined stories engendered by objects at the stores without marketer interference. Therefore, the interviews that followed included questions about things and events that the objects referenced, such as childhood memories. Interview questions were adjusted and developed as the research unfolded as per a grounded theory approach (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Projective tasks were also utilized during interviews as individuals were asked to share thoughts on particular objects found at the store.

Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and the written transcripts and field notes were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis tool NVivo. Photographs of objects, signs, and displays were analyzed using this tool as well. Data was coded and analyzed following the grounded theory approach to theory generation (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Data collection and analysis continued until theoretical redundancy was achieved.

Lacy's Thrift Store: An Ethnographic Overview

The analysis resulted in a thick description of the thrift store environment in addition to an understanding of the consumer experience that is influenced by different elements of place and through a mix of solid and liquid consumption characteristics. This section summarizes a thick description of the selected thrift store. In particular, I describe the components of this particular retail environment that shape the consumer experience. First, I describe the store, followed by prices, inventory, and staff. This section is followed by an interpretive summary.

Lacy's Thrift Store. The selected thrift store for this study, Lacy's Thrift Store, is a privately-owned retailer founded in 2014 and named after one of the owner's daughters, Lacy. Lacy suffers from spina bifida, a condition that affects the spine and can cause physical and intellectual disabilities. The owner, Mat, first got the idea to open a thrift store to raise additional cash flow to support organizations that help families with treatments for individuals who suffer from spina bifida. In addition, Mat not only wanted to be able to donate to these organizations, but also wanted to manage a store that would focus on contributing positively to the community in a variety of ways. Slowly, he began learning all the ways in which he could partner up with

other organizations to support various community needs. A specific aspect of the store that Mat wanted to maintain was low priced products to support low income families in the surrounding area.

Mat first opened a thrift store at another location but had to close it down due to disagreements with the building's owner and problems with security. Some of his loyal customers followed him from that location to the new one when he opened in 2014. This new store is located on a historic main street marked by a red brick road that ends after only one block. Although this part of the city is low trafficked compared to other main shopping centers, the historic main street is being revitalized with restaurants, shops, and community events such as the Local Harvest Farmers Market and the Friday Night Car Show. The Local Harvest Farmers Market takes place on the main street every Sunday from 9am to 12pm. The Friday Night Car Show takes place every Friday from 5pm to 8pm. Flyers for both of these events can be found near the store's cash register as well as flyers and business cards for real estate companies and side projects that Mat is affiliated with. The thrift store is open 7 days a week, 10am to 8pm although actual open times vary, especially during weekends when there are no workers in the store and the owner sometimes gets caught up in other personal business projects.

Inside the store, there are some signs that point to the fact that the store supports social causes, but because the owner does not support only one cause, it remains ambiguous how much support the owner provides and to which organizations in total. A sign posted by the register reads, "Your donation helps everyone, thank you… We help homeless, children's groups, battered women orgs., low income families and anyone in need. Those who cannot afford to pay, shop for free."

Prices. Most of the items at the store are unmarked, however there is a price menu posted on one of the front glass windows. It is a restaurant-like menu of general item prices such as "Clothes: baby .50¢, kids .75¢, adult $1 & up; Shoes: .75¢ to $2 High-end may be higher; Cups .50¢; Pillows .75¢; Sheets $1; Records .50¢; Movies VHS .75¢ DVD $1.50." This menu is written with a dry erase marker on a small white board facing toward the street. By the cash register is another price menu written on a piece of cardboard and taped to a small cooler. The prices on this piece of cardboard are a bit more specific and written in both English and Spanish. This serves as a quick reference for whoever is behind the register charging customers although not all items are posted. At first impression, the store feels like a mix between some of the isolated thrift stores found in areas with low population density such in the Midwest of the U.S., but also a trendy store with active social media efforts. A sign at by the register includes their Instagram code and reads "Follow us! We post inventory daily!" Signs posted to face toward the street include their Facebook and Instagram accounts in addition to phone and email information. Another sign on the sidewalk at the front of the store encourages customers to follow them on social media and receive a 25% discount on their first purchase. A year-long "promotion" that the store maintains is their 13-gallon trash bag fill up. With this promotion, customers have the option to fill up a 13-gallon white trash bag with any clothing and items they can fit and only pay $25 for it.

Donations. The store gets its vast inventory through donations. Signs at the store encourage donations reading, "Please Donate Your Unwanted Items." People come to the store and drop off their donations, usually at the back of the store where workers can help them unload from their cars. A sign outside the back of the store explains that customers are not allowed to

simply leave their donations outside if the store is closed as this is prohibited by the city. Mat also offers donation pick up. People can call Mat directly and he will pick up donations at their home addresses. The owner also takes home some donations mostly when there is a need for additional storage.

As donations are received at the back of the store, workers then sort through the items, inspect items for quality, clean them with rags and liquid cleaners, and organize donations into plastic bags or put items out into the main floor immediately. Clothing donations are mostly stored in this same small room at the back of the store and sorted in white trash bags that are labeled and kept in shelves against a wall. The photograph in Figure 2a shows this back area during a well-organized day.

FIGURE 2A: ORGANIZED DONATIONS IN WHITE TRASH BAGS



Donations that are considered too worn out or inappropriate for the store, such as food, are put in black trash bags and thrown out. Merchandize that corresponds to certain holidays such as Christmas, Halloween, Valentine's Day, or Easter is not all put out into the main floor donations come in. Some of these donations are also stored and brought out to the main floor as those holidays draw near in an attempt to be on theme with the particular time of year, emulating retailers that sell new items.

The back room of the store where donations are sorted ends up being more like a small hallway with donation bags organized and stored against one wall and shelves with various knick-knacks, books, housewares, and other small objects against the opposite wall. The room is like a small hallway where only a small number of people can fit at a time, including workers sorting through items, volunteers moving merchandize from this room to the main floor, and customers browsing the shelves. This area varies in organization and overflow from day to day depending on the rate at which merchandize is inspected, cleaned, organized, put out on the main floor, and sold and the rate at which donations are brought in during that particular week.

Figure 2b shows a worker inspecting clothing in this back room. Neither workers or volunteers wear clothing or accessories that signal their roles at the store such as matching uniforms, shirts, or tags. Sometimes they were gloves, waist and wrist braces, and aprons.

FIGURE 2B: WORKER INSPECTS CLOTHING



Workers. Mat does not hire employees to run the store. Instead, the owner partners up with businesses in the area that look for a light work environment for injured workers. There is usually a certain amount of time that workers are allowed to rest in order to treat workplace-related injuries while being compensated by insurance companies. Sometimes individuals may not be completely ready to return to their original jobs after this time period is over. However, workers may be able to do some other type of work that is not as physically demanding. During this time, some companies have worker's insurance policies that provide employees the option to get paid a portion of their original salary if they agree to work in a low-impact, low stress environment in the community. Mat partners up with businesses like Costco that have these

types of policies in place. It is for this reason that in this study, these individuals are referred to as workers and not employees of the thrift store.

One worker in particular, Luis, has worked at the store the longest relative to other workers and is trusted with as much responsibilities as the owner himself. This becomes significant when the owner is busy with additional business projects (which is often) or when he has to travel to several locations to pick up donations and cannot make it to the store at all. In those circumstances, Luis has to open up the store himself, close, and manage the entire store. Because of all the work he does, Luis feels like he has to act like he is the owner and thinks about opening a thrift store himself but feels insecure about his lack of business know-how. Luis references this general business know-how in response to Mat sharing his extensive business background often and how those experiences have made him "business savvy." In addition, there is a language barrier between Luis and some customers as Luis speaks Spanish primarily.

Volunteers. In addition to the worker's program, Mat partners up with a local organization that helps individuals with disabilities to feel valued and included in the community. Among the resources they provide is one where caregivers take young adult clients to volunteer at places that will allow them to do light work that is within their capabilities. At Lacy's Thrift Store, Mat has one caregiver from this organization, Emma, bring three of her clients to volunteer at the store. The three young clients have intellectual and physical disabilities and are able to communicate with others at different capacities. They help at the store mostly by collecting empty hangers hidden in between the clothes racks on the main floor and bringing them to the back room where workers can use them to hang and put out more clothes. Emma puts together displays, brings merchandize from the back room to the main floor, and generally

does the same work that the workers with the injured worker's program do. She is bilingual, fluent in English and Spanish. This allows her to communicate with the majority of the store's customer base. Most of the workers understand English but do not speak it as fluently as Emma.

Interpretive Summary

The Disruptive Marketplace framework (Zavala et al. 2019) and the solid-to-liquid consumption framework (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017) are used together to organize the findings of the ethnographic study in this section. As presented earlier in this paper, thrift in consumer research or secondhand consumption in general has been treated as marginal in academic research to some extent while vacillating between marginal and mainstream in public perception. With this come ambiguities on whether this type of marketplace aligns with social norms or marketplace expectations. Because of this ambiguity, the Disruptive Marketplace framework was employed to analyze the different aspects of place and determine the type of consumer experience this marketplace engenders. The disruptive marketplace framework includes three main elements of marketplaces that point to their capacity to disrupt social norms: emplacement, spatial, and temporal dimensions of place. Each dimension questions particular characteristics of place as outlined in the following sections. In addition, two relevant conditions to determine whether consumption is either more solid or liquid are discussed under each element of place: how that element affects relevance to the self and nature of relationships.

Emplacement Element of Place

The element of emplacement refers to how the marketplace relates to other places in society. Subsumed under this dimension of place in the disruptive marketplace framework is how the site relates to (1) contextual social norms and (2) other places in society. This section discusses how the thrift store relates to contextual social norms, affecting relevance to the self and how the site relates to other places in society, affecting the nature of relationships.

Contextual Social Norms and Relevance to the Self. In terms of contextual social norms, consumers engage in consumer rituals (Rook 1985) within the thrift store in the same way they do when they frequent places that sell new merchandise. However, consumers also express that while thrift shopping is more widely accepted today, they feel that there are still stigmas associated with this type of consumption. For example, although most customers have no problem shopping at the thrift store themselves, they understand that not all of their friends and family members would appreciate a gift bought at a thrift store and given to them the way they would appreciate it and welcome it. It is well understood how gifts are imbued with different types of meaning (Sherry 1983) and in this context, gifts bought at a thrift store are not always looked at in a positive light. Similarly, customers also mention that they would only invite certain friends and family to shop with them at thrift stores who they know are comfortable with this type of shopping. Also, customers tend to have a general idea of which family members do not mind them purchasing items for them at thrift stores. As customers shared these dynamics during interviews, it became clear that this is learned from stigma experienced in the past with friends, family members, and from different peer groups as children.

Among some of the more experienced shoppers, there is a sort of transformation that happens from the time they are brought to thrift stores as children out of necessity living in low-

income households and the time that they grow out of the social pressures typically associated with younger demographics. Sometimes customers grow out of it because they feel in adulthood that this type of shopping makes financial sense or because they develop an appreciation for the opportunity to be creative with their own personal styles at stores that carry unique items. In terms of relevance to the self, consumption characteristics in this context are closer to solid consumption.

A Home-Like Place and the Nature of Relationships. In terms of how the thrift store relates to other places in society, this marketplace resembles a home-like place and affects the nature of relationships through a communal environment. In this case, the thrift store represents a home-like environment in the sense that although it is open because of its inherent position within economic exchange (i.e. doors are open to all customers who come in and shop), it is also seemingly closed (resembling the privacy of the home) to newcomers and one-time customers who are not familiar with the owner, volunteers, and workers. Although everyone is welcome to shop, there seems to be a certain learning curve necessary to be part of this 'home.' At any given time, customers may walk into the store and notice regular customers sharing personal stories with workers and volunteers or notice that some customers bring home-baked goods for some of the young volunteers. In addition, the owner constantly catches up with some of the most loyal customers within listening range of others because of the small size of the store. At times when there is more than one worker sorting merchandize in the back room, customers will walk into the hallway to browse through the shelves and move carefully as if intruding in a conversation at someone's house and feeling the pressure to say hello and/or introduce themselves. Similarly, many customers, both new and regulars, step into the store at the front entrance and instead of

waiting for a worker to greet them as customary at places like Walmart, they themselves will say hello to whoever is at the front of the store.

In relevance to how the site relates to others in society, the thrift store acts as a home-like environment, affecting the nature of social relationships and consumption characteristics that are closer to solid consumption.

Spatial Element of Place

The spatial element of the disruptive marketplace framework includes an analysis of the (1) difference of objects within spaces and (2) difference of publics within spaces. This section outlines how the concentrated difference of objects at the thrift store affects relevance to the self and how the difference of publics affects the nature of relationships.

Difference of Objects and Relevance to the Self. Consumers who also donate to the store seem to feel invested in the thrift store success particularly because they can physically see their contributions. As I walk around shopping with and interviewing Beth, a single mother of a 6-year old daughter, Beth stops suddenly to point out to me with pride which dresses among a rack full of dresses she donated. Beth mentions that her daughter also does this to her when they return to shop at the thrift store a few days after donating items and her daughter spots some of her old toys at the store. When customers see their own items among the vast and unique range of inventory at the store, relevance to the self is high, resulting in personal investment in the retailer success. In this sense, the objects at the store affect a more solid type of consumption.

However, a significant number of customers primarily focus on the utility aspect of the objects in the store. Because of the low prices, inventory moves through quickly and individuals are often compelled to fill up the entire 13-gallon trash bags as soon as they surpass a certain number of individual items that they intend to purchase. Customers also often speak to how these purchases are low risk because if clothing doesn't fit them properly, for example, they can just find someone to give it to without feeling like they lost much at all. In line with this low risk characteristic, Luis, explains that he often gets requests from jornaleros, or day laborers. These customers often request certain types of work clothes. There is a Home Depot location about a block away from the thrift store where day laborers stand on the side of its parking lot, waiting for people who are looking to pay for labor for the day to hire them. This kind of labor often involves home improvement work or some kind of construction. With these types of jobs, clothing can get heavily soiled with paint and other chemicals. For this reason, customers who work as day laborers walk toward this area to buy clothes for daily jobs. Luis mentions that these customers are not willing to pay $7 for a pair of pants that they will only wear to work for a few days. Instead, these customers can get pants at the thrift store for $2 and feel satisfied with their low-risk purchase. In this case, these low-risk objects affect low relevance to the self. In this sense, the objects at the store also affect a liquid type of consumption.

The diverse objects at the store in terms of previous ownership and in-store features such as material composition and price characterize both solid and liquid consumption types.

Difference of Publics and the Nature of Relationships. The thrift store customer base is composed of diverse publics who often interact with the owner, workers, volunteers, and other customers. Customers vary in age (teen to elderly), ethnicity (Hispanic, white, Vietnamese), and

financial resources. The home-like environment and its diverse publics often make up a community feel in the store. This is evident in how consumers are considerate of others when, for example, two customers find a unique item that they each would like to purchase. In such instances, it is not uncommon for them to listen to each other's personal stories connected to the item. Customers also convey consideration for the store success by suggesting things that may help others browse through items better or improve the customer experience for others. They also show understanding toward the owner's additional responsibilities when the store does not open according to the posted times. They mention that he must be busy with other projects or picking up donations from locations far away instead of expressing frustration with having come to the store and finding it closed when it should be open according to the posted times. Consumers also show consideration for community needs when, for example, the smell in the store changes significantly when a person suffering from homelessness is browsing inside. In this sense, the nature of relationships at the store in terms of the different publics is non-commoditized and therefore, characterize a more solid consumption.

However, publics within this site also vary in terms of intention for purchase. This is significant because many customers also come to the store with a focused intention to purchase in order to resell. For example, some customers focus on books while others on vintage clothing. In addition, antique dealers look for production markers that may hint at an authentically old item (versus a replica of the time period's aesthetics). Others come just to fill up overflowing carts with all kinds of items that they plan to resell. In this sense, the nature of relationships at the store in terms of the different publics is commoditized and characterize a more liquid type of consumption.

In terms of the nature of social relationships, consumption characteristics are solid in that they are non-commoditized in the type of community fostered by this site at the same that it is liquid in how consumption is commoditized as evident in the different types of customers that shop at the store to resell.

Temporal Element of Place

The temporal element of the disruptive marketplace framework includes (1) difference from contextual temporal norms and (2) difference within spaces of varying temporal representations or rhythms. This section illustrates how the difference from contextual temporal norms in the thrift store marketplace influences high relevance to the self and thus, solid consumption. In addition, it lays out why consumption characteristics through focus on this element are also liquid in how the nature of relationships may be commoditized.

Difference from Contextual Temporal Norms and Relevance to the Self. The contextual temporal norms of thrift may be taken from established research on consumer choice that continues to provide support for "choice overload" (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder, and Todd 2010), or when consumers feel overwhelmed when they perceive there to be too many options in the marketplace. Still, different factors such as brand assortment and product variety all come into play and this research has not definitively identified "sufficient conditions that explain when and why an increase in assortment size will decrease satisfaction preference strength, or the motivation to choose," (Scheibehenne et al. 2010, 421). However, because of the extensive research in this area, there was an initial research assumption that the thrift store environment

would be a fast, erratic, and hectic experience considering the amount of difference in items found there. Instead of an overwhelming experience that my hint at a fast temporal dimension (Woermann and Rokka 2015) of the site, however, findings show that customers experience the thrift store as calming and actually contrast this type of marketplace to a stressful mall environment. Surprisingly, customers expressed time and time again how the thrift store is actually a calming place where they can spend long periods of time browsing and carefully going over the same sections of the store over and over as to not miss something special. In fact, even as customers are paying by the cash register, exiting the sore, and even walking away from the store, they will continue scanning the store with constantly busy eyes just in case something catches their eye and they feel compelled to look in that section again. Often customers will pay, exit, and then walk inside again to continue shopping. Like the home, it is rare to find several of the same individual objects at the thrift store. For instance, unlike Target or Walmart, the thrift store does not usually have an entire rack of the same shirt in different sizes and colors. The thrift store contains a vast number of disparate objects while representing a home-like place, creating a calming disorder. The calming environment of the store constitutes a slow temporal dimension of the marketplace with high relevance to the self, characterizing solid consumption.

Difference of Temporal Representations and the Nature of Relationships. This slow temporal dimension influences a consumer experience of a calming environment. This affects the nature of social relationships within the store as non-commoditized in terms of how customers interact with one another and with workers at the store as customers spend long periods of time browsing and sometimes get caught up in conversations given the small size of the store. In this

sense, this element characterizes non-commoditized nature of relationships and solid consumption.

At the same time, the thrift store contains different temporal representations. Objects within the marketplace represent different time periods such in the clear example of records, cassettes, or VHS movies. In this case, consumption is commoditized in terms of how valuable customers perceive each item to be depending on individual production times. Some customers, for example, mention how looking at specific tags and stitching in shirts gives away whether the shirt is authentically made during a certain time period, making it much more valuable to them and those that they plan to resell to. In this sense, this element also characterizes a commoditized nature of relationships and liquid consumption.

The temporal element of place characterizes high relevance to the self and liquid consumption in that aspect and both commoditized non-commoditized nature of relationships, affecting solid and liquid consumption for that aspect. In relevance to the self, consumption characteristics are solid given that a calm environment is of high relevance to the self because it provides a relaxing experience that customers value. In terms of the nature of social relationships, consumption characteristics are solid in that they are non-commoditized as seen in the cases where the slow temporal dimension leads consumers to interact with others in a communal way. However, consumption characteristics are also liquid in that they are commoditized based on the different temporal representations by objects that are more or less profitable to customers who resell.

Summary. Across the three disruptive marketplace elements coupled with the notion of solid and liquid consumption, findings contribute an understanding of how consumers experience

the thrift store marketplace. In particular, this paper provides insights into the nuanced relationships between the elements of place and consumption types. These findings are summarized in Table 2b.

Table 2b: Elements of Place and Consumption Types

Element of Place	**Specific Characteristic**	**Type of Consumption**	
		Solid Consumption	Liquid Consumption
Emplacement	*Relevance to the self – High*	*X*	
	Nature of Relationships – Non-commoditized	*X*	
Spatial	*Relevance to the self – High and Low*	*X*	*X*
	Nature of Relationships – Non-commoditized and Commoditized	*X*	*X*
Temporal	*Relevance to the self – High*	*X*	
	Nature of Relationships – Non-commoditized and Commoditized	*X*	*X*

DISCUSSION

The role of displaced objects in an uncertain and rapidly changing "liquid modernity" at the thrift store include solid consumption characteristics at the same time that they flow rapidly across geographic and representational boundaries. Liquid consumption characteristics are also present in this marketplace mostly in relevance to the spatial element that focuses on diverse objects and publics. The temporal element of place affecting the nature of relationships also shows both solid and liquid consumption characteristics.

In relevance to the self, the notion of the extended self (Belk 1988) in consumer research is well understood in terms of personal possessions. In the context of displaced objects at the thrift store, there is an assumption that the objects have at some point been the extension of other individuals and sometimes many anonymous others. The emplacement element of place influences a consumer experience of high relevance to the self and nature of relationships that is characteristic of solid consumption. The spatial element of place influences a consumer experience of both high and low relevance to the self and non-commoditized and commoditized social relationships, showing both solid and liquid consumption characteristics. Finally, the temporal element of this marketplace influences a consumer experience of high relevance to the self with solid consumption characteristics and non-commoditized and commoditized social relationships characterizing both liquid and sold consumption. The three elements of place at the thrift store marketplace influence a consumer experience where both solid and liquid consumption characteristics merge.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Through the lens of solid and liquid consumption and utilizing the disruptive marketplace framework to orient the focus on place, this paper investigates how the thrift store marketplace influences consumer experience, and what retail expectations are followed or disrupted within this type of marketplace. Notably, results warrant further investigation into the spatial element of this type of marketplace, given the mix of solid and liquid consumption characteristics found. Future research could examine consumer experience in secondhand consumption with particular focus on the subject-object relationships involved to potentially inform consumer experience in

other areas of society such as how we treat previous ownership, repair, DIY, notions and beliefs of contamination, the sharing economy, and identity construction.

Furthermore, increasing acceptance of secondhand consumption mixed in with a dwindling global economy as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic will provide a clear opportunity for researchers to examine the consumption experience with this type of consumption and the multiple second-hand exchanges that occur after initial production and distribution at retail stores that sell new items. People sell, trade, and rent objects both online and at physical stores that create environments for consumers involving characteristics of both liquid and solid consumption. In addition, questions of the emplacement, spatial, and temporal elements of place could also be applied to digital marketplaces that may disrupt from contextual social norms of retail as retailers engage in increasingly creative ways to compete through both online and physical presence. In an increasingly unstable and rapidly changing global community, the rapid flow of goods and continuous exchange of ideas carried through objects will be a worthy research endeavor.

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CHAPTER 3

Structure and Agency in Place:

Consumer Experience and Subject-Object Relationships in a Thrift Store Environment

Abstract

The role of place in consumer research has been recognized as an active participant in the consumer experience. Although various studies treat place as a major factor affecting experiences, identity construction, and relationships with others, it still remains unclear how this is achieved. This paper explores how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world of the marketplace and the structures that shape social norms. Ethnographic methods are employed in a thrift store environment. Findings reveal how the spatial element of place, an explicitly dynamic structure, and encouragement of the active transposition of schemas within this particular marketplace contribute to consumer creativity and subject-object relationships. In doing so, the regenerative structure-agency loop is addressed empirically. Contributions to the consumer research literature include a three-step analysis on how place affects the consumer experience and how consumers contribute to its shaping by (1) breaking down the spatial element of the marketplace, including differences in objects and publics, (2) determining whether the mechanisms underlying the dynamic nature of social structures can be identified, and (3) analyzing the level at which the active transposition of schemas (or consumer creativity) is encouraged.

Keywords: Structure, Agency, Place, Subject-Object Relationships, Creativity

The role of place in consumer research is now generally understood as one that shapes and is shaped by consumers and their experiences within marketplaces; but how this regenerative loop is maintained, disrupted, or changed is not clearly addressed within consumer research on place. This paper examines how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world and social structures around them. In short, this paper addresses the standing debate over the primacy of structure versus agency in shaping behavior in a particular marketplace context. When the structure-agency regenerative loop is mentioned, it refers to the debate of whether individuals act as free agents or in a manner dictated by social structure. The present research is situated at the intersection of literatures on place, agency and structure, and subject-object relationships. Importantly, contributions to consumer research include a broadening of our understanding of consumer creativity, how consumers adapt to change, and how consumers contribute to changes not only in the marketplace, but also in societal perceptions of seemingly static order. This paper examines the question, "How are subject-object relationships influenced by marketplaces and how do these influence the site in return?"

Ethnographic methods were employed in this study and include participant observation, shopping with consumers, projective tasks, and interviews at a thrift store located in the West Coast of the US. Findings show how the particular objects and subjects that make up the spatial element of this marketplace uncover the dynamic nature of social structures and encourage the active transposition of schemas within the site. In answering these questions, this research empirically addresses the structure-agency regenerative loop in the marketplace context utilizing sociologist William Sewell's (1992) perspective on the dynamic nature of structures as an orienting lens.

The following sections outline the literatures in which this research is situated and the theoretical perspective that is used as the orienting lens in the analysis of this study's findings. First, literature on the role of place in shaping and being shaped by individuals is summarized with particular attention to studies in consumer research. Second, Sewell's (1992) theory of structure is presented with a main focus on his position on the transposition of schemas and resources as relevant to this context. Third, the discussion of transposing schemas and resources leads into a discussion of subject-object relationships as approached in this study. This third focus is relevant in the context of notions of agency and materiality that arise. This creates the foundation of the approach to the analysis of consumer experience in a thrift store environment.

RELEVANT LITERATURE

Place

The way individuals relate to space and place in contemporary society is contextual to this moment in history (Cenzatti 2008). This section outlines some of these relationships. In particular, consumer research has expanded our understanding of place as an active participant that shapes and is shaped by culture and this section summarizes some of these valuable insights.

Daily life today is shaped by the new ways in which people experience the displacement place and relate to geographic space (John Bryson et al. 2002), global connections (Appadurai 1990), and temporal boundaries (Foucault 1998). The notion of 'place' has boundaries that are defined by contextual meaning (versus the abstract notion of space). Place is limited, acknowledged, and understood to be invested with specific meanings and value (Castilhos,

Dolbec, and Veresiu 2017). Places can shape and be shaped by such dynamics as changing publics (Cenzatti 2008) and symbols (McCracken, 1986).

As contemporary life continues to be transformed by the ways in which individuals relate to place, consumer researchers have acknowledged the active role of place in affecting consumer experience, identity construction, rituals, and taste among other defining attributes of daily life. After the role of place was recognized as being much more than mere background and acknowledged as an active participant in social relations, work in both marketing and consumer research expanded at various levels (micro, meso, macro) and with varying foci. In consumer behavior, for example, the role of atmospherics (Kotler, 1973) in influencing consumer behavior broadened the understanding of place and introduced new opportunities for practice and research. Furthermore, cultural perspectives included societal implications on a broader scale after the movement of meaning through symbols was investigated further (Levy, 1959; McCracken, 1986). Since then, consumer behavior and consumer research have expanded substantially in terms of the amount of insight researchers have been able to build with this understanding of place. Table 3a summarizes some of the consumer research literature on place. Examples of studies in each area are also included. These studies contemplate a range of factors regarding place, however, missing is an explicit examination of subject-object relationships that likely influence how pace is experienced and influences consumers.

Table 3a: Place in Consumer Research

RESEARCH ON PLACE	EXAMPLES IN THE LITERATURE
What place is	
Active participant	Servicescapes (Sherry,1998)
Sites where meaning is emplaced and made tangible	Sociospatial entities (Castilhos, Dolbec, & Veresiu, 2017)
Remembered place	Consumers' memory of what a mall used to be like, a utopian marketplace (Maclaran and Brown 2005)

What place affects	
Meaning and social relationships	Servicescapes facilitate links between people (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999)
Identity construction	Family identity (Epp and Price 2010); immigrant identity (Üstüner and Holt 2007)
Consumption patterns	Ethical and green consumption (Chatzidakis, Maclaran, and Bradshaw 2012); rituals (Bradford and Sherry 2015)
Social norms	Social inequality (Chin 1998); therapeudic servicescapes (Higgins and Hamilton 2018)
Rituals	Enable gift-giving rituals (McGrath 1989)
Individual tastes	Components of concert hall affect music tastes (Skandalis, Banister, and Byrom 2016)
Consumer experience	Consumer experiences in non-Western cultures (Sayed, Farrag, and Belk 2003); consumer experience based on the familiarity of the servicescape (Fowler, Wesley, and Vazquez 2007); servicescape encounters of people with disabilities (Baker, Holland, and Kaufman-Scarborough 2007; Rosenbaum 2009)
Temporal rhythms	Temporal rhythm (Slow, Fast) (Woermann and Rokka 2015); transformational temporality (before, after) tattoo parlor, heirlooms (Roux 2014; Türe and Ger 2016); past, present, future (mix or emphasis) (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991)
What affects/transforms place	
Objects and symbols	Extended self in the workplace (Tian and Belk 2005); managing symbolic pollution in the home (Dion et al. 2014)
Publics	Sharing space with others (Grifiths, M., and Gilly, M. (2015)
Practices	Practices in the home (Epp and Price 2010)
Rituals	Holiday rituals (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991); tailgating rituals (Bradford and Sherry, 2015)
Place-based social forms	Spectacle (Peñaloza 1998); festival (Kozinets 2002); carnival (Belk 1994); vestabal – Homeyness (McCracken 1989)
Types of places	
Private	Public/private (Bradford and Sherry 2015)
Public	Reclaiming a public place from commercial interests (Visconti et al. 2010)
Commercial/marketized	Inside-Outside Marketplace, Burning Man (Kozinets 2002)
Third places	Video arcades, coffee shops (Rosenbaum 2009)
The body as place	Embodied heterotopias through tattooing (Roux and Belk 2019)

Types of marketplaces	
Servicescapes (physical environment for service organizations)	(Bitner 1992; Sherry 1998)
Themed flagship brand stores	(Kozinets et al. 2002)
Virtual market spaces	(Ballantyne and Nilsson 2017)
Structures: formal, informal; Functions: economic, festive	(Sherry 1990; Sherry 1998)
Ordinary places (small, informally branded or unthemed stores and restaurants)	(Borghini, Sherry, and Joy 2011; Weijo, Martin, and Arnould 2018)
Components of place	
Atmospheric components	Atmospherics (Kotler 1973; Mari and Poggesi 2013); Christmas smells (Spangenberg et al. 2005)
Symbolic meaning within marketplaces	Symbols (Levy 1959; McCracken 1986)
Objects	Consumers arranging a place with objects that align with a taste regime (Arsel and Bean 2013).
Temporal representations	Retroscapes (Brown and Sherry 2003)
Aesthetics	Museum-like (Peñaloza 1998)

Consumer research recognizes that physical spaces, or 'places,' affect many aspects of social life and consumer experience while at the same time being shaped by them. Examples of exploratory themes are different places, place types, what places influence, what places contain, and what transforms place. Scholars have also explored the interactions between what is considered marginal and mainstream and the expansion of what constitutes mainstream (Thompson and Üstüner 2015). Lacking in the literature is an explicit recognition of assumptions about agency (the capacity of individuals to make their own free choices) and structure (recurrent patterned arrangements that influence or limit choices). Indeed, places "are constantly shaped by activities related to them or that they determine" (Roux 2014, 62). Therefore, research on place also requires a discussion on agency and structure.

Agency and Structure

Structure Versus Agency Problem. Rather than a philosophical discussion as to whether individuals truly possess 'free will,' the present approach to the notion of 'agency' is more in line with a social constructivist perspective that recognizes that different notions of agency are socially cultivated in different cultural contexts. In line with sociologist William Sewell's theorizing on the dynamic nature of structures, this paper maintains that individuals act through the use of several competing mechanisms in their episteme and that agency arises within that schemas (the rules of social life) and resources (material and non-material) can be transposed (Sewell, 1992).

The structure versus agency problem regarding the composition of culture in the fields of sociology and anthropology has been explored with questions like, "how is it that people use culture practically, creatively, and strategically and yet do so in ways that often reproduce the status quo?" For example, Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu, both major figures of practice theory (which has been utilized in consumer research to provide valuable understandings on topics like brand communities and value creation (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould 2009) and identity projects (Epp and Price 2010)), face the same challenges in accounting for a type of agency that is culturally situated. The structure versus agency loop problem in both Giddens' theory of structuration and in Bourdieu's idea of habitus presents a challenge for the place of agency within social structures (Ahearn, 2001). One way to come away from this limitation is to prevent the reduction of the term 'agency' by simply equating it to resistance.

For example, in the specific context of how women exercise agency, "even as subordinate players, [women] always play an active part that goes beyond the dichotomy of

victimization/acceptance, a dichotomy that flattens out a complex and ambiguous agency in which women accept, accommodate, ignore, resist, or protest—sometimes all at the same time" (MacLeod 1992, 534). This more nuanced understanding of agency that recognizes the multiplicity of motivations behind all human actions (Ahearn, 2001) can also be applied to the context of consumers playing active roles in the market.

A marketing perspective often assigns consumers a form of agency that is packaged as 'consumer choice,' particularly through research objectives aimed at how to appeal to it. Research studies examining changing consumer choices—however "alternative" or revolutionary they may seem at first glance—then often operate within the already established boundaries with a version of agency that is equated to mere negation. This is especially evident in research related to consumer boycotts. That is, when consumers resist some proposed marketplace choice, they are said to be exercising their agency. When consumers will not actively resist something, those behaviors are not particularly treated as such. In fact, some arguments regarding dominant market values go as far as to suggest that there is no room for individual agency in these types of systems at all. For instance, Marcuse's (1964) famous "one-dimensional" view of the transformed modern-day subject into 'consumer' posits that this new consumer subjectivity permeates all other aspects of life and that because of this, human actors do not actively engage in market relations but are merely duped by marketing mechanisms to continue recreating the same forces that oppress them. Yet, there are many examples in recent history in which active engagement within oppressive systems leads to real social change. In fact, as Murray et. al. (2018) illustrate, even popular culture can both (1) open the possibility of social change and (2) influence the motivations to drive it. Therefore, the entirety of the notion of agency cannot be

reduced to or rest on resistance as a condition, especially given that "there is no such thing as pure resistance; motivations are always complex and contradictory" (Ortner, 1995).

Structure and Change. Sewell (1992) defines structures as "sets of mutually sustaining schemas and resources that empower and constrain social action and that tend to be reproduced by that social action" (Sewell 1992, 19). Central to his theory of structure and change is that structures are dual, meaning that "sets of schemas and resources may properly be said to constitute structures only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time" (Sewell 1992, 13). This "definition of structure as made up of both schemas and resources avoids both the material determinism of traditional Marxism and the ideal determinism of traditional French structuralism" (Sewell 1992, 13). Thus, the possibility of change is inherent in structure.

Schemas are described as the rules of social life. However, rules in this sense do not imply formally stated prescriptions. Instead, they include things like conventions, recipes for group action, principles of action, habits of speech and gestures, rules of etiquette, aesthetic norms, and set of equivalences (wet/dry, male/female, private/public) (Sewell 1992). Taken from Giddens, schemas are "generalizable procedures applied in the enactment/reproduction of social life" and can be applied to a variety of contexts (Sewell 1992, 8).

Resources are categorized as those that are human and those that are nonhuman. Sewell (1992) describes human resources as products of schemas with the example that "a given number of soldiers will generate different amounts and kinds of military power depending on the contemporary conventions of warfare (such as chivalric codes), the notions of strategy and tactics available to the generals, and the regimes of training to which the troops have been subjected" (Sewell 1992). In contrast, nonhuman resources, "have a material existence that is not

reducible to rules or schemas, but the activation of material things as resources, their determination of their value and social power, is dependent on the cultural schemas that inform their social use" (Sewell 1992, 12). Importantly, schemas and resources "constitute structures only when they mutually imply and sustain each other over time" (Sewell 1992, 13).

The possibility of structural change exists with every social encounter that structures shape "because structures are multiple and intersecting, because schemas are transposable, and because resources are polysemic and accumulate unpredictably" (Sewell 1992, 19). In this theory of structure and change, agency is defined as "entailing the capacity to transpose and extend schemas to new contexts, [and] is inherent in the knowledge of cultural schemas that characterizes all minimally competent members of society" (Sewell 1992, 18). Sewell's (1992) theory of structural change includes five key axioms: (1) the multiplicity of structures, (2) the transposability of schemas, (3) the unpredictability of resource accumulation, (4) the polysemy of resources, and the (5) intersection of structures. This lens informs the analysis in this study.

A major focus of this paper is the complex ways in which consumers shape and are shaped by the material world around them and in marketplaces in specific. At the point of exposure to objects within marketplaces, consumers actively engage with a world that influences them and that they shape. This leads us into the focus on objects or the nonhuman resources that make up marketplaces.

Subject-Object Relationships and Shopping

Consumer relationships with objects are influenced by marketplaces in various ways. This paper approaches subject-object relationships in line with material culture analyses (Miller

2005) in that it treats the concepts of 'subject' and 'object' as continuously co-constructed by each other. This means that the subject defines the object but the object also defines the subject. Objects and subjects become resources as they embody cultural schemas. Human and nonhuman resources embody cultural schemas and agency lies in the "actor's capacity to reinterpret and mobilize an array of resources in terms of cultural schemas other than those initially constituted in the array" (Sewell 1992, p. 19).

In the marketplace space, the thrift store represents a clear example of this. First, there are cultural schemas or assumptions involving this type of shopping. Although some products within thrift stores have never been bought or opened by individual consumers (new, packaged products), the main assumption of thrift is that products found in these types of marketplaces have been previously owned by other consumers and touched by many hands. Prior literature in consumer behavior on perceived product contamination points to negative consumer evaluations of objects that are perceived to be touched by others (Argo, Dahl, and Morales 2006). Argo et al. (2006) focus on retailers that sell new items. Within that context, the notion of contamination influences consumer relationships with the products in a directly negative way. However, in the thrift store environment, the cultural schemas that dictate consumer perceptions of contamination are mobilized in a different array of resources. Here, evaluations look a lot different than at marketplaces that sell new items.

At the intersection of the literatures on place, structure and agency, and subject-object relationships is an opportunity to examine how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world and social structures. This research examines these dynamics utilizing ethnographic methods and interviews at a thrift store.

METHODOLOGY

Context

It was important to identify a context where there was an opportunity to observe how consumers both shape and are shaped by the material world and social structures. Thus, this study employed ethnographic methods and interviews at a thrift store because of the clarity that this particular context allows in such an investigation. This study is part of a larger study on secondhand consumption.

Data Collection

To develop a thick description of the thrift store environment and to understand the relationships within it, a variety of ethnographic methods are employed. This research utilizes ethnographic research methods (Venkatesh et al. 2017) including participant and non-participant observation, shopping with consumers, projective tasks, and interviews.

Participant and non-participant observation was conducted first with more frequent visits to the thrift store located in the West Coast in the US throughout a 17-month period. During that time 476 photographs were taken to complement written descriptions of objects, the store layout, signs, organization, displays, store front, and the street in which the store is located. Participant observation involved interacting with workers, volunteers, the owner, and customers as both a customer and a worker at the store. Working at the store included responsibilities such as interacting with customers as they constantly ask for prices of unmarked items and about item

characteristics, charging customers at the front of the store, assisting customers in different capacities such as the elderly, organizing, dressing mannequins, and setting prices. Non-participant observation involved standing or sitting and merely observing and writing notes with a role of researcher (i.e. not shopping or working at the store). These observations are captured in field notes at the store, and include descriptions of objects, store organization, general consumer and vendor behavior, and researcher experiences of working at the store.

Individuals were solicited through flyers and through snowball sampling to participate in the study for interviews. Interviews were conducted with customers, employees, volunteers and the owner. Interviews consist of short interactions with shoppers as well as extended interviews at the selected thrift store. A mix of novice and expert consumers in regard to the store and secondhand consumption were interviewed. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to understand their experiences at stores that sell secondhand items. Interview questions stemmed from the observations and initial interviews, which were performed using the shopping with consumers method. Some questions include how they came to shop at these retail spaces, and their feelings toward this retail environment in general. Projective tasks were also utilized during interviews as individuals were asked to share thoughts on particular objects found at the store. The interviews ranged from 15 to 120 minutes. Given the varied nature of the merchandise and reasons for shopping, interview questions varied.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews, field notes, and photos are the data employed in the analysis. Data was coded and analyzed following the grounded theory approach to theory generation

(Corbin and Strauss, 2008) Data—transcripts, field notes, photographs of objects, signs, and displays—were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis tool NVivo.

FINDINGS

This paper investigates how consumers shape and are shaped by marketplaces. More specifically, this paper posits that consumers shape marketplaces through the transposition of schemas by adjusting to changing expectations of retail in particular ways. Further, marketplaces shape consumers primarily through the spatial element of place, which at its most disruptive capacity, uncovers the explicitly dynamic nature of structures.

Findings from the ethnographic work at the thrift store address the research question at three different levels. First, results indicate the consumer experience within this site is influenced by the spatial element of this marketplace (versus the temporal element of the site or emplacement element), which includes diverse objects and publics within the site. Second, the characteristics of this marketplace, as outlined in the first point, influence a consumer experience of acting within a larger structure that is explicitly dynamic and clearly transformable. Third, this dynamic structure allows for the active transposition of schemas within the store in ways that vary from retail spaces that sell new items.

Spatial Element of Place – Objects and Publics

The focus on the spatial element of this marketplace, with particular attention to the differences in publics and objects within the site, is taken from the Disruptive Marketplace

framework (Zavala et. al, 2019), which can be applied to investigate the capacity of marketplaces to disrupt contextual social norms. The Disruptive Marketplace framework includes three main elements of place—emplacement, spatial, and temporal. This paper focuses on the spatial element of this particular marketplace. The following paragraphs describe the main factors that make up this site and shape the consumer experience.

Difference in Publics – Consumer Involvement. Difference in publics at the thrift store as it concerns consumer involvement includes purchase-only customers, purchase-and-donate customers, purchase-donate-and-follow-inventory customers via Instagram posts, all the way to customer-volunteer. Customer-volunteer refers to customers who frequent the thrift store as shoppers but also volunteer their time to help the owner manage the store in some way. These are customers who volunteer because they show consideration for the amount of responsibilities the owner has. This type of behavior is reminiscent of nonprofit organizations that seek out volunteers. The difference is that in this case, the customers themselves come forward to offer their time. Customer-volunteers collect misplaced hangers, organize small items, and one even opens the store, manages the entire site from setting prices to charging customers, and closes the store. These individuals are different from the usual volunteers that visit the store through their involvement at a local non-profit organization that has an official partnership up with the owner. The usual volunteers do not visit the store during weekends and neither do the workers. The thrift store open hours include weekends. However, on days that the owner cannot, for one reason or another, open the store himself because he is caught up with other responsibilities, a customer-volunteer will sometimes offer to help.

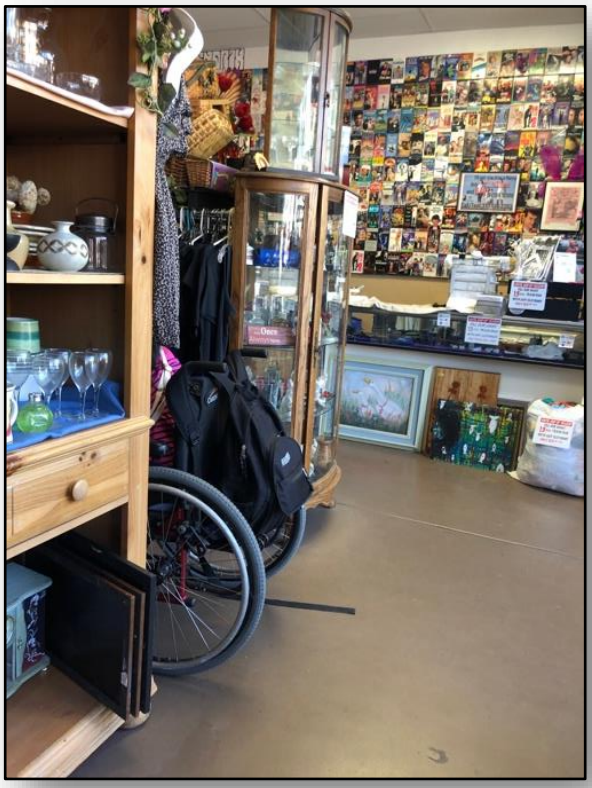
Difference in Publics – Language. There are also other, more apparent differences among the publics that make up this site at any given time. There are language differences when workers and Spanish-speaking customers bond and exchange stories, when Vietnamese customers bring written notes to the owner to communicate with him because they don't speak English, and when it feels like there is an invisible barrier between the owner and some of the most loyal customers that frequent the store. At times, the owner speaks to others right next to these customers as if they cannot hear him.

Difference in Publics – Physical Bodies. In addition to language barriers, there are also physical differences in terms of differently-abled bodies present at the store. This is significant not because of the customer base but because of the volunteers. The owner of the store partners up with a nonprofit organization that provides resources to individuals of various ages with different types of disabilities to help enable them to feel included and valued in the community. The particular group that comes to the thrift store from a local non-profit organization is composed of one care giver and her three clients. Her three clients are young people who suffer from different illnesses. The caregiver works hard at the thrift store, carefully organizing displays according to holidays, trying to be creative when dressing up the mannequins, and generally keeping the store aesthetically pleasing. Her three clients help collect misplaced hangers, as this is light work that they can do. When customers come into the store, they see workers with physical characteristics that are different from what they are used to seeing at other retail stores. Sometimes, customers come into the store and see a person in a wheelchair in the middle of one of the tight aisles, as shown in the photograph in Figure 3A. The tight isle is inaccessible through one side as her chair takes up space. The caregiver explains that she is

grateful that the thrift store owner agreed to have her bring her clients to volunteer because she asked multiple other retailers and was turned away. Those retailers believed customers may be startled or feel uncomfortable if they came into a store and saw workers with differently-abled bodies.

Customers here mention that they appreciate the owner allowing volunteers to come help at the store. Customers feel he must do a lot for the community since they can perceive this difference. The owner is aware that customers appreciate this. One particular customer likes to bring homemade sweets such as cookies just for the young volunteers on mornings that she knows she will find them there. The care giver explains that she is grateful that the thrift store owner agreed to have her bring her clients to volunteer because it provides her charges with a sense of purpose and fulfills the requirement for this type of support in her role.

FIGURE 3A: YOUNG VOLUNTEER IN CHAIR



Difference in Publics – Disposable Income. Another way in which differences in publics at the thrift store are visible relates to disposable income. Although wearing high-end brands to the thrift store and shopping not for the necessity of low prices but for fashion inspiration is not clearly reflective of consumer disposable income or economic status, there is another way in which this difference is visible. The owner likes to maintain extremely low prices year-round regardless of season, time of day, or colored stickers. Maintaining prices so low keeps inventory moving out quickly, which is what the owner wants, given that he gets plenty of donations for which they then need to make room. Customers appreciate that he keeps prices low. Aside from the more commonly recognized bargaining that happens in informal markets (Sherry 1990) or the haggling that happens at the thrift store in efforts to cut the price of an item down to one dollar from two, there is another type of dialogue involved when customers cannot pay. Here, customers and whoever is behind the register discuss an item's set price versus the price they can pay that day. The owner makes it a point to give individuals suffering from homelessness clothing for free if they cannot pay. Typically, homeless individuals will have large bags, backpacks, or carts that they take with them everywhere they go, as those carry most if not all of their personal belongings. When they come into the thrift store, they leave these belongings at the front of the store. Customers see their things and have to move around them.

Difference in Objects – Organization at the Thrift Store. The second component of the spatial element of marketplaces involves differences in objects. At the thrift store, there is a vast amount of unique objects (in the sense that there is never a rack with ten of the same style shirts) packed into a small space. In addition, this array of items is constantly changing as merchandize leaves the store quickly and new donations are put out to the main floor to replace them. This

creates a seemingly unorganized retail dynamic (compared to stores that sell new items). However, workers, volunteers, and the owner have general organization strategies in mind in efforts to try to create a pleasing shopping environment. They typically organize by category such as toys, shoes, dishes, and clothes, but this organization is never perfectly maintained. Objects that do not belong in these general categories always make their way around the store, in part because of the small space available. This type of organization creates two different environments depending on whether an individual is a customer versus if the individual works or volunteers there on set days or for a set amount of hours.

For workers and volunteers, the amount of organizing that goes into maintaining the thrift store every day and moving inventory as it comes (including unloading donations from people's cars, selecting, discarding, cleaning, organizing into storage, organizing into store floor, and putting displays together) is stressful and tiring, even while on the surface it appears to be a calm job. In fact, this is the main reason why the injured workers program partnered up with the thrift store owner and sends workers there. After a while of working at the thrift store, hands feel dirty and sticky, which is why workers wear gloves. They also wear waist or arm braces because in assisting people who drop off donations, they sometimes have to carry heavy items or boxes. Furthermore, there are also a variety of social duties involved. In reality, the job is significantly involved once the social component is also factored in, as customers constantly ask for prices and different object characteristics, workers set prices on unmarked items, workers and volunteers charge customers at the front and help customers who need extra assistance, like having to quickly triple-bag a customer's purchases so that she does not miss her bus.

Customers often share personal anecdotes, as well as information about what they are looking for and what they need. A lot of times these conversations are sparked by an object

triggering something in them. This could be something they remember from childhood, something they are surprised to find and treat like valuable treasure, something they think is funny, or something for which they cannot figure out its intended use. In these conversations the thrift store workers get to know customers' immediate needs, such as having to take the carts to a parking lot somewhere else. All of these factors influence the hectic nature of the place for workers and volunteers.

From the perspective of the customer, however, the thrift store is a calming environment and its organization is part of the fun and relaxing atmosphere. Consider the sentiments of Carla, a customer-volunteer who helps the owner manage the store as needed:

Interviewer:	So you find thrift shopping relaxing?
Carla:	I do, yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. And my favorite thing to do is, Mat [owner] lets me go through the things before they hit the, like go through the bags and the boxes and all that stuff back there before it comes out, and I'll help him organize sometimes and put things out. That's my favorite thing to do. Uh-huh.
Interviewer:	Oh, wow, but you kind of have to dig through a lot back there.
Carla:	That's my favorite thing to do. I love doing that. It's super fun.

Carla maintains that organizing things at the store is a relaxing activity for her. This is in stark contrast to how individuals working there feel toward the amount of unique items they have to go through and organize. On one particular day, Carla had stopped by the thrift store only with the intention to shop. She noticed donations had been left outside behind the store and knowing that the owner could get in trouble for this, she texted him to ask if she could open for a little while. Carla only decided to close the store early because she became tired, had not eaten since she arrived, and her injured hand began to hurt.

The sentiments of Flor and Robert, a couple far less involved with the store than Carla, further underscore the idea of the thrift store as a relaxing place, particularly because of its concentrated difference in objects ('Q' represents the interviewer):

Flor: Comparing thrifts to retail, I like it more because there's less people, it's calm. It's a calm environment rather than a retail store or like at the mall. So many people crowding you, buying ... I don't know, I feel like it's just more relaxing. You don't feel like, "Ugh, I don't wanna go to the store because I don't know what to get."

Robert: You know? Because there's so many people! But here, you don't expect a bunch of people in line waiting; it's just people minding their business.

Flor: A lot of thrift stores are kind of messy, but...we don't really mind because we just like to dig around and see what we can find. We will go to flea markets and stuff and just dig everywhere. We don't really mind and it's just an adventure to see what we can find.

Robert: If it looks messy, we have it in mind that we're gonna find something.

Q: If it looks messy?

Robert: Not dirty, but not organized.

Flor: We've been at thrift stores where…everything is...a mountain of clothes is just in a corner and we just dig it through.

Robert: It's like bins. You just go through the pile of clothes and you dig.

Q: Yeah, and you like digging? It's fun?

Robert: At the end of the day your hands are dirty, but I carry my hand sanitizer, okay next. Some days I don't want to go, I'm tired, but then at the end of the day when we do go and we find something, it's okay; it wasn't so bad. Glad we came. Because when you're off from work you want to go home and rest, you know? He goes after work, since he is off earlier.

Like many other customers interviewed for this study, Flor and Robert describe the store as calming, even going so far as to call their excursions an "adventure." They also reference an informal market (flea market) to further define what they mean by digging. Elsewhere in their interview, Flor and Robert explain that they resell the items they find at different secondhand marketplaces in order to make extra cash, which accounts for their efforts to spend time searching even after work, when they are tired. Other customers mention that they frequent the thrift store in their leisure hours, such as after work or even during a work break.

Differences in Objects – Unique Objects for Unique Customers. The fact that objects here are unique can sometimes lead to a negative experience, such as when a customer finds an item of clothing they really like but it is not in their size. Most of the time, however, the fact that

items are unique is discussed in a positive light. Below, a customer echoes the common sentiment of the pairing of a unique item for their unique personal identity.

> Q: Has your experience of thrift shopping and second-hand shopping changed your feelings towards it?
>
> Ana: Yeah…because when people buy stuff from a thrift store… you want to wear something that other people don't have. That's why I used to go to thrift stores to find stuff that fit my style and that no one else had.

The spatial dimension of this marketplace involves various differences in publics and objects that make up the site. This aspect influences the consumer experience as part of a larger structure that appears to be exposed as dynamic.

Explicitly Dynamic Structure

The unique characteristics of the spatial dimension of this marketplace create a place composed of a visible and highly concentrated level of uniqueness within a small retail space. The consumer thrift store experience involves surpassing socially acceptable retail expectations by immersing individuals in a more fluid and dynamic environment than the perceived solid structures of more traditional retail spaces that sell new items.

Unique Items Versus Invoking Reminders of Mass Production. One way in which an explicitly dynamic structure is uncovered is through higher value being placed on unique items versus items that are mass produced. Part of the value of new items sold at traditional retail stores resides in the fact that they have never been owned by another ‘consumer.’ Because these marketplaces have been treated as dominant marketplace structures in contemporary society, comparisons to different types of marketplaces have always been measured against the established norm of selling newly manufactured items. Because thrift stores sell mostly (or

exclusively) secondhand items, the value perceptions of those used items are then placed in a lower category than those which are new. However, for frequent secondhand shoppers, high value resides in the fact that objects at such marketplaces as thrift sores signal uniqueness, which is valued higher than objects that signal mass production. The thrift store is a place that emphasizes the hierarchy of unique objects over mass production. Thus, the social structures that intersect in this context turn many of the previously considered hard social norms into more malleable constructs.

Some of the ways in which this is enacted at the thrift store includes the reappropriation of market value into displaced objects, a focus on material quality without price references to influence perceived quality, and a more active focus on use value.

Material Independence. A second way in which an explicitly dynamic structure is uncovered is through the seeming independence of objects. This material independence is experienced in the questioning of object trajectories across time and space and by unique object aesthetics that include physical wear and tear as well as temporally specific markers in their design. Without being prompted by a marketer as to product history, consumers construct stories based on what they imagine the product has been through. These object trajectories are spoken about in the way one speaks about a person's past. Here, the idea of contamination, as it has been previously investigated in consumer behavior studies, is turned on its head. Instead of negative meanings associated with imagined others touching the object, the object trajectory is seen as a positive thing that adds to the value of the object, even if it is all imagined and constructed by the individual consumer. Certain factors influence this spark in imagination: the visible wear and tear of objects, marked year of production, and aesthetic representations.

The discovery of such explicitly dynamic structures create opportunities for individuals to be motivated to actively transpose schemas through easily accessible (low price) nonhuman resources.

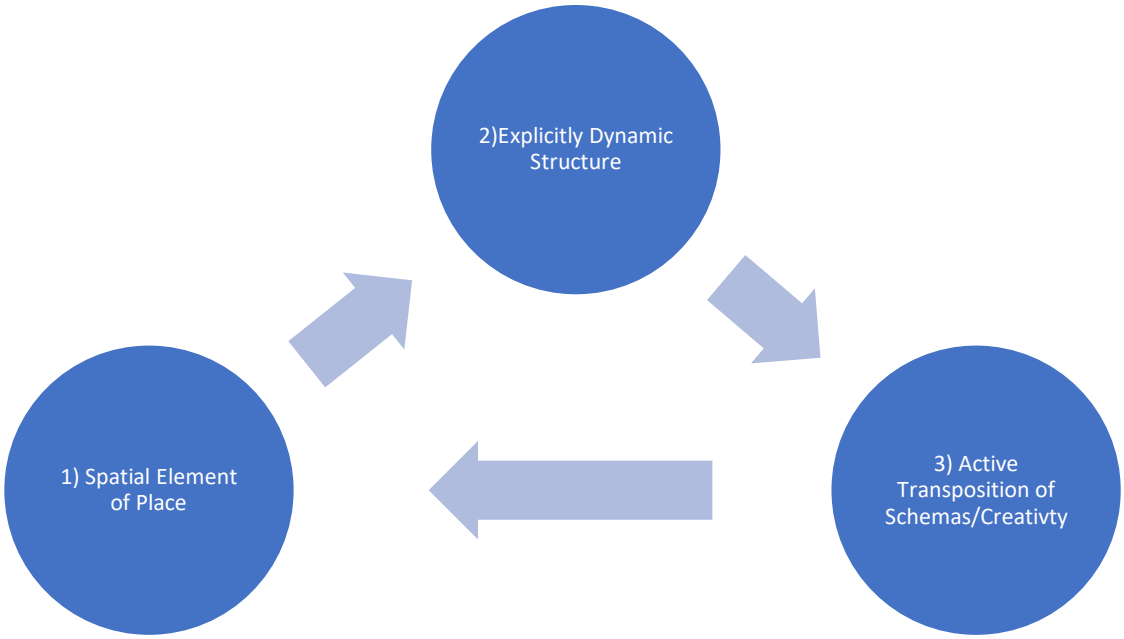
Active Transposition of Schemas

Because of its clearly dynamic nature, the thrift store marketplace represents a structure that is inviting to the transposition of schemas. The agency and structure relationship is apparent in this context in various ways, including that of encouraging consumer creativity. For example, creativity is encouraged through the struggle between the material independence of objects and market value assignations by consumers themselves. Consumer creativity is vital to the creation of value. In a society where the notion of co-creation has been recognized by marketers and researchers as vital to the success and longevity of businesses, consumer creativity becomes vital.

The motivation of consumers to take part in the active transposition of schemas is influenced by an open space for digging, how high-search efforts are seen in a positive light while low-search efforts are seen in a negative light, how consumers appear open to learning, and how stories of imagined future use are shared.

Figure 3b below illustrates these three main aspects of the thrift store marketplace. They are numbered 1 to 3 to illustrate the initial direction of analysis, but the arrow pointing from number 3 back to number 1 is used to illustrate that an intentional effort to shape the consumer experience within a marketplace would require the constant analysis of the impact of each component on the consumer experience as intentional adjustments are employed.

FIGURE 3B: PLACE, STRUCTURE, AND CREATIVITY: THREE MAIN ASPECTS OF THE THRIFT STORE MARKETPLACE



CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research is situated in literatures of place, agency and structure, and subject-object relationships. This paper explores the question of how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world around them and the structures that shape social norms. Ethnographic methods and interviews were employed within the context of a thrift store environment. Empirical findings address the structure-agency loop within marketplaces. Contributions to consumer research revolve around the three-step analysis theorized from the findings. This involves (1) breaking down the spatial element of the marketplace, including differences in objects and publics, (2) evaluating how explicitly or to what extent the dynamic nature of social structures is

uncovered, and (3) analyzing the level at which the active transposition of schemas (or consumer creativity) is encouraged. Marketing practitioners could utilize this structure to adjust their retail design according to the degree of active consumer creativity they seek to affect. Marketing practitioners could also adjust employee-customer relationships within marketplaces, work to change the store's community involvement perceptions, and emphasize the effortless fit of objects as unique to individual consumers.

This research contributes to our understanding of the effects of place on consumer experience and subject-object relationships. Some limitations of this research include that it focuses on one specific type of thrift store environment and that the site utilized for the investigation was small. Future research could further question the extent to which certain spaces encourage creative freedom while others do not, even within the same marketplace. For example, the sales rack at Macy's filled with displaced objects from the rest of the store encourages digging in a way that the rest of the store with its neatly arranged displays and rows of clothing does not. Research with an emphasis on place could further this conversation to include additional components of place that contribute to consumer experience and can be more intentionally manipulated.

Places and objects provide individuals with some degree of stability in that the [object]ivity of the world supports the construction of individual [subject]ivities (Arendt 1998). In a world of increasing instability, with broken global economies particularly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and changing consumption patterns, our relationships with objects and marketplaces will continue to morph with even greater emphasis on how consumers shape and are shaped by the material world around them and the structures that dictate social norms. Researchers will have a new world to investigate, one in which great structures previously

perceived to be fixed and unchangeable are exposed as dynamic and malleable when the world came to a halt. These global disruptions are transforming daily lives because the structures that support quotidian activities are being bent in ways never experienced before by living generations. Even the most solid and strongly regenerating structures such as capitalism itself have been exposed as much more fluid than previously perceived, and new discourses are entering the field of public opinion as schemas are transposed into new areas of society in new ways. The questioning of everyday social norms in the current, collective global pause is part of the recognition that structures are dynamic, "not static; it is the continually evolving outcome and matrix of a process of social interaction" (Sewell 1992, 27).

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