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Transnational Consumer Lifestyle and Social Movements

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A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of Management

Cass Business School, City, University of London

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my friend, husband, and life partner Omid for believing in me and walking through this difficult road with me.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

My research interest is to understand consumer behavior related to transnationalism. In this dissertation, I address three questions concerning consumption and transnationalism. First, I situate transnationalism within the extensive body of work in consumer culture theory on globalization. Second, I examine one aspect of transnationalism: transnational consumer lifestyle that characterizes the lifestyle of individuals who simultaneously work and/or live in multiple countries (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). This is an interesting context to re-examine important consumer behavior phenomena, including consumer acculturation, relationship to home in contemporary globalization, and the role of consumption in managing a fragmented and multicentered life. Third, I examine another aspect of transnationalism: transnational consumer movement facilitated by transnational digital spaces. Transnational digital spaces, such as social media platforms, facilitate connections between activists, transnational news agencies, and political and social figures and institutions across borders and have the potential to empower some consumers, specifically those in totalitarian societies. I believe these are important phenomena that shape contemporary global consumer culture, but they have received little attention in consumer research thus far.

Transnationalism refers to "the sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states" (Vertovec 2009, p. 2). At the center of the studies of transnationalism is an interest on the impact of connections and affiliations made in one geographical location on social formations and practices made in another. The study of transnational lifestyle in sociology, for example, highlights co-habitations and the impact of embeddedness in

one social context on practices and social relations made in another (see Glick Schiller et al. 1999). Similarly, sociologists have also investigated transnational social movements, characterized by the social formation of transnational movements shaped by connecting activists and institutions, such as news agencies and NGOs, across borders (Vertovec 2009). Transnational social movements are defined via "cross-border connections between local civic organizations and foreign bodies that facilitate communication with foreign agencies, receiving moneetary and non-monetary resources (such as information or skills) from them, forming partnerships, forming international activities together, and taking foreign actors into account in their own decision-making" (Vertoovec 2009, p.41).

Transnationalism theory and phenomena overlaps globalization, but it has a narrower focus (Kearney 1995). While globalization processes can illustrate decentered and deterritorialized social formations that take place in global spaces (Appadurai 1996), transnationalism largely focuses on processes that are anchored in and transcend one or more nation-states (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Portes and Walton 1981; Portes et al. 1999; Roudometof 2005). The hallmark of transnationalism is the emphasis on locality and the interconnectedness between localities and social institutions.

Transnationalism is used in sociology to study forms of global mobility such as migration between two or more nations or to study corporations that operate worldwide but are centered in one home nation (Kearney 1995). A transnational perspective has been utilized in prior literature to investigate cross-border lifestyles (e.g., Glick Schiller et al. 1999), transnational social movements via linking activists and institutions across borders (e.g., Martinez-Torres and Rosset 2010; Bandy and Smith 2005; Smith 2002), or diasporic communities and their impact through, for

example, economic remittances sent back to their countries of origin (e.g., Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Theories of transnationalism are not extensively used in prior consumer behavior studies. My review of the literature in paper I also demonstrate this gap. Prior research has examined contexts that can be framed from a perspective of transnationalism, however, the focus of the studies has not been on transnational social formations, cross-border links, or the impact of social institutions in one locality on social formations in another locality. For example, Cayla and Eckhardt's (2008) study on regional brands examined how brands shape a regional identity between consumers. Asian regional brand of *Tiger Beer*, for example, symbolizes the idea of urban and modern Asian identity by promoting similarities between different Asian cultures. While the community that the authors identify is one of transnational connections because different Asian consumer cultures co-exist and influence each other through the consumption of the regional brand as a collage of different cultures, the authors did not focus on transnational connections and transnational influences. Other examples from the literature that can been viewed from a transnational perspective are studies on consumer expatriatism and transnational families (e.g., Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Peñaloza and Arroyo 2010), transnational consumer communities (e.g., Takhar, Maclaren, and Stevens 2012; Cova, Pace, and Park 2007), and transnational consumption practices (e.g., Kravets and Sandikci 2014; Thompson and Troester 2002). While these studies have investigated aspects of transnational related phenomena, we lack studies that examine transnational consumption and transnational consumer lifestyles.

In this dissertation research, I attempt to address two gaps in prior transnationalism and consumer behavior literature. Building on theories of

transnationalism, I examine two aspects in consumer transnationalism: transnational consumer lifestyle and transnational consumer movements. Drawing on definition of transnationalism as "the sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states" (Vertovec 2009, p.2), the focus is on the locality and the interconnections between localities. In this way, I define transnational consumer lifestyle as consisting of cohabitation and simultaneous embeddedness in multiple countries (paper II). Additionally, I also examine a transnational space of social media that facilitates and fosters transnational connections and consumer movement (paper III).

Regarding the first gap, prior studies have paid limited attention to transnationalism as a consumer *lifestyle*, where consumers simultaneously co-inhabit more than one country through, for example, long-distance family arrangements and cross-border professional affiliations in the form of international assignments or a combination of part-time and full-time contracts. Transnationalism, as a lifestyle, has been extensively studied in the field of sociology and migration studies (e.g., Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Vertovec 2009). Sending economic remittances to families who stayed behind and continued engagements with the home country through financial investments, engagements in political campaigns, and work affiliations in the forms of part-time or seasonal jobs are examined in prior studies of transnationalism. However, little is known about how transnational lifestyles shape consumer identities and consumption behaviors. Few studies have examined temporary settlements in the form of consumer expatriatism with sustained connections to the country of origin (e.g., Thomposon and Tambyah 1999) or transnational family settings (e.g., Peñaloza and Arroyo 2010). However,

transnationalism and co-habitations as a form of consumer lifestyle has not been the focus of prior research.

Theoretically, examining the co-habitations and multi-embeddedness that characterize transnational consumer lifestyle is important as it may impact consumer acculturation styles and outcomes in different locations. Particularly, transnationalism can impact consumers' relations to locality, which structures associations (e.g., cultural or social) and provides boundaries to consumption (McCracken 1988). Consumer acculturation in one location can influence integration practices in other(s). Transnationalism represents a context in which individuals maintain and bridge multiple 'homes'. Acculturation in transnationalism, therefore, might take a different form when nostalgia, homesickness, and emotional distress are not as prevalent as in the case of permanent relocations (Peñaloza 1994). In my empirical study, I show that consumption in one locality shapes consumption and integration strategies and practices in other(s). In this way, transnational consumption is fragmented and complementary across countries. I also show that as a result of co-habitation, acculturation styles are selective, strategic, and domain-specific. Thus, in transnationalism consumers express agency on whether to acculturate in a specific society (homeland or others) or to be selective and strategic about acculturation.

Understanding transnational consumer lifestyle is also of importance for marketing managers. Transnationalism is a growing lifestyle as more individuals undertake transnational professional assignments or adopt a transnational family arrangement with members of the family residing and/or working in separate geographical locations (Collings, Scullion, and Morley 2007; Brookfield 2012; Lau et al. 2012; Sparrow 2010; Green et al. 1999). I derive managerial implications from

my study to help managers better cater to this growing consumer segment as their lives are scattered across borders. In this study, I provide examples related to different sectors such as healthcare, finance, and retail and the ways that transnational consumers maintain their consumptions across borders.

The second gap in prior consumer research literature that I aim to address in this dissertation is the potential of *transnational digital spaces*, such as commercial social media spaces, for consumer empowerment. Such platforms have the capability of connecting people across geographical borders and providing a space for the fast dissemination of information, fake or real. A set of transnational institutions, such as coalitions, NGOs, news agencies, as well as social and political figures shape the network of interactions and facilitate movements (Vertovec 2009). Prior consumer research has examined online consumer communities that are formed around a cause or a branded product (Kozinets, Hemetsberger, and Schau 2008; Muniz and Schau 2005; Schau et al. 2009; Shouten et al. 2007; Lampel and Bhalla 2007; Jang et al. 2008; Fyrberg-Yngfalk et al. 2014). The consumer empowering potential of such spaces are examined in the contexts of consumer collaboration and brand co-creation (e.g., Ind, Iglesias, and Schultz 2013; Harwood and Garry 2010; Bhalla 2010). However, little is known about the identity emancipatory potential of the transnational connections that such spaces foster. Specifically, I aim to show how engagement with consumers and institutions in another social context can impact emancipatory identity formation and identity expressions in the local context. This is especially salient in societies where certain freedoms are oppressed and traditional public spheres are limited.

Using Iranian women's online social movement as an empirical context, I show how the gender identity and consumption practices of activists are formed as a

result of the cross-border interactions facilitated through transnational social media platforms. I argue that due to their engagement in these platforms, new ways of identity expression become available to consumer activists and social movements that were previously not accessible in traditional, mainstream Iranian media. I argue that such platforms have become the contemporary public spheres that host debates and discussions and facilitate a public opinion on reformist and progressive gender identities in Iran. Theoretically, this finding is of importance as it contributes to our understanding of the emancipatory potentials of transnational digital spaces.

Finally, because transnationalism is a new perspective associated with novel phenomena in consumer research, I have also conducted a review study to examine the state of knowledge on globalization and consumer behavior. My aim in this study is to situate transnationalism within the broader globalization research via a review of the theoretical approaches on globalization that have been utilized in qualitative consumer behavior studies. In addition, I show how different theoretical perspectives of globalization have shaped the research findings associated with consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the meaning of global brands.

Theoretical Background. To address the gaps identified above, I draw from theories of transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Portes and Walton 1981; Portes et al. 1999; Kivisto 2001; Roudometof 2005; Urry 2007), the notion of network capital (Larsen et al. 2008; Urry 2007), and Habermas' (1989) theory of public sphere. I utilize these theories to explore the fragmentation of life in consumer transnationalism, the multi-centered nature of consumption in transnationalism, and the formation of multi-anchored consumer identities across borders.

Specifically, I draw on the notion of the *transnational social field*, defined as the "combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places" (Faist 1998, p. 216). Bourdieu (1984) introduced the concept of social field to illustrate the power dynamics that structure social relations. Transnationalism scholars have built on this notion and problematized the assumption of equating the boundaries of the nation-state with that of a social field. I use this notion to examine the transnational connections and multi-embeddedness created in transnational social fields. Drawing on this notion, I examine aspects of fragmentation in transnational consumer lifestyles (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), identify dimensions of transnational consumption, and show how living in one consumer society impacts consumption practices, acculturation styles, and identity expressions in the other(s).

In addition, I draw from the notion of *network capital*, defined as "the capacity to engender and sustain social relations with people who are not necessarily proximate, and which generates emotional, financial and practical benefit" (Larsen et al. 2008, p. 656). Unlike social or cultural capitals that are traditionally conceptualized as being anchored in one social context (cf. Bourdieu 1984), network capital can be transferred across borders (Urry 2007). Building on this notion, I examine the importance of network capital for maintaining cross-border relations, affiliations, and consumption patterns in managing consumer transnationalism (Urry 2007). In my empirical studies, I find that network capital is central in consumer transnationalism by enhancing other forms of capital such as economic and social capital.

Moreover, I draw on the Habermasian notion of *public sphere*, defined as a mediating domain between the private and the public authority spheres (Habermas 1989a, 305). The public sphere is where "public opinion can be formed with citizens assembling and publicizing their opinions freely" (Habermas 1989b, p. 231). I use this notion to examine transnational digital spaces from the perspective of the public sphere. In my empirical study of the Iranian women's social movement, I show the emancipatory potential of transnational digital spaces in shaping and communicating Iranian women's gender identity. In addition, I argue for the emergence of a new consumer subjectivity, the 'citizen-consumer' that merge individuals' concerns about their civic duties with their identity as consumers (Johnston 2008, p. 232). The Iranian women's movement is focused on the issue of the legalized public dress code for women that is both a sociopolitical concern and a consumer concern. Through engagements in transnational digital spaces, activists, men and women, engage in debates that link their concerns as a citizen and as a consumer.

Research Approach. In this dissertation research, I follow an interpretivist approach and use qualitative methods to answer the research questions. A growing and well-established body of research adopts the interpretivist approach, especially under the domain of Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005; Hudson and Ozanne 1988).

All research approaches in social science make ontological assumptions about the nature of the reality and the nature of social beings. From the interpretivist point of view, reality is socially constructed, multiple, holistic, and contextual (Hudson and Ozanne 1988). The interpretivists reject that one real world exists and instead assume that reality is essentially multiple and perceived by individuals.

Reality is also socially constructed and contextual because different individual and group perspectives coexist. Thus, interpretivists do not seek one truth as "no amount of inquiry will converge on one single reality because multiple realities exist and these realities are changing" (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p. 509). As a result, understanding the context is essential in interpretivism because social beings give meanings to realities based on the context. In addition, interpretivists assume that individuals actively create and interact with one another to shape their environment.

From an axiological point of view, each research approach seeks specific goals or axiologies. The overriding goal in interpretivism is 'understanding'. Understanding in interpretivism is a circular process, where collecting information and interpretation constantly shape each other. In addition, knowing the shared meanings and gaining an insider view is essential in understanding. This is known as *Verstehen*: "grasping the shared meanings within a culture of language, contexts, roles, rituals, gestures, arts, and so on" (Wax 1967). Gaining *Verstehen* is an active process that involves the cooperation between the researcher and the informants.

From an epistemological point of view, the knowledge created in interpretivist studies are characterized as idiographic, time-bound, and context-dependent (Hudson and Ozanne 1988, p. 511). The particularities of the phenomenon are of primary importance in knowledge generation in interpretivism. Moreover, the researcher is not merely an independent observer. The researcher's interpretation is collectively formed with the participants, and is the result of their continuous interactions. Generalization to a large number of people, context, settings, and times is not the primary purpose of knowledge generated in interpretivist studies, although, this approach can facilitate generalization within the context and similar cases.

In this dissertation, I follow the ontological, axiological, and epistemological assumptions of the interpretivist approach. In particular, I have utilized phenomenological semi-structured interviewing and netnographic techniques in my studies. Phenomenological studies seek understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals (Cresswell 1998, p. 57). In phenomenology, researchers draw communalities between all participants who experience the same phenomenon. I used this approach to examine the phenomenon of transnational consumer lifestyle and online consumer activism among Iranian men and women. Semi-structured interviewing (McCracken 1988; Bernard 2002) is my method of choice for data collection in the first empirical study as it enables me to investigate prior theories (e.g., consumer acculturation, identity formation, relation to possessions, etc.) and to examine emerging themes among my informants. For the second empirical study, I utilize the netnographic data collection method (Kozinets 2002) to collect and analyze publicly available information about online Iranian women campaign.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation consists of three papers, one conceptual and two empirical. Since transnationalism has not been extensively studied in consumer behavior literature, I first provide a review of globalization and consumer behavior literature with an emphasis on qualitative studies to situate transnationalism in the theoretical conversations in prior literature. In paper II and III, I examine empirical cases of consumer transnational lifestyle and transnational consumer movement facilitated by

transnational digital spaces. Following, I outline each paper and its contributions to prior literature.

In **Paper I**, a conceptual paper titled '*How does globalization affect consumers? Insights from thirty years of interpretive globalization research'*, I critically review and synthesize (McInnis 2011) the past three decades of interpretive, CCT-oriented studies on the impact of globalization on consumers' lives. In this review, I answer the call by Ger et al. (2018) and identify, summarize, and criticize the taken-for-granted assumptions in prior studies and new paths for research: "given that global consumer culture is now a critical force in everyone's lives, it is important that we understand what it is and how it impacts us. One way to go about doing this could have been to revisit and summarize all that has been said on globalization so far" (Ger et al. 2018, p.80).

Through a narrative synthesis (Cassell and Symon 1994) of 70 qualitative articles, I identify three distinct theoretical perspectives on globalization used in this literature —i.e. *homogenization, glocalization,* and *deterritorialization*. The homogenization narrative views globalization as a unidirectional flow of consumer products and cultural symbols from more affluent to less affluent countries that leads to regional and cross-continental forms of homogenizations (Levitt 1983). The glocalization perspective views globalization as unidirectional flows of products and cultural symbols from the center that are appropriated and localized in the periphery (Robertson 1992). The deterritorialization perspective views globalization as multidirectional and interrelated flows wherein all nation-states are impacted by others independent from center-periphery relations (Appadurai 1990).

In this work, I identify and problematize the underlying assumptions of each perspective and illustrate the ways that CCT studies have challenged or extended

these assumptions. In addition, I identify three domains of consumer behavior that have emerged as most studied in this domain- i.e., consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the symbolic meaning of global brands. Finally, from this work, I derive a future research agenda. This study contributes to the existing body of literature on globalization and consumer behavior (e.g., Askegaard et al. 2005; Verman and Belk 2009; Dong and Tian 2009; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Eckhardt and Mahi 2012; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould 2012; Luedicke 2015; Thompson and Troester 2002; Askegaard and Kjeldgaard 2007) by providing a framework that identifies key theoretical influences on this body of research and the ways that CCT studies have challenged or extended their underlying assumptions.

In addition, through this review I identify two gaps in relation to transnationalism and consumer behavior that I empirically examine in papers II and III. In a way, Essay 1 provides the justification for my two empirical studies. The first gap is transnationalism as a growing form of consumer lifestyle, which is shaped by a circular form of mobilities between multiple countries that result in cohabitation and multi-anchoring between multiple consumer cultures. The multi-cohabitation sets apart transnationalism from global nomadism and migration that are studied in prior literature (e.g., Askegaard et al. 2005; Bardhi et al. 2012). The second gap that I identified in the review study is to examine the consumer emancipatory potential of transnational digital spaces that are increasingly used by consumer activists to form and progress movements. Transnational digital spaces are examples of Appadurai's (1996) ideoscapes as platforms for global and multi-centered flows of ideas between nations. Transnational digital spaces, such as social media spaces, provide platforms for ideoscape for consumers to exchange and debate

ideas. However, little is known about the emancipatory potential of such spaces for consumer movements. Additionally, we know little about how transnational actors shape social movements.

In **Paper II**, '*Living Across the Borders: Towards an Understanding of Transnational Consumer Lifestyle*', I empirically examine a growing form of global mobility – transnationalism – (Sheller and Urry 2006), which has received little attention in prior literature. I empirically investigate the nature of consumption that emerges when consumers inhabit multiple countries (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). The hallmark of transnationalism is multi-cohabitation, resulting from extending familial, professional, and financial ties across borders, which differentiates transnationalism from migration (i.e., permanent relocation) and nomadism (i.e., deterritorialization). Transnational lifestyle is manifested in the life of the growing number of expatriates, dual-career professionals, and long-distance families.

In this study, I introduce a new form of mobile consumer lifestyles and contribute to existing literature in two domains of consumer mobility and consumer acculturation (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012; Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Bardhi et al. 2012; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007). First, using a semiotics square (Greimas 1987), I identify different meanings that locality (i.e., country) can take in transnationalism. Understanding the meaning of locality is important as it shapes associations and constructs boundaries to consumption (McCracken 1988). In prior studies in consumer mobility, little is done to explore the range of meanings that locality can take. The duality of home-host is often used in prior work (Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994), where home and host are often understood as separate and disconnected. I reexamine this perspective and challenge the home-host duality that dominates prior literature. I introduce four meanings of

locality (home, work, non-home, and non-work) and illustrate specific meanings and consumption practices associated with each (e.g., relation to possessions, commercial friendship, investment in long-lasting commitments). My findings also contribute to the conceptualization of home. I argue that home in transnationalism is networked, multiple, and fragmented. These findings challenge the singular notion of home in prior studies, where home is territorial and primarily linked with nation-state, country of origin, as well as collective ethnic, religious and ideological values (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton 1981).

Second, my findings contribute to consumer acculturation literature by examining acculturation patterns across a transnational network of home-places. Prior acculturation studies are primarily anchored in the host country and largely ignore acculturation practices that may occur due to co-habitation. In addition, the impact of acculturation in one society on (lack of) integration practices in others has received little attention. I argue that 'transnational consumer acculturation' is not holistic, as suggested by prior literature (Berry 1997; Askegaard et al. 2005), but rather selective, strategic, and domain-specific. I show that transnational consumers tend to not re-acculturate or invest in integrating into each new market they encounter, as we expected from acculturation literature (Askegaard et al. 2005). They rather selectively and strategically engage with services, products, and brands that relate to their purpose in each location. For example, acculturation at 'work-place' may be limited to work-related activities and consumption (e.g., limited material possessions, avoiding long-term investments and commitments), while acculturation at the 'home-place' is shaped by investment in material possessions and engaging in home-type activities, such as home cooking and interior design. In

other words, different meanings of locality structure the level and type of consumer acculturation in transnationalism.

In addition, my findings on 'transnational consumer acculturation' extends Askegaard et al.'s (2005) framework on identity positions in mobility. The authors introduced four identity positions: Hyperculture (hyper-assimilation with the host culture, coupled with rejection of the ethnic culture), Assimilation to the host consumption patterns, Pendulism (oscillation between cultures), and Integration (the best of both worlds). I extend this argument by adding the fifth identity position, which is that of a 'stranger' (Simmel 1983), as transnational consumers strategically align integration practices across localities (e.g., integration in work-place is limited to professional life, while integration in home-place involves long-lasting commitment and investment in possessions).

Moreover, 'transnational consumer acculturation' results in fragmentation of consumption practices (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). I argue that the nature of consumption in transnationalism can be understood via three dimensions: localized (consumption is shaped by the meaning associated with each locality), embedded in transnational networks of relations (consumption is embedded in social and place-based networks, e.g., commercial friendship), and complementary (consumption in each locality complements consumption in other localities).

In **paper III**, '*Social Media as Public Sphere: The Case of Iranian Women's Social Movement in Social Media?'*, I empirically examine the emancipatory potential of social media spaces through the lens of the concept of the public sphere, a mediating domain between the private and the public authority spheres (Habermas 1989a, p. 305). This study is based on a netnography analysis of an online campaign of Iranian women demanding more freedom and control over their personal choices,

known as: *"My Stealthy Freedom"*. The campaign is focused on the issue of mandatory public dress code in Iran, which is both a sociopolitical concern and a consumer concern. In this study, I examine a subject position of 'citizen-consumer' (Johnston 2008, p. 232) that can merge citizenship (an idea rooted in collective responsibility and human rights), and performing as a consumer. I provide several contributions with this study:

First, I argue that the elements of Habermasian public sphere are to a large extent present in social media spaces, where individuals debate social, cultural and political issues relatively freely. My analysis shows the power of social media in enhancing the ability of marginalized voices that have either been muted by the dominant fundamentalists or denied access to public means of communication.

Second, I introduce the notion of the *digital public sphere* in the context of Iranian women's movement, and discuss its three dimensions: *digital discursive space*, *solidarity*, and *anonymity*. I show that the digital public sphere can enhance the offline movement by providing new ways of communication and debate via visual media (pictures and videos). Consumer activists use visuals not only as a communication tool, but also as a medium to debate and vote on actions that further form communal, offline, and street activism. Thus far, nationwide inclusivity (i.e., women and men from different religious and social classes participate in the campaign), solidarity, and relative anonymity provided by social media platforms have not been available in existing mainstream communication platforms in Iran.

Third, I demonstrate the importance of 'consumption spaces' in consumer emancipation. This study contributes to the existing argument on emancipation and consumption, dominated by consumption of global brands (Ger and Belk 1996; Thompson and Arsel 2004), anti-market movements (Varman and Belk 2009;

Friedman 1991; Kozinets and Handelman 1998, 2004), and marginalized, subcultural consumption (Kates 2002, 2004), by showing that virtual platforms can enable liberatory debate and self-representation when individuals face limitations for self-portrayal.

Overall, each of my dissertation papers provides contributions to a specific body of literature on transnationalism and consumer behavior. Paper I provides a critical synthesis of the current state of knowledge on globalization and consumer behavior, while papers II and III address gaps in prior transnationalism and consumer behavior literature. Currently, the first paper of the dissertation is under review at the journal of *Marketing Theory*. During the past three years, I have presented my studies at several international conferences including *Consumer Culture Theory Conference (CCTC)*, *Winter American Marketing Association (AMA)*, *Macromarketing*, and *Interpretive Consumer Research (ICR)*; as well as the *Theory: Canon of Classic* summer workshop.

I focus next in each of the three papers that constitute my dissertation. I conclude the dissertation with a chapter on the overall contribution of my work.

Paper 1

How Does Globalization Affect Consumers? Insights from Thirty Years of Interpretive Globalization Research

Abstract

Globalization and internationalization are increasingly important domains of marketing research. Consumer culture researchers have significantly contributed to this field by exploring the impact of globalization on consumers under different cultural conditions. In this article, I offer an interpretive knowledge inquiry on thirty years of interpretive research in this area. Through a narrative synthesis, I identify three distinct theoretical perspectives on globalization that are used in this literature —i.e. homogenization, glocalization, and deterritorialization—and show how each perspective relies on different theoretical assumptions regarding the notion of culture, the relations between nations, the direction of influence, and the role of individuals in globalization processes. I problematize these underlying assumptions and illustrate the ways that interpretive studies have challenged or extended them. In addition, I highlight key insights on the ways in which globalization affects consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the symbolic meaning of global brands, and identify fruitful directions for further research.

Introduction

Studying the globalization of businesses, brands, and behaviors has become an important domain of marketing research, known as the field of international marketing. The majority of studies in this area are concerned with devising empirically-based strategic recommendations for corporations that internationalize their operations (Cayla and Arnould 2008). Few studies in this literature has offered contextually and historically grounded arguments on international marketing, global branding, and consumers' experience of globalization (e.g., Cayla and Eckhardt

2008; Eckhardt 2005; Cannon and Yaprak 2002; and Iyer and Shapiro 1999). Studies conducted in the tradition of consumer culture theory (CCT), however, approach globalization with a particular interest in understanding the broader socio-cultural implications of globalization forces not only for brands, but also for nations, regions, and individual consumers (e.g., Firat 1997; Ger and Belk 1996; Holt 2002). These studies tend to view globalization as "a *social process* in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (Waters 1995, p. 3). Thus, globalization comes into view as a modernization project that transforms economic systems, ways of living, consumer cultures, and consumption practices around the globe (Ritzer 2010). When a cultural perspective is adopted, the global diffusion of consumption ideologies and practices, the marketization of various economies, the internationalization of brands, and the rise of global mobilities not only open new business opportunities, but also initiate a wide range of socio-cultural transformations that affect consumers' lives both positively and negatively (e.g., Peñaloza 1994; Kjedgaard and Askegaard 2006; Bardhi, Eckhardt and Arnould 2012). The globalization of brands, for example, has led to some brands embracing a new role as socialization agents that consumers use for fostering imagined regional and global communities (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008; Strizhakova, Coulter and Price 2008).

Compared to managerially oriented globalization research, consumer culture research tends to take a more theoretical and critical angle when exploring global consumer behaviors, the spread of western modernity, or the defining role of different cultures in shaping globalization (e.g., Izbek-Bilgin 2012; Viktas, Varman and Belk 2015).

Considering the important, yet fragmented and sometimes contradictory, insights that interpretive globalization research has produced in the last thirty years, it is useful to conduct an integrated knowledge inquiry that categorizes existing findings, highlights similarities and contradictions, problematize underlying assumptions, and identifies gaps for future research (cf. MacInnis 2011; Lim 2016). The recent resurgence of nationalism and the anti-immigration sentiments in global consumer cultures add a further sense of urgency to advancing knowledge on globalization from a marketing perspective.

In this spirit, I conduct a narrative synthesis inquiry on a theoretical sample of seventy papers across major marketing journals. First, I identify three distinct theoretical perspectives that consumer culture scholars have adopted to study globalization, i.e. *homogenization*, *glocalization*, and *deterritorialization*. Each perspective comprises a different conceptualization of globalization, as well as different sets of theoretical assumptions regarding the concept of culture, the power relations between nation-states, and the role of individuals in globalizing processes.

Second, I illustrate the ways that CCT studies challenge or extend the underlying assumptions in identified theoretical perspectives. For example, homogenization perspective views globalization as a unidirectional flow of consumer products and cultural symbols from more affluent to less affluent countries that leads to regional and cross-continental forms of homogenizations (Levitt 1983). Underlying this perspective is the assumption of consumer's lack of agency in rejecting or modifying the imposed consumer culture. CCT studies, however, have identified cases in which consumers negotiate their identities by refusing the imposed consumer products and brands or adjusting their meanings and usages. Studies highlighting consumer boycotts (Varman and Belk 2009; Izbek-Bilgin 2012)

or hybrid forms of consumer identity among migrants (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005), for examples, provide contextually grounded arguments on how consumers manage the presence of homogenization forces in their everyday lives. CCT studies also challenge the celebratory approach in deterritorialization perspective by highlighting the ways consumers experience and manage deterritorialization of consumer culture in their lives. Studies, for example, argue that deterritorialization can provoke consumer resistance and desire to redefine locality and local consumer culture in response to deterritorialization (Luedicke 2015; Kjergaard and Askegaard 2007).

Third, I argue that authors have identified different ways in which globalization affects consumer's lives depending on which of the three theoretical perspectives they adopt. I document this insight and these findings regarding consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the meanings of global brands. These domains emerged from my analysis as the three most studied areas by CCT scholars. *Consumer empowerment* research concerns with questions of how globalization impacts consumers' ability to access products and services and to exert control over their consumption choices (Wathieu et al., 2002). *Consumer identity* research, in turn, asks how globalization affects consumers' ability to work "with marketer-generated materials [to] forge a coherent if diversified and often fragmented sense of self" (Arnould and Thompson 2005, p. 871). Research on the *meanings of global brands* explores the impact of globalization on how global brands are perceived and consumed in global markets (Ger and Belk 1996; Holt, Quelch, and Taylor 2004; Cayla and Arnould 2008; Izbek-Bilgin 2012).

Fourth, my inquiry reveals how interpretive globalization research provides rather fragmented, sometimes even contradictory, findings. Research on consumer

empowerment, for example, has produced conflicting arguments regarding the impact of globalization on consumers' experience of empowerment in developing countries. Some authors argue, for example, that globalization has reduced consumers' purchasing power, increased social hierarchies, and reduced access to consumer products for the middle and lower social class groups (e.g., Varman and Belk 2008; Böhm and Brei 2008). Others argue that globalization has empowered consumers in the developing countries by giving them more control to adopt, transform, or reject imported consumer culture (Viktas, Varman, and Belk 2015; Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). Similarly, despite the vast literature on global brands, it remains debatable what the factors and structural conditions that shape the symbolic meaning of global brands. Prior research indicates that global brands can take a variety of meanings from infidel (Izbek-Bilgin 2012), to a symbol of foreignness (Eckhardt 2005), to a badge of progress and modernity (Kravets and Sandikci 2014), to a passport to global citizenship (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008). This study allows researchers to better compare and contrast diverging conceptualizations, assumptions, and findings in this body of literature, and highlights important directions for further research (MacInnis 2011).

Method

In this study, I follow narrative synthesis that refers to an approach of systematic enquiry by relying on textual data to review and summarize prior findings (Cassell and Symon 1994). By incorporating a wide range of studies and research methods (e.g., interview, observation, ethnography), this approach allows the researcher to synthesize the findings of prior studies in light of their underlying theory and context

(Denyer, Tranfield and Van Aken 2008). A narrative synthesis provides an opportunity to conduct a comprehensive review on a given phenomenon by compiling a broad range of related studies that address different aspects of the phenomenon (Rumrill and Fitzgerald 2001). Cook et al. (1997) argue that this approach is particularly valuable when reviewing broad topics rather than a particular question, as is in my case of reviewing studies addressing a broad phenomenon of the impact of globalization on consumers' lives.

Narrative synthesis has been used across a range of disciplines including social science and management (Hypko, Tilebein, and Gleich 2010), nursing (Griffiths 2002), and education studies (Bleakley, A. 2005). It is a flexible method that allows reflexivity and critical examination (Denyer and Tranfield 2006). The extensive body of research produced over the past 30 years on the study of global consumer behavior has followed a variety of different theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches that have led to diverse outcomes in terms of consumer behavior. Thus, my aim is to systematically review this literature, identify the various perspectives and approaches, and clarify their consumption implications. Via the narrative synthesis, I integrate the various findings from studies that take a similar approach and perspective, analyze ambiguities, and examine similarities and conflicting findings in primary studies (Paterson et al. 200). The stages of my analysis are summarized in Figure 1.

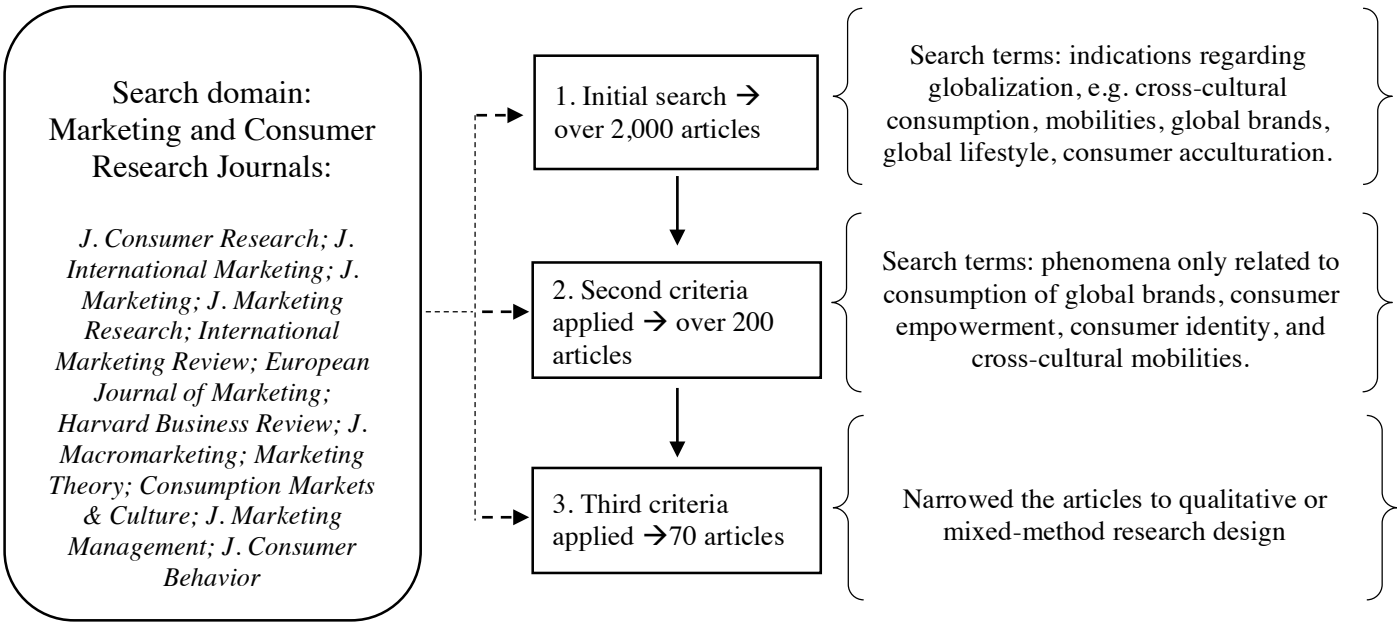


Figure 1. Flowchart of the Selection of the Review Papers

I first identified the set of leading marketing journals to conduct my article selection. The sample of 11 reputable marketing and consumer research scholarly sources that publish qualitative research and consumer behavior are selected: *Journal of Consumer Research; Journal of International Marketing; Journal of Marketing; European Journal of Marketing; Harvard Business Review; International Marketing Review; Journal of Marketing Research; Journal of Macromarketing; Marketing Theory; Consumption Markets & Culture; Journal of Consumer Behaviour; and Journal of Marketing Management*.

Second, I utilized my research questions and the relevant concepts to determine the article search and selection criteria (Timulak 2009). For each journal outlets, I performed an inclusive search using subject headings, text words, and keywords. The Boolean logic terms "or" and "and" were also used to combine search results. The search for articles was complemented with forward and backward

citation tracking. My initial search consists of a broad search for studies on "globalization" that produced over 2,000 articles. I, then narrowed the search by utilizing second criteria that relate to specific global consumer behavior, including acculturation, global mobilities, global, local and foreign brands, consumer identity, cosmopolitanism, etc. In this stage, studies that are predominantly concerned with strategy implications, such as product design, positioning strategies, or communication campaigns are excluded from the final sample. This resulted in over 200 articles, which are further screened for their methodological approach. After eliminating studies with quantitative research methods (the final sample includes studies with qualitative and mixed method approaches), 70 articles formed the basis for my narrative synthesis. Conceptual papers are not included in the final sample as my aim is to identify the impact of globalization on consumer behavior by synthesizing prior empirical studies. However, I utilize conceptual papers to establish my conceptual background or build conceptual definitions and relationships (e.g. Cayla and Arnould 2008; Firat 1997; Burgh-Woodman 2012; Cannon and Yaprak 2002).

Next, I read each individual article carefully to familiarize myself with the research, the assumptions, and the theory used and findings regarding global consumer behavior. I noticed that different theoretical perspectives on globalization are utilized across the literature and that the theoretical perspective on globalization shaped the research focus, contexts study (e.g. focus on developing countries rather than developed countries), conceptual definitions, and the methodological approach. As a result, I re-analyzed the articles to identify the theoretical perspective on globalization utilized in each article. I did this by examining each article for the (1) theories of globalization adopted (e.g., Trickle-down theory; Glocalization, Global

Flow Model); (2) theoretical assumptions on globalization (e.g., relation between nation-states, the nature of global consumer culture); (3) drivers and outcomes of globalization at macro, meso, and individual levels (e.g., spread of consumer culture; social and economic changes); (4) research findings regarding consumer identity, empowerment, mobilities, and consumption of global brands; (5) method used (e.g., field study, interview, historical analysis); (6) empirical phenomenon of interest; and (7) level of analysis: macro, meso, and micro levels. Considering different levels of analysis helped me to create a broader picture of the impact of different theoretical approaches at the macro-level, the meso-level sociocultural structures, and the micro-level consumer behavior outcomes. Each dimension represents a unique meaning unit, based on which I looked for communalities and differences to categorize the articles (Throne et al. 2004). Categories are abstracted clusters of meanings generated, based on comparison, looking for commonalities, and delineation of differences among primary articles (Gloser and Strauss 1967). I identify three theoretical perspectives on globalization across our pool of articles: a) homogenization; b) adaptation; and c) deterritorialization. Table 1 represent the summary of these perspectives.

My review also suggests the three most studied domains of consumer research: consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the meaning of global brands. Thus, I focused my analysis on identifying and synthesizing the findings of each article on these three domains of consumer research and classifying them by perspective. For example, I examined how consumer empowerment has been examined and found by studies that take a homogenization perspective on globalization. I repeat this process across each of these three domains by perspective. The findings are summarized in Table 2 and elaborated in the next section.

Findings: Theoretical perspectives on globalization

My narrative synthesis identified three theoretical perspectives adopted in interpretive globalization research, each representing a distinct set of concepts, dynamics, and assumptions regarding globalization. I label these perspectives homogenization, glocalization, and deterritorialization (see Table 1). As most authors do not overtly explicate their concept of globalization, I distilled insights on these underlying understandings by searching the texts for enabling theories, insightful citations, and particular types of methods and findings. I examine how each perspective operates at three levels of analysis, macro (global), meso (national, communal), and individual consumer levels.

In the following three sections, I outline each perspective by first identifying the underlying theories and theoretical assumptions, and then summarizing key insights offered by the respective authors on how globalization affects consumers with regards to empowerment, identity, and the symbolic meanings of global brands (see Table 2).

Table 1. Three Theoretical Perspectives on Globalization

	Perspective 1: Homogenization	***Perspective 2: Glocalization***	***Perspective 3: Deterritorialization***
Globalization Definition	Unidirectional flow of consumer products, brands, and cultural symbols from more affluent (the center) to less affluent (the periphery) countries leading to regional and cross-continental forms of homogenizations (c.f. Levitt 1983).	Unidirectional flows from the center are appropriated and localized in the periphery, glocalization (Robertson 1992).	Multidirectional and interrelated flows of products and cultural symbols where all nation-states are impacted by others independent from center-periphery relation (Appadurai 1990).
Examples/ manifestations of globalization	Presence of standardized western products, brands and retail spaces across the world; Global brands are western in origin.	Rise of emerging markets; Emergence of local middle classes in developing countries; Creolization and hybridization of consumption	Rise of multicultural marketplaces (ethnic festivals, global music genre, fusion food and fashion), rise of importance of global, cosmopolitan cities, global mobility, global nomadic lifestyles.
Theoretical Assumptions	1. Nation-state represents homogenized, stable culture. 2. Economic and political dominations of some nations over others drive center-periphery hierarchies at regional and cross-continental levels. 3. The periphery is primarily the recipient of products, brands, services and ideology originated from the center.	1. Nation-state only partially determine local cultures; Culture is understood between its "content" and its "structure" (Wilk 1995). 2. Differences in economic advancements determine the center-periphery relations between nations. 3. The periphery is not a mere recipient of products originated from the center, but also has agency as it appropriates the offerings and changing the meanings.	1. Weakening of ties between culture and place- i.e., deterritorialization of culture (Faist 2000, p.13). Culture is detached from specific physical location. 2. All countries can participate in global markets and get equally impacted from others. Focus of analysis is global rather than in the center-periphery hierarchies.
Globalization impact at meso level	1. Consumer culture ideology of the center is imposed on the periphery resulting in people around the world increasingly becoming similar and local differences, traditions, and heritage are being eliminated (Varman and Belk 2008). 2. Globalization negatively impacts consumers in the periphery as it perpetuates economic inequality (Verman and Belk 2009), creates political/ideological conflicts (Izberk-Bilgin 2012), and renders local companies uncompetitive.	1. Appreciation of global products brings more cultural varieties and new cultural forms (Thompson and Arsel 2004). 2. Peripheral local culture represent a hybrid form as elements of local and global cultures coexist at the same time (Rowe and Schelling 1991, p.231).	1. Consumer culture around the world is increasingly becoming decentralized as more products originated from developing countries enter global marketplaces (Firat 1997; Bauman 2000). 2. Local cultures are fragmented due to simultaneous presence of different and essentially incompatible patterns that are represented by variety of products, lifestyles and experiences (Firat 1997, p.78).
Methodological considerations	Single-sited research methods with a diagnostic focus on the developing countries; nation-state views as the unit of analysis (i.e., methodological nationalism); ethnocentric approaches	Single and Multi-sited research methods; Nation-state is the unit of analysis; Research contexts include the center as well as the periphery, such as rural areas and emerging markets	Multi-sited research methods; Unit of analysis consists of variety of different geographical units (nations, cities, regions, localities) and non-geographical units, such as global consumer lifestyles; Regions and various developed and developing countries are studied.
Examples of published articles	Bengtsson, Bardhi, and Venkatraman (2010); Brecic et al. (2013); Chytkova (2011); Costa (2005); Dedeoğlu and Güzeler (2016); Dong and Tian (2009); Gao (2012); Hu, Whittler, and Tian (2013); Izberk-Bilgin (2012); Iyer and Shapiro (1999); Jafari and Goulding (2008); Lindridge, Hogg, and Shah (2004); Luna, Ringberg, and Peracchio (2008); Mehta and Belk (1991); Nelson and Paek (2007); Oswald (1997); Peñaloza (1989, 1994); Sutton-Brady, Davis, and Jung (2010); Touzani, Hirschman, and Smaoui (2015); Üstüner and Holt (2007); Varman and Belk (2012, 2009, 2008); Varman and Vikas (2007); Wallendorf and Reilly (1983)	Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005); Cherrier and Belk (2015); Cova, Pace, and Park (2007); Eckhardt (2005); Eckhardt and Bengtsson (2015); Eckhardt and Houston (2002); Eckhardt and Mahi (2012); Eckhardt and Mahi (2004); Ger and Belk (1996); Grünhagen, Witte, and Pryor (2010); Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006); Kjeldgaard and Nielsen (2010); Kjeldgaard and Ostberg (2007); Kravets and Sandikci (2014); Kipnis et al. (2012); Sobh, Belk, and Gressel (2014); Thompson and Arsel (2004); Tinson and Nuttall (2010); Üstüner and Holt (2010); Vikas, Varman, and Belk (2015); Yazıcıoglu (2010)	Askegaard and Eckhardt (2012); Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2007); Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould (2012); Bardhi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson (2010); Burgh-Woodman (2014); Cannon and Yaprak (2002); Cayla and Eckhardt (2008); Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur (2016); Cayla and Arnould (2008); Demangeot and Sankaran (2012); Emontspool and Georgi (2016); Figueiredoa and Uncles (2015); Gaviria and Emontspool (2015); Holt, Quelch and Taylor (2004); Kamarulzaman et al. (2015); Luedicke (2015); Luedicke (2011); McKechnie and Tynan (2008); Sandikci and Ger (2010); Seo, Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz (2015), Takhar, Maclaran, and Stevens (2012); Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price (2008); Thompson and Tambyah (1999); Thompson and Troester (2002)

Table 2. Individual Consumer Behavior Implications

Concept	*Homogenization*	*Glocalization*	*Deterritorialization*
Consumer empowerment	Globalization empowers consumers in the periphery who embrace Western ideologies and have economic resources to afford the new lifestyle (Varman and Belk 2012). Globalization disempowers many in the periphery due to (a) mismatch between Western and ethnic values; (b) limited access to products and services (e.g., healthcare) due to the push towards new economic models (Böhm and Brei 2008). Consumers manage homogenization forces via expressing agency through resisting or boycotting ideologically conflicted westernized brands and consumer culture (Varman and Belk 2009; Üstüner and Holt 2007).	Globalization empowers consumers in the periphery as active agents with control over accepting, rejecting, or modifying products' meanings and usages (Ho 2001). Globalization empowers consumers by providing them with variety of consumption choices as hybridization increases diversity (Vikas et al. 2015; Kipnis et al. 2012). Developing countries, and thus consumers, are better off economically as local businesses benefit from new markets created by global corporations (DeBerry-Spence et al. 2012).	Globalization empowers consumers who embrace globalization ideology, e.g., via embracing mobile lifestyle as a path to upward mobility and development of cosmopolitan habitus (Bardhi et al. 2012). Globalization empowers minority groups by legitimizing stigmatized and niche practices in global, decentralized markets (Sandikci and Ger 2010). Globalization empowers consumers via increasing product diversities in local multicultural markets (Demangeot and Sankaran 2012). Deterritorialization of consumer culture can provoke consumer resistance and desire to redefine locality and local consumer culture (Luedicke 2015; Kjergaard and Askegaard 2007).
Consumer identity	National identity signals membership in a cohesive whole that is represented by distinct traditional and ethnic values, language, and politics. Nationalism drives consumption practices (e.g., resistance to globalization and boycotting global brands) as a way to preserve ties with the homeland (Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Dong and Tian 2009). CCT researchers challenged the assumption of stable and homogenized identity and culture via highlighting hybridity in consumer identity and consumer culture (e.g., Oswald 1999; Chytcova 2011).	Hybrid forms of identities driven by nationalism and global citizenship motivations simultaneously (Üstüner and Holt 2010; Kjeldgaard and Nielsen 2010). Hybrid identities represent a shift from national identity to a performative notion of self, where consumer strategically chooses and negotiates identity in the process of consumption (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006).	Consumers' identities transcend geographical and political borders-i.e., cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1990a). Consumption of products that symbolize other cultures enhance cosmopolitanism, however, might never become a lasting part of consumers' habits (Emontspool and Georgi 2016). Cosmopolitanism is a position of instability and transition from local to cosmopolitan orientation (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).
Symbolic meaning of global brands (GB)	GBs represent symbols of Western values and modern ways of living (Holt et al. 2004; Arnould 2010). GBs stand in symbolic contrast with local alternatives and represent the aggressiveness of multinational corporations. Consumption of GBs represent endorsement of Western consumer culture and emancipation from one's own culture; anti-consumption of GBs represents saving local economy and national identity (Izberk-Bilgin 2012).	GBs remain symbols of Western consumer culture, while also are subject to modification when sold in different cultural contexts. Consumers in the periphery incorporate GBs into their own tradition by actively modifying their meanings and usages (Ger and Belk 1996). Consumption of GBs represents the adaptability to incorporate Western consumer culture, but not to emancipate from one's own culture (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004).	GBs represent a collage of multitude of cultures from the East to the West (Craig and Douglas 2006). GBs provides a sense of closeness by bringing together different cultures and weakening the ties with any particular locality (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008).

Perspective I: Homogenization

Scholars who approach globalization from my first analytical perspective, i.e. homogenization, tend to define globalization as a process of cultural and economic alignment, where globally available goods, media, ideas, and institutions overrun and displace distinct local cultures (cf. Levitt 1983; Ritzer 1993).

This line of research examines local and global socio-cultural transformations as a result of unidirectional flows of consumer goods, brands, practices, and cultural symbols from the more affluent (referred to as the center) to the less affluent (referred to as the periphery) countries (Belk 1996; Craig and Douglas 2006). The principal drivers of globalization are presumed to originate from economic and political developments in developed countries; that is why this process is also referred to as Westernization. The homogenization thesis on globalization is especially dominant among international marketing scholars. Levitt (1983), for example, argues that homogenization processes have shaped the emergence of global consumer markets that share similar values and lifestyles, and can be served with standardized products and marketing strategies. The *Cosmopolitan* magazine targeting a global consumer segment with standardized campaigns of global brands such as Clinique, L'Oréal, and Lancôme even in local editions in India, Korea, and Thailand, for example, illustrates this dynamic (Nelson and Peak 2007).

Homogenization is facilitated by the business practices and infrastructures of global brands. Their market logic and practices of efficiency, calculability, and control have become a model of society known as "McDonaldization" (Ritzer 1993), which not only swaps over to other nations, but also to many non-economic domains of consumers' lives (see Alfino, Caputo and Wynyard 1998). Ultimately so, critical

authors argue, homogenization leads to a global monoculture, where local markets, cultures, and traditions are gradually eliminated (Varman and Belk 2012).

I identify three theoretical assumptions underlying the homogenization perspective (Table 1). Prior consumer culture studies provide two contributions in relation to these assumptions: illustrating supporting cases and extending the homogenization approach, or providing arguments to challenge some of the assumptions underlying the homogenization perspective via unpacking different ways that consumers adopt or resist globalization forces. The first assumption in homogenization is that cultural boundaries largely map on nation-state boundaries and are defined via distinct ethnic values, languages, and politics (Craig and Douglas 2006). The second assumption is that nations are organized in a center-periphery relationship, with the West being the center and the East being the periphery. Although the homogenization perspective acknowledges other forms of integration – specifically between neighboring counties in Asian, European, and African regions (Enright 2000) – homogenization scholars have predominantly focused on how Western culture affects Eastern culture (e.g., Ger and Belk 1996). The third assumption is that consumers in the periphery lack agency. These consumers are mainly portrayed as willing recipients of products and services from the center, which satisfy their emerging Western consumer desires.

CCT studies, however, have challenged some of these assumptions. First, in contradiction with the prediction of homogenization theories, CCT scholars argue that homogenization forces do not result in unified form of globalization. Jafari and Goulding (2008), for example, show that globalization brings together conflicting ideological and political ideas. The authors' study on Iranian women migrants in the UK illustrate that migrants' lives are overshadowed by these conflicting ideas.

Oswald (1999), similarly, acknowledges that globalization brings together diverse, and often contradicting, cultures and norms. These conflicting values co-exist in the life of migrants and are manifested in different situations. Thus, while authors acknowledge the center-periphery and the hierarchical relations between nations that structure globalization, they argue that this does not lead to a unified, homogenized globalization as the perspective predicts.

Second, CCT scholars challenge the conceptualization of culture as homogenized, pure, and nationalized. Authors have shown that culture is dynamic and heterogeneous and shaped by colonial histories and post-colonial resistance. Touzani, Hirschman, and Smaoui's (2015) study on post European colonization in Tunisia, for example, show that post Arab Spring, political and ideological conflicts between the western-inspired value system and the ethnic, Islamic value system have started to rise. As a result of consumer's resistance against homogenization of the colonizer (Britain and France), the consumer market for Western products has started to decline and consumers show more desire for Islamic products (e.g., halal food, Islamic-inspired clothing, entertainment etc.).

Third, CCT studies challenge the assumption of lack of consumer agency under forces of homogenization. Using the context of migration, for example, scholars argue that consumers can exercise their agency via accepting and rejecting aspects of home and host cultures. As a result, hybrid consumer identities are formed that merge aspects of two cultures (Oswald 1999; Askegaard et al. 2005; Chytcova 2011). In addition, consumers in the periphery are shown to exercise their agency when they collectively boycott consumer products and brands that represent contrast with their ethnic values or religious beliefs (e.g., Izberg-Bilgin 2012).

Anticonsumption movement opposing Coca-Cola in India is an example of such collective actions (Varman and Belk 2009).

Methodologically, I observe that this line of research relies on single-sited studies, predominantly conducted in emerging or developing countries, such as India (Varman and Belk 2008, 2009; Mehta and Belk 1991), Turkey (Izberg-Bilgin 2012; Dedeoğlu and Güzeler 2016), China (Dong and Tian 2009; Gao 2012), and Tunisia (Touzani, Hirschman, and Smaoui 2015). Since these studies usually consider the nation-state as unit of analysis and employ North American concepts and frameworks without much adjustment to local conditions, authors have been criticized for "methodological nationalism" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, p. 301; Cayla and Arnould 2008). Scholars who share this intellectual orientation assume that countries are the natural units for studies and equate society with the nation-state.

How does global homogenization affect consumers? I examine the implications of the homogenization perspective on three consumption domains—i.e., consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the meaning of global brands. I collate insights on these domains from each perspective, starting with homogenization.

Consumer empowerment

Consumer empowerment has been a focal topic in interpretive globalization research, especially with regards to transformations of social structures in developing countries, including class, gender, religion, and nationality. The rise of consumer culture in the emerging markets such as India and China is associated with a rise of material ambitions and aspirations for conspicuous consumption (Varman and Belk

2008). Consumers who can command sufficient economic resources to afford western consumer lifestyles, are considered empowered by globalization. Shopping in the new, Western-inspired malls in India, for example, contributes to young elite consumers feeling modern and westernized (Varman and Belk 2012).

While homogenization has certainly widened access to foreign products for some consumers, authors argue that many (if not most) consumers in developing countries are still worse off because they lack the economic and cultural resources required to participate in western consumer culture (Varman and Belk 2008; Böhm and Brei 2008). Varman and Vikas (2007) show, for example, how the push towards privatization of the healthcare system in India contributed to a decline in public institutions, increased costs of healthcare, and a marginalization of those in the middle and lower social class groups. Globalization, thus, has put especially consumers from the middle and lower social classes, in a condition of economic and social struggle (Ghosh and Chandrasekhar 2000), further deepening existing wealth and status inequalities (Böhm and Brei 2008; Ghosh and Chandrasekhar 2000).

Studies show that consumers struggle not only financially, but also ideologically. Authors highlight various clashes between traditional values and ideologies, and Western value systems, which are carried to consumers' doorsteps by global brands, products, and services. Many consumers in developing countries therefore see globalization as a threat to their own way of life. However, on the contrary to the assumption of lack of consumer agency, prior studies highlight that individual consumers may resist and boycott Western global brands (Varman and Belk 2009) and consume outside the Westernized markets via relying on community-based modes of production, for example (Izberk-Bilgin 2012). These

consumers also stigmatize others' attempts to adopt global brands as anti-nationalist and disloyal to their national identity (Gao 2012).

The clashes between Western and Eastern value systems may contribute to the experience of disempowerment when consumers move from developing to developed countries. Iranian migrant women living in the UK, for example, often feel pressured to conform to majority cultural norms and thus remove their headscarves to avoid being discriminated against (Jafari and Goulding 2008). Turkish migrants moving from rural areas to major cities with Westernized lifestyles similarly find themselves isolated from the mainstream society and sometimes even physically segregated from most city residences (Üstüner and Holt 2007).

Consumer identity

From the homogenization perspective, the individual subject appears as a member of a cohesive whole, i.e. a culture that is represented by distinct traditional and ethnic values, language, and politics (Craig and Douglas 2006). Nationality is viewed as an institution that largely defines individual identity based on locally anchored feelings of community, loyalty, and devotion (Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Mehta and Belk 1991; see also Bardhi et al. 2012 for a critique of this). People share a "national identity", which is a form of awareness of shared ethnicity and history (Smith 1991, p. 22-23; Kaplan and Herb 2011). Consumption of local brands based on national identity, or even nationalist ideology, can serve consumers as a form of political consumerism in support of their own national or even regional economy (Varman and Belk 2008), and as resistance against the global marketplace (Dong and Tian 2009).

As globalization brings products and brands from different cultures into local markets in other countries, consumption becomes a way to preserve one's

ethnic culture. This stream of research highlights the interplay between national and ethnic identities where ethnicity is seen as central to national identity because it symbolizes membership to a collectivity and emphasizes the role of descent and cultural boundaries (Smith 1991). For instance, Brecic et al. (2013) show, for example, that despite the shared national history of Serbs and Croatians, consumers prefer their own products over those from the neighboring country when engaging in rituals such as a birthday or New Years. Similarly, Tunisian consumers rejecting established Western norms after the Arab Spring also facilitated the rise of Islamic clothing, halal foods, and entertainment in Tunisia (Touzani, Hirschman, and Smaoui 2015).

Consumption does not only contribute to identity construction at home, but also when traveling (Bengtsson, Bardhi, and Venkatraman 2010) or migrating (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005). Asian migrants to America, for example, are shown to adopt specific consumption practices to counteract negative stereotypes (Hu, Whittler, and Tian 2013). Such practices include Asian men displaying possessions that signal technical and mechanical knowledge to counter stereotypes of being effeminate. Korean migrants in Australia, in turn, sometimes borrow Korean-made DVDs to evoke nostalgic feelings and familiarize their Australian-born children with their parents' country of origin (Sutton-Brady, et al. 2010). Possessions from home countries can, thus, gain sacred status as carriers of identity value (Mehta and Belk 1991; Jafari and Goulding 2008) and brands and foods from home become a source of comfort when travelling abroad (Bardhi, Ostberg and Bengtsson 2010).

On the contrary to the assumptions of pure and nationalized culture and individual identity in homogenization perspective, consumer culture researchers have highlighted a hybridity in consumer identity and consumer culture. Studies on

migration, for example, view consumer culture as co-shaped by home and host culture, resulting in hybrid form of consumer culture as opposed to stable and homogenized (e.g., Oswald 1999; Chytcova 2011; Peñaloza 1994). The consumer's identity is also hybrid, for example, in the case of hybrid gender identity among Romanian women in Italy (Chytcova 2011) or second-generation immigrant children, who tend to grow up maintaining multiple identities that are activated in different social and cultural settings (Luna, Ringberg, and Peracchio 2008).

Meaning of global brands

From the homogenization perspective, global brands are conceptualized as entities that originate in developed countries and are made available for purchase across the globe. Homogenization research suggests that multinational corporations like Coca-Cola, Procter & Gamble, and L'Oréal pursue truly global branding strategies by rolling out standardized products and advertising campaigns into one developing market after the other (Wills, Samli, and Jacobs 1991; Kaynak and Kara 2000).

This literature argues that the hallmarks of global brands are consistency in product attributes, quality perceptions, and premium prices in comparison to local competitors (Arnould 2010; Schuiling and Kapferer 2004). In particular, Holt et al.'s (2004) study with consumers in 41 countries has shown that brand globalness is associated with higher prices as consumers perceive higher quality for global brands, global influence and socially responsible practices, and symbolizing Western values and modern ways of life (Holt 2002; Nelson and Paek 2007). Consumer also perceive global brands in relation to local competitors. Thus, local and global brands constitute two discourses that shape consumer choice based on their ideological standing (e.g., Izberg-Bilgin 2012; Dong and Tian 2009). For consumers in

developing countries, for example, consuming global brands can be an endorsement of "Western" values and emancipation from one's own culture (Ger and Belk 1996), but also can be an unwelcome act of granting access to brands as infidel "Trojan horses" who colonize local markets and threaten citizens' religious ideologies (Thompson and Arsel 2004, p. 631; Izberk-Bilgin 2012).

The meaning of global brands is also formed in relation to consumption situation, i.e., the place. Consumers, for example, may reconsider brands like MacDonald's and Starbucks when they are consumed at home versus a foreign and unfamiliar situation abroad. While these brands may be framed as predatory and hegemonic at home, their meanings might change to sources of comfort, familiarity, and even national pride when they are consumed abroad (Bengtsson et al. 2010).

Perspective II: Glocalization

Authors who approach globalization from the second analytical perspective, i.e. glocalization, tend to see globalization as the "tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets" (Robertson 1995, p.28). For these authors, globalization is "glocalization," which denotes "the process by which local cultures and forces of globalization are thoroughly interpenetrated and co-shaping" (Robertson 1995; Wilk 1995; Ger and Belk 1996). Consumers appropriate the meanings of global brands to their own ends, add new cultural associations, drop incompatible ones, and transform others to fit into local cultural lifestyles (Kjerdgaard and Askegaard 2006). At the same time, glocalization acknowledges that a range of cultural symbols and universal marketing tools are globally broadcasted (Thompson and Arsel 2004). For

example, the global emergence of local cuisines has emerged as a result of local adaptations of universal marketing devices and techniques (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard 2007).

Contrary to the monoculture argument in the homogenization perspective, glocalization research highlights how localization processes increase socio-cultural diversity. While acknowledging a center-periphery relationship, authors argue that developing countries adapting (rather than adopting) global cultural symbols creates opportunities for new, locally embedded products, brands, practices, and symbols (Craig and Douglas 2006; Eckhardt and Bengtsson 2015). The consumption of Western rock music in Turkey, for example, has evolved as something that is both English and Turkish, neither ethnic nor Western entirely (Yazıcıoglu 2010).

The outcome of glocalization processes can be part of the process of *hybridization*, where the fusion of two or more elements from different cultures result in a new cultural element (Douglas and Craig 2006, p. 330; Pieterse 1995), or *creolization*, where the global interacts with the local and "the peripheral culture absorbs the influx of meanings and symbolic forms from the center [it] transforms them to make them in some considerable degree their own" (Hannerz 1990b, p. 127).

Despite their focus on local adaptation, scholars acknowledge that globalization is also a process of standardization of form (not content), where cultural differences follow similar structures that allow people to communicate and market them globally (Giulianotti and Robertson 2007, p.134). While ethnic values expressed in local cuisines, art, design, and fashion, for example, remain distinct, the ways that these differences are produced, communicated, and commodified become more similar across cultures (Wilk 1995). The practice of performing and promoting a "beauty contest", for example, follows a similar pattern across Western, Asian, and

Islamic countries, but is considerably adjusted to fit local tastes, norms and values (Wilk 1995).

I identify three theoretical assumptions underlying the glocalization perspective. First, this stream of studies acknowledges the myth of "pure, core culture" and poses that national borders only partially map on cultural boundaries. Thus, to study cultures and cultural differences, requires to distinguish between the elements that are territorial (e.g., local cuisines) and those that are universal and homogenized (e.g., how local cuisines are marketed). Second, similar to the homogenization literature, the glocalization literature draws on center-periphery distinctions. However, these distinctions do not follow an East-West dichotomy. What constitutes a center in the glocalization perspective is more multifaceted and relational, including not only developed vs developing distinctions, but also north vs south, present vs not present on global markets, or urban vs rural arrangements (e.g., Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006). Eastern countries such as China with economic strength and presence in global markets, can thus be regarded as center. Products, brands, and cultural symbols mainly originate from the centers and are appropriated, customized, and localized in the periphery. Third, in the process of glocalization, consumers in the periphery are no longer passive and disempowered; instead they are agents in transforming and appropriating global brands, products, ideas, image, etc. (Eckhardt and Mahi 2012). Contrary to the homogenization perspective, where the periphery is viewed as a mere recipient of products, brands, and cultural symbols from the center, the glocalization perspective acknowledges the power of the periphery to adapt global offerings around its local criterion.

Methodologically, I find authors using multi-sited research methods, such as multi-sited ethnographies (Buroway 1998; Kjerdgaard and Askegaard 2006) in

addition to single-sited studies. While the nation-state continues to be the unit of analysis, the glocalization perspective empirically acknowledges multiple relationships between contexts and in-between flows, such as the local appropriation of global fashion, for example (Kjerdgaard and Askegaard 2006). Studies thus consider both the center and the periphery.

How does glocalization affect consumers? I next distil key answers from glocalization research regarding globalization's impact on consumer emancipation, identity, and the meaning of brands.

Consumer empowerment

Authors writing from the glocalization perspective tend to argue that globalization is empowering consumers in the periphery (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004; Sandicki et al. 2016; Grünhagen, Witte, and Pryor 2010). These studies feature two key sources of consumer empowerment. First, authors highlight that globalization is empowering people by putting them in control over adopting, rejecting, or transforming foreign market offerings (Vikas, Varman, and Belk 2015; Ho 2001). Flexibility in adjusting consumption choices, control over consumption processes, and involvement in consumption decisions are defining markers of consumer empowerment (Wathieu et al. 2002). Indian women, for example, use imported polyester fabrics rather than silk to sew traditional saris so that less affluent women can wear those as opposed to Western garments (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). This appropriation practice helps these women uphold local traditions that would otherwise have become unaffordable. Similarly, Egyptian consumers transformed Western-inspired fast-food outlets into sites for social gatherings and celebrations (Grünhagen et al. 2010).

Second, glocalization studies highlight that globalization increases the availability of consumption choices due to the presence of foreign products. This dynamic can lead to the rise of local competition, the emergence of local alternatives, and a rise of product quality overall (Kipnis et al. 2012; Vikas et al. 2015). Studies on market development illustrate a range of implications of glocalization for consumers in the developing countries (Eckhardt and Mahi 2012; Yazıcıoglu 2010). Market development implies the "transformation of markets into effective avenues for the economic empowerment of local businesses and consumers to purchase both foreign and domestic products" (DeBerry-Spence, Bonsu, and Arnould 2012, p. 94-95). When global brands are introduced in new markets they may create a new category that opens doors for local brands. Due to the coffee culture that Starbucks created in many developing countries, for example, many local coffee shops emerged, some of which positioned themselves against Starbucks and emphasized local culture (Arsel and Thompson 2004). This hybrid nature of emerging markets, positions global brands as enabling agents that empower the local economy rather than diminishing it (Ho 2001).

Although this stream of studies is, with few exceptions, not particularly concerned with consumer disempowerment, market developments in the periphery still have the potential to evoke changes that produce experiences of less autonomy and disempowerment. The rise of the tourism industry in Greece, for example, provided women with opportunities to enter the workforce, but many women adopted these new roles in addition to their traditional roles, leading to feelings of disempowerment and unhappiness (Costa 2005). Similarly, Viktas et al. (2015) show that although the transformation of the caste to the market system in India

empowered many via granting more access to consumer products, this resulted in wealth as the dominant marker of status and a form of hierarchical distinction.

Consumer identity

Glocalization studies portray consumer identities as hybrid, driven by both nationality and global citizenship ideals (Robertson 1992). Consumers are viewed as agents that are neither fully free from their ethnic or national values nor fully globally determined. These agents have the ability to not only choose global brands and products, but actively shape and transform their meanings, usages and materiality (Kravets and Sandikci 2014; Strizhakova, Coulter, and Price 2008). The emergence of Indi-pop as a new music genre, for example, is held to be a result of Indian audiences' pressure to indigenize global, MTV-style entertainment programs (Cullity 2002). Similarly, Mexican teenage girls relying on the localized American TV shows, oscillate between traditional-confirmatory and modern-rebellious personas (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen 2010).

These findings illustrate how glocalization research departs from the idea of consumer identity anchored in nationality and ethnicity, and adopts a more performative notion of the self, where consumers strategically choose and negotiate identity in the process of consumption (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen 2010; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006). As consumption in the periphery is selective and strategic, consumers need to acquire a certain degree of "deterritorialized cultural capital" (Üstüner and Holt 2010, p.37) to effectively adopt, adjust, or resist Western lifestyle myths. Young women in the Arab Gulf states, for example, have transformed the meaning of the traditional black gown from a sign of religious modesty to a "cloak of invisibility" for the carefully curated Western luxury brands they wear underneath

(Cherrier and Belk 2015; Sobh, Belk, and Gressel 2014). These sophisticated strategies enable younger consumers to reconcile traditional Arab culture and modern consumer culture, thus creating hybrid forms of identity.

Meaning of global brands

While glocalization scholars align with homogenization scholars in portraying global brands as globally available products that originate in developed countries, their research focus is on understanding how global brands are appropriated in different contexts (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). As stated above, glocalization scholars argue that consumers in the periphery "appropriate the meanings of global brands to their own ends, creatively adding new cultural associations, dropping incompatible ones, and transforming others to fit into local culture" (Thompson and Arsel 2004, p. 631). Thus, the usage and meanings surrounding global brands may change as a result of consumers' incorporating brands into their local traditions by modifying their meanings and usages (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). Ger and Belk (1996), for example, show that Turkish women use ovens not only for cooking but also for drying clothes and as a laundry tool, while Indian consumers use motor scooters as a family vehicle despite producers positioning them explicitly as feminine bikes.

Marketers also contribute to the local appropriation of global brands. In globally-adopted local TV series and shows such as *Big Brother Thailand* or the telenovela *Rebelde* in Mexico, for example, producers adjust key characters, story lines, and settings to better fit into the local cultures (Kjeldgaard and Nielsen 2010; Eckhardt and Mahi 2004). The consumption of such formats thus allows for adopting mainly Western values systems, but still connecting them to local cultures and norms (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006).

While glocalization can entail a notable transformation of brand meaning and usage patterns, this is not to say that glocalization always fully distorts and dismantles previous meanings. Cova, Pace, and Park's (2007) study on brand communities in different geographical locations, for example, show that while local communities are formed around localized meanings (e.g., the Warhammer game revolves around history and strategy in France and imaginary violence in USA), these communities also ascribe to globally shared attributes and rituals. Similarly, in a study on UK high-school proms, Tinson and Nuttal (2010) argue that students engage in a co-shaping practice that incorporates the US prom with the existing local celebration. While as a result of cultural hybridization, local practices are not entirely lost, the meanings of the adopted practices are not fully distorted either.

Perspective III: Deterritorialization

Authors adopting the deterritorialization perspective conceptualize globalization as global integration through the exchange of cultural values, norms, and economic models between countries, independent from their hierarchical relations (Faist 2000). This understanding builds on Appadurai's (1996) notion of global flows where globalization represents a combination of five flows: finance, ideas, people, media, and technology. Globalization is understood as a decentralized process of integration that is equally impactful for developing and developed countries.

The net result of globalization is a decentralized global marketplace where production becomes dispersed across the globe and consumer products become influenced by a wide range of cultural values beyond the ones symbolizing modernity and Western ways of life (Faist 2000). From a marketing point of view,

globalization is viewed as the multidirectional flow of consumer products and brands (e.g., food cuisines, music, fashion, news and entertainment programs) that result in the availability of cultural symbols originated in one consumer market in the local marketplaces of another (Firat 1997).

The theoretical assumptions underlying deterritorialization are twofold. First, this literature assumes that culture is detached from specific physical locations and disembedded from local social networks (Bardhi et al 2012; Cayla and Eckhardt 2008). CCT scholars use the term deterritorialization to refer to the disconnection between cultures and physical places (Faist 2000, p.13). In fact, culture is seen as multi-centered and dynamic and not necessarily bounded by national borders. For instance, world music is conceptualized as neither mainstream Western popular music nor as globally-available music, but rather a combination of "ethnic music," "folk music," and "foreign music" that is disassociated from a single place but makes connections to many (Connell and Gibson 2004). CCT studies also highlight the marketization of global consumer cultures. Yoga, as a globally-recognized practice, for example, incorporates elements of Eastern spirituality, community spirit, and Western ways of workout in a way that the practice is only fully understood if all cultural elements are taken into consideration (Askegaard and Eckhardt 2012; Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur 2016). The commercialization and the global spread of the Halloween ritual, similarly, has transformed this ancient Celtic festivity to a global consumption ritual that incorporates elements from a range of different customs and rituals (McKechnie and Tynan 2008).

In addition, CCT studies extend the assumption of deterritorialized consumer culture by arguing that marketization of cultures can be a way to manage, or at times, resist globalization. This way, CCT scholars challenge the celebratory approach in

deterritorialization perspective. Kjergaard and Askegaard (2007), for example, argue that global consumer culture provides opportunities to globally represent aspects of local culture in order to redefine the local and to resist globalization. "The request for local produce can be considered a search for a center that holds (Bauman 1990) in the middle of a turbulent period where many cultural categories are challenged (Kjergaard and Askegaard 2007, p.145)". The authors illustrate the case of place marketing (the island of Funen in Denmark) and consumers' attempts to redefine and globally represent their place through its gastronomic skills.

Second, the deterritorialization perspective abandons the idea of center-periphery relationships that is privileged in the homogenization and glocalization literature, and instead conceptualizes globalization as a set of multidirectional flows. While deterritorialization scholars acknowledge uneven economic and political influences of some countries over others, they do not engage with such power hierarchies or center-periphery distinctions. They see all nations as players in global marketplaces that can impact other nations and, in turn, are impacted by others.

Empirically, this stream of literature focuses on interconnections and global spaces. Global spaces are of particular interest as the power hierarchies are established between global cities, urban, or highly networked areas and areas with low accessibility, such as rural zones (cf. Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017). Gaviria and Emontspool (2015), for example, study cultural fluidity in global cities that allows individuals to engage in cultural experimentations and self-representations. Thompson and Troester (2002) highlight multidirectional cultural influences on the Western healthcare system, which is now drawing on both Western scientific methods and Eastern holistic healing practices.

Methodologically, deterritorialization studies use both single and multi-sited research designs to examine how global flows transform the local and how locals respond to global flows. The unit of analysis is a combination of different geographical units (i.e. countries, cities, regions, localities, etc.) as well as global spaces, such as global cities and global marketplaces (e.g., Sandikci and Ger 2010; Kamarulzaman et al. 2015). Deterritorialization studies have also studied practices and systems, such as national healthcare systems (e.g., Thompson and Troester 2002) and global consumer lifestyles (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012).

Consumer empowerment

Deterritorialization research is not directly concerned with the study of consumer (dis)empowerment. Therefore, I did not find studies that examine this issue explicitly. However, I found that deterritorialization scholars tend to assume globalization to be empowering for consumers when embracing a globalization ideology and identity position. That is, through deterritorialization, globalization opens spaces of freedom, where new elites can emerge. Bardhi et al. (2012), for example, document a new elite professional class of individuals who embrace a global nomadic lifestyle disembedded from their countries of origin. By embracing globalization ideology and developing a cosmopolitan habitus, consumers can use nomadic lifestyles as a path to upward social mobility and a source of empowerment (Thompson and Tambya 1999; Bardhi et al. 2012).

Scholars adopting this perspective argue that the rise of international travel and the growth of expatriate communities contribute to the formation of local multicultural marketplaces. This can be empowering for consumers that have embraced multiculturalism and global mobility, however, it can be disempowering

for the locally oriented and parochial consumers (Craig and Douglas 2006; Demangeot and Sankaran 2012; Holt 1997). Seo, Buchanan-Oliver and Cruz (2015), for example, show how the luxury brand market in New Zealand has been influenced by the East Asian expats who associate luxury brands with conspicuous consumption, while local New Zealanders' perception of luxury brands is more discreet and personal. As both perceptions coexist in the market, marketers now offer more variety with regards to their conspicuousness of their products. However, satisfying the demands of expat consumers can also spark frustrations and resistance among locals who feel unable to fully embrace globalization ideology (Luedicke 2011). The rising influence of the Turkish migrant community on Austria's housing, retail and status brand markets, for example, fosters experiences of disempowerment among indigenous Austrian villagers, who then respond with discrimination and exclusion (Luedicke 2015).

Deterritorialization research also shows how global flows of meaning contribute to the legitimization of stigmatized practices and the normalization of niche markets, which enhances consumers' experiences of empowerment. The emergence of global markets for Muslim women's veils, for example, empowered women by reframing a practice as fashionable and liberatory that has previously been stigmatized as a symbol of subordination and lack of agency (Sandikci and Ger 2010, see also Ger 2013). Similarly, the global consumption of Bollywood movies has contributed to the creation of transnational Sikh communities that remind foreign-born young Sikhs of Sikh rituals (Takhar, Maclaren, and Stevens 2012) and thus empower members of such marginalized groups. Transnational social media spaces such as *TripAdvisor* and *Yelp* also contribute to empowering members of minority groups by providing information on halal food, for example

(Kamarulzaman et al. 2015). Mediated by such global flows of meanings and technologies, transnational communities enhance the experience of emancipation by connecting individuals to a global community rather than to one nation (Strizhakova et al. 2008).

In summary, prior studies have acknowledged that deterritorialization can be a source of consumer empowerment, while at the same time can provoke resistance. Kjergaard and Askegaard's (2007) study on place marketing of the island of Funen in Denmark, for example, highlights that deterritorialization of consumer culture can empower local economies through enhanced tourism and higher representation of local cultures in global marketplaces. However, marketing the local can be viewed as the individual's resistance against globalization. Luedicke's (2015) study on the rise of migrants' communities and the growing multiculturalism in Austria, similarly, highlights locals' resistance to reclaim their status hierarchies.

Consumer identity

The deterritorialization perspective also features deterritorialized consumer identities that are not anchored to particular national or local territories. Global flows have created opportunities for imagining communalities between individuals who do not share the same nationality, language, ethnicity, and country of residence, but lifestyles, values or consumption interests (Appadurai 1990). In this view, consumers form their identity through a multitude of connections with different local and global cultures and values that go beyond national and ethnic identifications (Hannerz 1990a; Burgh-Woodman 2014). Such multi-centered forms of consumer identity are referred to as cosmopolitanism, i.e. an "intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz 1990a, p. 239). Through the

consumption of products and brands from countries other than home, consumers enhance their sense of being cosmopolitan, for example, in the case of mobile consumers engaging in global nomadism (Bardhi et al 2012). People tend to become more cosmopolitan when they engage with a greater variety of foreign products and cultural symbols (Cannon and Yaprak 2002), which can be seen as a form of virtual travel (Emontspool and Georgi 2016).

However, cosmopolitanism is also a position of instability and tension (Hannerz 1990a; Cannon and Yaprak 2002; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015). Sustaining a cosmopolitan consumer identity requires making conscious, selective, and strategic consumption choices to maintain connections to a multitude of cultures and values. Research on expatriates shows that consumers embrace cosmopolitan ideals of nomadic mobility and cultural adaptability, while seeking emotional ties to home and communal affiliation associated with familiar goods and places, stability, and continuity (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).

Meaning of global brands

Deterritorialization scholars frame global brands as representations of a deterritorialized, global ideology that are targeted to global consumer segments. In this view, brands are multicultural collages, detached from specific territories (specifically nation-states), providing cultural proximity by focusing on similarities and avoiding symbolic contradictions (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008). Regional brands are good examples of brands that provide a sense of closeness by bringing together different cultures and weakening the ties with particular locations. Asian regional brands such as Tiger Beer, for example, symbolize the idea of urban and modern Asian identity by promoting similarities between different Asian cultures (Cayla and

Eckhardt 2008). The incorporation of Eastern values of spirituality and body care into the Western healthcare system of medical precision has given rise to what Thompson and Troester (2002) refer to as *cosmopolitan medicine* that "flexibly incorporates ideas and practices from Western and Eastern approaches" (p. 566). Deterritorialized global brands thus provide new ways of building cross-cultural connections and forming transnational communities across geographical boundaries. They can serve as passports to global citizenship by creating imagined global identities that like-minded individuals share across the globe (Strizhakova et al. 2008).

Discussion

This article contributes to globalization research in marketing through a narrative synthesis of thirty years of interpretive research in this domain. I have outlined three distinct perspectives on globalization in interpretive consumer research and synthesized the key insights regarding the impact of globalization on consumer empowerment, consumer identity, and the meaning of global brands from each perspective. I have also highlighted different ways that interpretive studies extend or challenge underlying assumptions from each theoretical perspective. I conclude by discussing specific contributions made to the globalization literature and outline paths for further research.

My inquiry shows how interpretive studies have conceptualized globalization in three distinct ways, i.e. homogenization, glocalization, and deterritorialization. Each approach results from different underlying notions of culture, identity, and the direction of influence between local cultures. By tracing these assumptions, I

problematize the taken-for-granted conceptualization of central notions, such as identity and culture as bounded to territory and nationality under the first two perspectives. I further highlight that methodologically, research has been dominated by an ethnocentric approach and methodological nationalism in the first two perspectives. My inquiry suggests that scholars need to be aware of the theoretical perspective of globalization that underlies their study as it shapes the ontology and the phenomenon of study. Below, I summarize contributions from each identified perspective and illustrate directions for future studies.

The homogenization perspective tends to define globalization as processes of cultural and economic alignment, where globally available goods, media, ideas and institutions overrun distinct, local cultures (cf. Levitt 1983; Ritzer 1993). CCT studies adopting the homogenization narrative provide the following contributions to this stream of work: First, in contradiction to the prediction of homogenization perspective, CCT scholars argue that homogenization forces do not result in a unified and homogenized globalization. While authors acknowledge the center-periphery and the hierarchical relations between nations that structure globalization, they argue that globalization brings together diverse and often contradicting cultures and norms. Studies on migration, for example, show that globalization brings together conflicting ideological and political ideas that continue to co-exist in the life of migrants and are manifested in different situations (Jafari and Goulding 2008; Oswald 1999). Consumer acculturation studies illustrate a range of identities and argue that cultural assimilation is only one possible outcome (Askegaard et al. 2005). Other identity outcomes, such as hybrid identities and rejection of host culture while remaining anchored to home culture, are identified by this stream of literature that

challenges the homogenization prediction of this perspective (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983).

Second, CCT studies also challenge the conceptualization of culture as homogenized, pure, and bounded by national borders. Scholars argue that consumer culture should be understood as heterogeneous and co-shaped by homogenization forces as well as local and colonial histories. Touzani, Hirschman, and Smaoui's (2015) study on post-colonial consumer culture in Tunisia, for example, show the hybrid consumer culture resulted from period of colonization by Britain and France and ongoing resistance from Tunisian consumers. Similar patterns of cultural hybridity and consumer resistance are reported in other consumer contexts, such as Turkey and India (Izbek-Bilgin 2012; Varman and Belk 2009).

Third, prior CCT studies challenge the underlying assumption of consumers' lack of agency in periphery countries. While prior studies acknowledge cases where homogenization force result in imposing conflicting ways of life, declining consumers' control over their consumption choices, and increasing global and local inequalities in consumers' purchasing power (e.g., Böhm and Brei 2008; Varman and Belk 2008; Varman and Belk 2009), prior literature also argue that consumers in the periphery can exercise their agency to accept or reject the imposed consumer culture. Studies on consumer movements and consumer boycott (Izberk-Bilgin 2012) highlight these dynamics. Consumers who exercise their power to resist the imposed consumer culture are shown to often use ethnic values, national identity, and religious norms to persuade other consumers to join their movements (Gao 2012).

Fourth, due to the binary focus on East-West distinctions in homogenization perspective, this literature has largely ignored other drivers of homogenization, such as regional collaborations. Emerging social, economic, or political interactions

among neighboring countries in Asia or Africa, for example, are shown to result in regional form of homogenization (Enright 2000), which are predominantly overlooked in prior studies on cultural homogenization.

CCT studies approaching globalization from glocalization perspective view globalization as a set of processes through which local cultures and forces of globalization interpenetrate and co-construct each other (Robertson 1995). Center-periphery relations continue to be important in this stream of studies (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006), however, they are organized along developed-developing nations, or city-suburbia distinctions, rather than an East-West axis. Prior CCT studies contribute to this perspective on globalization in different ways.

First, CCT studies extend glocalization perspective by illustrating the characteristics of global consumer culture. Kjeldgaard and Askegaard (2006), for example, argue that "global youth culture is an institutionalized facet of the market, emerging predominantly from Western cultural currents and diffusing globally… the styles characteristic of youth culture spread globally, instigating the development of local versions of youth culture through appropriation and creolization (p.233)". In addition, the role of locality is emphasized in shaping consumer cultures: "the process of appropriation and re-contextualization of mediated imagery across cultures often leads to metamorphoses of meanings that make these meanings both unpredictable and contradictory in relation to their origin of broadcasting (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006, p.234)". Moreover, CCT studies argue that the localization of globally available products and services result in the emergence of new practices and new meanings. Turkish Rock music, for example, has developed as a new genre that is different from traditional Turkish music and its English roots (Yazıcıoglu 2010).

Second, CCT studies extend glocalization perspective by arguing and showing that localization of consumer culture result in emergence of new markets. Kravets and Sandikci (2014), for example, illustrate the formation of middle class consumer segment in developing countries as a result of social and economic reforms towards market-based economies (see also Vikas et al. 2015). The emerging middle class consumer segments in the periphery countries are shown to actively participate in shaping and transforming products' meanings, usages and materiality to be part of an imaginary global middle class consumer segment. In the Gulf countries, for example, young women have transformed the meaning of some consumer products from symbols of modesty and religiosity to signs of fashion and modernity to better align with the western luxury products they use (Cherrier and Belk 2015; Sobh, Belk, and Gressel 2014). These strategies enable these younger consumers to reconcile traditional Arab culture and modern consumer culture, thus creating forms of hybrid identity.

Third, with regards to consumer empowerment, I argue that CCT scholars who approach globalization from glocalization perspective take a more celebratory approach on consumer's experience of empowerment than those approaching globalization from homogenization or deterritorialization perspective. Prior glocalizaiton studies argue that globalization is empowering and liberatory for consumers in the periphery due to the implementation of market logic that emancipates consumers from traditional caste based hierarchies (Vikas et al. 2015). In addition, studies argue that localization of consumer culture in the periphery countries result in better consumer access to global brands that used to be only possible for rich and well-travelled consumers (Eckhardt and Mahi 2004, 2012). Increased competition in local markets that, in turn, result in increased product

quality, lower prices, and improved customer service are also identified as factors contributing to consumers' experience of empowerment (Grünhagen et al. 2010). Overall, this stream of studies highlight that modernization forces leads to stronger local economies and empowers individuals as consumers to express their voices through accepting, rejecting, or modifying cultural elements from both local and global consumer cultures. However, little is done to capture challenges and complications of glocalization forces on consumer's experience of disempowerment. Vikas et al. (2015), for example, show that transformation of caste-based hierarchical system to a market-based system in India has indeed empowered many from lower caste groups via granting more access to consumer products, however, the new market-based system imposes new hierarchies based on consumption and status products that poses new challenges for individuals to adopt. More studies are needed to examine challenges and difficulties that consumers experience in emerging, developing markets due to changes in underlying social and economic structures.

Fourth, as glocalization dynamics are constantly changing further research is also needed to understand the glocalization of brands and consumption styles originating in developing nations (as opposed to those originating in developed counties and localized in the periphery). Thus far, research has identified some patterns of Easternization of Western consumer culture via cases of mainstream adoption of yoga (Askegaard and Eckhardt 2012) and impacts of Eastern healthcare practices on Western healthcare systems (Thompson and Troester 2002), but has not yet explored new and emerging dynamics such as the global normalization of formerly stigmatized products (see Sandici and Ger (2010) for an exception). The increasing adoption of the hijab, as a symbol of consumer culture in Islamic

countries, in mainstream advertisements, such as the recent cases of H&M and Nike, for examples, warrant further research and, possibly, require reconsidering some assumptions of glocalization theory.

Authors approaching globalization from deterritorialization perspective tend to view globalization as processes of global integration through exchanges of cultural values, independent from hierarchical relations (Appadurai 1999). The focus of these studies is on regional and global spaces such as global cities (e.g., Gaviria and Emontspool 2015), global marketplaces (e.g., Sandikci and Ger 2010) and global consumer lifestyles (e.g. Bardhi et al. 2012). When studying consumer behavior, this stream of studies tends to define culture as fragmented, multi-centered and independent from geographical borders (Firat 1997, p.78), and view identity as transnational and cosmopolitan (Bardhi et al 2012). Prior CCT studies contribute to this understanding of globalization in different ways.

First, CCT studies extend the assumption of deterritorialized and multicentered global culture by illustrating the ways that global consumer culture is mediated via products and brands. Globally recognized practices, such as yoga (Askegaard and Eckhardt 2012; Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur 2016) and global or regional brands, such as Asian brand of Tiger Beer studies by Cayla and Eckhardt (2008), are examples of consumer practices and consumer products that incorporate elements from different cultures and offer a medium to engage and relate.

Second, with regards to consumer identity, prior CCT studies argue that deterritorialization result in new forms of consumer subjectivities. In their study of veiling practices among Turkish women, Sandikci and Ger (2010) argue that the legitimization of veiling as a fashionable practice is a result of the growing global middle class, educated, urban, religious women who seek to be modern. The authors

identify both local and global influences contribute to formation of such transnational communities. For example, global Islam as a growing global ideology, global Islamic fashion industries, and global financial support for religious individuals such as students and Islamic businesses impacts on formation and legitimization of such global community of consumers. Therefore, while an individual may reside in Turkey, for example, she sees herself as part of an imagined, global community of modern Muslim women. This also can be understood as a subject position of 'citizen-consumer' (Johnston 2008) in the context of global ideoscape (Appadurai1996), where ideas flow in multiple directions. In this situation, individuals can merge their civic and citizenship duty with their identity of being a consumer. As more and new opportunities are available for individuals to interact and share ideas, specially through digital platforms, more research is needed to examine the impact of communication technologies in forming and maintaining global consumer subjectivities.

In addition, studies on global nomads (Bardhi et al. 2012) emphasize on deterritorialized and global consumer identities tied to cosmopolitan ideology. Global nomad consumers are shown to detach their sense of self from any particular country and instead identify as a global citizen. This detached identity is facilitated via global brands and liquid relation to material possessions that enhance flexibility (Bardhi et al. 2012). Burgh-Woodman (2014), similarly, argues that globalization is an individual experience through which the boundaries between self and other are dissolved. She challenges the idea of nation-state as the sources of identity and argues that the Self/Other dichotomy is problematic in the era of deterritorialization (this dichotomy is a central part of homogenization and glocalization perspectives).

Third, with regards to consumer empowerment, prior CCT studies provide two arguments, one to extend the underlying assumption of deterritorialization perspective on enhanced consumers' feeling of empowerment as a result of globalization, and two to challenge the celebratory nature of the perspective and argue for cases of consumer disempowerment. Some authors argue that the emergence of transnational communities of consumers that cross geographical borders can be a source of consumer empowerment. Studies on transnational communities that are facilitated by regional brands (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008), global social media platforms (Kamarulzaman et al. 2015), and global consumer practices (Sandikci and Ger 2010) provide examples of consumers' experience of empowerment when geographical borders become less relevant in consumers' lives and ideas and practices easily cross borders.

On the other hand, other CCT scholars challenge the celebratory nature of deterritorialization perspective by arguing and showing consumer resistance practices and the implications on their everyday lives. Luedicke (2015), for example, highlight the resistance from local villagers in Austria in response to the growing population of immigrants and their rising influence on Austria's housing, retail and status brand markets. Indigenous consumers seek preserving their ethnic values and national identity and respond with discrimination and exclusion against immigrants who strive to acculturate in their culture. Other forms of resistance and attempts on preserving local values are reported by Kjergaard and Askegaard (2007) in their study on place branding (the island of Funen in Denmark). The authors argue that the conditions of deterritorialization makes social actors more flexible about localities and their source of identity and belonging (p.139). Place branding in global

marketplace is argued as an attempt to resist globalization and preserve local ethnic values.

My review shows that more research is needed to examine challenges that consumers face in the condition of global deterritorialization. Given the current political and cultural climate, coping with a deterritorialized world seems to become increasingly challenging for many consumers. Further research has yet to explore how consumers respond when facing global rather than local competition for essential resources such as urban housing, when facing challenges of cosmopolitanism as a position of instability and transition (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), or when coping with the intricacies of mobile lifestyles. In addition, as the global stream of goods and ideologies is growing, it also seems important to further explore the roles that technological and cultural innovations, such as deterritorialized online networks, play in consumers' experience of (dis-) empowerment. Such platforms have the potential to globally distribute fake news and fundamentalist ideologies that threaten progressive political conversations and cause resistance against foreign cultures and minority groups. However, they may also have the potential to empower consumers by rapidly disseminating information, providing channels for conversation, coordinating global brand boycotts, and expanding identity construction resources.

In summary, my inquiry contributes to the literature on global consumer behavior by synthesizing a range of studies from 11 consumer behavior and marketing journals, contrasting their theoretical foundations and implications for consumer behavior, and problematizing their assumptions. My inquiry provides a contextually and historically grounded guide on different meanings that global brands can take (e.g., tool for political and economic oppression; passport of global

citizenship, platform for international communities), different consumer identity positions in response to the condition of globalization, and different drivers on consumer's experience of (dis)empowerment. I hope that my inquiry proves useful for this important, yet complex, body of academic literature. I also hope it holds value for students of globalization who are looking for inspiration for further research.

Paper 2

Living Across the Borders: Towards an Understanding of Transnational Consumer Lifestyle

Abstract

In a world of increasing global mobilities, I investigate the nature of consumption when individuals inhabit multiple countries at the same time. This form of global mobility, known as transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1999), has received little attention in prior consumer behavior studies, despite the growing opportunities and demand for multi-cohabitations in the contemporary global economy (Sheller and Urry 2006). Transnationalism describes the lifestyle of a growing number of migrants, dual-career professionals, and long-distance families whose lives are expanded across borders. In this study, I draw from 20 semi-structured interviews with transnational consumers and provide several contributions to the existing discussions on mobility-driven consumer lifestyles. First, the findings reveal that transnationals form distinct relationships with places. Using semiotics square (Greimas 1987), four meanings of place have emerged: work, home, non-home, and non-work, and each is associated with specific meanings, relationships, and consumption practices. Second, I show that consumer acculturation in transnationalism is selective, strategic, and domain specific as subjects may fully integrate in one domain and fully segregate in others. My informants' lack of interest in learning and imitating (Peñaloza 1994) the consumer culture in their permanent place of residence is not due to their lack of capital to integrate, ideological conflict, or because of an inhospitable host country as Üstüner and Holt (2007) have argued. They, instead, strategically align their daily practices to capitalize on their access with multiple consumer cultures (Ong 1999) and minimize integration efforts. Third, my findings on transnational consumer acculturation reveals the fifth type of consumer identity in

transnationalism: the position of stranger (Simmel 1983). This finding extends Askegaard et al.'s (2005) four identity position in mobility: hyperculture, integration, assimilation, and pendulism. Fourth, I challenge the territorial and singular notion of home that is mainly linked with nation-state, country of birth, ethnic identity, and collective religious or ideological values (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton 1981) and argue for a networked, fragmented, and multicentered home in transnationalism. Fifth, I introduce the notion of transnational consumption that is characterized via three dimensions: fragmented and localized, embedded in transnational networks of relationships, and complementary. Sixth, my findings on transnational consumption extend our understanding of postmodern consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) by identifying the nature of fragmentation in transnationalism and highlighting the central role of locality and consumer's agency in this fragmentation. In summary, my study on transnational consumer lifestyle advances our understanding of consumer acculturation styles, home and the meanings attached to it, consumption in mobility, and postmodern consumption.

Introduction

Global mobilities represent the lifestyle of a growing number of people as many pursue economic, political, and cultural interests that require presence in multiple locations (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Sheller and Urry 2006; Urry 2007; Rhodes 2002; Collings, Scullion, and Morley 2007; Brookfield 2012). Consumer research has examined different implications of mobility-driven lifestyles on consumers' relations to

possessions and material objects (e.g., Mehta and Belk 1991; Bardhi et al. 2012), identity positions (e.g., Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2995; Oswald 1999; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007), and cultural experimentations (e.g., Gaviria and Emontspool 2015; Bardhi, Ostberg, and Bengtsson 2010). However, little is done to examine the nature of consumption in the condition of multi-cohabitations and multi-embeddedness in multiple localities. In this study, I examine the context transnationalism to identify the nature of consumption when consumers inhabit multiple countries simultaneously.

Transnational lifestyle has become common place and a requirement in many professions (Portes et al. 1999; Rhodes 2002; Lau et al. 2012) as a result of the rise of the class of bi-national professionals, the growth of the demand for transnational occupations that need regular mobilities, and the spread of families across borders. A transnational perspective challenge the elitist approach on global mobility that limit mobilities to elite professionals and those from higher social class backgrounds (Bauman 2000). Instead transnational perspective recognizes global mobilities as a requirement for a growing number of individuals in the contemporary conditions of globalization (Sheller and Urry 2006). Transnational lifestyle demands cohabitation in multiple societies and maintenance of access to multiple consumer cultures (Kivisto 2001; Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Faist 1998, p. 216). Ong (1999) argues that transnationalism is a form of flexible citizenship where there is not one but many competing cultural values that one needs to bridge simultaneously.

In this research, I draw from the literature on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Kivisto 2001) where individuals "develop and maintain multiple relations –

familial, economic, social, and organizational – that span borders" (Glick Schiller et al. 1999, p.1). I use the theory of transnationalism to theorize my context of study, to unpack the fragmentation in transnationalism, and to highlight multi-cohabitations and the role of different institutions across borders in maintaining cohabitations (e.g., family, professional networks, and commercial friends).

Transnational consumers serve as a unique study context as they are embedded in multiple societies simultaneously via, for example, maintaining work affiliations in multiple countries or having members of the family living apart with frequent visits serve as a unique study context. This multi-embeddedness result in constant changes in social and cultural reference points. Transnational consumers' lasting embeddedness in multiple societies differentiates transnationalism from nomadism, and their continued attachment and involvement with multiple countries, including the country of origin, distinguishes transnationalism from migration (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). In this study, I examine 1) acculturation styles in transnationalism, 2) the meanings and practices that transnational consumers attach to places, and 3) their consumption patterns.

Prior research on consumer mobility has explored consumers' behaviors and their relations with places and different sociocultural values using acculturation framework (Berry 1997; Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Luedicke 2015; Üstüner and Holt 2007). The acculturation literature has explored consumers' willingness and ability to integrate into the consumer culture of the host country when they relocate from their country of origin to a new country. Peñaloza (1994, p.42) argues that consumer acculturation is structured through the process of *translation* when newcomers "render intelligible signs inscribed in the new cultural code by first resituating them within the

previous code with which they were familiar and then by returning their equivalent to the terms of the new code". Peñaloza argues that through translation practices, consumers eventually *adapt* to the new consumer culture.

The insights from consumer acculturation studies, however, have remained largely anchored within the boundaries of the host society. Limited attention is paid at consumption practices and relations that are formed and maintained across borders. In other words, the impacts of consumption practices and acculturation attempts in one consumer society on integration (or lack of it) in another have received limited attention. Prior research mainly investigates the impact of cross-border connections in the forms of nostalgic consumptions or occasional visits to home country (e.g., Mehta and Belk 1999). However, in the conditions of multi-cohabitations, aspects of consumers' lives take place across multiple countries (for example when family life is anchored in one country and professional life in another). Therefore, the duality of home-host, where home and host are viewed as separate and independent, does not capture the simultaneous embeddedness in multiple consumer cultures and the impacts of consumptions made in one country on consumption practices and acculturation attempts made in another. In addition, multi-embeddedness can take place across more than two countries, in which case the home-host duality with the emphasis on the host country (Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 1999; Akegaard et al. 2005), cannot capture consumer cohabitation and interconnectedness between consumption practices made across borders. In this study, I aim at focusing at this gap via studying transnational consumers, whose lives are spread across countries. Drawing on theories of transnationalism (Glick

Schiller et al. 1999; Kivisto 2001; Faist 2000; Roudometof 2005), I study consumption practices and relations that are simultaneously formed and maintained across borders.

The purpose of this research is to revisit consumer acculturation in a context where consumers simultaneously inhabit multiple countries. I show that transnational consumers follow a different acculturation style that can be understood as selective, strategic, and domain specific as they might fully assimilate in one domain and fully segregate from others. As transnationals have continuous and simultaneous access and involvement with multiple societies, they strategically capitalize on their access and minimize acculturation efforts in multiple locations (cf., Üstüner and Holt 2007). I also argue that the strategic and domain-specific acculturation style result in the emergence of a different identity position in transnationalism: the position of stranger (Simmel 1983). Similar to Simmel's (1983) conceptualization of stranger, transnational consumers do not perform neither as fully-fledged members of the society, nor as fully deterritorialized (Bardhi et al. 2012). They often assimilate to particular social groups within each society (e.g., professional networks) and segregate from the rest. This finding extends Askegaard et al.'s (2005) argument on four types of consumer identity in mobility: hyperculture (when consumers hyper-assimilate to the consumer culture in the host society while abandoning their ethnic identity), assimilation to the host society, integration (maintaining best of the both worlds), and pendulism (oscillation between cultures). The position of stranger in transnationalism emphasizes on consumer's agency in purposefully identifying with aspects of consumer culture in different societies. This is, of course, not without challenges as transnational consumers face limitations (e.g., financial and time constraints) in managing cross-border connections.

In addition, I explore the relations that transnational consumers form with localities. Prior studies on consumer mobility have looked at consumer relationships with localities using the duality of home-host, where home often represents the country of origin that is left behind and serves as a source of nostalgia and emotional attachment while host represents the new society with different, often contradicting, social, cultural, and ideological values (Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 1999; Jafari and Goulding 2008). In this study, I explore the relations that my transnational informants form with multiple societies beyond home-host duality. Using a semiotics square to analyze the meanings of homes, I examine the meanings associated with different places and the consumption practices attached to them. Four meanings of place have emerged: home, work, non-home, and non-work. These meanings highlight the fragmentation in transnational lifestyles (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Firat and Venkatesh 1995), where the individual's identity is multi-centered, instead of unified and centered. The combination of different attachments and embeddedness provides transnationals with a sense of completeness.

Finally, I identify a new form of consumption in transnationalism, characterized by three dimensions: localized, embedded in networks of relationships, and complementary. Transnational consumption is fragmented and shaped by the meaning of locality. My informants strategically plan their consumption across places, as each place represents certain meanings, attachments, and consumption goals. Consumption in transnationalism is also embedded in networks of relationships that spread across borders, among which I show that commercial friendship (Price and Arnould 1999) maintains consumption across borders. Finally, transnational consumption is

complementary, where consumption in different localities substitutes and complements consumption in others.

These findings also contribute to our understanding of postmodern consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Consumer transnationalism represents fragmented consumer lives through simultaneous cohabitations in multiple places. I show that this result in fragmentation in one's identity, where each place represents an aspect of one's sense of self (e.g., professional anchoring, emotional and interpersonal attachments). The three dimensions of transnational consumption identify the nature of postmodern consumption in transnationalism. These three dimensions highlight the central role of locality in postmodern consumption as well as consumer's agency in purposefully aligning consumption practices across borders.

Overall, this study contributes to three domains of consumer behavior studies: *consumer acculturation, consumer mobility,* and *postmodern consumption*. Introducing transnational consumer lifestyles, unpacking consumer acculturation patterns in transnationalism, and identifying dimensions of transnational consumption are key contributions of this study. Despite the growing opportunities and demand for multi-cohabitations in the contemporary global economy, transnationalism has received little attention in consumer behavior studies (see Peñaloza and Arroyo 2010 for an example of a study on transnational family arrangements). I hope that this study contributes to the existing conversations on mobility and consumer behavior by shedding light on a growing type of consumer lifestyle.

The following is a brief discussion on changes in patterns of global mobilities over the past few decades. Next, I provide an overview of prior studies on mobility-

driven consumer lifestyles and implications on consumers' lives in the consumer behavior literature.

A Brief History of Global Mobilities

Mobilities have been a central element in global social transformations and a manifestation of globalization over the years. To illustrate changes in global mobilities, I borrow Sheller and Urry's (2006) concept of *mobility paradigms*, which refers to social, economic, and political transformations that have led to different patterns of global mobilities over the centuries. Looking back over the past few decades of research, transformations have occurred in patterns of mobilities, streams of research, and methods of investigations on global human mobilities (see Faulconbridge and Hui (2016) for a review on the past decade of mobility research). These different paradigms are contextualized in the historical times they have developed:

The first paradigm that is broadly used is *migration*, which primarily captures the state of global mobilities in the industrial era (Faulconbridge and Hui 2016). Migration studies mainly illustrate the particular economic hierarchies and political arrangements between the more developed and the less developed nations during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Hatton and Williamson (1998) refer to this period as the age of "mass migration", where migrants are mainly seen to be motivated by income maximization and risk diversification interests. Inspired by economic theories, migration was viewed as a win-win scenario, where the wage differences

between the more developed and the less developed countries will decline over time, ultimately leading towards an economic equilibrium (De Haas 2012).

The migration paradigm captures a wide range of mobility types, often in the form of the unidirectional and permanent relocation that may pertain to upward or downward social mobility (Sheller and Urry 2006). Relocations can be a source of power and status, for example in the case of Romanian women in Italy (Chytkova 2011), or can be coerced and unwanted, which generates sufferings and emotional distress, for example in the case of early economic migrants from China to Europe and Canada (Gogia 2006).

Castles (2010) argues that most migration research is biased towards the receiving countries. This bias is partly due to the heritage of colonial narratives, as Bakewell (2007) argues in his study on African laborers in Europe; and partly due to the impact of research institutions that were mainly located in the US as migration studies started to take shape. It is, therefore, not surprising that migration studies were mostly focused on the issues of assimilation and national sovereignty and largely ignored the perspective of the sending and the transit societies as well as that of the migrants (Sheller and Urry 2006).

In consumer behavior literature, migration research started to shape in 1980s and continue to be the primary paradigm of inquiry in 1990s. This stream of literature mainly examines consumers' behaviors when they relocate from their country of origin to a new country with a different, and at time contradictory, consumer culture (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983; Peñaloza 1989, 1994). Prior studies are primarily focused on the study of consumers' acculturation processes and outcomes in the host culture. As

Sheller and Urry (2006) argue, this line of inquiry has paid limited attention on the impact of migration on consumers in the sending countries, for example, when migrants leave families behind and relocate for work purposes.

With fundamental changes in the twenty-first century, including the rise of the global economy, digitalization, and fast-growing globalization, a new paradigm of mobility has started to form (Bauman 2000; Urry 2007). The new paradigm was introduced to capture social transformations in the twenty-first century and to challenge the migration approach on mobility. Bauman's (2000) theory of liquid modernity has redirected the research focus from nation-state sovereignty, national identity, and cultural assimilation to a view of the modern world where people, entities, information, and objects are part of a system of movement. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990), similarly argues that globalization is a decentralized process of integration through a combination of five global flows: Ethnoscape, Finanscape, Ideoscape, Mediascape, and Technoscape. His flow perspective highlights global and cross-border movements of people as an outcome, as well as a driver, of the growing globalization in the twenty-first century.

The second paradigm points at the era of fluidity and openness, where globalization and sociocultural transformations have made it possible for people to think beyond geographical borders, national identity, and ethnic cultures and cross them frequently (Castles 2010). In the year of 2016, for example, over 247 million people live permanently outside their countries of birth (World Bank 2016). This number shows a 41% increase in migration compared to the same number in 2000. Such movements

capture a broad scope of motivations including business, study, marriage, lifestyle, and professional advancement.

The functionality of this globalized system of movement depends on a complex network of immobile infrastructure such as global banking, satellite and television, airports and transient places, and mobile phones (Sheller and Urry 2006; Sassen 2002). Mobilities are organized through certain nodes such as airports, leisure complexes, and cultural hubs. Sassen (2012), for example, argues that global cities provide global spaces and cultural fluidity that facilitates mobilities and enhance human connections. The author argues that the cultural fluidity of big cities performs as an empowering platform by giving individuals space to connect and be mobile (see also Gaviria and Emontspool 2015). The emergence of global and networked cities is accompanied with the development of a new elite of mobile professionals who center their identities on mobility.

The narrative used in the second paradigm has shifted from migration to *mobilities*. Castles (2010) argues that this is partly due to the political discourses on the migration-mobility debate. His observations on the primary studies as well as the social transformations in the twenty-first century points at the distinctions made between the mobility of professionals or skilled workers, as a badge of open modern society, and the mobility of unwanted migrants and lower-skilled individuals. "International recruitment of highly skilled personnel was considered valuable, while lower-skilled migrant workers were seen as out-of-place in shiny new post-industrial economies (p.1567)". This classification views mobility as an engine for progress and migration as a problem that needs to be fixed. Addressing the root causes of migration in the sending countries

and further protecting national borders in order to limit migration, have become national narratives, and at times political trademarks, in many developed countries (Bakewell 2007). The mobilities of professionals and skilled workers, on the other hand, are celebrated as a sign of progress and modernity.

A further point is relevant here: despite the wider array of possible mobilities in the twenty-first century, scholars argue that the right to be mobile is more class-specific and selective than ever (Castles 2010). Bauman (2000) points that national border restrictions and international corporations' control on mobilities have made global mobilities associated with elites, professionals, and those from higher social class backgrounds. Moreover, critiques from feminist theories point at the "romantic reading" of nomadism that has resulted in privileging bourgeois masculine mobility and cosmopolitanism (e.g., Kaplan 2006). This perspective on human mobilities is essentially different from that of migration that views mobility as a survival strategy and a search for a better and safer life.

In consumer behavior literature, the mobility paradigm is used to examine consumers' experience of global mobility and nomadic lifestyle (Bardhi et al. 2012; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015). This literature, inspired by Bauman's (2000) theory of liquid modernity, examines deterritorialization of consumers lives, decentering of their identities, and the ways they manage fragmentations of their lives through consumption.

Sheller and Urry's (2006) study on the future of mobilities in the twenty-first century points at further changes in human mobilities and the need for a third paradigm. The authors highlight the central role of "machines" that enable individuals to be virtually and physically mobile through time and space. The increasing spread of

communication and transportation machines facilitates "co-presence" with key others, such as family members, friends, and colleagues. Authors argue that "persons" will come to existence when individuals inhabit multiple nodes in multiple machines. We cannot live without such systems. Our daily lives are organized in time-space patterns and scheduled through devices that facilitate instant communication and fast travel. Mobility, thus, becomes more accessible and commonplace, and not only available for elite professionals.

Sheller and Urry (2006) argue that the future changes in mobility do not simply highlight the novelties in future travels and mobility-based lifestyles, but also that neither the migration paradigm with territorial emphasis on the nation-state and national sovereignty, nor the deterritorialized and decentered view on the world system, captures the full picture of mobilities in the twenty-first century. Glick Schiller et al. (1999), highlighting the same debate on the future of mobilities, propose a different approach to study mobility via redefining concepts and notions such as society and identity. The authors' transnational emphasis on society introduced a different approach on mobility and mobile lifestyles, where individuals are neither seen as bounded in national borders nor as decentered and nation-less, but instead as part of a transnational social field that span across geographical borders.

The transnational paradigm on mobilities, however close to frequent travels and nomadism, but stays away from the romantic view of cosmopolitanism and the elitist approach to mobilities (Sheller and Urry 2006). Mobilities are seen as a necessity and commonplace in many professions (e.g., education, management, finance, retail, healthcare etc.) and not only limited to those who are affluent or from high social class

backgrounds (see World Bank report 2016). Clusters and part-societies are shaped when mobile individuals form "personalized networks" that span geographical borders (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003; Faist 2000). The mobility systems and associated infrastructures facilitate co-presence when individuals inhabit different geographical locations. Clusters and networks are formed with family members who live apart, friends who inhabit different geographical locations, or coworkers who work for the same corporation but in different geographical locations (Larsen et al. 2008).

As human mobilities become more accessible and commonplace, so do the mobilities of objects and materials that flow from one place to the other. Individuals are, thus, less concerned with bringing a piece of their home country as a memory or a source of comfort when they can access similar brands and products in destination countries.

In this study, I draw from concepts presented by Sheller and Urry (2006), Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2003), Faist (2000), and Glick Schiller et al. (1999) to examine the nature of consumption in transnationalism. In the following section, a review of mobilities in consumer behavior literature is presented. Specifically, two ways in which consumer behavior literature has discussed consumers' experience of global mobilities are discussed: linear, permanent relocations – migration – and non-linear, frequent moves –global nomadism.

Mobilities in Consumer Behavior Studies

Increasing global mobility impacts on consumers' ways of life and their relations with consumer products, material objects, and different consumer cultures. These

implications will now be discussed under linear, permanent relocation/migration and non-linear, frequent mobilities such as global nomadism.

Migration

Studies on migration have marked consumer mobility with two characteristics: *unidirectional* and *long-term or permanent* in nature (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005). Prior research has mainly studied economic migrants who relocate from less affluent countries to more affluent countries to settle and take on a better, and often safer life. Migration is commonly approached as a one-time, permanent form of relocation, where significant back-and-forth movements or dual engagements are not significant.

In consumer behavior studies, theories of acculturation and socialization, pioneered by social science and psychology (Ward 1974; Berry 1997), are often used to illustrate how border-crossing individuals react to new social, economic, and market systems. Studies suggest that migrants often experience stress, feelings of nostalgia, and patterns of isolation when they enter a new society (Peñaloza 1994). However, migrants are shown to undergo a gradual but an inevitable process of consumer acculturation due to the pressures from the host society. Consumer acculturation is a process of learning and displaying skills and behaviors necessary to function in a new consumer culture (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005). Through this process, migrants develop necessary consumption-related skills, such as the markers of status, consumption practices, and the symbolic meanings that exist in the host country. Inevitably, migrants not only learn where to buy what, but also which brands and products convey which

meanings and status positions in the new context, and how locals wear, eat, drive, or share specific brands, goods and services.

This literature points at postassimilation understanding of consumer acculturation, where a range of consumer acculturation outcomes takes place when migrants relocate into a foreign consumer culture (Luedicke 2011; Oswald 1997; Peñaloza 1989, 1994). The ability and desire of migrants to integrate into the new consumer culture or to maintain previous practices results in one of the four possible identity scenarios each representing a distinct relation with home and host societies. The combination of their consumption choices places migrants in a continuum of assimilation at one end and isolation at the other (Askegaard et al. 2005; Üstüner and Holt 2007): Hyperculture (hyper-assimilation with the host society while deserting ethnic identity), Assimilation to the host society, Integration (best of both worlds), and Pendulism (oscillation between cultures).

A combination of individual and institutional factors determines the degree of consumer acculturation. Individual consumers who lack the economic and cultural capital to perform in the new society, for example, can express an inability or unwillingness to adapt to the new consumer culture. Üstüner and Holt's (2007) study on Turkish migrants moving from rural areas to major cities with Westernized lifestyles, is an example of this situation. Authors argue that migrants in such situations may find themselves isolated from mainstream society and sometimes even physically segregated from most city residences. In addition to economic and cultural capital, studies also show that ideological conflicts between home and host societies, including political and religious conflicts, can lead to feelings of inner conflicts, where migrants find

themselves unable to integrate or to freely express ethnic identities. Iranian migrant women living in the UK, for example, are shown to often feel pressured to conform to majority cultural norms and thus remove their headscarves to avoid being discriminated against (Jafari and Goulding 2008). Finally, an inhospitable host culture for divergent modes of life can be a reason for lack of integration that could spark conflicts between migrants and locals who feel unable to fully embrace globalization ideology (see also Luedicke 2011). Luedicke (2015) shows that the rising influence of the Turkish migrant community on Austria's housing, retail and status brand markets, for example, fosters resistance among indigenous Austrian villagers, who then respond with discrimination and exclusion.

Consumption plays a central role in acculturation processes as a mechanism to signal the level of acculturation in the host society as well as to maintain ties with the home country left behind (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Bengtsson, Bardhi, and Venkatraman 2010). Sutton-Brady et al. (2010) argue that Korean migrants in Australia borrow Korean-made DVDs to evoke nostalgic feelings and to familiarize their Australian-born children with their parents' country of origin. These second-generation immigrant children then tend to grow up maintaining multiple identities that are activated in different social and cultural settings simulating home or host culture. Asian migrants in America are shown to adopt specific consumption practices to counteract negative stereotypes (Hu, Whittler, and Tian 2013). Such practices include Asian men displaying possessions to signal technical knowledge to counter the stereotypes of being effeminate.

For migrant consumers, possessions, specifically those from the country of origin, can gain sacred status as carriers of identity (Mehta and Belk 1991; Jafari and Goulding 2008). Migrants use these special possessions to display their cultural heritage to others, to create a sense of belonging and community with fellow migrants who experience culture shock and homesickness (Mehta and Belk 1991), and to create a sense of home abroad. For example, branded products and ethnic foods become important sources of comfort when individuals are away from home (Bardhi, Ostberg and Bengtsson 2010).

Overall, prior migration studies in consumer behavior are mainly focused on acculturation processes and outcomes in the host country. The ongoing life of migrants in their home country, for example through their families who left behind or their continued work-related involvements, have received little attention in prior studies (e.g., Peñaloza and Arroyo 2010). These involvements are essential as they may impact acculturation intention and practices in the host country. In addition, with the growing opportunity for cross-border travels as well as the demand for frequent mobilities in many professions (Sheller and Urry 2006; World Bank 2016), many individuals are simultaneously involved with more than one country through transnational assignments, long-distance family arrangements, and short-term expatriate programs. As a result, the duality of home-host does not capture transnational life arrangements and the sources of acculturation in consumers' lives. In this study, I reexamine consumer acculturation using the context of transnationalism, where consumers are simultaneously involved in more than one country.

Nomadism and Sequential Mobilities

Another pattern of global mobility is global nomadism: non-linear, frequent moves. Global nomadism describes the lifestyle of people who are voluntarily detached from physical locations and engage in frequent relocations and short-term travels (D'Andrea 2009). Nomadic travels and nomadic lifestyles are manifestations of the rise of globalization of businesses and the growing availability of affordable means of travel such as flights and hotels. In addition to the for-profit, corporate-driven mobilities, many nomadic and frequent mobilities fall under the umbrella of individual choice of lifestyle. Many in sports, real estate, consultancy and business choose nomadism as a strategy to grow and succeed.

To manage the fragmented, nomadic lifestyle, global nomads are shown to become detached from any particular locality (Bardhi et al. 2012). The term deterritorialization is used in referring to the disconnection of nomads' lives from a particular physical place (Faist 2000). Deterritorialization has implications for consumers' identity performances as well as their consumption practices, which sets apart nomadism from migration. Deterritorialization and frequent mobilities increase encounters with multiple cultures and enhance ties that go beyond national and ethnic identifications – i.e., cosmopolitanism. Hannerz defines cosmopolitanism as an "intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz 1990, p. 239). Cosmopolitanism refers to a taste regime and identity position as a result of purposefully learning and displaying cultural symbols and meanings. Such a process of actively accumulating and displaying cultural meanings is different from

the habituated and unconscious way of leaning that mostly takes place while growing up and leads to relatively enduring and embodied tastes (Holt 1998; Bourdieu 1984).

Nomadic, frequent mobilities can enhance cosmopolitanism by reducing commitment to the homeland and allowing for autonomy and reflexivity. Mobility, as a way of life, and cosmopolitanism, as an ideology, are closely related; however, neither indicates the existence of the other. Although mobility is not a necessary condition for cosmopolitanism (Cannon and Yaprak 2002), travel is often viewed as a path to cosmopolitanism and a mode of self-development (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).

Prior studies suggest that interactions with new cultures may or may not lead to the formation of strong connections as a lasting part of one's identity (cf. Hannerz 1990). In other words, cosmopolitans are positioned to participate in many worlds without becoming part of any. Thompson and Tambyah's (1999) study on mobile professionals engaging in temporary relocations, for example, shows that cosmopolitanism among their informants is manifested thorough the experiential consumption of the host culture (e.g., local foods, home décors) without forming strong connections with the locals or integrating into the society as a whole. Cosmopolitanism, however, can be a position of tensions and instability between consuming familiar possessions and established tastes that provide sources of stability and connectedness and consuming various cultures in order to sustain a cosmopolitan identity (Hannerz 1990a; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015). Thus, sustaining a cosmopolitan consumer identity requires making conscious, selective, and strategic consumption choices.

Declining ties between identity and place can, on the other hand, create a sense of closeness and an imagined global identity between nomads. The notion of "imagined

communities" refers to a different form of community in which members perceive communalities that are not necessarily defined via shared citizenship or speaking the same dialects (Appadurai 1990). These communities are sometimes shaped in the forms of social clubs and virtual communities through social media platforms to help nomads experience a sense of sociality through common consumption practices and activities.

Consumers who engage in nomadic lifestyles also display different consumption styles, including the predominant consumption of global brands to minimize the uncertainties driven by a high degree of mobility (Bardhi et al. 2012). For global nomads, global brands provide a brand-scape and a feeling of stability and continuation. Following this observation, global brands, such as those in telecommunication, hotel, and global media networks, such as CNN and the BBC, target global consumer segments via universal marketing. Via a unified global positioning, for example, 24-hour customer services reachable from almost everywhere, global brands aim at targeting mobile professional consumers. Similar patterns take place in finance and retail sectors.

In addition to consumption, the meaning of home and the centrality of localities on what constitutes as home changes when consumers are frequently on the go. As a result, consumption practices defined around home, such as home-making practices, home cooking, and ritualistic consumptions such as those related to new year's celebrations, are impacted. For those frequently on the go, home is not a singular, sacred place that ties individuals to the homeland, but instead, a fragmented notion where individuals *perform* home-making practices as a temporary and localized act. These homes provide a temporary sense of rootedness and orientation for a particular period of

time. Carrying and displaying reminders of personal relationships, such as family photos, personalizing rooms by, for instance, rearranging furniture in the same pattern in different places, or creating home-like routines, are examples of temporary home-making practices (Bardhi et al. 2012).

Nomad consumers are also shown to form different relationship to material possessions than those engaging in other forms of mobilities. The relationship to material possessions changes from identity-displaying symbols, as is in the case of migrants (Mehta and Belk 1991), to a use-value based relationship (Bardhi et al. 2012). A liquid form of attachment is developed where consumers minimize their possessions and are attached to them ephemerally and predominantly for their use and access value.

Overall, studies on frequent consumer mobilities and nomadic lifestyles capture the deterritorialized and fragmented consumers' lives where there is a decline of ties between individual identity and place. In other words, locality and geographical borders are not central in nomads' lives and instead scholars view global nomads as part of a global imagined community, where members stablish communality on the basis of shared experiences and consumption practices instead of nationality and citizenship. The lack of emphasis on locality, however, may ignore accumulative acculturation practices across different locations. In addition, the changes in the meaning of home, as a central identity anchoring places, is not well defined in this stream of work. In the current study, I reexamine the meanings of home in the context of transnationalism, where consumers frequently travel between some places.

Theoretical Background: Transnationalism

In this study, I draw from theories of transnationalism that broadly define a distinct form of mobility-based lifestyle as a result of simultaneously forming and maintaining connections with multiple places (Faist 2000). In transnationalism, consumers "develop and maintain multiple relations - familial, economic, social, and organizational - that span borders" (Glick Schiller et al. 1999, p.1). The notion of transnationalism conceptualizes the lifestyle of a growing number of people who speak more than one language, have homes in more than one country, and/or make a living through regular contact across national borders (Portes and Walton 1981; Glick Schiller et al. 1999). The rise of the class of bi-national professionals, the growth of the demand of transnational occupations that need regular cross-cultural mobilities, and the spread of families across borders, have led to growth in transnationalism (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003; Rhodes 2002). Maintaining multiple cross-cultural connections is not only more achievable due to new technologies of communication and transportation, but has also become a necessity for many due to the requirements of the global economy (Urry 2007; Lau et al. 2012).

In this study, I build on this notion to first define the transnational consumer lifestyle and, second, to examine the nature of consumption when consumers inhabit two or more countries at the same time. Below, I summarize the central tenets of transnationalism and differences with other types of mobility-driven lifestyles.

First, to capture the transnational lifestyle, prior research has used the notion of *transnational social field* as an alternative of the nation-state (Roudometof, 2005; Urry

2000). Transnational social field is defined as the "combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places (Faist 1998, p. 216)" and is used as an analytical tool to describe transnational connections. Bourdieu introduced the concept of social field to illustrate the power dynamics that structure social relations. Transnationalism scholars have built on this notion and problematized the assumption of equating national boundaries with the social field. The notion of transnational social field allows researchers to explore actions as taking place within and between nation-states simultaneously. In other words, transnationalism is seen as a process of "network building" (Portes and Walton 1981, p. 60; Portes et al. 1999) and formation of "part societies" (Kivisto 2001) that span across at least two countries. Prior studies illustrate examples of transnational social fields that are formed via transnational political parties that connect locals with expats, transnational organizations that host and facilitate movement between countries, and transnational families that are maintained through economic remittances sent by members of the family living across borders (e.g., Glick Schiller et al. 1999).

Glick Schiller et al. (1992) argue that transnational social fields are partly formed as a security strategy and when individuals try to keep their options open, since in the globalized economy no place is considered as fully secure and, thus, individuals engage in practices to maintain their access to other professional markets through transnational connections. Larsen, Urry and Axhausen (2008, p. 656), reasoning along the same line, introduce the notion of *network capital* as "the capacity to engender and sustain social relations with people who are not necessarily proximate, and which

generates emotional, financial and practical benefit". Unlike social or cultural capital that are anchored in one social context, network capital can be transferred across borders (Urry 2007). In transnationalism, network capital can be manifested in cross-border work affiliation, investments opportunities, interpersonal friendships, commercial friendship etc.

From the consumer behavior point of view, specifically consumer acculturation, prior studies offer little explanation on how consumers manage living and consuming in multiple locations at the same time. How does consumer acculturation take place? How do consumers relate to different societies when their lives are spread across borders, and how is consumption impacted by living a transnational life? In consumer culture research, few studies have examined transnational family structures, for example Peñaloza and Arroyo's (2010) study on Mexican workers in the United States with families in Mexico (see also Hughes and Askegaard 2008). The authors argue economic remittances and gifts brought to families who stayed at home could perform as an acculturative mechanism for families in Mexico even when they never cross borders. These studies, however, have not been concerned with the impact of transnational family arrangements on acculturation of transnational migrants in their host countries.

The expansion of social space in transnational theories from the nation-state to a transnational social field, provides distinctions between transnationalism and other forms of mobility-based lifestyles. The literature on migration, for example, has broadly assumed the central role of the nation-state via incorporating the dualities of home and host country (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994; Luedicke 2011). The focus of these studies has predominantly been on the host society, where migrants are expected to

permanently reside. Studies are mainly concerned with whether migrants can integrate in the host society and how. The home country, which is permanently left behind when migrants relocate to another country, serves as a source of nostalgia and is only accessible remotely via symbolic material possessions (Mehta and Belk 1991) or when migrants make annual trips to visit families. Migration scholars broadly suggest that economic success and the social status of migrants are largely dependent on how successful they can acculturate in the host society. Transnationalism, however, links economic success with strong social networks and the ties made across national borders; i.e., network capital (Larsen et al. 2008; Urry 2007). In other words, other forms of capital and skills are required in transnationalism.

Transnationalism is also different from global nomadism as prior studies on nomadic lifestyle are somewhat unconcerned with the role of locality (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012). Despite the emphasis on flexibility and frequency of travels, in the heart of transnationalism is the significance of the nation-states, the importance of locality, and the overall notion of interconnectedness (Ong 1999). Transnationalism is anchored in and transcends one or more nation-states (Kearney 1995), whereas, global nomadism takes place in global spaces and is largely decentered from any specific national territories.

Second, transnationalism is the state of in-betweenness (Hannerz 1996, p.107-108). Transnationals are the bridgeheads for entry into other territorial cultures, such as the case of international assignees who build professional networks and share knowledge across branches of the company (Brookfield survey 2016). Transnationalism is a form of *flexible* citizenship where one needs to bridge multiple cultural values

simultaneously (Ong 1999). Ong defines flexible citizenship as "the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political economic conditions (p.6)". Flexible citizenship is primarily driven by economic reasons as opposed to identifying with shared political values tied to a nation-state. As a result, transnationals experience a state of in-betweenness by constantly switching between social and cultural norms and legal regulations.

Transnationals, therefore, need to acquire a range of symbolic capitals that facilitate their cross-cultural transitions, their positioning, and their social and cultural acceptance in different localities. Transnationals benefit from the actual performance of dual citizenship, through which they not only identify with multiple sets of norms and values across borders, but also structure their lives in a way to benefit from accessing multiple rights and benefits (e.g., citizenship, ownership of land and business, access to consumer products and services, and exercising voting rights).

From the consumer behavior point of view, being the bridgehead and inhabiting multiple places has not been the focus of consumer acculturation studies, as prior acculturation research was primarily concerned with residing in one place. The case of transnationals, however, represent a different context, in which individuals maintain and bridge between multiple "homes". Acculturation in transnationalism, therefore, might take a different form when nostalgia, homesickness, and emotional distress are not as prevalent, as in the case of permanent relocations (Peñaloza 1994). Prior studies suggest that transnationalism can be used as a form of resistance to integration into a single society and as a way of expressing economic and social control via working and living

in multiple countries (Vertovec 2001). Thus, transnationalism is not only a security strategy when social or economic situations become unfavorable, but can also be a way of expressing agency on whether to acculturate in a specific society (homeland or others) or be selective and strategic about acculturation.

Third, in transnationalism, living in one place impacts the livelihood in the other (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). Familial relations, professional activities, and interpersonal friendships are performed in transnational spaces and mutually impact and transform one another. Economic remittances brought to the home country by workers living abroad, for example, hold transnational families together, impact the type of consumption that the families can afford, and perform as an acculturative agent when members of the family are physically far from the host culture (Hughes and Askegaard 2008). The money and objects received by members of the family are used to negotiate their social relations and social status, for example, when children are seen with branded clothes and toys in their village (Peñaloza and Arroyo 2010). Transnationalism, therefore, means two conditions: a) the multiplicity of homes via cohabiting in multiple countries, and b) the interconnectedness between localities via extending family, work, and friendship connections across borders. From the consumer behavior point of view, the interconnectedness between localities and the impact on consumption practices have not been captured in prior studies on mobile consumer lifestyles. To what extent are consumption practices in one location impacted by involvement in other consumer markets?

Fourth, while theories of transnationalism question nationalized concepts (i.e., defining concepts as national, where the boundary of the nation-state is one of the

defining elements), they do not see them as fully fluid, deterritorialized, and independent from the nation-state (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003). Instead, prior studies have demonstrated new conceptualizations of notions in a way that the cross-border nature of relations and transactions are taken into account. For instance, Faist (1998) suggests that in most migration studies, the notion of culture is viewed as national and essentially territorial, and based on ethnicity, language, and religion. The alternative conceptualization views culture as a toolkit, where it is defined via flows of objects and meanings across borders (Hannerz 1996; Appadurai 1990). For instance, Appadurai and Breckenridge (1988) define "public culture" in India as a response to cultural interactions and exchanges with other nations that is manifested in local food, entertainment, and consumer products. Thus, culture is neither viewed as territorial and local, nor as fully fluid and independent from locality. "Cultural creolization", or the outcome of locals' interpretations of meanings and symbols from other cultures (Hannerz 1990b, p. 127), captures the globally informed, yet localized nature of culture. Prior studies used the notion of cultural creolization to differentiate between cultural homogenization and the idea of the global village (Hannerz 1989).

Cultural creolization can enable new forms of identity formation and identity expression in transnationalism (Vertovec 2001). Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p. 11) made a distinction between practices that signal identity and practices that facilitate living in multiple locations. They introduced the notions of *ways of being*, which refers to the "social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather the identities associated with their actions", and *ways of belonging,* which refers to the "practices that signal or enact identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular

group". In transnationalism, an individual may be embedded in a social field via, for example, working, residing, or having long-lasting personal or professional connections, but does not identify with any particular group, label, or norm associated with that field. On the other hand, ways of belonging emphasize the role of social institutions, such as family, religious and ethnic communities, that are part of specific localities.

What Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) describe in their notions of ways of being and ways of belonging is similar to Simmel's (1983) conceptualization of the *stranger*. The stranger is one who synthesizes nearness and distance at the same time. The stranger does not perform as fully deterritorialized – as a wanderer or a nomad would be – but also does not possess a fixed social position, as a fully-fledged member of the society would do. Simmel argues that the stranger has a fixed social position within a particular social group, often a professional group, as she imports qualities and skills that the group does not possess.

For transnationals, thus, nationalism is not the only identity institution. The distinction between ways of being and ways of belonging has two implications for consumer identity under mobility. One, it provides an alternative to the predominantly used either-or categorization dominant in studies on consumer acculturation (e.g., Askegaard 2005), and two, it emphasizes the significant role of locality that is missing from studies on cosmopolitanism (e.g., Glick Schiller et al. 1999). Instead, transnationalism views an individual as a citizen of multiple countries, who capitalizes on these identifications through exercising multiple rights or taking part in multiple consumer cultures (Caglar 2001, p. 610; Vertovec 2001; Ong 1999).

In summary, the central premises of theories of transnationalism points at this particular lifestyle as a pivotal element in the contemporary global economy and a necessity for many, rather than a property of elite social groups. Transnational behaviors and practices involve actions such as monetary transactions across borders, voting and expressing citizenship in multiple countries, travel and commuting, transnational family settings with members of the family living in separate geographical locations with frequent visits, transnational interpersonal and commercial friendships, transnational jobs, and transnational consumptions. To analyze transnationalism, the bounded conceptualizations of notions such as culture, society, and identity are redefined in a way that the cross-border nature of them is highlighted. To be specific, the transnational social field, as an alternative to equating the nation-state to the social field; creolized culture, as an alternative to defining culture via ethnicity, shared language, and religion; and transnational identity, as an alternative to national identity, have shaped the central basis of theories of transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Vertovec 2001). Transnationalism, as a way of life, points at individuals' control over, and at times resistance towards, confirming and acculturating in a specific social context as individuals are exposed to not one but many social norms and cultures simultaneously and they constantly bridge them. In the current study, I examine the nature of consumption in transnational consumer lifestyles. This study contributes to the body of literature on mobility-based consumer lifestyles dominated by studies on migration and nomadism (Askegaard et al. 2005; Mehta and Belk 1991; Bardhi et al. 2012; Luedicke 2015).

In this study, I examine the consumer lifestyle of transnational consumers with an emphasis on their acculturation style and their relations with localities (i.e., countries). A list of research question is provided below:

RQ 1: What cumulative acculturation style(s) do transnational consumers develop across inhabitation in multiple countries?

RQ 2: What forms of relations do transnational consumers have with countries they are involved with?

RQ 3: What is the nature of consumption in transnationalism?

RQ 4: How do transnational consumers manage the fragmentation in their lives resulted from simultaneous involvement with multiple countries?

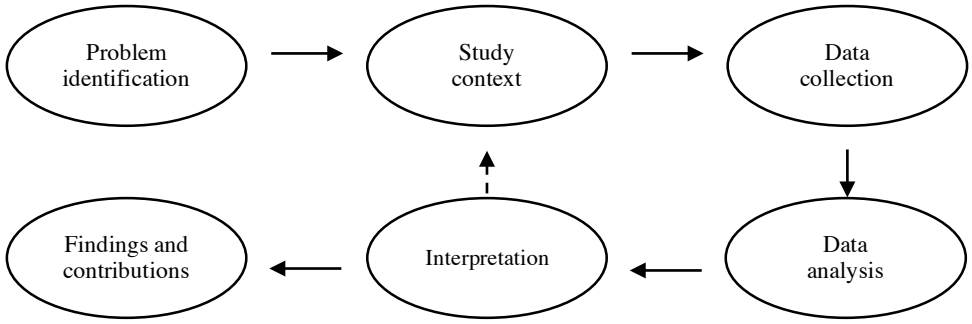
Method

In this study, I aim at unpacking the nature of consumption in transnationalism, acculturation styles that transnational consumers use, and the meanings and practices that they associate with different localities. I follow a phenomenology approach in this study (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989). Phenomenological study seeks understanding of a phenomenon as experienced by several individuals (Cresswell 1998, p.57). A phenomenon is "an 'object' of human experience" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 163), such as having a particular sickness, insomnia, being a single mother, etc. Scholars use this approach to draw communalities between all participants who experience the same phenomenon.

Phenomenology is an appropriate method for this study as my main goal is to understand the lifestyle of transnational consumers, their relations with different locations, and the mediating role of consumption in maintaining this particular lifestyle. Despite the growth in transnationalism due to professional, personal, and financial reasons (Rhodes 2002), little is known about consumers' cohabitation experiences. The majority of studies in consumer behavior literature have mainly taken a single country approach to study mobility-based consumer lifestyles via using the home-host duality (e.g., Askegaard et al. 2005). In this study, I approach the phenomenon from a networked perspective to further unpack the multi-embeddedness experience, the meanings of localities for transnational consumers, and impacts of consumption in one location on the consumption in the other(s).

In this study, I follow the six steps of research design (Maxwell 1996), as illustrated in Figure 1: identifying research purpose, study context, data collection procedure, data analysis, interpretation of the findings, and discussions on theoretical contributions (Bernard 2002). Following, I provide descriptions of the first four steps and the relations between them. In the next section, I illustrate in-depth interpretations of study findings and discuss contributions to the literature on mobility-based consumer lifestyles.

Figure 1. Research Design



Study context

My aim is to examine the nature of transnational consumption, where consumers manage a network of locations by residing or working in multiple countries at the same time. The context of transnationalism provides the opportunity to reexamine the role of locality in mobility-driven consumer lifestyle by simultaneously examining and contrasting the nature of consumption across different locations. Transnationalism provides a distinct approach on the role of locality by broadening the study context from a single-country approach to multiple-country approach.

Transnationalism represents a growing consumer lifestyle as many, including, for instance, employees of multinational organizations, academics, and consultants, pursue economic, political, and cultural interests that require presence in multiple locations (Millar and Salt 2006; Sirkeci 2013). Transnationals frequently travel between countries while maintaining financial, professional, or personal ties with people in other locations (Bell and Ward 2000). Studies show that the recent trends in the labor market demand many to frequently travel, which may involve working away from home for

weeks or months (Lau et al. 2012; Rhodes 2002). For example, 64% of international corporations across industries such as retailing, energy, construction, IT, manufacturing, and services, reported to increase the number of their international assignees on an annual basis (GMAC survey 2012). In a recent global survey of 163 global companies representing over 11 million employees (Brookfield 2016), 70% of respondents claim that reducing relocation costs via increasing international assignees is one of their priorities. Using international assignees is more cost effective for companies as their employees are not required to fully relocate to another country and are more willing to take assignments, especially in the case of family involvement (Green et al. 1999).

The increase in job-related mobilities have also resulted in many families living in long-distance arrangements, where individuals work in one country and live in another (Lau et al. 2012). International assignees usually maintain their home arrangements and often travel without their families. To maximize the performance of international assignees and minimize monetary and non-monetary costs (e.g., relocation, getting to know the host's organizational culture), international assignees are often assigned to fixed destinations (Lau et al. 2012).

In addition to corporate-driven international commutes in the form of assignments, many professionals voluntarily opt for the transnational lifestyle due to the requirements of their jobs and the desire to grow and succeed (Rhodes 2002). In academia, for instance, hiring "flying" researchers and lecturers has become common practice in many institutions as a way to increase the quality of teaching and research and to expand cross-border connections (Hughes 2011). As a result, many academics maintain work affiliations with multiple institutions, usually with one being the

permanent position and the other(s) on a contract basis. Rhodes (2002) argues that alternative marital and family configurations are on the rise in response to the requirement of the global economy. One such arrangements is in the form of "dual-career commuter couples", where couples choose to live in separate geographic locations with frequent visits, for the purpose of equal career advancement opportunities (p.398). The majority of these spouses are well educated and professional. The average age of these individuals is mid-to-late thirties, ranging between 25 to 65 years old, with 40% to 50% having children, and more than half married for at least 9 years (Anderson and Spruill 1993). Although many dual-career commuter couples live in one country and travel up to 2,700 miles to visit each other, which could be as frequent as every weekend to whenever their schedules permit (Rhodes 2002), the long-distance and cross-border commutes are also on the rise since travel has become more affordable.

Job-related international commuting and long-distance work assignments have become common expectations in many fields such as real-estate, academia, and consultancy (Collings, Scullion, and Morley 2007; Brookfield 2012). This includes commutes to neighboring locations, such as those reported between Hong Kong and mainland China (Lau et al. 2012) or within European countries (Sparrow 2010, p. 141), as well as cross-continental arrangements (Green et al. 1999). Thus, for transnationals, relocation is replaced by commuting and travel, where absence from home could range from days to weeks to months, in the case of seasonal travels (Bell and Ward 2000). These travels are in the form of circular in form and happen between a few fixed locations (as opposed to sequential in the case of global nomads) and are frequent (as opposed to one-time permanent relocations in case of migration). Although

transnationalism as a way of life in not limited to any particular professional setting and is growing as a professional requirement in many fields, the transnational consumer lifestyle has received limited attention in consumer behavior studies.

Data Collection

Following phenomenology approach, I chose semi-structured interviews for data collection. The semi-structured phenomenological interviewing technique is focused, efficient, and guided by pre-organized questions (McCracken 1988). In contrast to the many qualitative research approaches with emerging research design and a low level of pre-structure, such as grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998), semi-structured interviews are highly structured and are driven by prior theories and research problems. Therefore, before entering the field, I identified the overarching theories, and who, what and where is under study and what techniques to follow. This is particularly useful for young researchers with limited experience. Bernard (2002) argues that semi-structured phenomenological interviews are the best technique to manage time and be prepared when entering the field.

In summary, phenomenological semi-structured interviewing is an appropriate methodology because of the primary interest in the role of locality in transnational consumer lifestyle. Thus, existing theories of consumer acculturation, home-making practices, and identity performances play a central role in this study. The existing frameworks and theories are used as *a priori* themes that need to be further investigated

in the interviews. While the approach is highly structured and guided by prior theories and research problems, one needs to keep in mind that the research design (including sampling procedure and interview guide), data collection, and data analysis are interdependent and iterative (Bernard 2002). As is often the case, interview questions, sampling criteria, and the theoretical lens may be revised as the interviews progress.

Following the literature on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1999), informants were sampled on the basis of two characteristics (Table 2): work affiliations in multiple countries (e.g., transnational occupations, full-time, part-time and volunteer jobs that demand presence in multiple locations), and residing in multiple countries (e.g., long-distance family relationships). This way, my informants are socially and/or economically embedded in different locations that goes beyond visits or holiday trips. In addition, my informants maintain personal and professional relations with 2-4 countries simultaneously, which sets apart my sample from migration with the home-host duality (Askegaard et al. 2005) and nomadism with frequent and decentered mobilities from one country to another (Bardhi et al. 2012).

Table 1. Sampling Criteria

Criteria	Indications	Type of tie
1. *Work affiliation in multiple countries* *	• Employment in international corporations involving international assignments • Involvement in full-time, part time, contract-based, or volunteer jobs in different countries	Financial, professional
2. *Residing in multiple countries* *	• Long-distance family relations (e.g., partner lives in another country, kids live in another country) • Strong friendship/interpersonal attachment	Personal, financial, lifestyle (e.g., hobbies)
3. *Others*	• Between 26 and 65 years old • Financially independent • Voluntary mobile	
* Each informant spends at least two months (collectively) in each location		

In qualitative research, no prior specifications can be made regarding the size of the sample (Belk et al. 1989). Sample size is an emerging characteristic of qualitative studies and is identified through the iterative process between data collection and data interpretation. The iteration and further sampling continues till theoretical saturation is achieved. In the condition of theoretical saturation, the study of more informants does not provide additional theoretical insights and the researcher can stop recruiting more informants. In this study, my final sample consists of 20 individuals (Table 3).

I followed the snowball sampling technique (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981) to recruit my informants. Each informant was asked to recommend another transnational who met my sampling criteria. The first round of data collection included seven pilot

interviews that were used to examine the suitability of my questions and language. The second round of data collection took six months and I ended up with 20 informants who exhibit the characteristics of the transnational consumer. My final sample consists of 10 males and 10 females; eight of the informants are single, two in long-distance relationships, and 19 are married, among which five have children. They regularly travel, which was often characterized as commuting, via plane or train, between locations. Informants range in age from 26 to 63 years old. My informants reside in at least two countries with eight of them residing in three countries simultaneously. Twelve informants reside in trans-continental arrangements, and the rest reside and work across European countries. The informants spend at least 20% of their time in each location. Professionally, they are from academia, real estate, consultancy, finance, aviation, and nursing. Except for one informant, the rest of the sample have one nationality. The informants speak at least two languages, and some speak three to four different languages.

Table 2. Informants Profile

ID	Name, age	Occupation	Education	Family status	Networks of homes (length of stay in a year, residential place)	Nationality (s)	Language (s)	Motivation for maintaining the connections
1	Adam, 62	Aviation analyst	MSc	Married w 2 kids. Wife lives in Germany	Germany, Berlin (1.5 months, owns a house), UK, London (>7months, rental apartment), UAE (~2.5months, hotel apartment)	German	German, French, English	permanent contract in London, involved in consultancy in UAE, and personal connections in Germany
2	Anka, 34	Communication consultant, cosmetic industry	PhD	Married, husband lives in Sweden	Germany (~month, birthplace, parent's place), Sweden (~2months, permanent place), London (~9months, rental apartment)	German, Swedish	German, Swedish, English, French	Professional, partner lives in a different country
3	Chris, 42	University lecturer	PhD	Married, Family lives in Germany	Germany (~2months, owns a house), UK, London (~10months, rental apartment)	German	English, German	Full time contract in UK and family lives in Germany
4	Cristina, 35	University lecturer	PhD	Long-distance relationship, boyfriend in Greece	Greece (birthplace, >1month, permanent place), UK, London (>10 months, rental shared apartment), Boston, US (~1months, permanent place at friends' houses)	Greek	Greek, French, English, German	Professional, partner lives in a different country
5	Elena, 38	University lecturer	PhD	Single	Italy (~4months, birthplace, rental apartment), UK, Luton (~7months, hotel apartment)	Italian	Italian, English, French, Spanish	Professional, occasional contracts in Italy, Personal connections and hobbies in Italy
6	Emma, 40	Researcher	PhD	Married	Spain (~1.5months, parents' place), UK, London (~8months, own a house), Italy (<1month, parents' place), US (>1month, various places, often permanent room in friends' houses)	Spanish	Spanish, English, Portuguese	Professional, personal
7	Eric, 35	Real estate agent	BSc	Single	UAE, Dubai (~4 month, hotel apartment) and UK, London (~7months, birthplace, owns an apartment)	English	English, French	Professional
8	Erica, 37	Student	MSc	Single	Lebanon (>4months, birthplace, parents' place), London (~8months, rental apartment)	Lebanese	Arabic, English, French	Professional links with both Lebanon and UK

ID	Name, age	Occupation	Education	Family status	Networks of homes	Nationality (s)	Language (s)	Motivation for maintaining
9	Gorge, 36	University lecturer	PhD	Single	France, Paris (~2months, birthplace, parents' place), UK, London (~10months, rental apartment)	French	French, English	Part time contracts in France and full time contract in UK
10	Hanna, 27	Student	MSc	Married	France (~2-3months, birthplace, in-laws place), UK, London (8-9months, rental apartment)	French	French, English	Professional, personal
11	James, 58	Consultant	PhD	Married w 2 kids	USA, Lopez Island (~10months, rental house, birthplace), Thailand, Bangkok (>1.5month, parents' place)	American	English, Thai	Engaged in a non-profit in Thailand and contracts in USA
12	Jeff, 33	Researcher	PhD	Single	Belgium (>1month, birthplace, parents' place), Singapore (~8months, rental apartment), UK, London (~1month, permanent room in friends' houses)	Belgian	English, French, Dutch, Spanish	Professional, personal
13	Kevin, 53	Consultant	MSc.	Married w 2 kids. Kids live in London	UAE, Dubai (permanent work place, ~9months, owns a house), UK, London (>2months, rental apartment)	Canadian	English, some Arabic	Full-time contract in Dubai, second home in London, kids study in London
14	Min, 43	Researcher	PhD	Married w 2 kids. Family lives in Oxford	China (birthplace, ~2months, parents' place), UK, London (>6months, rental apartment), UK, Oxford (>3months, owns a house)	Chinese	English, Chinese	Full-time contract in UK and part-time contract in China
15	Paola, 34	University lecturer	PhD	Married	Italy (~4months, birthplace, owns an apartment), UK, London (~7month, rental apartment), US (1month, permanent room in in-laws' place)	Italian	English, Italian, German	Professional, Personal connections
16	Samuel, 41	Market researcher	PhD	Married, wife and the kid live in Spain	Spain (>5months, owns a place), UK, Luton (~6months, rental apartment), Italy (<1month, hotel and friends' place)	Italian	English, Italian, Spanish	Part-time contract in Spain and Italy, full time contract in UK
17	Sara, 26	Nurse	BSc	Single	USA (~1.5monthsparents' place), UK, London (~10months, rental apartment), France (1month, parents' place)	British	English	Work in NHS, family connection in USA and Franc

ID	Name, age	Occupation	Education	Family status	Networks of homes	Nationality (s)	Language (s)	Motivation for maintaining
18	Silvia, 30	Project manager	MA	Long-distanced relationship	Italy (1month, birthplace, parents' place) and London (~10 months, rental apartment)	Italian	Italian, English, French, Spanish	Partner lives in Italy, part time collaborations with Italy, permanent job in London
19	Tylan, 33	Consultant	MSc	Single	Germany (~6months, owns an apartment), Jordan (>5months, hotel apartment)	German	German, Arabic, French, Dutch, Spanish	Consultancy contracts with the Middle East, personal connections in Germany and Doha
20	Viviana, 30	Financial analyst	MSc	Single	Spain (~2months, friends' place), Italy (>1month, parents' place), Dominican Republic (>1month, hotel apartment), UK, London (>8months, rental apartment)	Spanish	English, Spanish, Italian, French	Voluntary engagements with NGOs in Dominican Republic, full time and part time contracts in UK and Dominican Republic

The data was collected through semi-structured, phenomenological interviews (Bernard 2002; McCracken 1988). The interviews were conducted at informants' offices, public coffee places, or over Skype, and each lasted between 90 minutes and 2 hours. My interview questions (see appendix A) consisted of three sections: the first section includes questions that were focused on the network of locations that my transnational informants maintain. These questions were aimed at understanding informants' network of places, duration of personal and/or professional connections with each, and why and under what arrangements informants form and maintain these connections (e.g., job contracts, long-distance familiar relations, personal attachment, family businesses and other forms of unofficial financial arrangements).

The second section of the interview guide consists of questions that were focused on the meanings of each location and the role that each plays in the lives of our transnational informants. Questions were aimed at the symbolic meanings associated with each locality and the similarities and differences of living in each place. I also aimed at understanding informants' willingness to integrate in different sociocultural systems that they are involved with, and their attachment to different locations.

The third section of the interview guide was focused on the consumption practices across different locations. Different consumption domains, including media and entertainment, sports, clothing, food, travel and leisure, are covered in my questions. The aim of these questions is to understand where in their networks my informants consume certain products and services, how consumption helps maintain the connection between places, and how residing in one location impacts consumption in the other(s).

Data Analysis

Data collection and data analysis followed an iterative process. After each interview, I documented a summary of key learnings and the new questions that emerged from the interview to further fine-tune the interview guide for the following interviews. Analysis of the interview data was conducted in two phases. First, I conducted within-case analysis by carefully reading each interview transcript (Strauss and Corbin 1998). The coding process followed sentence-by-sentence analysis, through which major ideas brought by each sentence, repeated keywords and phrases, conflicting situations, feelings and emotions, consumption rituals, and key expressions were documented. I

analyzed each interview as an independent case, where I specifically documented each informant's portfolio of places, the reasons behind maintaining the portfolio, the meanings of each place for the informant, differences and similarities between consumptions practices in different locations, and the impact of living in one location on consumption in the other(s). After this step, I produced an explanatory map for each informant, including the portfolio and the representative key consumptions for each location, such as shopping, entertainment, etc. (see Figure 2 for examples).

Within-case analysis followed a continual process of comparison between data, a priori codes, and open codes (Miles and Huberman 1994). A priori codes consisted of a list of pre-identified codes that were included in the interview guide and were driven from existing theories on transnationalism, mobility, consumption, and identity (Table 4). For instance, questions were asked regarding the informant's attempts (or lack of it) towards acculturating in a specific society, consumption rituals, and relationship with places. Open codes consisted of those that emerged from the interviews. Through the iterative nature of the data collection and data analysis, the concepts that emerged from interviews were included in the following interview questions in order to gain a holistic understanding of whether patterns repeat across informants.

Figure 2. Examples of Individual Maps

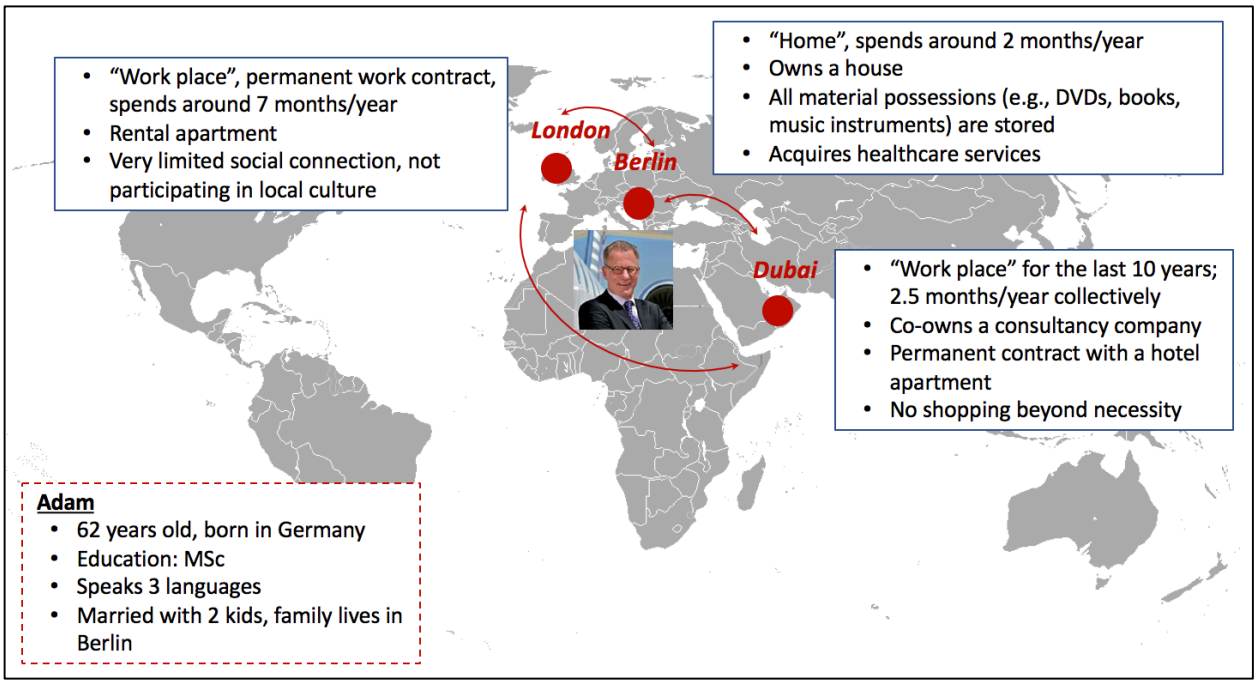


Table 3. A priori Expectations

1. Transnational consumers form different financial, personal, professional, and lifestyle ties with different countries that may impact their level of involvement in each country
2. Transnational consumers may form different integration strategies in different locations
3. Transnational consumers may form different relations with locals in different locations
4. The consumption practices of transnational consumers may be strategically different in different locations
5. Transnational consumers form different meanings for each location that may not coincide with the traditional meaning of "home"
6. Transnational consumers' home-making practices may differ across different countries
7. Transnational consumers' relations with material objects may be manifested differently in different locations
8. Living or working in location A may impact transnational consumers' consumption practices in location B
9. Transnational consumers' identities are anchored in multiple places, each serving a different identity purpose
10. Transnational consumers may form consumption practices that facilitate the maintenance of their network and the flow between them

I used the two types of codes, i.e., a priori and open codes, to produce categories of meanings. The categorization refers to the practice of labeling data units using a priori codes that are driven from existing theories as well as emerging codes (Spiggle 1994). For example, using theories of acculturation, consumption practices referring to "home making" and "integration practices" were documented as categories. I, then, constructed higher order clusters via comparing, contrasting, and merging categories

(Spiggle 1994). For example, categories of data referring to different relations to place such as 'work place', 'home', and 'parents' place' are clustered under "meanings of place".

I stored the summaries of within-case codes in a Word file along with representative quotes from informants' interviews. I also used notes that I took during the interviews, other correspondence with my informants (e.g., emails and follow-up notes), and supplementary material (e.g., pictures from informants' possessions symbolizing specific cross-border relations), to complement my understanding of my informants' lifestyle.

Second, I conducted cross-case analysis, through which clusters identified in individual cases were compared and contrasted to provide aggregate categories and themes (Strauss and Corbin 1998; Miles and Huberman 1994). The aim of this step is to go beyond the uniqueness of individual cases and provide a general understanding of characteristics of transnational consumption. To this end, I focused on similar patterns and behaviors across individual cases and bracketed them into themes and identified reasons for dissimilarities. Specifically, four meanings of place have emerged from my analysis. These meanings are used to reexamine the conceptualization of home, by prior studies (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton 1981), as singular and tied to home country. Also, a transnational form of consumer acculturation has emerged that can be understood as selective, strategic, and domain specific. This acculturation style challenges the expectations regarding consumer integrations from prior acculturation studies. In addition, a transnational form of consumption is emerged that is localized and fragmented across borders.

Although generalizability is not a goal in qualitative studies, providing an aggregate explanation of concepts is necessary (Miles and Huberman 1994). I cross-examined different meanings that individual informants associated with consumption practices in different locations (e.g., home, workplace, parent's place), bracketed them, and provided a category that synthesizes different relations. Spiggle (1994) refers to this process as *integration*, through which different forms and types are identified and relations between clusters are discussed. Integration refers to the theory-building practices, through which the researcher discusses the theoretical contribution of the study in relation to the existing body of literature. For example, differences in consumption practices in different places have shown the complementary aspect of transnational consumption, which has not been identified in prior studies and challenges the underlying assumption of consumer acculturation as a holistic practice.

Findings

The findings are drawn from a combination of deductive and inductive analysis. In order to contextualize my findings, I use prior theories on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Faist 1998; Kivisto 2001; Vertovec 2001) to highlight fragmentation in transnational lifestyle. Narratives of frequent travels between places, relations with places (work, home), and purpose of co-habitations (work, family, hobby) are common in my corpus of data. In addition, I use theories of acculturation to examine consumer acculturation strategies across locations. From an acculturation point of view (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 1999; Luedicke 2011), I expected to observe a feeling of homesickness and pressure to adjust to the consumer culture in the place of residence among my informants; however, my data revealed acculturation strategies that can be described as selective, strategic, and domain specific. I also use prior studies on relation to possession (Bardhi et al. 2012; Mehta and Belk 1999) and expected to observe a liquid relation to possession among my informants. My data, however, revealed an in-between situation, where the relation to possession is structured around the locality and the meaning associated with the locality. Drawing from my data, four different meanings of place have emerged, each is associated with specific practices, consumption acts, and meanings.

Below, I first illustrate the transnational consumer lifestyle by focusing on the role of mobility in transnationalism. Second, the four meanings of place that emerged in transnationalism will be discussed. Third, I introduce the notion of *transnational consumption* via its three dimensions. This section provides discussions on different

ways that this study contributes to the existing conversations on mobility-based consumer lifestyles and consumer acculturation strategies (e.g., Askegaard et al. 2005; Bardhi et al. 2012; Üstüner and Holt 2007; Luedicke 2015).

I. Transnational Consumer Lifestyle

Consistent with prior literature on transnationalism (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Ong 1999; Vertovec 2001), I find that the transnational lifestyle is organized around two conditions: (1) multi-cohabitation in two or more countries, and (2) maintaining cohabitation via extending family, work, and friendship connections across geographical borders. The following quote from Cristina illustrates the nature of transnationalism. Cristina permanently resides in London and works as a full-time university lecturer. Her place of residence in London is a shared rental apartment. She owns a place in Greece, where she frequently travels to. She also travels frequently to Boston to visit her friends and colleagues.

> *I work 5 days per week here in London, and sometimes weekends too, and I try to go once a month for 3-4 days to Greece. So, London is more for work for me; it is actually only for work, and I have personal connections with home [Greece] and close friends and colleagues in Boston that I often visit. So, this is my triangle if you like, London, Greece, Boston (Cristina, 33).*

The two conditions of transnationalism exist in Cristina's life arrangement. She has a permanent work contract in London and resides in a rental apartment, however, she sees London only as a workplace with intense work schedules and limited interpersonal connections. Greece and Boston, on the other hand, are places where she connects through friendships, familial relations, and entertainment. Cristina manages this 3-country existence by frequently visiting her family in Greece and her colleagues and friends in Boston. She accumulates *network capital* (Larsen et al. 2008, p. 656) via creating and maintaining relations across borders, from which she receives emotional, financial, and professional benefits.

Cristina's life is not deterritorialized (Bardhi et al. 2012), but rather anchored in multiple locations, each serving a particular purpose. Her life arrangements are also not similar with that of a migrant with permanent relocation and discontinuation of living in the country of origin (cf. Bardhi el al. 2012). My informants, instead, arrange their lives in transnational social fields (Faist 1998, p. 216) that combine their social and symbolic ties across geographically distinct places. The transnational social field for Cristina, for example, is combined of London, Greece, and Boston, which anchors her to these places, rather than decentering her. In contrast to what Bardhi et al. (2012) argue on the importance of international institutions such as global hotel chains, global financial institutions, and global brands, I find that transnational consumers mainly rely on local institutions such as family and local commercial friends to maintain anchored in multiple places. Frequent traveling and utilizing communication devices such as WhatsApp and Skype help facilitating co-presence even when my informants are away.

I work full time in London, I also work for a friend who runs a local business in Sweden, so I pay taxes and insurance in Sweden as well… My husband is Swedish and still lives there and I have a large circle of friends in Sweden that I visit often (Anka 34).

Similar to Cristina, Anka's life arrangement is spread across borders. She dwells in London via working fulltime as a consultant for a multinational cosmetic corporation and dwells in Sweden via her family attachment, friendship connections, and her part-time job for a friend. Anka's transnational social field consists of London and Sweden and is structured and maintained via a combination of professional, personal, and financial ties (Faist 1998, p. 216).

Maintaining transnational life arrangement is not without challenges. It requires meticulous planning on traveling between places to attend family or professional matters. Anka, for example, travels frequently to Sweden to visit her husband, who resides there, as well as fulfill her duties for a small firm that she works part-time for. In addition, the involvement with multiple societies with different social and cultural norms may create tensions and, at times, feeling of loneliness. The following quote from Adam highlights aspects of his social life when he is in Dubai. Adam permanently works and lives in London. He also co-owns a company in Dubai, where he spends around 2.5 months per year. Adam is also involved with berlin, where his wife is located and they own a house together.

Do I have friends in Dubai? No, not really. Maybe some of it is because of the slight mistrust that is always there you never know. There is a differentiation between locals that never get a chance to leave

UAE. They need to be there they have no option that home. So, there is sort of mistrust between cultures that makes it a little bit harder or maybe impossible to have friendships with Arabs or with locals. Even though I have two local friends that I am very close to. We usually go out and have a tea, but always early evening because they have to go home to their family or mother or whatever. So, it is a very different way of socializing in the Middle East (Adam 62).

The challenges of planning, frequent travelling, and creating and maintaining social life in different places are also reported by other informants. They, however, become very skilled in scheduling, planning, and arranging multiple responsibilities across borders. This is a type of skill that is required in transnationalism and can be understood as a source of network capital (Larsen et al. 2008). With regards to social life, most of my informants express that despite their attempts, creating and maintaining social life in different places is difficult. This, however, does not seem to create a great degree of anxiety or discomfort as a few close friendships and familial relations are often maintained across places. Adam, for example, does not heavily invest in creating close friendships in London or Dubai as he is still in touch with his friends and family members in Germany.

II. Transnational Consumer Acculturation

Data analysis reveals that my informants engage in a different consumer acculturation style than other mobile consumer groups studied in prior consumer research (Askegaard et al. 2005; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994; Thompson and Tambyah 1999). My informants exhibit acculturation patterns that can be described as selective, strategic, and domain specific. They can be fully integrated in one domain (often professional) and fully segregated in others across different localities they are involved with. In the following quote, Elena, a university lecturer from Italy who resides and permanently works in Luton, UK, explains her relationship with her country of origin (Italy) and her country of residence (UK) and her lack of intention to integrate into the local culture in the UK:

> *I do not see myself as an established member of the UK. When I'm in Luton I feel that I know my way, it's familiar. It's a bit like a cousin, you are stuck with it, you are not unhappy but they might never become your best friend. I think that when you feel established or you want to establish yourself, you need to go through something more, like buying a property or changing habits, or something more related to culture and way of living like eating local food or having local friends. I haven't really reconfigured my life to the UK. For example, when I'm not working, all my hobbies are still in Italy, I go there to spend time in the mountains and I basically do all kinds of sports around mountains (Elena, 38).*

Elena's acculturation in London seems to look more like that of the *stranger*, who displays nearness and distance at the same time (Simmel 1983, p.1). The stranger does not possess a fixed social position – as a fully-fledged member of the society would do– but also does not perform as fully detached – as a wanderer or a nomad would do (Bardhi et al. 2012). My informants do not show aspirations to learn and imitate the host culture as shown in the case of expats and migrants (Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Askegaard et al. 2005). Their lack of interest is, however, not due to their lack of capital to integrate, ideological conflict between home and host countries, or inhospitable host country (cf., Üstüner and Holt 2007). My informants, instead, strategically align their life arrangements across different locations to benefit from multiple access and minimize acculturation efforts.

Elena's metaphor of "familiarity" illustrates her strategic relationship with her permanent place of residence (UK) and her level of knowledge of the local culture. She selectively decides areas she is willing to learn and integrate in the UK context. For example, she has acquired the necessary professional knowledge to perform in her host institution in the UK. However, she has not made efforts or long-term commitments to integrate into the UK culture via, for example, investing in material possessions (Peñaloza 1994), long-term commitment through investing in real estate, or adjusting consumption habits according to the local norms (e.g., shopping for local brands, using local entertainments). Like the stranger, integrating within a particular social group, often professional, is a way of anchoring into the society while maintaining a sense of fluidity (Simmel 1983). For Elena, her professional identity and consumptions related to

that are anchored in London, while her shopping, leisure, social, and familial consumptions take place in Italy.

As opposed to the findings in prior studies on consumer acculturation as a holistic concept (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994), acculturation in transnationalism is domain specific as subjects may be fully integrated in one domain (often professional) and fully segregated from others. The following quote from Paola, who works and resides in London while maintaining personal and professional connections with Italy and United States, indicates that even for salient services, such as healthcare, transnational consumers do not necessarily reacculturate in a new destination.

> *There are still things that I don't know about UK after living here for seven years. Even basic things like who do I call when I'm sick? Is it the same system everywhere? How can I see a specialist? In Italy, I know what to do, in US I also figured how it's done, here I still don't know. I didn't have the time to figure it out. I didn't have the necessity too. I also don't know much about social rules, economic rules, housing and many other things. These things take time and I honestly don't know if I need to know them. I'll learn if I have to (Paola, 34).*

Paola structures her life in a way that she can benefit from accessing multiple localities and minimizing her efforts to invest time and find local commercial services in her permanent residence in London. She does not see the necessity to have a local doctor as she relies on existing and trusted relations in Italy, her birth country, and the United States, where her in-laws are located and she frequently visits. Multi-cohabitation may lead to the experience of multiple citizenship (Ong 1999) when my informants

strategically anchor their lives in multiple geographical locations and capitalize on different benefits and rights. Ong (1999, p.6) describes multiple citizenship as a form of flexibility that is primarily driven by economic reasons and interest in capital accumulation, from which my informants receive emotional, financial, and professional benefits.

These findings extend Askeggard et al.'s (2005) framework on consumer identity positions in mobility. The authors introduce four identity positions: Hyperculture (when hyper-assimilation with the host culture takes place, while consumers abandon their ethnic culture), assimilate to the host consumer culture, Pendulism (oscillation between home and host cultures), and Integration (best of the both worlds). In addition to these identity positions, transnational consumers exhibit the fifth identity type that is of 'stranger' (Simmel 1983). My informants strategically decide on the level of acculturation in new consumer markets and minimize time and effort required for integration. Multi-cohabitation provides the opportunity for being strategic and selective in acculturation decisions. Paola and Elena, for example, have made efforts in integrating into the professional culture in the UK (i.e., their professional identity is anchored in the UK), while they made little effort in learning the local consumer culture. Instead, their leisure, entertainment, and hobbies mainly remained anchored in Italy.

Selective acculturation, however, does not mean deterritorialization as my informants are anchored in multiple places, rather than being decentered. Such fragmentation of life (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) may lead to the experience of being transient and temporariness in one location and enduring and permanent in the other.

Paola, for example, resides in a rental apartment in London, where she permanently lives and has worked for over seven years, while she has purchased an apartment in Italy that she uses when visiting her family: "*I own a flat in Italy. All my books are there. I decorated it myself.*" Unlike the rental, pre-furnished apartment in London, the flat in Italy is meticulously decorated by Paola with her favorite possessions. The apartment in Italy serves as an emotional anchor, a financial investment, and a way to maintain and grow her network in Italy (Larsen et al. 2008).

As Peñaloza (1994) identified in her seminal work on consumer acculturation, family and friends are the two main acculturation agents that can determine the degree of integration in the host consumer culture. My analysis confirms this finding and extends the argument by examining the role of cross-border interpersonal connections. I argue that in addition to friends and families at home and host, cross-border connections can have a central impact on my informants' lack of intention to acculturate in a new context. The following quote from Jeff points at the nature of his relationship with locals in Singapore, where he permanently works and resides, and those in other places that he is involved with (London and Belgium).

> *I have most of my friends in London. Although we don't see each other that often, maintaining that relationship is very easy, it doesn't require a lot of work. I'm going to London often and we catch up. Although I'm pretty far away from Europe [residing in Singapore], I can still be anywhere in Europe within 24 hours. There are other people here [in Singapore] that I think are more of a temporal nature, or at least that I think the friendships have not developed in such a way that I would*

assume that if they would leave tomorrow, that I would still be in touch with them at all. There have been already some cases like that and that's fine (Jeff, 33).

Jeff refers to his friendships in Singapore as temporal and of a professional nature, whereas his friendships in London are more meaningful and worthy of attention and care. These cross-border relations can perform as an acculturation agent that impacts Jeff's lack of interest in acculturating in Singaporean consumer culture. Although Jeff lives and works permanently in Singapore he does not identify with the locals or the local norms: "*I wouldn't identify at all with Singaporean culture, that is not why I'm here. In social life, it's relatively easy to avoid this [integrating to local culture] because you pick your own friends. It has helped a lot that I have friends in other places [London and Belgium]*". Jeff's goal for residing in Singapore is mainly professional, which has shaped his level and type of acculturation with the local culture. Similar to Paola, Jeff is not willing to integrate into the local consumer culture in his permanent place of residence and instead maintains his connections with friends in other places.

The selective and strategic relation with people and places can be explained by Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) notions of *ways of being*, defined as "social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather the identities associated with their actions", and *ways of belonging,* which refers to the "practices that signal or enact identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group" (p.11). What Jeff describes is the intention to "be", rather than to "belong" into the local Singaporean norms. His lack of desire to integrate is facilitated by his continued connections with his friends in London and family members in Belgium. The professional profiles of my

informants are similar to those studied by Thompson and Tambyah (1999), but the advancements made in the last two decades on mobility infrastructures, specifically the increased travel opportunities and lower cost of travels, have enhanced co-presence and cohabitations (Sheller and Urry 2006). My informants, unlike those studied by Thompson and Tambyah (1999), show a lack of interest in learning and imitating the local culture or interacting with locals.

It is worth noting that for transnationals the notions of distance and proximity have changed when maintaining cross-border connections (Giddens 1991). Distance is not understood in geographical terms, but rather the ease of access to other locations and people. For my informants, travel has become normal and an integral part of their lives. Jeff travels a few times a year between London, where his friends are located, and Singapore, where he resides and works fulltime. Travel, sometimes described as commuting, is a way to overcome distance, to maintain connections, and to get the best of the both worlds (i.e., job opportunities in one and interpersonal relationships in the other). In addition to travel, maintaining connections and selective acculturations are facilitated through communication technologies and mobile applications that enable virtual co-presence (Sheller and Urry 2006). In the following example, Silvia points at the ease of connection through Skype and WhatsApp, which have replaced physical touch and eliminated distance.

> *It is much easier to keep my connection with my own friends rather than making new ones, because frankly I see them often or we are in touch through WhatsApp or Skype. So, I don't feel the need to make new friends. I would say I spend my time on my friends 30 to 70 in favor of*

my friends everywhere else. I have a lot of weak ties here in the UK (Silvia, 30)

Silvia's first relocation to the UK in 2005 involved strong feelings of homesickness and attempts to integrate into the local culture and to find local friends (Peñaloza 1994). She, on the other hand, does not feel such pressures now as she can be in touch with her key others in other places using mobile applications and digital communication tools. Prior studies on consumer behavior in expatriatism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999) and nomadism (Bardhi et al. 2012) have largely ignored cohabitations and feeling of co-presence via the facilitating role of mobility infrastructures and communication technologies (Urry 2006). Digital communications and mobile applications have become commonplace and part of everyday life and have changed the experience of mobility.

In summary, from the acculturation point of view, my informants exhibit selective, strategic, and domain-specific acculturation style. They are anchored in multiple localities through a combination of professional, personal, and financial ties. My analysis shows that multi-cohabitation can lead to a feeling of transience in one location and permanency in the other, each leading to different acculturation strategies. My informants exhibit a lack of intention to integrate in the place where they have a sense of the temporary and exhibit more willingness to integrate and to hold long-lasting connections and commitments in the place where they have a sense of permanency. Stability and permanency are reinforced through possessions and long-term commitments, such as in the case of Paola where she invests in real estate in Italy while permanently residing in a rental flat in London. These findings contribute to the existing

conversations on consumer acculturation (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Üstüner and Holt 2007) by showing that acculturation can be strategic and domain-specific, rather than a holistic notion. At the same time, my informants' relation to place also seem to shape their acculturation. I examine these patterns next.

III. Four Meanings of Place in Transnationalism

My analysis revealed that informants form specific meanings and relationships with places they inhabit, i.e., countries. One way of addressing the contextual embeddedness of the meaning of place is through the semiotic square developed by Greimas (1966; 1987). Following Greimas (1987), I conducted a narrative semiotic analysis to uncover relatively stable patterns that provide the structure and meaning of places. I analyzed the data with a focus on relationships, practices, purposes, and meanings associated with each place. Two main oppositions of 'home' and 'host' structure my informants' relations to place. Four meanings of places have emerged: home, work, non-home, and non-work (Figure 3, more illustrative data in Table 5). My informants experience three, or at times two, of these positions simultaneously, depending on their life arrangements. A combination of different places provides transnationals with a sense of completeness. Findings also specify that informants strategically align their interpersonal relationships as well as practices (e.g., ownership, shopping, and consumption) to reinforce specific meanings.

Figure 3. Different Meanings of Place in Transnationalism

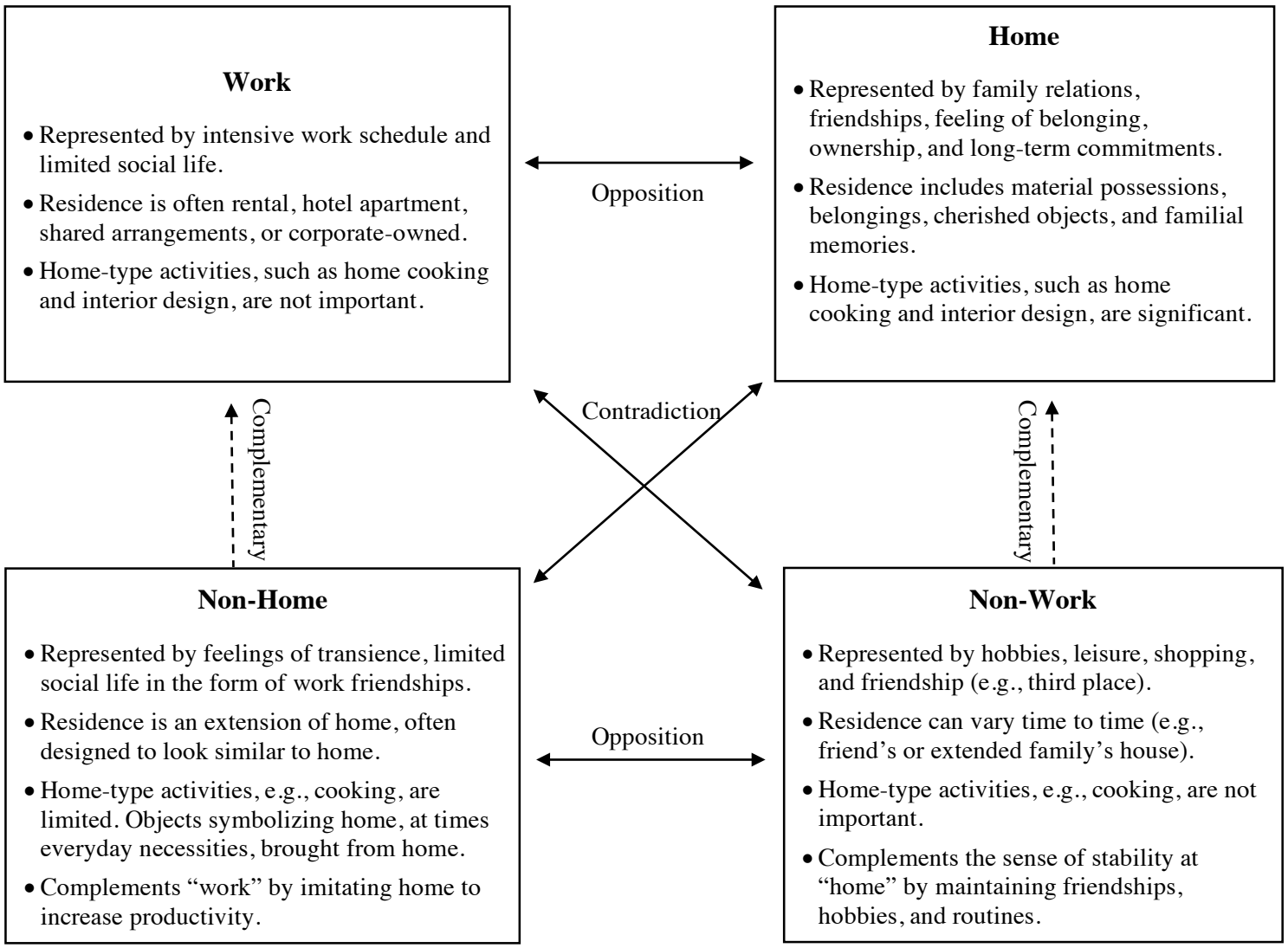


Table 4. Illustrative Data on Four Meanings of Place

Meaning of place	Illustrative data
Home	In Italy, I live in a flat. It's owned by my family but decorated to my taste. All my belongings are there. My hobbies are there. I do different mountain sports, so I go there a lot. That helps me to live in two countries actually [Elena, 38, residing in Luton, UK]. When I go to Lebanon, almost three or four times a year, I stay with my family. I go to the beach, hang out with friends, and do lots of shopping. Going back home allows me to breathe. I have my family, it's a different concept. Everyone lives close by, the family gathers together, I have Sunday lunch with the family every Sunday. My mother is near me, she always brings me food, or I go to eat at her place. We go to the beach, we go to the mountain, and in the evenings, we go out for dinner or to a bar or meet with friends [Erica, 37, residing in London]. I have all my friends and family there [Italy], and my home is there. My books are there. I have a flat there that I decorated myself. I also have a bank account there that I use whenever I go there [Paola, 34, residing in London]. Spain is where I have most of my connections. I don't have many friends here [London] because I go to Spain often or talk to them over Skype. I have my needs covered, you know talking to your friends and getting the help you need. Just getting the connection you need with someone. The intimacy. I actually have Skype meetings to have a drink with my friends. I have Skype meetings to iron and talk while we just do our ironing for the week with my friends on the weekend [Emma, 40]. I was born in here [UK] but US is where I grew up [between age of 7 and 19]. My mom is still there and also my sister. This is home. I spend about one month there every year. When I'm there, I usually do something with my family. We go out for dinner. We go out to the city, the NY, and have dinner. We usually go out to eat or meet with my friends. One of my best friends is there. We hang out a lot [Sara, 26]. I'm German but Sweden is home for me. I spend a lot of time in Sweden, which is where I have my husband and my parents in law and most of my friends [Anka, 34, residing in London].

Meaning of place	Illustrative data
Work	In Dubai I do not have a place even though I am a resident of the UAE for ten years. I stay in a hotel here and there. We have a contract with a hotel… When I'm there I am more focused on consulting. So, working and writing most of the time. It's very good actually to be in an isolated place sometimes. I can study and work most of my time [Adam, 62]. When I'm in UAE, I don't really relate to the culture. I understand them to some extent. For instance, there is a saying of inshallah which has many connotations. In the business world, it's pretty much you say inshallah because you want it to work but it is in God's hands so maybe we do it tomorrow or maybe we do it next week. In the UK when if we say we are going to do something it's kind of set in the stone, fairly inflexible. I can integrate at this level but sometimes obviously, especially in the Middle East, there is a very big difference between a professional foreigner and an Emirati [Eric, 35].
Non-Home	My apartment here [UK] is actually similar with our flat in Sweden. Even the area is the same, you know sort of a former industrial area that's developing in a more urban area and there is a park around the corner and it's similar to the area we live in Stockholm. Inside the apartment is also similar, you know the furniture. Some of it happened by accident, but I like it a lot. I realize that I have basically, without thinking about it, created something very similar [Anka, 34]. Our flat in London is nice but it's small. Groomed to be modern, but it's rented. The furniture was here, I have nothing there that is mine. I could empty it in about a day with a suitcase. I have some portraits, artworks, and decoration that make it a bit nicer, but that's it [Paola, 34, residing in London]. This is embarrassing, but we also do grocery shopping in Spain when we go there or order them online, like wine from a shop that has a branch here [UK]. We can't find here asparagus, and the kinds that we Spaniards put in our salad. The tuna. We like our tuna better. Canned tuna. We just bring tons of canned tuna, canned asparagus, and canned things that can stand a trip. Wine. We buy most of our wine in Spain, either we bring it or friends who are coming here bring it for us [Emma, 40].
Non-Work	Whenever I go to Boston, I do my shopping, specially makeup and cosmetics. I go there a few times a year and I do my shopping, or I ask my friends to do that for me and send them to me. I know what I want. There is no need to try new things [Cristina, 34, residing in Lodnon]. I always go back to Sweden or Germany for medical treatments, you know dental, skin care, surgeries, or even routine checkups. The NHS [in UK] is unfriendly, complicated with long waiting times, incompetent doctors and low quality service [Anka, 34, residing in London].

Home-Place:

My analysis revealed that home is represented by strong family relations and friendships, feeling of belonging, display of material possessions, ownership, and long-term commitments. This is in line with McCracken's (1989) notion of 'homeyness'. He argues that creation of a sense of homeyness is one of the important transactions between people and their place of residence, which is created and maintained through inclusion of possessions and cherished objects such as gifts and family memories. McCracken argues that home is an environment where gravitational power among family members is sustained and the relationship with the outside world is mediated (p.176). Hill's (1991) study on homeless women extends this argument by highlighting the importance of home as a source of stability and emotional support. While shelters may offer many basic components of home, the absence of personal space and the general loss of control make it unlikely to provide a sense of homeyness. In such a situation, homeless women are shown to rely on memories about their previous home or use fantasy about a possible future home to cope with their homeless situation.

My informants often describe home-place as 'emotional home' or 'personal home' that represents long-term commitment and emotional attachments. This is despite the fact that in many cases my informants can afford visiting home only a few times per year due to financial constraints and intense work schedules that demand full-time presence at 'work'.

> *Now that unfortunately my grandmother passed away I use her house whenever I go there [Greece]. I kinda renovated it, so I can at least store things. I like paintings and books. I see this place in Greece as my*

personal house, rather than the one here [London]. As I told you stuff are important for me, but I have learned to live without them. Now I have only the very basics here and I try when I buy something that I like I bring it to Greece. I have my base in Greece. I have very little in my London place. I have 4 good glasses but only 4 not more, 4 plates, very good ones but that's it. I try to keep it simple (Cristina 33).

Cristina lives in a shared rental apartment in London. Her place of residence is pre-furnished and she does not own many material possessions beyond necessities. Cristina views London as a workplace that is associated with intense work schedule. Lack of material possessions and long-term investments facilitate the flexibility and fluidity needed in London. Greece, on the other hand, is associated with emotional attachment and belonging. Cristina co-owns a house in Greece, where she stores her favorite paintings and books. These belongings enhance the feelings of attachment to the place.

The home in Greece is the base for Cristina that gives her the sense of attachment, continuity, and stability associated with the nature of home (McCracken 1989). Although patterns of emotional attachments to country of origin are often reported in studies on mobile consumers (e.g., Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005), my informants often do not experience nostalgia and homesickness, where they are continuously involved with their 'emotional base' via traveling. Access to home is an opportunity to capitalize on interpersonal attachments, as well as financial opportunities, as Larsen et al. (2008) describe in their notion of network capital. As opposed to social and cultural capital that are bounded by locality, network capital can be transferred

across borders (Urry 2007). Paola, for example, owns a flat in Italy that she has decorated with her hand-picked furniture and personal possessions (e.g., books, DVDs). This place gives her a sense of emotional stability and financial security (McCracken 1989) while living in a rental apartment in London and using second-hand furniture. The arrangements between places require a project management type of planning, through which my informants plan travels and assign practices and meanings to each place via consumption.

> *In Berlin I am in a house that we built in 1966. We are married for 35 years. So that's where home is, although I spend 60-70% of my time in London. My precious objects are kept in the home in Berlin, my piano and collection of arts and DVDs. With the many moves that I have and with the sort of being on the move, everything is concentrated in Berlin. You do not want to have valuable or precious things with you when you move for a couple of years because they might get damaged or lost or you know every second move is like throwing something away. We have some sculpture and a big dragon from China. These are things that will be there forever and remind you of these parts of your life (Adam, 62).*

My informants experience a sense of stability and belonging from home-place even when they are temporary far from home. Long-term commitments, such as investment in real-estate, and material possessions, such as family memories or personal belongings, reinforce the sense of stability, continuity, and belonging. My informants are not detached from material possessions and belongings (Bardhi et al. 2012), they rather hold strong and enduring attachments to them despite their frequent mobilities.

The fluidity required in their professional life, however, does not allow the presence of belongings in their everyday life. My informants learn the skill of maintaining long-distance relations to their belongings and possessions. Berlin, for example, is an emotional home for Adam, where he stores his precious possessions, and the place he wants to eventually retire to, however, he can only afford visiting his home a few times per year.

Despite mobility being a central part of my informants' identity and a growing necessity in their professional life (Bardhi et al. 2012), they, seek to minimize the instability and fluidity resulting from it. Having a base, or an emotional home, is a way of emotional anchoring and managing uncertainties and instabilities, while maintaining mobility.

Work-Place:

Work is associated with an intense work schedule, productivity, and limited social life and interpersonal relations. Living arrangements in work take the form of corporate-owned flats, hotel apartments, rental flats, and shared arrangements. Home-type activities, such as home-cooking, shopping, and vacations may not be as salient among my informants, instead, more efficient practices, such as take-out foods, take place at work-place. Material possessions (e.g., home appliances, properties, cars) are limited to facilitate the feeling of transient that is necessary for productivity. Consumption is more work-related and driven by the logic of speed and efficiency.

My informants view their work-place to be temporal in nature, despite several years of residing and permanent work contracts in some cases (c.f., Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Elena, for example, refers to the UK, Luton specifically, as her work-place. She has been living in a hotel apartment for over five years, with very basic belongings and limited possessions.

> *I've established my life in the UK, but UK is mainly work, or it's only work for me. If I refer to home, I do refer to my flat in Italy. What attracts me to the UK is my job, and probably nothing else. In the UK, I live in a hotel apartment. My main belongings, books and stuff are all in Italy. I got used to living in a hotel apartment and I don't really mind, mostly because I'm not here fulltime. I can accept it because it's only five nights a week, the rest is in a place that is much more familiar for me (Elena 38).*

Elena does not see her relationship with the UK beyond the professional domain. She does not interact with locals and only has a few work friends in Luton. Unlike nomads (Bardhi et al. 2012), however, Elena maintains her anchor in Italy by frequently traveling there, owing possessions there, and having hobbies and friendships in Italy.

Work-place serves as an anchor for professional identity and a source of cultural capital. Erica views the UK as a place where she can accumulate social and cultural capital by going to talks, museums, and joining intellectual societies. These experiential consumptions have the potential of cultural capital (Weinberger, Zavisca, and Silva 2017). This allows my informants to maximize learning through novel experiences (Keinan and Kivetz 2008). In other words, transnational consumers recognize the

potential of the place and strategically consume what place can offer (Ong 1999). London, for example, offers consumption opportunities tied to cultural capital and intellectual development. This points to the logic of productivity tied to work-place.

> *London is a workplace for me. If I'm in London, it's very important for me to go to the opera, the Royal Opera House. I go to lots of talks. I am a member of many different institutions and societies. I go to lectures, to talks. So, I keep my intellectual and cultural life busy. In London, I've always lived in a shared accommodation. So, I've never had my own place. I never go home early to my flat, because I don't feel I'm at home. I work in a coffee shop or sometimes in the library and only go home to sleep. There is an element of loneliness here (Erica 37).*

Similar to Elena, Erica has not stablished a permanent life in the UK, despite living in London for over five years. Living in big cities facilitates the transient nature of the 'work', a feeling of isolation, and a lack of intention to integrate (Sassen 2002). My informants' instrumental relation with their 'work'-place is manifested in their lack of material belonging, use of second-hand furniture, and short-term accommodation arrangements, often in the form of shared arrangement or corporation-owned properties with limited emotional engagement (Bardhi et al. 2012). As Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) identified in their notion of liquid consumption, my informants' consumption practices in the place associated as 'work' can be characterized as ephemeral, access based, and dematerialized.

Non-Home-Place:

The third contextual meaning of place is non-home: represented by feelings of transience, limited possessions, limited home-type activities, and limited social life, often in the form of temporal and work friendships. Non-home complements 'work' by increasing productivity via imitating home-type activities and feelings. The place of residence is often decorated or redesigned to look similar to home. Objects symbolizing home (e.g., photos, decorations) or practices that resemble home-type activities (e.g., rearranging the kitchen to facilitate cooking routines, rearranging bedrooms) enhances the feeling of hominess, despite the transient nature of non-home.

> *I have my entertainment here [London] with me. I have that set up and that gives me the frame within a house. I have my guitar along also. I also brought one of the Persian rugs that my father gave me many years ago. That is something that gives every apartment a kind of homie or belonging and make you to not to feel lonely or isolated in apartment or some big city (Adam, 62).*

Adam manages the loneliness and lack of social connections in the big city by applying his home-like arrangements in London. London does not mean home for Adam as it lacks stability, commitment, and strong social and familial connections, however, it is an extension of his home in Berlin to help him cope with loneliness and manage intense work schedules in London. London, Dubai, and Berlin represent non-home, work, and home for Adam, respectively (more data in Table 5), each representing specific meaning, practices, and activities and serve as an identity anchoring point. The

combination of these places gives Adam a sense of wholeness (Firat and Venkatesh 1995).

> *I don't see myself living here [London] forever, but I bought a house here. It is a good investment. That made me feel a bit connected to the UK. I still don't feel like I belong. The way I describe it is I'm happy here, I see no reasons to leave unless some reason comes up. I might consider moving back to the US, I know people there and I can find a good job (Emma, 40).*

Non-home is associated with feelings of the temporary. This is both an opportunity and a challenge for Emma; her lack of attachment to London helps her keep the option of moving back to US, yet she struggles with lack of emotional connection. London is a place of transition (Sassen 2013), a place to grow network capital and professional connections (Larsen et al. 2008), and to take advantage of investment opportunities (both in financial terms and in the form of cultural capital).

Non-Work-Place:

The fourth contextual meaning of place is non-work, associated with hobbies, leisure, shopping, and friendships. Non-work is often viewed as the third place linked with novel experiences, emotional expression, and diversity (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982, p.265). It is a residency that is often not fixed and could vary from time to time (e.g., friend's or extended family's house). For my informants, non-work complements

'home' by maintaining a feeling of belonging, continuity, stability, and routines (e.g., shopping routines, friendship, hobbies).

> *I would say that my best friends are mostly in London, I visit them often. I don't have a place there, I usually crash at some friend's house. We are very close. We have a WhatsApp group that we plan things together, like holidays. I went on a holiday, the trip to Lebanon, a couple weeks ago, that was with this entire group from London… I do my shopping also in London. Burton is my go-to store in London, I buy basically everything there (Jeff, 33, residing in Singapore).*

London is the third place for Jeff (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982). His relation to London is strongly linked to his friends (former colleagues), leisure activities, and extensive shopping. He does not associate any of these activities with Singapore, where he works, or Belgium, where his family reside.

> *I do most of my shopping in the US. I either go there for conferences or to visit friends. Then we add another week for shopping. This year, for example, I had gone to a conference in May, a wedding in June, another conference and an extra week in July. Every time I go there, I bring an extra suitcase and extend my trip to do my shopping. I buy most of my clothes there (Emma, 40, residing in London).*

In addition to friendship and leisure activities, involvement with 'non-work' is associated with the feeling of routine and continuity that compliments home. Emma, for example, carefully plans her trips to the US, where she often visits to meet former colleagues and friends, to carry out her carefully planned shopping list.

In summary, four meanings of place have emerged in transnationalism: home, work, non-home, and non-work. The framework presented in Figure 3 illustrate these positions. This framework also articulates the fragmentation of social and professional life in transnationalism (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). My informants form and maintain relations with each place by carefully aligning activities, relationships, and consumption practices to each locality. A combination of different places provides transnationals with a sense of completeness. This is a form of fragmentation as the individual's identity is multicentered and integrated across a transnational network of home places (Firat and Venkatesh 1995, p.245). This is, however, not to claim that my informants' identities are detached from the locality, it is in fact the opposite as their identities are shaped by the meaning attached to the locality (e.g., emotional home, professional workplace) in a way that the combination of different anchoring provides them with a sense of wholeness. For example, home-place is associated with emotional anchoring, strong interpersonal relations, long-term commitment, stability, and continuity that complements the instability and fluidity at work-place.

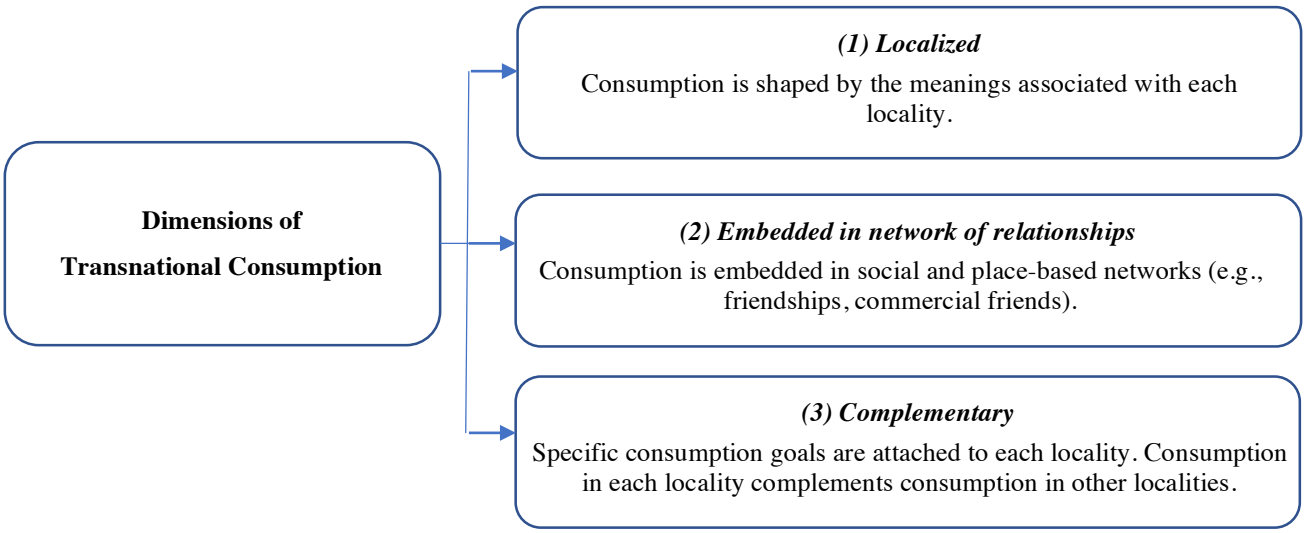
My findings show that home-type relations shape transnational consumption that I illustrate next.

IV. Transnational Consumption

The nature of consumption in transnationalism differs from consumption in other mobility-driven consumer lifestyles examined in consumer research (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012; Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015). My analysis

revealed three dimensions of consumption when consumers adopt a transnational lifestyle. As shown in Figure 4, transnational consumption is localized, embedded in networks of relationship and places, and complementary:

Figure 4. Transnational Consumption



1- Localized

In contrast to what we know from studies on nomadism that define consumption as deterritorialized and instrumental, where possessions and practices are strategic resources in managing mobility (Bardhi et al. 2012, p.510), my informants' consumptions are fragmented and localized with distinct consumption patterns and materiality assigned to each home-place (work, home, non-home, non-work). Consumption practices associated with home-pace, for example, enhance connections and long-term attachments, whereas those associated with work-place enhance productivity and fluidity.

Italy is where I feel at home. Four years ago, we bought a flat there. Everything there is ours, the furniture, the books, everything. It feels like a home even if I am not there all the time. I make sure to take good care of the flat in Italy because we are not renting it out, so I want to make sure of that. Our flat in the UK is very basic, nothing here is ours, I can pack our life and leave in an afternoon (Paola, 34).

For Paola, the practice of property ownership is shaped by her attachment to Italy as her home, despite the fact that she only spends less than one-third of her time in Italy, and the rest in a rental apartment in the UK. As transnationals are simultaneously involved with multiple places, consumption becomes a medium to maintain the relation with the place and the meaning attached to them. Hence, instead of consumption being territorial, as reported in the case of migrants (e.g., Mehta and Belk 1991) or deterritorialized, as reported in the case of nomads (Bardhi et al. 2012), transnationals maintain attachments to multiple places.

I buy specific perfume from a shop in London. So, for me buying perfume means London. For me this perfume became also my connection to London. It's not expensive or anything special… everyday things. Also, I buy very specific makeup from US. I either order it online or buy whenever I go there or ask my friends to send. For me this is Boston as funny as it sounds, I know. Food is always Greece. I bring lots of things from there (Cristina, 34).

Cristina's consumption pattern is multi-centered and fragmented as she regularly crosses geographical borders in her everyday consumption. Firat and Venkatesh (1995,

p.252) define fragmentation in the consumer experience as being multiple, disjointed, and a tool to represent human subjects as divided self. The fragmentation argument treats individuals as decentered and fragmented, instead of unified and centered (p.245). The fragmentation in transnational consumption is shaped by different meanings and purposes associated to each locality. My informants adopt a project management logic in planning their everyday consumptions from different places. Prior studies on migration have discussed the home-inspired consumption as a source of symbolic attachment and a tool to express communal and national identity tied to nationalism and ethnic identity (e.g., Mehta and Belk 1991). My informants, however, show a different pattern, where simultaneous engagements with different places (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Sheller and Urry 2006) facilitate everyday consumption to be multicentered and fragmented. In a way, my informants' consumer acculturation is transnational in nature since through their multi-engagements they learn how to access the best market offerings.

> *I shop in US and Spain because I can find brands that I know. I'm just very attached to my American makeup. I buy it from a friend who owns a makeup store. She ships it to me wherever I am in the States. I really love it. I cannot find it here [London]. In that case, that brand, is just a very specific brand that you cannot find anywhere else. … For clothing, I'd say Calvin Klein is my favorite. I like Desigual too. Calvin Klein is American, Desigual is Spanish. I don't wear much jewelry but if I do it's usually Spanish. I do a lot of my shopping in the States. A little bit in Spain. We also do grocery shopping in Spain. We can't find here*

asparagus, and the kinds that we Spaniards put in our salad. The tuna. We like our tuna better. Canned tuna. We just bring tons of canned tuna, canned asparagus, and canned things that can stand a trip. We buy most of our wine in Spain (Emma, 40, residing in London).

Emma's quote exhibits her loyalty towards her favorite products. She continues to consume the same products even after she left Spain. Familiarity and trust in service provider are important attributes in transnational consumption. In other words, my informants show attachment and rigidity in their consumption (cf., Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017). They often resist acculturating in the consumer culture of their place of residence (Askegaard et al. 2005) and instead maintain their consumption practices and routines. To sustain these routines, adjustments are, at times, needed, such as in the case of Emma, where she switched to canned products, including vegetables and fish, so she can ship her favorite Spanish ingredients to London. In a way, their embodied home and longing for consumption practices of their home-place persist even when they reside in other places (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).

2- Embedded in Networks of Relationship

The fragmentation in transnational consumption is shaped by network of relationships across borders (e.g., familial relations, interpersonal connections, and commercial friendships). I found commercial friendships (Price and Arnould 1999) as one important type of relationship that my informants develop across the borders. A commercial friendship is a specific form of relationship between the client and the service provider that involves affection, intimacy, and social support (Price and Arnould 1999, p.50) and

is associated with commitment, loyalty, and positive word of mouth (p.39). My informants often develop strong commercial friendships, and consumption is a way to maintain them.

> *My hairdresser is in Spain, and has been there since ages. I don't have an explanation why I do my hair there. I don't know. It's probably by heart, because my hairstylist is a funny guy and I like him, so why go somewhere else? It's pretty much more based on personal relationship than the things itself. I know the guys that run the shop, I would probably feel uncomfortable by going to another shop. I don't go to hairdresser a lot anyway, so I can wait for a while, that's fine. Because I want to go there, I did it even when I was in US. Because they know me and I know them, say hi, gossip kind of stuff. I don't need to book in advance. I call, can I come? Same goes for the beautician (Emma, 40).*

Emma travels trans-Atlantic for a haircut from her favorite hairdresser during her eight years in residing in the US and six years residing in London. For her, going to the same hairdresser is a symbol of friendship with the owner of the store and a way to maintain routines and stability in her life. This is particularly an interesting pattern as services such as hairdressing, beauticians, and healthcare are often associated with proximity, ease of access, and availability (Berry, Seiders, and Grewal 2002); whereas my informants *plan* their consumption around their commercial friendships that could span borders. These commercial friendships provide a sense of stability and continuity that also help transnational consumers save time and effort in learning the consumer culture in every new market.

From the consumer acculturation point of view, the unnoticed patterns of cross-border consumptions in prior studies (Askegaard et al. 2005) can be explained via networks of relationship, commercial friendships, and different forms of attachment and meanings associated with place. My informants neither re-acculturate nor attempt to invest in new relationships in each new market. Rather, they tend to maintain their consumption patterns in prior locations, including those that are traditionally perceived to be local and in need of proximity, such as medical services, therapists, hairdressers, etc. (Berry et al. 2002). Trust in familiar service providers as well as limited resources (e.g., time) in learning new consumer markets are important attributes in transnational consumption.

> *I bought this frame [glasses] in Germany, it's from a fashion designer, who is my friend. I've still got many connections in Germany. So, I go there, good atmosphere, discount, everything. My shopping habits haven't really changed much since I moved here [London] (Anka, 34).*

Prior studies in consumer acculturation have largely ignored cross-border consumption patterns. Few studies captured the life of mobile consumers outside their country of residence (e.g., Hughes and Askegaard 2008). Peñaloza and Arroyo (2010), for example, examined transnational family structures and the impact of economic remittances sent to families in Mexico by migrant workers in the US. The transnational lives of migrants who inhabit multiple places in different geographical locations and their consumption practices taking place across borders, however, have largely been ignored.

3- Complementary

Analysis of my informants' consumption patterns revealed the complementary relations between consumption practices taking place in different localities. Consumption goals and practices assigned to localities substitute and complement one another.

> *I never went to a doctor in the UK, It's only Italy. It may sound stupid because I never really even tried the doctors here [London]. I can go, not an issue, but I prefer to see my doctor in Italy. The same for the dentist, I actually discovered that dentists in the UK are much cheaper than those in Italy. But there is no point for trying for the sake of trying. I know what I want (Viviana, 30).*

As Glick Schiller et al. (1999) explain in their notion of transnational social field, my informants perform their daily practices in a transnational social space, instead of a territorial one. Institutions, service providers, and consumer products and brands are part of the transnational social space. Therefore, once a particular consumption goal is satisfied somewhere in the transnational social field, the practice does not repeat in another locality. Emma maintains her therapist in Spain via Skype sessions during her 14 years of being away from Spain and Viviana only goes to her doctor in Milan and made no attempt at finding a local doctor in London where she works and receives health insurance.

> *My husband has skin cancer and doctors in London didn't let him see a dermatologist. They said go home and check yourself. We were not happy with that. We decided to move all medical care to Spain. We paid more and got private insurance, but we are happy. We don't really trust*

how it's going to work here [London]. We are better off there. Now we are covered and we have insurance we can get our care there (Emma, 40).

From the consumer acculturation point of view, my informants strategically align their capital (Ong 1999) to minimize acculturating efforts as re-acculturating in new consumer markets is time and resource intensive. Emma's knowledge of the healthcare system in Spain substitutes her lack of expertise in navigating the desired service in London.

In summary, transnational consumption can be understood via three dimensions: fragmented and localized, embedded in networks of transnational relationships, and complementary across a network of home-places. My informants resist multiple consumer acculturations (Askegaard et al. 2005) as it is time and resource intensive, and instead rely on existing networks of established and trusted commercial friendships across borders. Their consumer acculturation is transnational in nature as acculturation in one home-place impacts acculturation in the others. In other words, learning is ongoing and takes place in a transnational social field (transnational consumers learn where and how to acquire best products and services). This finding contrasts with prior discussions indicating that learning takes place in the host country (e.g., Peñaloza 1994). I hope transnational consumption contributes to the existing conversations on mobility-based consumer lifestyles, dominated by the territorial view on consumer acculturation (Askegaard et al. 2005; Luedicke 2015; Mehta and Belk 1991; Üstüner and Holt 2007; Jafari and Goulding 2008) and consumer nomadism (Bardhi et al. 2012). Consumption

in transnationalism highlights the largely unexplored consumption practices taking place across borders. Next, I summarize contributions and limitations of the study.

Discussion and Contributions

In contrast to the bulk of studies on mobility and consumer behavior (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007), consumer behavior researchers have largely ignored a growing form of mobility-driven lifestyle, i.e., transnationalism, that has emerged in response to the conditions of the contemporary globalized world (Sheller and Urry 2006). Transnationalism takes place as a result of simultaneous co-habitations in more than one country (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Sheller and Urry 2006), the hallmark of which is 'multi-cohabitation' that differentiates this lifestyle from migration (i.e., permanent relocation) and nomadism (i.e., deterritorialization). This study examines the transnational consumer lifestyle and provides contributions to three domains of research that I outline below: consumer acculturation, consumer mobility, and postmodern consumption.

Implications for consumer acculturation. Consumer acculturation is an interdisciplinary domain that has advanced our understanding of consumer behavior by examining consumer socialization practices in the host society through the perspective of identity as the driver of consumption (Berry 1997; Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Luedicke 2015; Üstüner and Holt 2007). Prior consumer acculturation studies have largely remained anchored within the boundaries of the host society and have paid limited attention to consumption practices and relations that are formed and maintained

across borders. In other words, the impact of consumption practices and acculturation attempts in one location on the acculturation outcomes in other location(s) has received limited attention. This is particularly important in the context of multi-cohabitation, where aspects of consumers' lives take place in different countries (e.g., family life anchored in one country and professional life in another). Thus, the duality of home-host is problematic in the situation of multi-cohabitation. In addition, consumer acculturation is primarily understood as a holistic concept (as opposed to a domain-specific one). Using the context of transnationalism, I reexamine how consumer acculturation occurs across a transnational network of home-places and how consumer acculturation in one place shapes acculturation styles in others. My findings contribute to this conversation by showing that consumer acculturation in transnationalism is not holistic, but rather selective, strategic, and domain-specific.

My findings suggest that transnational consumers tend to not re-acculturate or invest in learning and imitating the consumer culture in each new market they encounter. My informants' lack of interest in integrating into new consumer cultures is not due to their lack of capital to integrate, ideological conflict between home and host countries, or inhospitable host country, as Üstüner and Holt (2007) argue. Instead, their acculturation style is selective and strategic as transnationals purposefully plan their consumption practices in different geographical locations to capitalize on their existing connections and relationships (Larsen et al. 2008) and minimize integration efforts. I show that forming and maintaining network capital (Urry 2007) is an important skillset in transnationalism that could contribute to financial benefits, professional opportunities, and interpersonal connections. By maintaining cross-border networks via selective and

strategic consumer acculturation, transnational consumers accumulate their network capital.

In addition, I argue for the fifth consumer identity position in transnationalism: the position of stranger (Simmel 1983). Prior consumer behavior studies have identified four consumer identity positions in mobility based on the degree of integration in home or host culture (i.e., hyperculture, assimilate, pendulism, and integration; Askeggard et al. 2005). I argue that in the condition of multi-cohabitation a fifth type of consumer identity can take place when consumers purposefully integrate in some domains and disconnect from others in each social context. My informants exhibit a strategic distinction between their professional self and other aspects of their lives. Specific practices and consumptions facilitate their level of integration in each place. For example, integration in work-place is limited to professional identity and consumption practices at work-place is aimed at facilitating efficiency and productivity via limiting material possession and long-term commitments. Integration in home-place, on the other hand, involves long-lasting commitment, investment in material possessions, and often include leisure, home-type activities, and shopping. This purposeful divide can be understood as the identity position of stranger that only integrates in some domains and segregates from others.

Moreover, I argue that this fragmentation in social and professional life in transnationalism result in fragmentation in consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). I identify three dimension of transnational consumption: localized, embedded in transnational networks of relations, and complimentary across home-places (figure 4).

First, transnational consumption is localized. In contrast to findings from prior studies on frequent mobilities, deterritorialization, and liquid relations to possessions (Bardhi et al. 2012), I argue that consumption in transnationalism is driven by meanings and purposes attached to the locality. Consumption at home-place, for example, is associated with family practices such as home cooking, shopping, ownership, and long-term commitments and investments (e.g., real estate); whereas, consumption at work-place is aimed at facilitating mobility and productivity by avoiding material possessions and relying on access-based consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012, 2017).

Second, transnational consumption is embedded in networks of stablished and trusted relationships that span across borders. Prior research on consumer mobility acknowledges the role of interpersonal relationships on consumption. Peñaloza (1994) introduces familial relations and friendships as central consumer acculturation agents that impact the degree of acculturation in the host society and the type of consumption in migration. Sutton-Brady, Davis, and Jung (2010), for example, show that Korean migrants in Australia encourage their Australian-born children to watch Korean-made shows to learn about their parents' country of origin. Prior studies, however, have paid limited attention on the impact of interpersonal relations outside the host society. My findings show that cross border relations are salient in transnational consumption and impact the level of integration in the place of residence. Among these relations, the commercial friendship (Price and Arnould 1999) has emerged as an important type of relationship that transnational consumers form and maintain across borders. In my findings, I bring various examples of commercial friendships in healthcare and retail that span consumption to various places outside the permanent place of residence. In

other words, established and trusted interpersonal relationships and commercial friendships in one location impacts the degree of acculturation and types of consumption in other locations.

The embeddedness of transnational consumption in cross-border commercial friendships also contributes to our understanding of the nature of consumption. In contrast to the findings of prior studies on the importance of convenience, proximity, and ease of access in consumption of services (Berry et al. 2002), my informants' pattern of consumption is mainly shaped by their cross-border networks, instead of convenience or ease of access. In my findings, I provide examples of medical care, therapy, hairdressing, and financial services. Transnational consumers adopt a project management mindset in planning and acquiring these services from different existing trusted networks.

Third, transnational consumption is complementary as consumption practices in each locality complements and substitutes consumptions in other localities. I show that transnational consumers tend to maintain their old consumption habits and routines instead of adapting to new consumer cultures in different markets. I found that once a consumption goal is satisfied in a locality, transnational consumers tend to avoid consumption of similar products in other locations. The inflexibility in changing consumption habits among transnational consumers provides them with a sense of stability, routine, and continuity and a way to manage the fluidity of their lives.

This inflexibility in transnational consumption contributes to the discussion of consumer agency in consumer acculturation. Prior studies on consumer acculturation broadly argue on two contrasting mechanisms in acculturation processes. Askegaard et

al. (2005), Oswald (1999), and Thompson and Tambyah (1999) are among scholars who argue for selective acculturation processes, through which consumers have agency to accept or reject aspects of home or host consumer culture. These processes result in integration into either home or host consumer culture or adopting a combination of both, which Askegaard et al. (2005) refer to as 'the best of both worlds'. The other stream of studies highlight the dominant consumer acculturation processes due to the pressure from locals to adjust to the host culture (Jafari and Goulding 2008) or inhospitable host culture for divergent modes of life (Üstüner and Holt 2007; Luedicke 2015). Such processes highlight lack of consumer agency in freely choosing or altering consumption habits. Consumption in transnationalism contributes to the first stream of studies by highlighting that frequent mobility and co-habitation help sustaining access to multiple consumer cultures and enhancing consumer agency in maintaining old habits and avoiding re-acculturation.

Implications for consumer mobility. Consumer mobility is an interdisciplinary domain of research that examines different patterns of mobility (e.g., migration, nomadism) and the impacts on consumers' lives. Studies on consumer mobility have advanced our understanding of consumer behavior via examining consumer socialization practices in the host society through the perspective of consumer acculturation (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994; Luedicke 2011, 2015; Jafari and Goulding 2008; Oswald 1999), upward or downward social mobility through the lens of consumer empowerment (Chytkova 2011; Üstüner and Holt 2007), and consumer relations with material possessions and branded products (Bardhi et al. 2012; Bardhi et al. 2010; Mehta and Belk 1991). My findings advance our understandings of mobility-

driven consumer lifestyles by examining transnationalism, where consumers simultaneously engage with multiple sociocultural contexts via the formation and maintenance of cross-border financial, professional, and interpersonal ties (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). In this study, I contribute to the existing arguments on consumer mobility in different ways.

First, my findings illustrate that the fragmentation of life in transnationalism helps transnational consumers manage the fluidity of their mobile lifestyle. Few studies on consumer behavior have explored the ways consumers manage the fragmentation of mobile lifestyles through consumption. Bardhi et al. (2012), for example, argue that liquid relations to possessions (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) and the absence of locality in nomadism are mechanisms to manage frequent mobilities and the deterritorialization of life. My findings contribute to this conversation by arguing that fragmented consumption in transnationalism facilitate a sense of continuity, stability, and identity anchoring that help consumers manage the fragmentation of their lives. Maintaining existing cross-border networks, including commercial friends, are strategies to maintain a sense of stability when frequent mobilities are a necessary part of life.

My findings also contribute to the existing conversations on consumer mobility by identifying different meanings of locality (i.e., country) that emerge in transnationalism. Understanding the meaning of locality is important in consumer research as locality structures associations and provides boundaries to consumption (McCracken 1988). In prior studies on consumer mobility, little has been done to explore the range of meanings that locality can take and its impacts on consumption. Home-host duality is predominantly used in prior studies to examine consumption practices and relations

associated with places (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2010; Oswald 1999). Through the context of transnationalism, I reexamine this perspective in locality. My findings challenge the home-host duality and extend the meanings that localities can take by using a semiotics analysis (Greimas 1987). Narrative semiotic analysis revealed four meanings of place in transnationalism: home, work, non-home, and non-work, as illustrated in Figure 3 and Table 5. I show that two or more of these meanings co-exist in my informants' lives and provide them with a sense of completeness.

Each category of place is associated with certain meaning and practices. Home-place, for example, is represented by family relations, friendships, long-lasting commitments, stability, and a sense of belonging. In contrast to findings from studies on migration on remote access to home, my findings show that home continues to perform a central anchoring point for my informants (McCracken 1988). Despite occasional access to home, the collection of material possessions and investment in long-lasting commitments (e.g., real estate) enhance the feeling of belonging even when transnationals do not permanently reside at home. Work-place, on the other hand, is represented by an intense work schedule and limited social life. The place of residence is often a rented dwelling, hotel apartment, shared arrangement, or corporate-owned. Consumption at work-place can be described as fluid with limited material possessions and belongings (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) that are aimed at facilitating productivity and mobility. The third meaning of places is non-home-place, where a hybrid form between home-place and work-place takes place. Non-home is often the permanent place of residence for my informants, where they work and reside full time. Non-home is, however, often associated with feelings of a transient and limited social life, mostly

in the form of professional friendships. Material possessions and cherished objects are at times incorporated in the place of residence to enhance the sense of homeyness (McCracken 1988), maintain connections to home-place, and increase productivity (such as in the case of an informant who brought his music instruments and his favorite rug to the place of residence). Finally, non-work-place is understood as the third place (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982), where hobbies, leisure, entertainment, shopping, and, at times, long-distance friendships are carried out.

The four meanings of place in transnationalism challenge the home-host duality that dominates studies on consumer mobility. In addition to the duality, home and host are often viewed as separate and disconnected in prior studies (Peñaloza 1994). Home is often viewed as a place that is left behind and serves as a source of nostalgia. My findings provide a framework (Figure 3) that illustrates interconnection between places in transnationalism as my informants' everyday lives takes place across borders, such as in the case of long-distance family arrangements where aspects of professional and personal life are interlinked across places. As opposed to being territorial and bounded, my informants' lives take place in a transnational social field (Faist 1998, p. 216; Kivisto 2001; Glick Schiller et al. 1999), where institutions (e.g., family, professional organizations), service providers (e.g., healthcare, financial, and other public or private services), and consumer products spread across borders and structure everyday lives.

This multi-centering of life, however, does not mean deterritorialization or the absence of locality in transnational lifestyle (Bauman 2000). Transnationals, on the other hand, are attached, rather than detached, from places. Maintaining relations with multiple localities allows them to access benefits and rights tied to each place (Ong

1999). In a way, transnationals accumulate network capital by creating and maintaining cross-border relations, from which they receive emotional, financial, and professional benefits (Larsen et al. 2008, p. 656). For example, maintaining long-distance family arrangements across borders or undertaking transnational professional assignments or part-time cross-border affiliations are examples of accessing benefits and accumulating capital across geographical localities.

These findings also contribute to the conceptualization of home. I challenge the singular notion of home and argue for a networked and fragmented home in transnationalism. In prior studies in consumer behavior, home is primarily understood as territorial and singular and is mainly linked with nation-state, country of birth, ethnic identity, and collective religious or ideological values (Csikszentmihalyi and Halton 1981). For my informants, however, home is understood as a combination of multiple places across geographical borders, where each place serves a purpose (e.g., emotional-home, work-home). In contrast to works on the singularity of home, home in transnationalism is multiple and multi-centered, which allows me to contribute to the discussion on the meaning of home and home-making practices. In prior studies on consumer mobility, home is interlinked with the nation-state and migrants are shown to re-create a sense of home through material possessions when relocating abroad (Mehta and Belk 1991; Oswald 1999). Transnational consumers, however, maintain access to their emotional base and do not attempt to re-create a sense of home in another location. Ong (1999) describes this as a type of flexibility, where the level of involvement in each place is determined by the goals associated with the place.

Implications to postmodern consumption. Firat and Venkatesh (1995, p.252) identify five conditions of postmodernity: hyperreality (reality is constructed rather than given), fragmentation (consumption is multiple and disjointed), reversal of production and consumption, decentered subject (instead of a cognitive subject, we have a communicative subject), and juxtaposition of opposites (fragmentation, rather than unification, is a basis of consumption). Consumer transnationalism represents a particular case of postmodern consumer where fragmentation in individual's life takes place through simultaneous cohabitations in multiple places. I also argue that this result in a fragmentation of transnational consumers' identity when different places (e.g., work, home) satisfy different aspects of their sense of self.

In addition, I identify the nature of postmodern consumption in transnationalism: fragmented and localized, embedded in transnational networks of connections, and complementary across home-places. These three dimensions highlight 1) the central role of locality in postmodern consumption and 2) consumer's agency in purposefully aligning consumption practices across borders. Firat and Venkatesh (1995, p.255) consider fragmentation in consumers' lives an emancipatory response to the market logic and an attempt to restructure one's identity. In this study, I argue that transnational lifestyle and cohabitation is a means to facilitate fragmentation and exercise agency in response to the conditions of globalization. Transnational consumers strategically decide the consumer culture they would like to integrate to and the level of acculturation. This, of course, is not without its limits as they face time and resource limitations (e.g., financial constraints) in their travels and the frequency of access to different markets.

In summary, this study provides contributions to three domains of research: consumer acculturation, consumer mobility, and postmodern consumption. I argue that despite the growing opportunity and demand for co-habitations, the transnational lifestyle has received little attention in consumer behavior studies. My findings show that transnationalism is a form of fragmentation and multi-centering of life (Firat and Venkatesh 1995) that anchors consumers into multiple consumer cultures. My semiotic analysis of the meaning of place challenges the duality of home-host that is dominant in consumer mobility studies (Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005). Four meanings of place have emerged in my analysis that highlights a range of purposes and meanings associated with each locality. This finding also contributes to the conceptualization of home. In transnationalism, home is fragmented and networked, instead of singular, territorial, and tied to a nation-state (McCracken 1988). This study also extends our understanding of consumer acculturation by showing that acculturation in transnationalism is selective, strategic, and domain specific as transnational consumers tend to maintain old consumption habits and avoid re-acculturating into new consumer markets. Finally, my analysis of consumption in transnationalism reveals three dimensions of transnational consumption: localized, embedded in transnational networks of relations, and complementary. This finding also extends our understanding of postmodern consumption by emphasizing on the role of locality and consumer's agency in fragmentation in consumption and consumers' identities.

Limitations and Future Research

One possible limitation of this study is the semi-structured interviews I utilized to collect data about transnational consumers' behaviors across borders. As with any interview data (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994), my results reflect what informants believe they do in different places. In some cases, I was able to conduct the interview at informant's homes or offices, but some interviews were conducted via Skype. As a result, observing the contents of informants' dwelling across localities was not generally possible. In addition, my informants may also reflect based on what they believe I seek to find. To minimize the social desirability effect in my data, I did not ask sensitive questions (Appendix A) and I also did not have any personal connection with my informants prior to the interview. The other possible limitation of this study is the sample size. I collected data from 20 transnational consumers. Although my sample covers a range of professions including academia, nursing, management, real estate, finance, and cosmetics, a bigger sample would further strengthen my findings.

One possible area of future work is to investigate the role of different types of capital on consumer transnationalism. My sample includes informants who have at least one university degree and speak at least two languages (except one informant). This could raise a question of the role of social and cultural capital in managing a transnational lifestyle. In relation to economic capital, my informants do not possess high economic capital and in fact, they, at times, face financial constraints. For some of my informants, transnationalism is a way to minimize expenses via accessing more affordable consumer markets and maximize revenue by carrying multiple jobs across

borders. Thus, while other researchers find that high economic capital are essential in managing a mobile lifestyle (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012), my study does not show high economic capital as a necessary attribute in transnationalism. However, network capital (Urry 2007) is central among my informants and enables them to grow their cross-border network and access financial and professional opportunities. Future study can investigate the role of all of these types of capital in facilitating transnationalism.

Appendix A. Interview Guide

1. Country portfolio
    1. What are the countries you have lived or worked in during the past five years?
    2. What are the countries you currently work or live in?
    3. What are the reasons you have maintained connection with X, Y (different countries in the portfolio)?
    4. How much time you spend in each location throughout the year?
    5. In which of the locations do you have fixed residential place?
2. Portfolio meaning
    1. In what ways you think living in X and Y are different/similar?
    2. What do you like/dislike about each one?
    3. What would come to mind when describing X or Y?
    4. How do you describe the role of each one in your life? How do they impact who you are today?
    5. Let's imagine a scale from 1 to 7, how would you rate the importance of X/Y on your life? In what ways
    6. How do you see yourself in X or Y? which one is homier?
    7. To what extend you see the country as a whole representing who you are?
    8. If you are to pick one occasion that describes your relation with X, what would that be?
    9. In what ways living in X has changed your life in Y and vice versa?
    10. Tell me about your friends? Do you keep contact with your friends at X when you are in Y? in what ways they are different/similar?
    11. How do you compare your life with that of a migrant? In what ways you think it is similar/different?
3. Consumption portfolio
    1. Take me through one off day/weekend in X and Y, what do you do? Where do you eat? With whom do you go out?
    2. In what ways your day off in X is different from one in Y?

3. Describe your place of residence in X and Y? In what ways they are different/ similar? [ask for pictures]

4. Do you carry stuff between the countries?

5. How do you shop in X/Y? Take me through a shopping day in X and Y? Where do you mostly do your shopping and why?

6. What is your favorite clothing brand? How do you find it in X/Y? have you ever had any problem finding what you want in X/Y?

7. Where do you get your medical services?

8. Where do you get your haircut?

9. How did you want a good place for grocery in X/Y? a good hairdresser? A nice bar?

10. How do you describe your clothing style in relation to the places you lived in? [similar question for food consumption, media consumption and entertainment]

11. What TV series do you watch, what music do you listen to when you are in X/Y?

12. What is the most precious object you own? What does it mean to you?

13. What do you do in Holidays? Which one do you celebrate? What do they mean to you? With whom do you celebrate?

14. In what ways having access in the market in X has changed your consumption pattern in Y and vice versa?

15. What are the things that you do in X that you cannot/don't want to do in Y?

16. To what extend/how much you are attached to X/Y?

17. In what ways your life is different in X/Y? which one is home?

18. What is the difference between shopping in X/Y? anything particular you buy when you are in X/Y?

19. What is your favorite local brand/shop in X/Y? name a few and describe them to me? Have you been able to find local brands of X in Y and vice versa? Anything you would like to change in your favorite local brand of X in Y?

4. <u>Closing questions</u>

1. How do you describe your social status in X? Compare with other locations.

2. How do you describe the role of your job in obtaining such status? [same question for social and professional network]

3. How do you describe your relation with locals, in London as well as other locations?

4. Have you ever experienced being socially isolated in any of the places you live/work in?

Demographics

Please answer the following questions as precisely as you can.

Age: _____

Education Level: _____

Current Occupation(s): _____

Country of origin (birth): _____

Previous relocation pattern: _____

Nationality (ies): _____

Do you have kids? If yes, how many? _____

Civil Status: Single Married Divorced Single Parent Widowed

Name the languages you speak? _____

Paper 3

Social Media as Public Sphere:

The Case of Iranian Women's Social Movement

Introduction

In this study, I empirically examine another aspect of consumer transnationalism: transnational consumer movements facilitated by transnational social media platforms. I specifically examine the emancipatory potential of such transnational platforms for an Iranian women social movement that is focused on the issue of public dress code. After the Iranian revolution in 1997, the issue of public dress code for women has become both a sociopolitical concern and a consumer concern (Milani 1992). However, this issue has not been extensively and democratically discussed in local mainstream media, such as newspapers, magazines, and TV, since these platforms are controlled by, monitored, or owned by the state. In recent years and with the growing globalization of social media, Iranian women's movement has been influenced by transnational social media. The increasing use of social media to share, discuss, and connect with like-minded individuals, both inside and outside the country, has been a central focus of the movement. In addition, the coverage from transnational news agencies and the engagements from the expat community as well as transnational activist groups and NGOs have contributed to the global presence and the impact of the movement.

Many scholars have studied the social formation of transnational social movements as a result of the interconnections between institutions such as political and social coalitions, NGOs, news agencies, and activists across borders (Vertovec 2009). The presence of social media has facilitated the transnational movements, especially in the last few years as the result of social media-fueled and sustained revolts against political situations, such as the Arab Spring movements, and more recently, the Hong

Kong youth protests (cf. Sparks 2000; Iosifidis 2011; Fuchs 2014). Similar patterns of transnationalism in social movements have been reported in Me Too movement, Back Lives Matter movement and many more.

In consumer behavior studies, we have seen the emergence of critical arguments, directed at one fundamental question: can consumers imagine a better world and then enact this world through their individual consumption activities? (Murray and Ozanne 1991, 1994; Firat and Vankatesh 1995; Shankar et al. 2006; Schor 2007). I engage in this debate by examining what kind of emancipatory space social media (as a transnational consumption space) is through the lens of the concept of the public sphere, a mediating domain between the private and the public authority spheres (Habermas; 1989a, 305). The public sphere is where "public opinion can be formed with citizens assembling and publicizing their opinions freely" (1989b, p.231). The public sphere emancipates opinion from the control of the state and the commercial institutions by providing a platform for voicing one's belief and collectively establishing its legitimacy.

This paper examines whether social media has become a contemporary public sphere based on a netnography of an online campaign of Iranian women demanding more freedom and control over their personal choices, known as "My Stealthy Freedom". Adopting the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, the goal of this study is to reconsider the role of social media and digital spaces in empowering individuals and to unpack the consumption acts related to emancipatory causes. I see social media as a commercial platform that enhances human connections, fosters and amplifies critical voices, and enables other forms of debate and discussion beyond face-to-face, verbal, or textual communications. I found that social media is important in this context

as other means of communication, such as TV and newspaper, are either in the hands of, or controlled by, the state. I also found that specific forms of communications emerged that mostly take place through photos and videos in a way that standardized forms of digital discourses are shaped in this context.

This study also provides a different perspective on the role of consumption and the marketplace in consumer emancipation. In consumer behavior studies, particularly in the CCT domain, consumer emancipation is often seen in the context of freeing oneself from the capitalist forces of the marketplace. Studies on the Burning Man festival (Kozinets 2002), anti-consumption and anti-consumerism consumer movements (Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Giesler 2006; Shankar et al. 2006), for example, view consumer emancipation "from" the marketplace ideology, rather than "through" it. This study brings another viewpoint by looking at the mediating role of market logic and commercial spaces in consumer emancipation. I, specifically, examine social media spaces as platforms for emancipation and self-representation where individuals face a dominating ideology and lack of freedom for self-portrayal. This study adds consumption spaces to the existing arguments on the facilitating role of the market in expressing consumer agency, dominated by studies on stigmatized consumption (e.g., Sandicki and Ger 2010) and consumer subcultures (e.g., Kates 2002, 2004).

Theorization of consumer agency through the public sphere and structural transformation has a long history in the social sciences and consumer culture studies (Habermas 1989; Murray and Ozanne 1991, 1994). Consumers are conceptualized as active agents who contribute to "what is happening on the stage" rather than being passive and receptive of market offerings. For Holt (2000), for example, exercising

individual agency is a project of self-creation and self-representation. Habermas' (1989) first theorization of the public sphere deals with a discourse-based, face-to-face, status free site voluntary organized by the public to distance themselves from the state and the commercial arena in order to critically debate over common issues. The current study builds on this concept and examines the digital public space in the context of the feminist movement in Iran. The triggers of creation of the digital public sphere and the strategies used by individuals in debating over their preferred consumption practices are discussed.

In the following section, I review the theoretical groundings on individuals' agentic power and the roots for emancipatory actions. Next, the link between consumption and emancipation is reviewed from the consumer culture perspective. Then, theoretical perspectives and conceptualizations of consumption as emancipatory means are discussed. Finally, the study context, research method and study contributions are presented.

Conceptual Foundation: Human Agency

The term *agency* has been associated with a range of notions, including selfhood, motivation, will, intentionality, choice, and freedom (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Among the many theoretical approaches on agency, practice or habitual based (Bourdieu 1990) and rational and norm-based (Habermas 1989) perspectives are among the pioneers who coined the term.

Theorists of practices, such as Pierre Bourdieu (1984, 1990), define human agency as practices that become repetitive, taken-for-granted, and habitual over time. Bourdieu's notion of practice provides a dialectical approach between structure and agency via three notions of field, habitus, and capital. He argues that individuals internalize the social structures of different fields and over time these structures become habitual and repetitive (i.e., habitus). On the other hand, structure, including norms, rituals, ideologies, and traditions, are not produced in a vacuum, but rather as the outcome of human interactions and an underlying cognitive reasoning based on past practices. Bourdieu, therefore, views human agency in the context of everyday practices and bounded within social relations. Giddens (1979), similarly, highlights that practices can vary to a certain degree depending on the level of consciousness, however, our social predispositions and social structures remain as key in defining agency.

Rational choice theory has stressed on goal seeking and purpose of actions (Habermas 1984–89; Munch 1981). The rational conceptualization of human agency relies on the assumption of individuals as "free agents", who are able to make rational choices for self and society (Luke 1973). Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p.970) define agency as "the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments, the temporal relational contexts of action, which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations". Temporal aspects of agency stress the self-transformative aspects of human agency, when individuals face contradictory circumstances. Conflicts and contradictions between entities lead to changes in social structures as well as the self (Emirbayer and Mische

1998). In such a conceptualization, which is also closer to the current study's conceptualizations of human agency, "projective future" and "cultural creativity" are the main point of focus in defining agency.

Social reproduction through "cultural creativity" has usually been linked to rebellious behaviors of unsatisfied individuals (Corsaro 1992). Human actors do not merely repeat past routines, they also create new practices as well as new social structures (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Interactively generated criticisms are shaped through shared experiences that lead to the reproduction of "future" social structures, values, and norms (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). Hence, the imaginative engagement in future, as an important dimension of human agency, represents actors' capability of distancing the self from habits and traditions to invent new possibilities for thoughts and actions for the future.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) calls for the "projective dimension" of human agency by arguing for the interplay between current actions and future desires. Authors note that "projectivity is neither radically voluntarist nor narrowly instrumentalist (p. 984)". Future-oriented projects are interactive and culturally embedded processes forming through negotiations of future paths. Social narratives provide cultural resources through which actors develop a sense of collectivity and forward movement (Taylor 1989).

The next section summarizes different conceptualizations of consumer agency in consumer culture studies.

Consumer Agency in Consumer Culture Studies

Theorization of consumers' agentic power has a long history in consumer culture studies (Firat and Vankatesh 1995; Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Holt 2002, Kozinets 2002; Murray and Ozanne 1991). Critically-oriented consumer research discusses consumers' autonomy-seeking behaviors and emancipatory actions as a process of escaping the ideological influence of the market (Kozinets 2002; Murray and Ozanne 1991), a process of consumer-driven reformation of market structures (Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Ozlem and Ger 2010; Scaraboto and Fischer 2012), or a process of reclaiming self-directed agency from organizations of objects that form consumer identities (Firat and Vankatesh 1995; Holt 2002). The next two sections are devoted to a brief review of the conceptualization of consumers as active agents contributing to reforming market structures as well as their own faith not only as consumers but also as individuals.

Consumer Agency and Market Emancipation

Firat and Vankatesh's (1995) concept of "liberatory postmodernism" highlights how postmodern thoughts are concerned with privileging consumption over production and with issues regarding the creation of the subject (i.e. the consumer), the meaning of fragmented subjects, the role of symbolic consumption, and the creation of the hyperreal. According to this view, "the process of consumption is emancipatory, paradoxically combining both the "real" and the imaginary (Firat and Vankatesh's 1995,

p. 250)". Consumers are seen as active producers of symbols and signs, through which products and brands take meanings.

As opposed to the modernist ideology, which considers human beings ready and willing to be objectified and consumed by the system, postmodern thoughts assume agency for consumers. Firat and Vankatesh (1995) argue that the postmodern consumer constantly restructures her identities in the face of market pressure. The postmodern individual is freed from seeking unity, she is instead a fragmented individual, who seeks liberty to live life to the fullest (Firat and Vankatesh 1995).

However, to say that fragmentation leads to an emancipatory position for the consumer, as Firat and Vankatesh (1995, p.255) argue, is challenged by Holt (2002). He argues that even the most creative consumers are ultimately contributing to the totalizing nature of the marketplace through actively feeding the market system with new consumption opportunities and production ideas. Thus, consumer emancipation projects are under fundamental questions of "to what extent?", "through what processes?", and "under which conditions?" consumer emancipation could actually be possible? The following are examples from the consumer culture body of studies highlighting individual and communal forms of consumers' liberatory acts from the ideological influence of the market through reconstructing their identities.

Murray and Ozanne's (1991) study on critical imagination and consumption tries to answer a fundamental question: "Can consumers imagine a better world and then enact this world through their individual consumption activities?" Their answer is: "Surely this goal is possible". The emancipatory goal of critical theories explicitly acknowledges consumers' power to free themselves from all forms of dominations

(Murray and Ozanne 1991), through which new consumer-driven markets emerge. For instance, a consumer might buy from companies that use their profits to support social causes; or an environmentally conscious consumer might boycott products packaged in polyurethane. Authors argue that consumers are critiques who can channel their agency as consumers to impact market structure, via for example, boycott as a sign of resistance.

Kozinets' (2002) ethnography study on the Burning Man's anti-market festival shows the consumer's attempt to escape from the capitalist ideology of the marketplace. During this one-week festival, participants rely on alternative forms of exchange and stay away from the market and any sign that relates to the market (e.g., no brand names, no currencies, no vending). The author argues that the Burning Man festival creates a hypercommunity that represents the communal form of consumer emancipation via relying on gift giving, as opposed to the market system, and detaching oneself from belongings, branded products, and unnecessary objects. However, relying on another exchange system, namely gift giving, and consumption as a self-expressive art, the Burning Man experience is both temporal and not truly disconnected from market logic. Participants could only stress their frustrations of mass-marketing and branding and support communal values for a short period of time, which would unlikely pose a lasting impact on the market system.

Kozinets (2002) concludes that emancipation from the market can only happen temporarily and locally. Such communities of anti-market consumers are short-lived and practically not feasible, as market structures do not let consumers geographically expand such ideas. However, the self-transformation effects could stay for long, which could

potentially make everyday consumptions more active and conscious. A similar paradoxical tension was raised by Holt (2002) in his extended case study on everyday brand consumption behaviors. Holt rejects viewing resistance as a well-planned and deliberate project in which consumers formulate a strategy for their consumption practices and seek to enact it. Similar to Kozinets' Burning Man participants, Holt's informants possess anti-marketing sensibility and resistance, however they "locate their identity work within the marketplace rather than other organizing spheres such as family, religion, community, and work" (Holt 2002, p.79). Ultimately, consumer emancipation from the market is argued to be temporal, local, and not entirely outside the market structure. Hence, complete escape from the market is unlikely to take place.

Consumers can also exercise their agency against cultural and ideological changes within the market structure. Movements such as anti-consumerism, anti-advertising, anti-Nike and anti-genetically engineered food, are examples of individually and ideologically driven practices where consumers exercise their agency to change the market culture (Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Varman and Belk 2009). In such movements activists often take the role of intellectually superior consumers who need to educate others, often seen as their opponents who have fallen into the trap of consumerism and global capitalism. The effectiveness of these movements depends on a number of criteria (Kozinets and Handelman 2004): coherent identity (i.e. socially responsible, noble citizens), clear goals (i.e. cultural change, saving the local economy from the hegemony of global brands), and clear definition of the opponent/coherent enemy (i.e. regular consumers, the capitalist market structure).

Studies on consumer boycotts highlight that boycotters see their actions not only as part of a collective effort (e.g., Varman and Belk 2009) but also as a means to express their individuality and complex emotions (Kozinets and Handelman 1998; see also Friedman 1991). As opposed to staying loyal and working towards an ultimate communal goal, boycotters tend to adopt an extrinsic, or other-focused, process where they can distinguish themselves from others by adopting individualistic boycotting ideologies. From a consumer agency point of view, boycotting becomes a way through which the ideal self can become activated. In some cases, boycotters join boycotts mainly because of the personal effect rather than making any threat to the targets (the brand). Boycotters actually see their boycotting act as an individual process of mental hygiene and a way for moral self-realization (Kozinets and Handelman 1998, p. 477).

Consumer Agency and Reformation of Market Structure

Another stream of studies on consumer agency is concerned with individual and communal movements to reform the structure of the market (e.g. Sandicki and Ger 2010; Scaraboto and Fischer 2012; Kates 2002, 2004). In these forms of emancipatory acts consumers do not seek to fight the market logic or to differentiate themselves from the mainstream consumers via devoting enormous time and energy evaluating products, advertisements, and peer consumers (e.g. Kozinets and Handelman 1998, 2004). Instead, the goal of market reformation practices is to change the structure of the market through affecting the process of product legitimation (Kates 2002, 2004), changing market taste structures (Sandicki and Ger 2010), or demanding wider choices of products (Scaraboto

and Fischer 2012). A series of studies on gay subculture by Kates (2002, 2004), for example, demonstrate how marginalized and stigmatized consumer subculture have legitimized the subcultures consumption within the mainstream market. Kates argues that gay subculture is a "way of thinking, a set of ideas about politics, society, religion, manner, fashion, and sex", which demonstrate how their non-brand-focused community legitimizes brands and consumption practices - leather jackets, for example. This process is referred to as "moral legitimacy" and is known as a way consumers actively questioning the meanings of brands and consumption acts in relation to cultural contexts (Handelman and Arnold 1999; Suchman 1995).

Resisting market structures and fighting to legitimize and normalize a stigmatized practice is also discussed in Sandicki and Ger's (2010) study of veiling practices in Turkey. Similar to Kates' (2004) discussion on gay subculture, Sandicki and Ger demonstrate a type of pressure that is neither from the marketers nor from the peer consumers; the oppression is rather from the dominant habitus that positioned minority practices and beliefs as marginal. In both contexts, fashion has become both a medium to resist the market structure and a marker for the creation of a new habitus. By adopting veiling, for example, consumers fought against the associations with being subordinated, uneducated, and poor and tried to establish their identity as educated, middle class, urban, religious women who seek to be modern. The new identity position is manifested via participating in the consumer culture and conspicuous consumption, even though it is against Islamic teaching. The new habitus gained from being religious women and a competent consumer has, over time, transformed veiling from a stigmatized practice that is adopted only by a small minority mainly residing in rural areas into a fashionable and

ordinary consumption choice adopted by many. Therefore, the decision to adopt veiling was indeed a decision to adopt a stigma symbol that entails elements of both escape and resistance. By fighting the social norms, these women resist the ideology of modernity and try to escape from stigmatized female identities. At the same time, they reconstruct their identities as moral selves and their choices as virtuous. From a consumer agency point of view, this act of free will comes with commitments and lifestyle changes that create a parallel taste structure in the market.

Consumer agency may also be manifested in the form of a quest for more inclusion into an existing market by consumers whose needs are not met or recognized. The study of plus-size fashion consumers (Scaraboto and Fischer 2012), for example, highlights a bottom-up, consumer-led market change that was initiated by a group of fashion bloggers who formed a community around their shared interests. The bloggers aimed at changing the structure of the mainstream market via developing a collective identity and allying with powerful institutional actors, such as celebrities and recognized bloggers. Through gaining and maintaining legitimacy, greater inclusion into the existing market, for example, availability of more and better choices for plus-sized consumers, is envisioned. As opposed to challenging the logic of the market or seeking profound changes in marketing practices (e.g. Kozinets and Handelman 2004), plus-sized fashion bloggers embraced the market logic as a tool to express their agency. Unsatisfied consumers, whom the authors call 'institutional entrepreneurs', are often activists without a profit motive who desire social justice or equality (Greenwood and Suddaby 2006). Through recognition in the field, activists accumulate symbolic capital to exert their power to change the field. For example, one blogger was recognized as a

'Twitter Jockey' by MTV and was later invited to be a guest blogger for plus-size retailers including *Faith 21* and *Evans*, as well as a fashion advisor by *Vogue Italia*.

In summary, consumer agency has been viewed through different lenses by consumer culture researchers. The first stream of studies is concerned with emancipation from market logic and the capitalist nature of the market. Studies on anti-market, anti-advertising, anti-consumerism, and anti-global brands movements (e.g., Kozinets and Handelman 1998, 2004; Friedman 1985, 1991; Kozinets 2001, 2002; Varman and Belk 2009), for example, show mainly bold and profound initiatives led by consumers who aim at changing the ideologies and culture around consumption. Among these studies, some highlight macro-level, communal movements aiming at market reforms, such as gift-giving as a replacement for market logic, embraced by those participating in the Burning Man festival. Such profound, communal initiatives are often argued to be local, temporal, and not effective, where full emancipation or detachment from the market is not possible. However, possibilities exist for a lasting impact on future individual consumption decisions as well as opportunities for personal differentiations and identity representation through boycotts (Kozinets and Handelman 2004).

With regards to this seemingly paradoxical situation where one cannot escape the market, Thompson (2004) argues that asking such questions is inherently wrong and misleading as there is no inside and outside of the market per se. There is no sharp line of demarcation where the influence of the marketplace ends and the emancipation space begins. Thompson's argument is in line with postmodernist approaches on social structure and consumer agency in co-creating meanings and reforming market structures (Firat and Vankatesh 1995). Taking the postmodernist approach, understanding

consumer emancipation from the market is, then, argued through market discourses, where status distinctions and identity positions define consumption patterns.

The second stream of studies is concerned with consumer emancipation in the context of a reform in the structure of the existing market without challenging market logic (Kates 2002, 2004; Sandicki and Ger 2010; Scaraboto and Fischer 2012). The market is, therefore, often seen as a facilitating medium and a tool to express agency and redefine one's status in society. These forms of consumer agency, which mainly focus on marginalized consumer subcultures (e.g. gay subculture or plus-size fashion followers) or stigmatized consumption practices (e.g. veil wearing), demonstrate gradual, more focused, and less profound reforms that determine the status and position of subcultures and new consumption practices within an existing market. In such cases, consumer liberatory acts are, then, more fluid, less deliberately planned and executed, and less recognizable by others in the market.

The approach taken in the current study to consumer agency is close to the second stream of studies outlined above. Consumer agency is enacted through consumption and enhanced by market logic. In this study, commercial consumption spaces, social media specifically, are studied as a platform for emancipation and self-representation when individuals face a dominating ideology and lack of freedom for self-portrayal. Post-revolution in Iran, the establishment of gender discriminatory laws have placed limitations, specifically for women, to freely represent themselves in public places. Long-sleeved coats and headscarf became mandatory for all women to wear in public places. These limitations as well as lack of access to public means of

communication and debate, such as TV and newspapers, have raised the need for another medium for debate, discussion, and self-representation.

In addition to arguing the emancipatory potential of digital spaces, the link between online representations and the offline influences of such representations, in the form of communal movements demanding changes in the law, are discussed. The link between online self-portrayal and their offline influences also addresses the critiques that are often raised regarding the 'slacktivism' in digital movements (Shirky 2011). Subsequently, the implications of emancipatory acts and consumption practices portrayed in digital platforms are discussed in everyday, offline, street life.

Study Context

The women's movement in Iran started before the Islamic revolution (1979) and was part of a national program called the White Revolution (1925-1979). The White Revolution was a campaign, designed by the government of the time, to socially and economically modernize, westernize, and secularize the country (Ramazani 1974). The campaign was mainly aimed at lower and middle social class groups, who were seen as traditional, religious, and most resistant to change. With regards to women's rights, a number of changes took place during the campaign. Women, for example, were first admitted to university at 1930 and were given right to vote at 1960, as well as the right to stand for public office, to divorce, and to claim child custody.

Although the campaign was visionary and unprecedented, the pressure towards modernizing, secularizing, and westernizing the country left little room for people to

adjust or to resist. One of the most controversial projects taken in the campaign was the act of abolishing the veil, which demanded that all women to remove their hijab in public places. The act, which was viewed as a fundamental prerequisite in facilitating the country's entrance into modern society, was criticized by many and led to further isolation of traditional and religious groups who were not willing to change their way of life. The top-down, forceful nature of the campaign, though making unprecedented, progressive changes for women (the right to vote, to enter higher education, and to be economically independent), was perceived as too sharp a contrast with the local culture and traditions.

After the Islamic revolution in 1979, the new government implemented changes including a conservative family protection law that limited women's right to divorce and earn the custody of their children, increased government control over public means of communication (e.g., TV and newspaper), and regulated consumption (e.g., controlled access to social media). The changes brought limitations to individual freedom, public self-expression, and specifically women's rights over their personal choices. Following the implementation of Islamic laws, an important adjustment was made in the form of a legalized public dress code for both men and women. The dress code required women to wear a headscarf and a long-sleeved coat that covers their body, and men to wear trousers. The legalization of these codes was a gradual process due to public resistance. Initially, in 1980, the dress code was presented as business attire that was only mandatory in government and public offices. Despite public demonstrations against this law, the new dress code became mandatory for all women to follow in all public places in 1983 (Milani 1992).

Women's responses to the limitations enforced after the revolution have resulted in a flourishing, bottom-up, grassroots feminist movement in Iran (Ansari 2015). The movement follows a reformist, progressive, and gradualist agenda aimed at improving the system from within and with the help of all women and men from different social and religious backgrounds. The One Million Signatures Campaign, for example, was initiated in 2006 by a small group of activists and was aimed at collecting one million signatures from the public, as well as prominent social and political figures, as a national quest to get the parliament to change some of the gender discriminatory laws. The campaign received wide national and international attention, was successful in making changes in the divorce law, and organized a series of conferences and seminars to further educate the public.

Despite the limitations, the degree of mobilization and consciousness among Iranian women is notable. Over the years, they have outnumbered men in higher education and stablished their position in high-ranking managerial and political posts (except the presidency, which is exclusive to men). Feminism in Iran is best understood as a progressive and reformist movement that is carried out on different social and political platforms and as part of daily life. For example, despite the 1983 parliament act demanding women to wear a headscarf and loose outfits covering their bodies, the past two decades have witnessed fashion styles showing their creativity in pushing the boundaries little by little. So, feminism in Iran is best understood as *everyday feminism* and *everyday activism*, aimed at changing cultural narratives by claiming space in public spheres and showing agency. The growing number of female college graduates, female managers, lawyers, and parliament members, however does not always reflect a

realistic picture of Iranian society due to filtering applied in high-ranking positions, but this has awakened more women to claim their rights and to fight against discriminatory laws.

The ongoing tension between the feminists and the fundamentalists (who enjoy the benefit of controlling public means of communication such as TV and newspapers) raised the need for an alternative media for debate and discussion suited for the reformist group. The movement requires an inclusive, democratic space capable of providing access to voices that are either muted by the dominant group or denied access to the public forms of communication. The online *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign, for example, aims at providing such a platform by mirroring and amplifying the offline movement and providing a space to exchange ideas and debate.

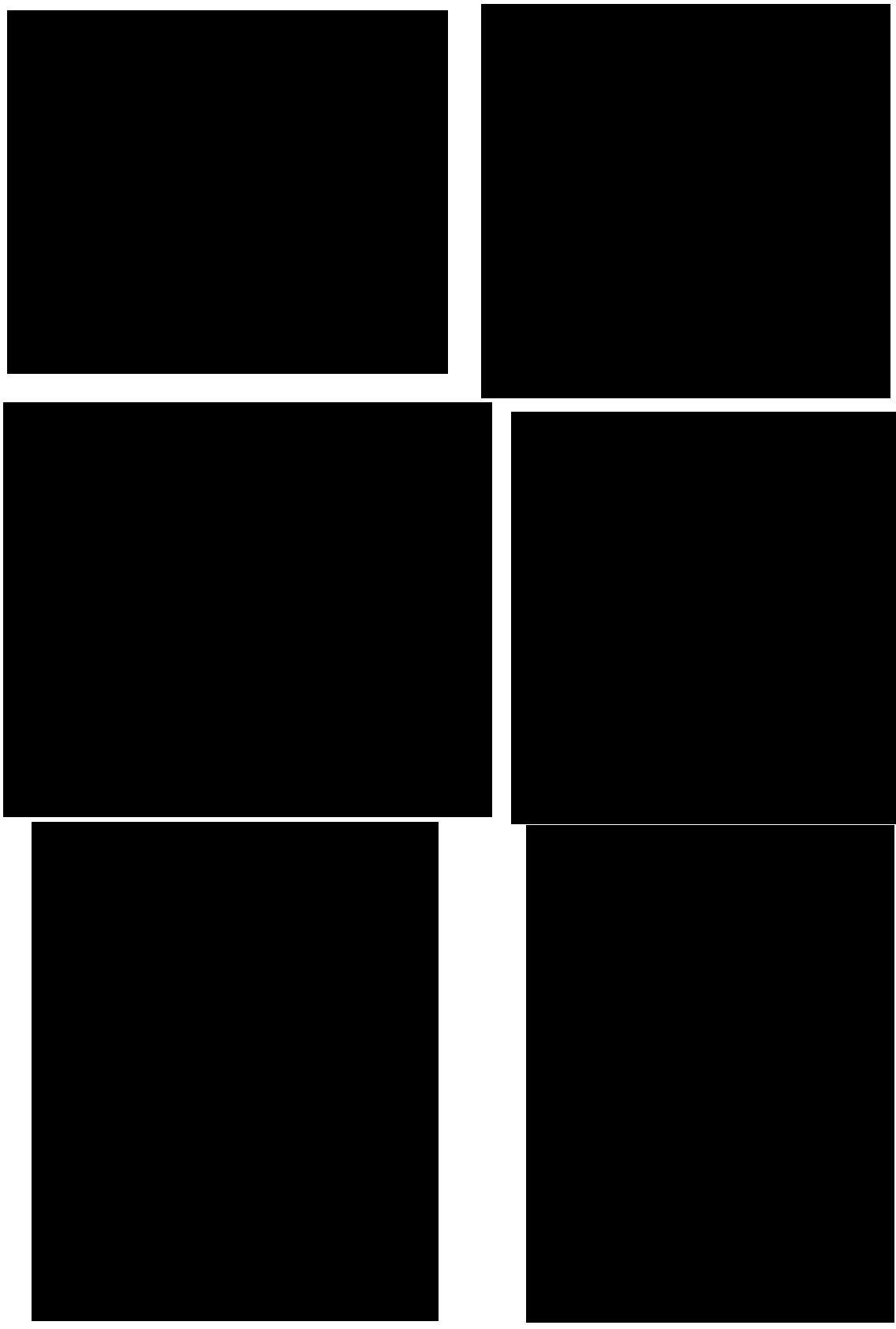
The campaign was first launched on Facebook and later on Instagram and Twitter. A widely recognized Iranian female journalist published a picture of herself on her personal Facebook page showing her driving without wearing a scarf. She titled it "my moments of freedom". Shortly after, thousands of Iranian women, as she explained later in her interviews, empathized with the photo and, in response, shared photos showing their own moments of freedom. Photos display aspects of everyday public life where women act against the mandatory dress code by removing their headscarf, such as when driving, sitting in a restaurant, having a picnic with one's family, being in at work, or simply walking on the street. Over the years, women have innovatively created and recognized situations where it is relatively safe or more socially acceptable to remove their scarf or wear tighter and more revealing cloths in public places. Removing the scarf while driving is an example of such situations.

After receiving a great number of submissions, the journalist decided to create a separate Facebook page in 2014, hoping that it could turn into a collective movement. She named it *My Stealthy Freedom Campaign- Iranian women's communal liberatory act in fight for oppression*. The campaign later spread via Instagram, one of the most popular social media platforms in Iran, and Twitter. So far, the campaign has attracted 1.09 million followers on Facebook, nearly 400,000 on Instagram, and 6,500 on its Twitter page. Over 2,500 photos, 320 videos, and 5,000 tweets shared on the campaign's pages. Each post is often accompanied with a short description explaining the reasons for joining the movement. An elderly woman, for example, wishing changes for the younger generation, a man supporting the movement, a woman posting her picture with her partner requesting more support from men, or a devout woman, wearing a scarf, expressing her support for freedom of choice.

The movement started as a space for sharing joyful everyday moments that all women, and men, can understand and relate to. It started as a communal therapeutic space, yet after only a few months the photos and stories received wide attention from the public, the news agencies, and at times, political figures both inside and outside of the country. Interviews with the journalist who started the movement, specifically, have contributed to the wide recognition of the movement, inside the country as well as internationally. During this period, the goals of the movement have started to shape and become more clearly presented: the cover photo of the campaign's Facebook page read as "publicizing stealthy liberties is challenging the lack of freedom." Figure 1 shows examples of international news coverage on the campaign from leading news agencies including BBC, abc News, and The Guardian. The involvement of international news

coverage expands the movement from an isolated local event to an international one as they introduce the movement and its developments to the expat community as well as the broader international audience.

Figure 1. Examples of International News Coverage on the Campaign



Theoretical Background: Public Sphere

To study the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign and its role as an emancipatory space, the notion of the public sphere is used. The concept of the public sphere is introduced in Habermas' first major book: *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989). Habermas' notion of the public sphere describes the development of a particular space as a domain mediating between the private and the public authority spheres (Habermas 1989a, 305.), where "public opinion can be formed with citizens assembling and publicizing their opinions freely" (Habermas 1989b, 231). The purpose for such space is for individuals to have critical debates about common matters, which could counterweight authority power and empower individuals to have a say in matters that might impact their lives. The primary examples of public sphere are coffee houses, public squares, as well as published media in the form of newspaper.

The Habermasian public sphere is based on number of characteristics: inclusivity to all citizens, concerned with all kinds of public matters, freedom from status and class, freedom from the commercial realm, and independence from the state (Habermas 1989a,b). Habermas argues that his historical analysis shows the idea of the public sphere as a status-free social interaction platform through discourses, rather than class-based distinctions. His notion of inclusivity, however, was confronted by other writers. Fraser (1990), for example, argues that public spheres have historically shown a systematic exclusion of minority groups, such as immigrants, the poor, slaves, and criminals.

Fraser's (1990) feminist revision of the public sphere and Curran's (1991) critical argument on the public sphere are amongst the revisions who referred to the Habermasian definition of the public sphere as bourgeois and idealized. Fraser argues that the bourgeois public sphere is an example of institutional discrimination against women and other marginalized groups. These exclusions act as a domination mechanism that works towards further disadvantaging of the subordinate groups. Similarly, Negt and Kluge (1993) argue on the notion of the *proletarian public sphere* as an alternative platform to highlight the feelings, interests, and concerns of the disadvantaged groups of people that never get discussed in the bourgeois public spheres. The possibilities and the value of multiple public spheres is of importance in the current study. Since the public routes of communication and debate, TV and newspapers specifically, are monitored by the fundamentalists in Iran, the existence of an alternative public sphere capable of amplifying voices that are not represented in mainstream platforms and providing space for democratic debate is of crucial importance.

The second part of Habermas' theory focuses on the transition from the liberal bourgeois public sphere to the modern mass societies operating through the mass media and the emerging consumer culture in the early nineteenth century. Habermas highlighted the commercialization of public spheres and argued about the damaging impact of the growing consumer culture and the rise of mass media on the power of the public sphere (Habermas 1989). He argued that the commercialized mass media and the rise of consumer culture have changed the very purpose of the media from a neutral platform to report and debate, to a tool for advertisement, entertainment, and political domination. Habermas says: "When the laws of the market governing the sphere of

commodity exchange and of social labor also pervaded the sphere reserved for private people as a public, rational-critical debate had a tendency to be replaced by consumption, and the web of public communication unraveled into acts of individuated reception, however uniform in mode (Habermas 1989, p.161)".

Later, others made similar arguments highlighting that the overall outcome of the transition towards modern societies and mass media result in political control over public spheres and the transformation in citizens' preferences from social and political concerns to the consumption of mass-produced products (Thompson 1995, p.140). Sparks (2000) argues that although mass media made it possible for private people to engage in the production of culture and to better participate and share information, the emerging consumer culture dominates the debate in public spheres.

Despite the manipulating power of the mass media, the Internet to be specific, under the control of the state and commercial forces, social scientists and communication scholars have noted the liberatory potential of these spaces, however limited and context specific (e.g., Liu and McCormic 2011). From a Habermasian point of view, digital spaces may not qualify for the criteria of the public sphere, but under certain conditions such spaces perform as an emancipatory space for private people. Liu and McCormic's (2011) study on mass media reformation in China, for example, illustrates that the rise of consumption-oriented discourses, mediated through social media, has led to the availability of more identity representation resources for individuals. Such resources are shown to provide alternative ways for people to relate to the state and to reflect on social and political matters, hence, enhancing individual agency. Similarly, collective movements, such as boycotts against fundamentalist

vigilantes in India in 2009, protests requesting changes in education laws in Chile in 2006, the Hong Kong youth protests, and the Arab Spring movement, to a large extent demonstrate the role of social media as a tool for coordinating movements and amplifying voices (Joseph 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2012; Fuchs 2014; Khondker 2011).

Sparks (2000) argues that to discuss the role of digital spaces as public spheres, one needs to examine some key criteria to measure the performance of the platform, rather than relying on an idealized, Habermasian notion of the public sphere. He suggests that we should investigate questions such as "to what extent is the media is inclusive to everyone?"; "to what extent are the debates are uncensored and not directed by the state or the commercial parties?"; and "to what extent do people participate in debates?" Following this line of reasoning, many have argued that the emancipatory power of mass media should be argued along with the particularities of the context and the value they provide for people. Iosifidis (2011), for example, illustrates that digital platforms are capable of both enlightening individuals and manipulating them. He highlights issues such as lack of inclusiveness (not everyone can afford the costs and possess the required skills), censorship, and the inappropriateness of such platforms for lengthy dialogue and discussions (see also Fuchs 2014).

The current study draws from the existing arguments on the emancipatory power of digital spaces and aims at building on these arguments by illustrating whether social media operates as a public sphere in the contemporary sociocultural situations in Iran, and what are the facilitating consumption practices. The aim of this study is to illustrate the role of social media not just as a platform to exchange information, but also as a means to discuss cultural reforms when other means of communication (e.g., TV,

newspapers) are monitored and controlled by the state. Individuals, who anonymously participate in the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign contribute in sociocultural reforms by mirroring their offline, everyday, on-street actions, amplifying their voices, and educating the public. Underlying this cause is an attempt to challenge the legalized public dress code that systematically limits one's choice of public appearance and self-representation.

Method

The aim of this study is to explore the nature of the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign from the perspective of the public sphere. To do this, a netnography of the campaign across its social media networks was conducted. Netnography, or ethnography on the Internet, is a method of qualitative research that uses ethnographic observation techniques to study online communities, forums, or other publically available information sites (Kozinets 2002; 2015). Kozinets (2002, p.63) identifies five criteria of a suitable site to study with netnographic methods. He argues that a suitable site should have a (1) focused aim or topic, around which the members gather and share content; (2) high traffic of posting; (3) a large number of contributors or posters; (4) rich and detailed data; and (5) between-member interactions relating to the nature of the research questions.

The *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign meets these criteria by providing a debate platform for its members across three social media sites: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The conversations and material shared by members (in the form of photos,

videos, and texts) are focused around the issues of personal freedom and, specifically, public appearance. This gives the researcher a community of individuals who are concerned with women's issues and contribute via sharing their own stories, photos, and videos, reacting to someone else's input, or engaging in debates and discussions. These communities are commonly described as weakly-bounded and deterritorialized networks of individuals that participate in activities and discussions around a shared interest (Cova and Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2002; Arvidsson and Caliandro 2015).

Table 1 shows the high volume of traffic, both in terms of the number of posts and engagement per post (i.e., like, comment, share). The table also shows the large number of members and followers in each platform (1.08 million page likes on Facebook, 384,757 followers on Instagram, and 6,510 followers on Twitter). Due to the accessibility of share tools, specifically the hashtags, the campaign has spread outside its assigned domains and is discussed in other platforms including right-wing and left-wing news pages, other activists' groups, and personal blogs. The triangulation between different data sources as well as data types (visual, textual, and video), provides the researcher with a rich data set. Altogether, the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign meets Kozinets' (2002) criteria for a suitable platform for netnography analysis.

Compared to other methods, such as ethnography and interview, netnography is a particularly useful method when the researcher aims at observing online behaviors, communicative acts, and interactions in their naturally occurring setting, or at employing an unobtrusive research method when observing individuals (Kozinets 2002; 2015). Netnographic methods eliminate the interference from the researcher and allow observing behaviors and interactions in their natural setting. These two capabilities of

netnography are essential in the study of the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign due to the sensitivity of the topic and the underlying social movement motivation of the campaign. For these reasons, the minimum interference from the researcher is required to observe how interactions, debates, and communicative acts unfold.

Table 1. Data Sources

Data source	Dataset	Characteristics
Campaign's Facebook page	2,609 Photos 320 videos	• 1.08m page like • 1,212 average like • 63 average comment/post • 144 average share/post
Campaign's Instagram page	1,800 posts	• 384,757 followers • 13,525 average like/post • 773 average comment/post
Campaign's Twitter page	10 hashtags 5,164 tweets	• 6,510 followers (45% female) • 5 Top hashtags: #mystealthyfreedom #whitewednesdays #MyCivilDisobediance #MenInHijab #FromInsideIran
Blogs, personal FB pages	10	--
News coverage	BBC, NYT, Fars news, ABC, The Guardian, Independent, Huffington Post	Mainly international coverage

One of the most important differences between netnography and other qualitative research methods such as traditional ethnography, focus groups, and interviews, is the issue of research ethics. Kozinets (2002; 2015) argues that two important issues need to

be taken into account when conducting a netnography: (1) is the research site considered public? and (2) what is the role of the researcher? (see also Lipinski 2006). The *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign takes place in three widely recognized public sites, i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Activists are aware of the public nature of these pages when joining the campaign by sharing their input or commenting on someone else's inputs. In addition, to protect the identification of participants (including name, affiliations, and links to personal pages) and to encourage more participation, every post is uploaded by the campaign manager. Individuals who wish to participate in the movement are, therefore, asked to send their material to the admin for publishing on the campaign's pages. This limits the chances of identifying activists, thereby protecting their safety (c.f., Lipinski 2006; Kozinets 2010). The underlying purpose of the community is also fundamental in whether it can be considered public. *"My Stealthy Freedom"* is a platform for a social movement aimed at changing the law. Activists participate in the campaign wishing their input to be read and discussed by other members, and more importantly, people outside the campaign. Thus, the campaign can be considered as public.

Kozinets (2002) describes netnographers as "professional lurkers" whose role is to observe, with minimum interference, individuals' interactions. In the study of the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign, the researcher merely observed and documented online interactions and communications without impacting on directions of conversations or commenting on participants' input.

Table 1 shows study data sources. Overall, three sources of data are used in this study: (1) content shared in campaign's pages (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter),

(2) publically available reflections and opinion pieces written about the campaign, and (3) news coverage about the campaign, including local and international coverage. The researcher collected reflections about the campaign to capture wider viewpoints about the movement outside its associated domains, and assess the degree of impact. This is especially important as these sources allow capturing the views of those that chose to not join the campaign, but rather to express their views as an observer and not a member of the movement. Nevertheless, their reflections, either supportive or critical, impacts the public views about the campaign and potentially their decisions in joining the movement. Individual reflections are often in textual form and longer than a typical Facebook post, which, thus, provide a rich source of textual data. News coverage is collected specifically to assess the impact of the movement, locally as well as internationally.

The data set was collected over three years: 2014-2017. The longitudinal nature of the data set produces rich data and enables the researcher to monitor the changes in the narrative, strategies used, and interactions. The dataset consists of over 4,600 photos and videos. The campaign's Facebook page has over 1.08 million followers and the average attention to each post is 1,212 likes, 63 comments, and 144 shares. The campaign's Instagram page, similarly, has attracted nearly 400,000 followers, with average attention on each post being more than 13,000 likes and 700 comments. Top 10 Twitter hashtags were monitored, which collectively represent over 5,000 tweets. Ten individual reflections, from publically available Facebook pages and blogs were collected and analyzed. The average attention to these posts is often higher than the ones on the campaign's page, which indicates the importance of opinion leaders.

Data analysis

Similar to other qualitative methods, netnographic data analysis is not separate from its data collection. After each round, the documenting of the material - photos, videos, and conversations - was analyzed to unpack the symbolic meanings and the self-representation approaches. Since the goal of the study is to examine whether and how the campaign can perform as a public sphere, the analysis was focused on the communicative acts. My initial focus was on understanding textual exchange of information and online debates in the form of one-on-one dialogue and exchange of comments. What began to emerge as a strong theme was the central role of visual communication, in the form of photos and videos. As a result, the focus of the study shifted to unpack the visual communications as the main communicative tool and textual communications as the secondary tool.

My analysis of visual data was based on theories of semiotics and visual rhetoric (Mick 1986; Barthes 1977). Semiotics is the science of signs and symbols and is concerned with the meanings associated with those signs. A sign consists of a signifier and a signified. A signifier is the physical expression of the sign (e.g., the object itself, the picture, a logo, a TV advert). The signified is the meaning or the content associated with the signifier. For example, a photo showing a woman driving a car or leaning on a motorcycle (signifier) can be seen as a sign of power, being in control, and expressing agency (signified). The juxtaposition of the signifier and the women removing her scarf and holding it in the air convey a strong message from the activists.

To unpack the signifiers and the signified, the researcher followed Schroeder's guidance on analyzing the visuals by starting the interpretation with descriptive

elements such as form, subject matter, medium, and color (Schroeder 2006, p. 304). Following Schroeder, the visuals shared on *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign were coded based on five dimensions. Table 2 summarizes these codes. Each code represents a combination of signifiers and a dimension of visual communication in the campaign. For example, the location where the photo was taken or the video was recorded can be big cities, rural or urban areas, historical places, cultural hubs, etc. Setting, similarly, can refer to situational elements, such as outdoors, the family setting, workplace, in a car while driving, or in public places. I explain each dimension in the following table:

Table 2. Coding Dimensions

Coding dimension	Description/examples
4. Location	Geographical location where the photo was taken or the video was recorded, e.g., big cities, urban, or rural area.
5. Objects	The presence of objects in the picture or the video and the associated symbolic meaning, e.g., headscarf, bike, car.
6. Setting	The situational factors observable in the picture or the video, e.g., the nature, family setting, workplace, in a car, and in public places.
7. Message	The direct message send by the participant, e.g., recorded voice, video subtitle, attached description/short stories.
8. Color	The color of the headscarf (green and white are predominantly used).

Location: from the public sphere point of view, it is essential to assess the geographical reach of the campaign. The public sphere should be inclusive to all individuals who are impacted by the issue under debate (Habermas 1989). The

campaign's presence in social media provides the opportunity for many, not only those in big cities and urban areas, to participate and exchange ideas. To capture this geographical reach, indications regarding the locations, e.g., big cities, small cities, and rural areas, are recorded. These indications are often mentioned by individuals in their videos, specified as a photo caption, or are identifiable based on signs and symbols. For example, many pictures and videos are taken in front of historical buildings and symbolic places, such as famous squares, government buildings, museums, cultural hubs, and universities. These signs help the researcher to monitor the reach of the campaign.

Objects: the presence and the types of objects displayed in photos and videos are recorded. In particular, the researcher took note of the headscarf, as the main object of interest, and the way it is presented, for example, on the head, around the neck, completely removed, or held in the air. Initial data analysis reveals other objects such as cars, motorcycles, and bikes that are frequently displayed in visuals. In the analysis of objects, they are coded as the signifier (Mick 1986; Barthes 1977). The researcher, then, unpacks the symbolic meanings associated with the objects, i.e., the signified, in an iterative process of data collection and data analysis. A car or a motorcycle, for example, can be seen as a sign of power; a phone that is symbolically hold in the air as a device to record and report is a sign of citizen journalism and individual power; and a message written on a t-shirt, "this is what a feminist looks like" is a sign of association with an imagined global community of feminists.

Setting: this covers a broad range of factors such as public spaces (e.g., street, workplace, in the countryside) versus private spaces (e.g., home, inside a car) and group

arrangement (e.g., family, friendship, workplace) versus unaccompanied/individual setting. Whenever mentioned, the relationships between individuals are also coded, for example, family members, friends, couples, intergenerational groups, and acquaintances.

Message: direct messages can be found in the form of short stories or statements attached to videos and photos, in the form of recorded audio messages, or as a short tweet. Thematic analysis of messages is done to uncover key themes, use of language, and the meanings. Messages are posted, or translated, in three languages, Farsi, English, and French.

Color: the color of the headscarf was also recorded (i.e., signified). Generally, a wide range of colors and shapes of headscarf is used by Iranian women. Brighter colors are often used in parties, ceremonies, and as part of everyday fashion, while gray, dark blue, and black are used mostly in formal and business attires. Initial analysis of the campaign reveals that specific colors are used more often as a strategy to enhance visibility and the feeling of community when activists take pictures or record videos of themselves. Specifically, green and white are repeatedly seen in visuals. Green symbolizes the connection with the Green Movement (the political uprising after the presidential election in 2009), and white is a symbol of peace.

Following Miles and Huberman (1994), the analysis started from questions driven from the existing theories on the public sphere (Habermas 1989). Communicative materials, visual as well as textual, documented from the campaign were analyzed in relation to three questions: what is being communicated (the message)? how is it communicated (the communication medium)?; and, to whom is it communicated (the audience)?

Findings

The following quote, from a publically available personal Facebook post, summarizes the role of the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign in Iran's feminist movement:

> *This campaign is a mirror that shows us the true face of our society. This shows us that if the forces on hijab were to be elevated, what kinds of clothing women would have chosen for themselves. These are the pictures of the real life that were only existed on private collections or private social media pages. Now they are out in a collective form, like a mirror of our society. This page invited everyone to show their true self (Nima, Male, FB post, living in Germany).*

The metaphor of the *mirror* emphasizes the role of the campaign as a reflection of everyday life and a mirror of offline activism. This point addresses the concern raised by previous literature regarding the slacktivism and little impact of online movements (Shirky 2011). *"My Stealthy Freedom"* performs as a platform that mirrors, amplifies, increases awareness, and encourages participation, rather than replacing offline activism with digital activism. In consumer behavior literature, the impact of digital platforms on spreading ideas is known as *megaphone effect* that refers to "the fact that the web makes a mass audience potentially available to ordinary consumers" (McQuarrie, Miller, and Phillips 2012, p.136). Through digital platforms, ordinary individuals (e.g., fashion bloggers, activists) can acquire a large audience without the institutional mediations that are historically required (e.g., advertising agencies, business intermediaries, news broadcasters). In the case of Iranian women movement, the traditional media and news

platforms (TV and newspapers) are replaced by social media spaces, where activists can acquire a large audience and can publically confront the status quo without facing limitations from the press and news agencies.

The campaign also aligns with the Habermasian notion of public sphere by providing a space for reunion, to share and debate, and freely represent oneself. Nima's emphasis on self-representation is echoed in the following note by Marzi on everyday activism and aspects of empowerment:

> *Not everyone wants to be hard-core activist or political. People want to make sure their lives, their children are not threatened [refer to the anonymity provided by the campaign]. We should take every opportunity and try to push the boundaries little by little. We should continue pushing the boundaries and at the same time keep claiming more space in the society. I think we should take jobs or other opportunities even when they demand obeying most strict rules. Personal freedom and economic empowerment of women are the two sides of the same coin (Marzi, Female, blog post).*

Marzi highlights the importance of everyday activism and the reformist approach in the women's movement in Iran. Such a reformist approach protects one's security, from, for example, getting arrested, and often brings limited changes that require repetition and large-scale support to be effective and noticeable. The campaign contributes to this reformist mindset by providing a space capable of connecting activists in different geographical locations, and highlighting and documenting their progress.

Digital public sphere

My analysis of the campaign from the viewpoint of the public sphere has resulted in three dimensions of the *digital public sphere* in Iran: (1) digital discursive space; (2) solidarity; and (3) anonymity.

Digital discursive space

Digital platforms have created an opportunity for new forms of discourses that weren't possible in traditional, text-based media. Analysis of the communicative acts in the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign reveal that communications and debates mostly take place in the form of visual media. Textual communication and one-on-one debates are less frequent and complements visuals. The movement has benefitted from what I call digital discourses that convey meanings through body postures, color, objects, photo arrangements, buildings and places, etc. in photos and visuals. A picture of a woman standing next to a police station, waiving her scarf in the air, looking to a camera and smiling sends a powerful message of determination, power, and control, without exchanging any words.

The tendency towards digital discourses and fewer text-based communications has developed over time. The initial posts were accompanied with textual stories explaining the motivations on joining the movement aimed at legitimizing the movement and encouraging others to join. The textual messages have shortened over time and were finally removed from the majority of posts. Instead, standardized forms of digital discourses have emerged: similar use of objects, places, color, etc. that

enhances conveying the same message, reinforces a feeling of community, and creates visibility in offline activities. In other words, a specific regime of digital activism has emerged. Arsel and Bean (2012, p.899) define a taste regime "as a discursively constructed normative system that orchestrates practice in an aesthetically oriented culture of consumption". In the context of Iranian women movement, the digital regime of consumer activism is structured around shared activities, use of symbolic objects, and strategic use of colors or places. For example, the *White Wednesday* is a weekly event, where all, women and men, are encouraged to display signs in white, via for example wearing a white scarf, a white wrist ribbon, or a white T-shirt and to send their pictures to the campaign. These activities are collectively agreed upon through voting tools such as like, share, and comment. Over time, these practices form the discursive narratives that is shared and understood by activists and their audiences.

Analysis of the digital discourses have also revealed patterns on the locations where visuals are recorded. Pictures are often taken in the countryside, in crowded public spaces, in front of historical and symbolic buildings, such as government buildings and police stations, to emphasize the geographical reach of the movement - i.e., rural as well as urban areas - and stress on control, courage, and power. Figure 1(a) shows examples of pictures taken in tourist sites, by the seaside for example, and in central areas of cities.

As figure 1 illustrates, pictures mostly convey the fun, playful, joyful, colorful, and everyday scenes, such as the everyday commute to work, weekend trips, shopping, driving, eating out, or at work. Faces are usually relaxed and happy, which further emphasizes the feeling of being in control and exercising power and agency, despite

discriminatory laws and limitations. The stress on daily activities, everyday routines, and ordinary social and familial situations facilitates connection with the ordinary audience and enhances opportunities to participate. From the point of view of the public sphere, the ease of participation and the accessibility of the shared visuals enhances the inclusivity of the campaign.

In addition to physical location and emotions drawn from the photos, objects are, at times, illustrated as a crucial component in the pictures. As Figure 1(b) illustrates, objects symbolizing power and freedom, such as a car or motorcycle, are often represented in the center of the photo. One photo, for example, shows a woman leaning on her car with a cigarette in her hand and another one shows a woman driving a car to work, in both cases with their headscarf around their neck instead of covering their hair. Strategic use of objects to signal agency and empowerment further highlights the mediating role of market logic and the symbolic power of objects (e.g., Kozinets 2001). In addition, photos often represent snapshots of everyday life, which are further highlighted by their calm faces and eyes looking away from the camera, almost as if someone photographed them at random. The stress is on everyday activism, where anyone can participate at any moment, anywhere in the country, and with no predefined rules of engagement.

It has been necessary to redact images from this page due to Data Protection concerns. Photos illustrating the campaign may be found on the following social media page: https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/

Figure 2(a) and 2(b): Digital Discursive Space

The use of objects to symbolize empowerment highlights the mediating role of market logic and conspicuous consumption. This finding addresses the point raised by Habermas (1989) and others (Iosifidis 2011; Shirky 2011) regarding the damaging impact of mass media and market ideology, in general, on the public sphere. A picture of a woman riding an expensive motorcycle or driving a desert car (Figure 1(b)), for example, not only indicates the mediating role of conspicuous consumption, but also serves as an indication of the identity position of the activist: modern, independent, and from a middle or higher social class background. Although the campaign provides access to individuals living in big cities, small cities, and rural areas, taking part in such platforms requires skills and computer literacy. This, in turn, has to some extent limited the participation in the campaign to the educated, the young, and individuals from middle and higher social class backgrounds. The exceptions are seen when photos display different generations and social classes (see also Figure 3(c)).

Another central object is the headscarf, as the focus of the campaign indicates. I have coded the "positions" and the "colors" that the scarf has taken in visuals. Two hashtags of "#mystealthyfreedom" and "#whitewednesdays" were monitored. As Figure 2 demonstrates, the headscarf has been strategically used as a tool for resistance. These photos show a collective move on Wednesdays, where women, and at times men, wave a white scarf or white cloths on the end of a stick. While standing on a platform to be visible to the crowd, the activists often exchange no words with her audience, but instead silently communicate a strong message. Repetition of this act has proven that it is not an isolated protest, but a communal and symbolic act of defiance. The digital broadcast of these images has been vital in the continuation of the movement.

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From the point of view of the public sphere, digital spaces act as a coordination tool and a brainstorming platform, where actions are displayed for the public to view, discuss and vote through likes, shares and comments. Those with most impact and effective messages, such as the ones shown in Figure 3, get repeated and form a communal movement. Such communal practices become a cultural moment that shapes discourses around feminism and the women's movement in Iran.

Figure 3. Strategic Use of Headscarf in Street Protests

However rare, communication and debate may also take place in the form of textual exchange of ideas. Personal Facebook posts and blogs are most suited for lengthy texts. The following is an example of a personal Facebook post that raised a question about the impact of the campaign.

> *The campaign manager claims that they are attracting public attention to women's issues. Who is this public that she is talking about? Iranian women and men are the ones who are subject to these rules and are more than familiar with them, so no need to remind them again and again. Non-Iranians don't know the social and political complications we have and therefore won't be able to make good judgments or help us (Mina, Female, personal FB post, living in Iran)*
>
> > *Response: I strongly disagree with this statement. We indeed need to draw attention to this issue. Being subject to an unfair situation does not mean knowing what kinds of rights we have or the extent of unfairness of the situation. The most important result of gathering ordinary people outside the political debates is to see that our attention has not really been on the issues such as mandatory dress code. Many of us don't know what rights have been taken from us and campaigns like this help in encouraging us and creating a sense of justice seeking (Mohsen, Male, FB reply, living in the USA)*

Mina has raised the point of slacktivism and the potential political exploitation of the campaign. She argues that those who are subject to limitations have full knowledge

of the situation and don't require reminders. She also made a point that broadening the scope of the movement to the expat community and the international audience is meaningless and might further complicate the situation by presenting it as a subject for political debate as opposed to a social movement. Mohsen's response has made a distinction between being subject to a situation and having a comprehension and a realization of one's rights, possibilities to change the situation, and access to other like-minded individuals. Referring back to the notion of the public sphere, such debates are at the center of diagnosing the problems and forming the public opinions concerning the way forward.

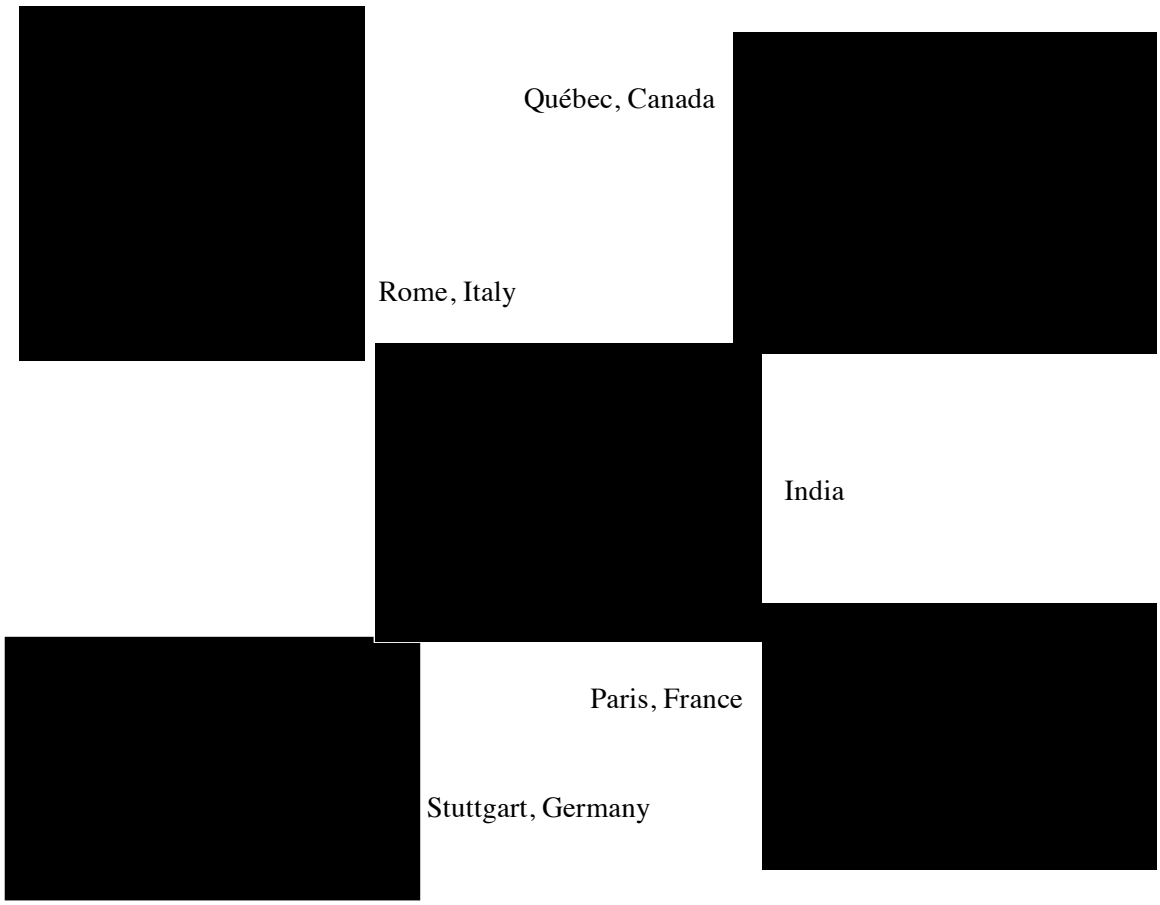
It is also important to note the impact of the Iranian expat community on the development of debates and discussions about the campaign and the issue of the public dress code in Iran. Mohsen, living outside the country, can engage in debates via the transnational platform provided by social media. The connections made between the local activists and the expat community form a transnational collective that is "initiated and sustained by actors as networks of individuals across borders" (Vertovec 2009, p.29). Such collectives share knowledge, debate issues, and exchange strategies without living in proximity. As a result, a transnational community of activists are formed via participations in the form of suggestion of strategies for street actions, engaging in online debates, and spreading the news about the campaign.

Social movements, like the Iranian women's movement, have become transnational in nature as a result of connecting activists and other actors, such as news agencies and global NGOs, across borders. For example, Masih Alinejad – the Iranian activist who started the movement and is currently managing the online campaign,

received the inaugural Women's Rights Award at the Geneva Summit for Human Rights and Democracy in 2015. Such actions contribute in the global presence of the movement and the international recognition of its impact. Figure 4 illustrates more examples of the transnational network of activists that reinforce actions and enhance the global presence of the campaign by participating in the weekly hashtags and events introduced by the campaign. As shown in Figure 4, international activists, including the Iranian expats and the broader transnational feminist groups, organize events in solidarity of the campaign by participating in the weekly white Wednesdays events by publically displaying signs in white or wearing white colors. Examples of events held in Rome, Québec, India, Stuttgart, and Paris are presented in Figure 4. The transnational nature of social movements has become increasingly more important as we have seen examples in similar movements, such as Me Too movement, Black Lives Matter movement, and the Arab Spring movement.

It has been necessary to redact images from this page due to Data Protection concerns. Photos illustrating the campaign may be found on the following social media page: https://www.facebook.com/StealthyFreedom/

Figure 4. Examples of Transnational Community of Activists (#whiteWednesdays)



Consumer Solidarity

In *'Passionate politics: Emotions and social movements'*, Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta, (2009) highlight solidarity as an important form of emotion involved in formation and continuation of social movements. Solidarity is defined as "the emotion which arises out of consciousness of being entrained within a collective focus of attention…this emotion makes the individual feel stronger as a member of the group" (p.29).

My Stealthy Freedom campaign enhances the feeling of solidarity among activists via providing an opportunity to participate for those living in small cities and rural areas (although skills of using such platforms are required) and those from different generations, social class groups, and religious communities. To capture the geographical reach of the campaign, indications regarding the locations are recorded (e.g., photo caption, signs and symbols, such as historical buildings, famous squares, government buildings, museums, cultural hubs, and universities). My analysis revealed a wide reach of the campaign, confirming an essential requirement of the public sphere: inclusivity to all affected individuals.

In addition to inclusivity provided by social media, specific practices are collectively formed aiming at enhancing the feeling of solidarity. I monitored two related hashtags: "#MenInHijab" and "WhiteWednesdays". Figure 3(a), 3(b), and 3(c), show examples of White Wednesday participants: a group of men all wearing white shirts and holding supportive signs, a lady wearing a white dress in her shop, a man with a white scarf around his neck, a devout mother wearing the traditional chador and her son who wears a white t-shirt, a devout woman wearing a white scarf under her traditional black chador, and a police officer wearing the white scarf around his neck and holding a supportive note. These photos distinctly capture solidarity from social groups that are not directly influenced by the law.

Similarly, the "MenInHijab" hashtag (Figure 3(d)), captures support specifically from men, where the emphasis has been mostly on family. Photos often display couples, mother and son, dads and daughters and often capture a family setting, such as a family trip. From the viewpoint of the public sphere, such attempts expand the domain of

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discussions by emphasizing on the women's issues as a family concern and therefore a public concern. Such attempts help construct opinions and become the concern of the public sphere.

Figure 5(a), 5(b), 5(c), and 5(d): Solidarity ((#WhiteWednesdays and #MenInHijab)

Anonymity

The third element of the digital public is anonymity. Anonymity and protection of activists' safety and that of their families is at the center of this movement. Anonymity is facilitated through different strategies. For example, all photos and videos are uploaded by the campaign manager and aliases are often used in personal blogs, Twitter accounts and personal Facebook posts. This way, identification factors such as name, affiliations, place of residence, and links to personal social media pages are protected (unless an activist wishes to declare it). Anonymity is also a point of interest with regard to the collective, as opposed to individualistic, motives of the campaign (i.e., changing the discriminatory laws). My analysis of visuals also revealed that sometimes activists safeguard their identities by, for example, covering part of their face or only showing the back of their heads. Such a level of identity protection is facilitated through digital media, which couldn't be possible in traditional forms of broadcasting that the women's movement has utilized in the past.

Discussion and Contributions

The past four decades of women's increasing presence in social, political, and economic spaces is a proof that there is no turning back in the women's movement in Iran. In this context of everyday feminism and everyday activism, digital platforms have come to aid the movement by amplifying activists' voices and forming public opinion by educating the public and providing a platform for debate. Geographical limitations are removed,

new forms of debate have emerged, and new ways of communication in the form of digital discourses are developed. The *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign is an example of such platforms that have successfully gathered many voices, from different social, economic, and religious backgrounds, to share and debate regarding issues of public dress code. I argue that the issue of mandatory public dress code in Iran is both a sociopolitical concern and a consumer concern. My netnography of the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign contribute to the domain of consumer emancipation in several ways that I outline below.

First, I demonstrate the importance of "consumption spaces" in consumer emancipation. My findings contribute to the existing arguments on emancipation and consumption, dominated by consumption of global brands (Ger and Belk 1996; Thompson and Arsel 2004), anti-market movements (Varman and Belk 2009; Friedman 1991; Kozinets and Handelman 1998, 2004), and marginalized, subculture consumption (Kates 2002, 2004). I extend this conversation by identifying consumption spaces as platforms encouraging debate and discussion. I argue that in the contexts where individuals face a dominating ideology and lack of freedom for self-portrayal, virtual platforms enable liberatory debates and new ways of self-presentation through enhancing solidarity and relative anonymity. These platforms make a mass audience available to ordinary consumers (McQuarrie et al. 2012) that are essential in social movements.

Second, my findings show that consumption spaces can perform as alternative public spheres in the absence of democratic mainstream platforms (e.g., TV, newspapers). Using the Habermasian notion of the public sphere, I show that the

elements of the public sphere are to a large extend present in social media spaces, where individuals debate social, cultural and political issues relatively freely. My analysis of the online extension of the Iranian women's movement shows the power of social media in enhancing the ability of marginalized voices that have either been muted by the dominant fundamentalists or denied access to public means of communication.

I illustrate that in contrast to arguments on slacktivism on social media-inspired movements (Shirky 2011), the *"My Stealthy Freedom"* campaign has led to significant impacts on the development of the Iranian women's movement. My findings show that the campaign has activated debates that have gone beyond its platforms and attracted debates outside the activist groups. It has also inspired broad coverage by international news agencies as well as the local press. Coverage by local newspapers can be viewed as a sign of acknowledgement of the impact and the broad reach of the campaign. Social and political figures, including a few members of parliament, as well as independent activists have also expressed their support in official interviews or via their personal social media pages. Overall, the campaign's name has become a familiar phrase and has inspired further offline street activism. The campaign is also often used to coordinate actions and a platform to debate and vote on offline actions. Overall, the interplay between the online extension of the movement and street activism addresses the comments raised by Habermas and others (e.g., Shirky 2011) regarding slacktivism and the lack of impact of mass-media driven public spheres.

Third, I identify aspects of consumer emancipation in the context of the Iranian women's movement by introducing the notion of the *digital public sphere* and discussing its three dimensions: *digital discursive space*, *solidarity*, and *anonymity*. In

my findings, I provide examples to illustrate that the digital public sphere can enhance offline movements by providing new ways of communication and debate through visuals. Activists utilize visual communications, via pictures and videos, to communicate their messages. Others, activists or audiences, react to these visuals by debating their meanings and effectiveness through likes, shares, and comments. Visuals are not only used as a tool to communicate but also as a medium to debate and vote on actions that further form communal, offline street activism. For example, actions are coordinated and discussed through photos shared under '#WalkingUnveiled' or '#WhiteWednesday' hashtags. These findings extend our understanding of the importance of visuals in actions tied to communal identities (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2015).

In addition, these findings contribute to the conversations on the digital tastes regimes (Arsel and Bean 2012) by arguing on the emergence of digital regime of consumer activism. I argue that this is a discursive regime that is formed via collectively selected activities and strategies on use of objects, color, and historic places (e.g., *Walking Without Veil* and *White Wednesdays* campaigns). These collective discursive practices are shared and understood by activists and their audiences, while at the same time confront the state-imposed laws and encourage more participation.

My analysis also highlights the solidarity enhanced by digital public sphere through connecting individuals who reside in different geographical locations and are from different socioeconomic backgrounds. Such nationwide inclusivity and relative anonymity facilitated by social media are not available in existing mainstream platforms in Iran. These two dimensions of the digital public sphere are of central importance in

the context of the women's rights movement in Iran as it enhances the power of subculture groups. This dimension of the digital public sphere extends Kates' (2002, 2004) argument on marginalized, subculture consumptions by showing that eliminating geographical borders facilitated by social media platforms enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the movement.

Fourth, this work contributes to our understanding of globalization and its influence on consumers' everyday lives. Building on Appadurai's (1996) notion of ideoscape, I argue that digital spaces can be a platform for transnational consumer movements via connecting activists across borders and facilitating the spread of ideas. In *My Stealthy Freedom* campaign, for example, the campaign manager is a former journalist that resides in United States and many of its supporters are also residing outside the country and contribute to the movement by spreading the idea, encouraging others to participate, and engaging in discussions. Similar patterns have been reported in movements during Arab Spring, Black Lives Matter, Hong Kong protest, Green Movement etc. (Khondker 2011; Sparks 2000; Iosifidis 2011; Fuchs 2014), where digital spaces serve as a coordination tool, a space to vote on actions, and a domain to exercise agency.

This is also important to note that these movements highlight the importance of the subject position of 'citizen-consumer' (Johnston 2008) that can merge citizenship (an idea rooted in collective responsibility, human rights, and freedom) and performing as a consumer. *My Stealthy Freedom* campaign integrates the consumer concern of mandatory public dress code, public appearance, and public self-representation with

individual citizens' concerns about protecting human rights and individual freedom via publically opposing state-imposed laws.

Limitations

One possible limitation of this study is the sources of data. My analysis is mainly based on netnographic data of posts and visuals that are publically available on campaign's pages, personal social media pages, and blogs. However, some activists might not be willing to share their views, pictures, or videos publically. This could lead to a bias as some social or religious groups may not be sufficiently represented in the analysis. For example, those from traditional and religious groups might be less willing to share their pictures but instead contribute to the cause by supporting others via liking, sharing or commenting on their posts. Since my study is mainly focused on visual and textual analysis and does not track those supporting others via reacting to their inputs, some groups of participants might not receive sufficient representation in my findings. One way to address this issue is to use supplementary data sources, such as interviews with activists. Interviews could also help revealing aspects that are not observable through visuals and capturing the views of those that are less willing publically contribute to the cause.

OVERALL DISSERTATION CONTRIBUTIONS

In this section I take a step back and put into perspective the overall contributions of the three papers to marketing theory and practice. Below, I outline contributions to marketing theory, followed by contributions to marketing practice.

In this dissertation research, I draw from theories of transnationalism that broadly define transnationalism as "the sustained cross-border relationships, patterns of exchange, affiliations and social formations spanning nation-states" (Vertovec 2009, p.2). Building on these theories (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Sheller and Urry 2006), I first situate transnationalism within the broader literature on globalization and consumer behavior and then address two gaps in consumer behavior and transnationalism literature. Specifically, I examine two aspects of transnationalism and consumer behavior: transnational consumer lifestyle and transnational consumer movement facilitated by transnational digital spaces. I provide contributions to four domains of consumer behavior literature: globalization and consumer behavior, consumer mobility and consumer acculturation, consumer emancipation and consumer empowerment, and postmodern consumption. Following, I outline each.

Contributions to globalization and consumer behavior. In paper I, I conducted a narrative synthesis (Cassell and Symon 1994) on the past three decades of globalization research and provided several contributions to the literature:

First, I identified three distinct theoretical perspectives on globalization used in this literature —i.e. *homogenization, glocalization,* and *deterritorialization*. The

homogenization narrative views globalization as a unidirectional flow of consumer products and consumer culture from more affluent to less affluent countries that leads to regional and cross-continental forms of homogenizations (Levitt 1983). The glocalization perspective views globalization as unidirectional flows of products and cultural symbols from the center that are appropriated and localized in the periphery (Robertson 1992). The deterritorialization perspective views globalization as multidirectional and interrelated flows wherein all nation-states are impacted by others independent from center-periphery relations (Appadurai 1990). Through identifying these perspectives, I contribute to the literature by a) identifying and problematizing the theoretical assumptions under each theoretical perspective on globalization and b) showing how each theoretical perspective shape research method, choice of study context, and empirical findings with regards to three domains of consumer behavior studies: consumer identity, consumer empowerment, the meaning and consumption of global brands. This framework (illustrated in Figure 1, paper I) can be used by future scholars to criticize the taken-for-granted assumptions regarding glocalizaiton and to situate their study within the broader globalization literature.

Second, using this framework, I identify areas that demand further research. One such area is that of transnationalism. I show that theories of transnationalism are not directly and extensively used in prior consumer behavior literature. Specifically, I identify two gaps in relation to transnationalism and consumer behavior that I empirically examine in papers II and III. The first gap is to examine transnationalism as a form of consumer lifestyle, which is shaped by a circular form of mobilities between multiple countries that result in cohabitation and multi-anchoring between different

consumer cultures. The multi-cohabitation sets apart transnationalism from global nomadism and migration that are mainly studied in prior literature (e.g., Askegaard et al. 2005; Bardhi et al. 2012). The second gap is to examine transnational consumer movements and their consumer emancipatory potential facilitated by transnational digital spaces that are increasingly used by consumer activists to form and progress movements. Social movements are increasingly transnational in nature (Vertovec 2009, p.29), such as in the cases of the Arab Spring, Me Too movement, and Black Lives Matter movement. However, little is known about the emancipatory potential of such spaces for consumer movements. By examining these two gaps, I contribute to globalization and consumer behavior literature via a) showing how individuals manage contemporary globalization by adopting a transnational form of lifestyle (paper II), and b) showing how transnational consumer movements contribute in shaping the contemporary global consumer culture by linking resources, institutions, and people across borders. This is especially important in the context of the less developed and totalitarian societies.

Contributions to consumer mobility and consumer acculturation. Drawing from theories of transnationalism, I empirically examine the nature of consumption and consumer acculturation when individuals adopt a transnational form of lifestyle (Glick Schiller et al. 1999). In this study, I contribute to the existing literature on consumer mobility and consumer acculturation (e.g., Bardhi et al. 2012; Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007) in several ways:

First, I show that consumer acculturation in transnationalism is different from consumer acculturation in other forms of mobile lifestyles that are studied in the literature (e.g., Peñaloza 1994; Askegaard et al. 2005; Üstüner and Holt 2007). Prior acculturation studies are primarily anchored in the host country and largely ignore acculturation practices that may occur due to co-habitation. In addition, the impact of acculturation in one society on (lack of) integration practices in others has received little attention. I argue that 'transnational consumer acculturation' is not holistic, as suggested by prior literature (Berry 1997; Askegaard et al. 2005), but rather selective, strategic, and domain-specific. I show that transnational consumers tend to not re-acculturate or invest in integrating into each new market they encounter, as we expected from acculturation literature (Askegaard et al. 2005). They rather selectively and strategically engage with services, products, and brands that relate to their purpose in each location. In practice, a transnational consumer may fully integrate in one domain (e.g., professional) and segregate from other domains in a particular society.

Second, I show that the strategic and selective consumer acculturation in transnationalism result in a new form of consumer identity position: the position of stranger (Simmel 1983). A stranger, as Simmel defines, is someone who can strategically decide on the level and the area of integration in a particular society. The literature on consumer mobility has introduced four identity positions (Askegaard et al. 2005): Hyperculture (hyper-assimilation with the host culture, coupled with rejection of the ethnic culture), Assimilation to the host consumption patterns, Pendulism (oscillation between cultures), and Integration (the best of both worlds). I propose that the stranger represent the identity position of transnational migrants in each locale where

they strategicially and selectivity acculturate to a particular aspect of a local culture. This form of consumer identity that takes place when an individual integrates in each consumer market through a particular anchoring (e.g., professional, familial, friendship) and does not engage in other forms of integration. For example, a stranger position would imply that one will understand and engage with the consumer market of fashion in Milano during his/her time there but no-where else; consume mainly work-related services and products when in London on his/her regular job; and consume all home/domestic related services and products when in Paris during the weekend or holidays with his/her own family. The condition of cohabitation in transnationalism provides transnationals with an opportunity to exercise this identity position across countries. Thus, a transnational consumer strategically aligns different acculturation practices across localities. For example, integration in work-place is limited to professional life, while integration in home-place involves long-lasting commitment, investment in material possessions, and engagement in home-type activities.

Third, I identify different meanings that locality (i.e., country) can take in transnational consumer lifestyle. Theoretically, examining the meanings and relations with locality is important as locality can structure associations (e.g., cultural, social, familial) and provide boundaries to consumption (McCracken 1988). Using a semiotics square (Greimas 1987), I introduce four meanings of locality (home, work, non-home, and non-work) in transnationalism and illustrate specific meanings and consumption practices associated with each (e.g., relation to possessions, commercial friendship, investment in long-lasting commitments). These four meanings challenge the duality of home-host that dominates prior consumer acculturation studies (e.g., Oswald 1999;

Peñaloza 1994). Home and host are often viewed as separate and independent in prior studies. In addition, the duality of home-host does not allow for more than two countries when examining consumer acculturation styles. In this work, I challenge this duality and examine consumer acculturation and relation with locality from a network perspective. Such network includes countries and institutions within them (e.g., family, professional networks, commercial friends). I show that a transnational consumer may experience all, or some, of these four meanings of locality (home, work, non-home, non-work) through simultaneous cohabitations facilitated by social, familial, or professional connections.

Fourth, I introduce the notion of transnational consumption as a specific form of consumption that takes place across borders characterized by three dimensions: is localized (transnational consumption is shaped by the meanings associated with each locality), is embedded in transnational networks of relations (transnational consumption is embedded in social and place-based networks of interpersonal relations and commercial friendships), and is complementary (transnational consumption in each locality complements consumption in other localities). The notion of transnational consumption contributes to what we know about consumption under mobility. Instead of consumption being territorial, as reported in the case of migrants (e.g., Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994) or deterritorialized, as reported in the case of nomads (Bardhi et al. 2012), consumption in transnationalism is fragmented across multiple places. This notion also contributes to our understanding on how consumption helps managing uncertainties in mobility. Transnational consumption provides a sense of stability and continuity by being anchored in multiple localities and being embedded in networks of friendships and interpersonal relationships. Through transnational consumption,

transnational consumers maintain their previous connections and consumption patterns and routines.

Contributions to consumer emancipation and consumer empowerment. Consumer empowerment is often evaluated based on consumer's *access* to market offerings and consumer's *control* over their choices (Wathieu et al., 2002). While I did not directly examine consumer empowerment in my research, my dissertation contributions to our current knowledge in this area in several ways.

In paper I, I answer the call by Ger et al. (2018) to summarize and synthesize prior research on the impact of globalization on consumers' lives. One aspect of such impact is how globalization contributes to consumers' experience of (dis)empowerment due to the forces of globalization. In my summary framework, I show how CCT scholars have challenged the prior assumptions and the expected outcomes of mainstream international marketing theories regarding globalization's impact on consumers' experience of empowerment. For example, as opposed to predictions of homogenization theories that local cultures in less developed countries are overrun by Western-inspired consumer culture, CCT studies show that consumers' resistance has led to hybrid consumer cultures and the transformations in products' meanings and usages to better serve consumers' ethnic culture that leads to their experience of empowerment (Ger and Belk 1996).

In paper II, I illustrate how transnational consumer acculturation can be understood as selective, strategic, and domain specific. I argue that this manifests as a case of consumer agency, whereby consumers strategically align their consumption

across countries, and chose in what market aspect or domain to acculturate or whether to avoid it. This strategic and selective acculturation style facilitates transnational consumers' access to benefits and rights tied to each location. For example, rights to citizenship, ownership of land and business, access to consumer products and services, and voting rights are amongst the benefits that transnational consumers gain by maintaining multiple and simultaneous embeddedness. Transnational consumers accumulate network capital (Larsen et al. 2008, p. 656) by maintaining cross-border relations, from which they receive emotional, professional, and financial benefits (e.g., undertaking transnational professional assignments, part-time cross-border affiliations, cross-border investments, or long-distance family arrangements). In addition to the gained benefits, such simultaneous access minimizes acculturation efforts. Thus, less resources, including time, are required for acculturation. I argue that this is an expression of consumer agency, where transnational consumers actively decide on the areas and the level of integration in different places. Transnational consumers are more empowered through accessing multiple consumer markets, gaining monetary and non-monetary advantages from their network capital, and accessing rights and benefits tied to each locality.

In paper III, I examine a case where consumers' access to public means of communication and self-presentation are limited, as they are either in the hands of the state or controlled and monitored by it. I show that, in this condition transnational digital spaces can empower repressed consumers by providing a platform for communication and debate, a means to extend and amplify offline activism, and a way to connect activists and institutions across borders. I show that the women's movement in Iran is

transnational in nature due to the connections that are facilitated via social media platforms. These spaces provide a platform for global news agencies, local activists, political figures (inside and outside Iran), expat community, and international community of activists to participate, exchange ideas, and debate. In line with these findings I provide two arguments to the literature on emancipation and consumer behavior:

First, I demonstrate the importance of 'consumption spaces' in consumer emancipation. This study contributes to the existing argument on emancipation and consumption, dominated by studies on consumption of global brands (Ger and Belk 1996; Thompson and Arsel 2004), anti-market movements (Varman and Belk 2009; Friedman 1991; Kozinets and Handelman 1998, 2004), and marginalized, subcultural consumption (Kates 2002, 2004), by showing that virtual platforms can facilitate transnational consumer movements and enable liberatory debate and self-representation when individuals face limitations for self-portrayal and access to democratic means of communications. I show that these spaces provide a platform for public sphere (Habermas 1989). I argue that the elements of Habermasian public sphere are to a large extent present in social media spaces, where individuals debate social, cultural and political issues relatively freely. I introduce the notion of the *digital public sphere* and discuss its three dimensions: *digital discursive space*, *solidarity*, and *anonymity*. I show that the digital public sphere can enhance the offline movement by providing new ways of communication and debate via visual media (pictures and videos). Consumer activists use visuals not only as a communication tool, but also as a medium to debate and vote on actions that further form communal, offline, and street activism. In addition,

nationwide inclusivity among women and men from different religious, social, and religious background, as well as connections with the expat community of activists have not been available in the existing mainstream communication platforms in Iran. Overall, the digital public sphere provided by transnational social media spaces enhances consumers' feeling of empowerment by amplifying their voices, providing new ways of debate, and enhancing the link with transnational actors such as expat community and global news agencies.

Second, I contribute to the research on taste regime, defined as "a discursively constructed normative system that orchestrates practice in an aesthetically oriented culture of consumption" (Arsel and Bean 2012, p.899), by introducing the notion of *digital regime of consumer activism*: a discursive regime that is shaped by collectively deciding and negotiating on how to strategically use objects, colors, places, and spaces to communicate between activists, to educate the public and encourage participation, and to visibly confront the laws. In the paper, I provide multiple examples of strategic use of objects and colors (e.g., #whiteWednesdays, #walkingwithoutveil) and public spaces by activists in order to exercise agency and publically confront the laws of the mandatory public dress code.

Contributions to postmodern consumption. In their seminal work, Firat and Venkatesh (1995, p.252) describe five conditions of postmodernity: hyperreality (reality is constructed rather than given), fragmentation (consumption is multiple and disjointed and the human subject has a divided self), reversal of production and consumption, decentered subject (we have a communicative subject, rather than a cognitive subject),

and juxtaposition of opposites (fragmentation, rather than unification, is a basis of consumption). My empirical studies contribute to our understanding of postmodern consumption in multiple ways. In paper II, I study a case of the postmodern consumer, where fragmentation in consumers' lives takes place through simultaneous cohabitations in multiple places. I argue that co-habitation results in a fragmentation of consumers' identity, where different places (e.g., work, home) satisfy different aspects of consumers' sense of self (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). In other words, transnational consumers develop distinct social and material relations with each locality. In addition, I show that transnational consumers manage such fragmentation through a network approach to their consumption. I illustrate that consumption and life in one location complement that in other location(s). These findings extend arguments on postmodern consumption by identifying three dimensions of fragmented consumption in transnationalism: localized, embedded in transnational network of relations, and complementary across borders. These dimensions emphasize 1) the role of locality in postmodern consumption and 2) consumers' agency in strategically and selectively managing consumption practices across borders.

In paper III, I focus on another dimension of postmodern consumption: decentered self. Firat and Venkatesh (1995) argue that instead of viewing human beings in mere cognitive terms, human beings in postmodernism are understood as "communicative subjects guided by language as much as by rational thought" (p. 243). Communicative technologies are central in the formation of decentered subjects. In paper III, I examine a context, where self, more specifically gender identity, is formed and communicated through visuals. I show that digital platforms enable new forms of

communication, wherein certain themes and narratives emerge through photos and videos. These narratives collectively shape Iranian women's gender identity and facilitate different ways of expressing it (e.g., joining street actions such as #walkwithoutveil or #whitewednesday). In other words, a specific regime of digital activism has emerged in this context. Arsel and Bean (2012, p. 899) define a taste regime "as a discursively constructed normative system that orchestrates practice in an aesthetically oriented culture of consumption". In the context of the Iranian women movement, the digital regime of consumer activism is structured around shared activities, use of symbolic objects, and strategic use of colors or places. I also argue that, in this context, a new form of global consumer subjectivity has taken place as individuals (women and men) see themselves as part of a global community of Iranian activists. I advocate that this is a form of long-distance citizenship or diasporic communities, where activists living outside the country use digital communication platforms to express their support and oppose state-imposed laws (cf. Appadurai 1996).

Contributions to marketing practice. The field of international marketing is primarily driven by technical and universalizing approaches, aimed at solving managerial problems. This approach has led to an ethnocentric view that has become problematic as the global marketplace develops (Cayla and Arnould 2008). Prior studies have tried to address this gap by providing arguments that are contextually and historically grounded, and polycentric in orientation. Cayla and Eckhardt (2008), for example, have offered a contextually sensitive approach to international branding (see also Cayla and Arnould 2008; Eckhardt 2005; Cannon and Yaprak 2002; and Iyer and Shapiro 1999 for more

examples). With the first paper in my dissertation, I contribute to this conversation by first synthesizing a range of studies from 11 consumer behavior and marketing journals and contrasting their theoretical backgrounds and implications. Second, my framework provides a contextually and historically grounded guide on different meanings that global brands can take (e.g., tool for political and economic oppression; passport of global citizenship, platform for international communities).

Finally, in my second paper, I introduce and examine a growing consumer segment, whose lives are fragmented across borders and facilitated by frequent travels (Sheller and Urry 2006). The hallmark of transnationalism is multi-cohabitation, resulting from extending familial, professional, and financial ties across borders, which differentiates transnationalism from migration (i.e., permanent relocation) and nomadism (i.e., deterritorialization). This segment includes those that undertake job-related international assignments, perform a combination of full-time, part-time, or volunteer jobs across borders, manage a long-distance family arrangement, etc. Such lifestyles have become commonplace, and often demanded, in many fields such as real-estate, academia, consultancy, finance etc. (Collings, Scullion, and Morley 2007; Brookfield 2012). This includes commutes to neighboring locations, such as those reported between Hong Kong and mainland China (Lau et al. 2012), or within European countries (Sparrow 2010, p. 141), as well as cross-continental arrangements (Green et al. 1999). In this study, I examine transnational consumers' behaviors towards a range of local products and services (e.g., healthcare, entertainment, etc.) and provide insights on the ways that corporations can better serve this growing consumer group.

Specifically, I show that on the contrary to the expectations from the literature and the common understanding of mobility-driven lifestyles, transnational consumption is not deterritorialized, but rather localized and driven by meanings attached to the locality. In practice, transnational consumers tend to maintain consumption habits and practices across borders, for which transnational commercial friendships are central. I show that *trust* in service providers and *familiarity* with the product/service play central roles in transnational consumption as they provide stability, continuity, and feeling of anchoring in fragmented transnational lifestyle. Thus, while a transnational consumer does not permanently live in a particular country, her consumption might still be anchored in the interpersonal or commercial friendships and relationships that are anchored in that society. I provide multiple examples form healthcare, retail, and finance sectors showing the importance of trust and familiarity that shape transnational and cross-border nature of consumption in services that are traditionally described via ease of access and proximity in the literature. These dimensions of transnational consumption help managers better unpack the consumption of their transnational customers and better cater to them across borders.

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