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A multi-sited ethnographic marketing inquiry into the experiences produced and undergone at shopping malls : the case of malls in Buenos Aires, London, Paris, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo

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Titre: "A multi-sited ethnographic marketing inquiry into the experiences produced and undergone at shopping malls: The cases of malls in Buenos Aires, London, Paris, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo"

THESE

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THESE

Titre: "Une étude ethnomarketing multi-sites sur les expériences produites et vécues dans les centres commerciaux: les cas de centres commerciaux à Buenos Aires, Londres, Paris, Rio de Janeiro et São Paulo"

Abstract- Français

Cette recherche se concentre sur les centres commerciaux et sur les expériences de magasinage produites et vécues au sein de ces espaces de vente dans différentes villes et régions du monde (Angleterre, Argentine, Brésil, France). Bien qu'il existe de nombreuses recherches sur ce sujet dans les économies développées, il en existe peu consacrées aux économies émergentes (Amérique Latine, notamment) et encore moins à des comparaisons inter-zones. Ce travail à caractère inductif et interculturel s'appuie, pour la discussion théorique des observations menées, sur les apports de la "Consumer Culture Theory", en particulier sur les recherches sur l'expérience de magasinage transposées aux centres commerciaux, et tente de dégager des implications marketing.

Mots Clés: Centres commerciaux, Consumer Culture Theory, expériences de magasinage, analyse inter-culturelle, Angleterre, Argentine, Brésil, France.

Abstract – English

This research focuses on shopping centers and on the shopping and consuming experiences produced and undergone within these retail spaces in different cities and in different regions of the world. Although significant work has been done on this topic in developed economies, significantly less has been devoted to emerging economies and even less has been done in comparative terms. This work builds on the existing Consumer Culture Theory related literature and it attempts to address current gaps in this body of work, as well as to provide managerial recommendations based on research findings. It differentiates itself from previous research on shopping centers on four main aspects: (1) By studying the phenomenon of shopping centers in Latin America, a largely unexplored domain; (2) By adding a multicultural perspective to the body of research on consumer and shopping experiences at shopping centers through the study of cases in five different cities; (3) By establishing a process of case selection to provide a priori variability of cases; (4) By comparing on “continuum” (Carù & Cova, 2007; Roederer, 2008) the full array of shopping experiences: produced, undergone and co-driven (Csaba and Askegaard, 1999; Tsai, 2010) and assessing whether these experiences vary across locations as well as the possible causes of variation.

Key words: Shopping Centers; Consumer Culture; Servicescapes; Argentina; Brazil; England, France.

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Machado de Assis, a classic Brazilian author, once said that “a word attracts another, an idea is followed by the next, and this is how we make books, governments, revolutions”. This work, rather than a revolution, marks an evolution in my personal development. It represents a final rite of passage from my corporate to my academic life.

Instead of viewing it as the end of a process, I prefer to see it as the coronation of a very difficult yet rewarding journey. One throughout which I have had the help and support of many people.

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It is because of my children that I have kept going. My husband has made it all possible. You are the best.

* * *

"Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop."

Lewis Carroll (1864)

Alice in Wonderland

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'I dread success. To have succeeded is to have finished one's business on earth, like the male spider, who is killed by the female the moment he has succeeded his courtship. I like the state of continual becoming, with a goal in front and not behind.

George Bernard Shaw (1896)

General Introduction

Service and commercial places have had a community function dating to ancient times (Adburgham 1979; Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999). In contemporary commercial spaces individuals interact with objects, brands, with various groups of other individuals and with different belief systems, thus allowing for the construction of identity and meaning through the consumption not only of products and services, but also of time (Schmitt and Zarantonello 2013).

Askegaard and Linnet (2011) state that businesses respond to the communities in which they are inserted through the creation of new operant and operand resources¹ and recognize that the creation of these new resources reflects changes in society's rules. Following this line of thought, it is therefore crucial for corporate management to acknowledge how business have responded to these constructed communal identities in order to sustain an effective corporate strategy.

Yet communities are constantly changing and the recent outbreak of social movements has called for a new understanding of not only what is going on in today's world, but why things are changing and how these changes affect

¹ Constantin and Lusch (1994) define operant resources as those upon which an act or operation is executed and operand resources as those engaged to act upon operand and other operant resources. Operant resources are often intangible skills and competencies that act upon production inputs that are operand resources.

businesses in every industry. So how can we understand these corporate-consumer relationships in the aftermath of a “new consumer”² era?

Even though there is a general consensus about much of “what” has changed over the life-span of a few generations, and even in some cases on the effect of these changes on consumers’ roles in marketspaces, there is still a need to further understand the underlying factors driving those changes. The “why factor” inspiring these consumer responses cannot be understood based solely on mainstream firm-centric marketing approaches, which were developed in parallel to the industrial revolution and are based on the microeconomic maximization paradigm (Webster 1992).

These dominant frameworks view consumption as the “act of using goods and services to satisfy needs and wants” (Kotler 1997: 9) without necessarily taking into account the deeper social, cultural and psychological aspects of consumer behavior. A Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) approach to marketing thought focuses on the experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption that are often neglected or at least underemphasized in mainstream firm-centric research (Arnould and Thompson 2005) and can thus make significant contribution to an understanding of this new world order.

Of particular interest for the CCT literature is the network of relationships which are built in retail spaces at any given point in time. As proposed by Peñaloza and Cayla (in Belk 2006), CCT studies both consumption venues and what consumers do in these spaces.

² Cova and Cova (2009) identify three consecutive faces of the “new consumer” developing from marketing discourses over the last 20 some years: “the individualistic consumers of the early 90’s, the hedonistic consumers of the turn of the millennium and the creative consumers since the mid-2000’s.” (Cova and Cova 2009: 95).

Accordingly, this work will attempt to analyze consumer culture and the construction of a communal identity project (Arnould 2005) at shopping centers in different cities, while acknowledging the “cultural, historic and societal conditions that make this identity and the means of attaining it attractive and legitimate” (Askegaard and Linnet 2011). It will also attempt to understand how the “feedback system” works, or, in other words, how the construction of communal identities affects the retail environments in which they take place in terms of business models and positioning.

This research focuses on shopping centers and on the shopping and consuming experiences produced and undergone within these retail spaces in different cities and in different regions of the world. Although significant work has been done on this topic in developed economies, significantly less has been devoted to emerging economies and even less has been done in comparative terms.

This research builds on the existing Consumer Culture Theory related literature and it attempts to address current gaps in this body of work, as well as to provide managerial recommendations based on research findings. It differentiates itself from previous research on shopping centers on four main aspects: (1) By studying the phenomenon of shopping centers in Latin America, a largely unexplored domain; (2) By adding a multicultural perspective to the body of research on consumer and shopping experiences at shopping centers through the study of cases in five different cities; (3) By establishing a process of case selection to provide a priori variability of cases; (4) By comparing on “continuum” (Carù & Cova, 2007; Roederer, 2008) the full array of shopping experiences: produced, undergone and co-driven (Csaba and Askegaard, 1999; Tsai, 2010) and assessing whether these experiences vary across locations as well as the possible causes of variation.

Part 1 Research Contextualization

*“In the struggle for survival, the fittest win out at the expense of their rivals
because they succeed at adapting best to their environment”*

Darwin (1869)

On the origin of species

1.1. Empirical Background of the Research

According to Fuentes (2012), retailing and shopping practices are rooted on while at the same time work to reproduce broader social and cultural practices He argues that retail has a political role in society, since it affects the way people view the world.

This implies that in order to recognize why some store concepts, marketing practices and products are successful while others fall short it is important to recognize the socio-cultural processes on which the practices of retailing, shopping and consumption build on. The most successful retailers would thus be the ones who understand not only how these underlying processes affect their business, but also how their business may affect these processes today and in the future.

1.1.1. Retail markets and the “survival of the fittest”

The retailing industry has undergone significant changes over the last twenty years. Competition from online commerce has initially driven retail operators to focus on the experiential side of the physical shops: the embodiment of physical retail experiences and an overall strategy of re-enchantment of retail spaces. However, the early approaches completely separated the online from the off-line experiences (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999; Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Carù and Cova 2003a; Farrag et al 2010). More recently, however, retail operators are taking into account the complete entertainment experience, with its full array

of on and off-line experiences (Vanheems 2012) with components of excitement, fun, joy and even dream-like fantasies (Tsai 2010).

Retailers have started to innovate with multichannel approaches (Dholakia, et al. 2010) and the complementarity of these varied shopping experiences seemed to be more effective and profitable in the long-run. Offline only retailing is now a shrinking category (The Economist, 2013). With the emergence of multichannel retailing - or omnichannel, the preferred term for some analysts, physical retail settings continue to be a key factor in creating consumer experiences.

Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999) sustain that companies should consider the design of physical retail spaces or "common places" as a key managerial issue. The design of these shared spaces aids in the development of social links by and among the users. These communal experiences transform routine shopping into a social activity, which in turn stimulates repeat or longer visits.

Mastering the creation of consumer experiences in this new multichannel environment and on a global scale becomes critical for retailers during hard economic times. As consumers become weary of their spending habits, both physical shops are closing and online retailers are failing. It is the "survival of the fittest" - the retailers who better adapt to consumers' cultural changes - who will remain competitive in the long run.

1.1.2. Cultural understanding as an asset in retail management

The movement towards industry consolidation in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis accentuated the already ongoing trend of globalized corporate investment. It favors global players, who can hedge market downturn in one area with good performance in other markets (Cushman & Wakefield 2011). In spite of this new competitive scenario, the mainstream

market perspective - which dates from the 1980's – acknowledges the existence of cultural differences but either deems them "defeatable" (Levitt 1983) or "avoidable" (Hofstede 1980).

According to this dominant marketing worldview, culture is regarded mostly as a background factor which may affect the outcome of business transactions. The role of cultural understanding under this viewpoint would be to predict problems or potential misunderstandings resulting from diverse cultural backgrounds in marketing exchange relationships or in cross-cultural managerial interactions (Hofstede 1980; Levitt 1983; Askegaard et al. in Nakata 2009; The Economist Intelligence Unit 2012).

The key issue at hand under this classic approach is therefore the level of standardization-adaptation considered optimum for each market and the unit of analysis is almost always the "nation-state". Culture is usually seen as a unitary and sometimes static variable, although occasionally reference is made to subcultures, generally in terms of ethnicity (Askegaard et al. in Nakata 2009: 127).

Traditionally companies have prioritized expansion into countries with which they believe to be more compatible culturally, minimizing the risk of failure during the "learning curve" period. According to Ghemawat (cited in The Economist Intelligence Unit 2012), two countries sharing a common language trade 42% more than two comparable countries with no language connection, while countries formerly united by colonial bonds trade 188% more. Those sharing a common currency trade 114% more.

However, competitive pressures and the pace of global expansion have rendered it necessary for companies to expand into what is deemed as 'more unfamiliar markets', implying places where no common language, history or currency are at play. Studies measuring 'cultural distances' have

consequently become popular (Hofstede, 1980; Askegaard et al. in Nakata, 2009).

Contrary to this classic approach, this work will attempt to analyze consumer culture and the construction of a communal identity project (Arnould 2005) at shopping centers in different cities, yet without attempting to either measure or avoid those cultural differences. Instead, the goal here is to acknowledge the direct, two-way relationships between cultures and the marketplace.

1.1.3. Leveraging opportunities in “unfamiliar markets”

Emerging economies, and especially BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa³), and more recently the so called “Next Seven”⁴ Argentina⁵, Egypt, Indonesia, Mexico, Turkey, Vietnam, have become the focus of business operations by various companies in different industries, including retail (Euromonitor 2010). In fact, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit, in 2010 the high-growth markets of Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa together accounted for 45% of world GDP while in 1980 the same nations represented a mere 25% of world GDP.

The same study reveals that GDP is likely to double for many of the high growth markets by 2020, in purchasing power parity terms. These same countries are about to become the largest recipients of the world’s imports. Latin America is the region with the overall best performance in the retail industry.

³ South Africa was officially added to the BRICS framework in 2013.

⁴Now “Next Six” as South Africa joined the BRICS..

⁵ The continuation of Argentina in this group is now being questioned due to the recent troubles in the country

The new upward push in the retail industry in these markets is propelled by the price of the commodities and a more stable macroeconomic environment, based largely on stronger institutions in several countries which warrant stability (with the exception of Argentina, Bolivia and Venezuela). According to this worldview, new trends in retailing are differentiated into three clusters:

- The Emerging markets, and especially BRICs, showing both rental space growth and price increases;
- Global gateway cities (NYC, London, Paris, etc.) showing price increases due to the shortage of prime locations;
- Other regions, showing decline in both rental spaces with the closing of second class, unprofitable locations, and overall price declines (Cushman & Wakefield 2011; PWC 2012).

Under this scenario, deeper knowledge of different markets, cultures and economic and political contexts is a significant competitive advantage. This is one area where substantial contribution to marketing practice can be made by going beyond Levitt (1980) and Hofstede (1983) as proposed by Askegaard et al. (in Nakata 2009) through the study of the "dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace and cultural meanings" (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

In the post-2008 crisis era, the so-called "developed economies" are experiencing economic instability, unheard of for the newer generations, while some of the so-called "emerging economies" experience economic growth. A wide range of opportunities have opened up for the now more mobile young adults in these developing regions (in spite of some "roadblocks" on the way). Factors like the increasingly rapid global flows which minimize the effects of national borders through the abundance of cultural encounters have propelled the interest in the processes of identity

construction both at the individual and group levels and on a global scale (Askegaard et al. in Nakata 2009).

However, only limited insights on how cultural and symbolic underlying meanings affect the individual and group identity construction projects have originated from studies in LICs (Ustuner and Holt 2010).

1.1.4. The shopping center industry

From an economic standpoint, shopping centers provide a clustering of goods and services that is beneficial to investors and consumers (choice of brands, one-stop-shopping), and to society in general since it provides jobs, tax revenues and sometimes the rejuvenation or development of urban or suburban areas (ICSC 2008). The most prominent design of shopping center today is the "mall", defined by ICSC standards (2008) as "typically enclosed, climate controlled and lighted, flanked on one or both sides by storefronts and entrances".

From a managerial standpoint, malls target a large proportion of the population, defined loosely as "blue collar and middle classes" (Dupuis et al. 2002) and several attempts to develop more "upscale" shopping centers are reported to have failed systematically in some western countries (USA, France), despite a favorable "geo-marketing analysis" (Ochs and Badot 2010). However, in recent years, shopping centers all over the world have undergone significant changes in terms of format, types, functions and also a positioning and size "inflation", leading to more upscale and bigger shopping centers (Dennis 2005).

Particularly, the shopping center industry in Brazil is booming and Shopping Iguatemi in São Paulo is the 5th highest location price in the Americas, the first one outside of the United States (Cushman & Wakefield 2011). In fact, a recent study demonstrated that Brazilians visit shopping

centers on average 3.9 times a month, with the upper classes demonstrating even more frequent visits (IBOPE 2013). This is significantly higher than the North American average of 2.9 visits per month (JC Decaux 2013 in Cushman & Wakefield, 2011).

As for Europe, England's shopping center industry in has received great attention over the last few years, propelled by the transformations that took place in the Greater London area in preparation for the 2012 Olympics. Shopping centers represent today over 28% of total sales in the country (the Economist, 2012). Many analysts have seen these transformations as attempts to counterbalance the effect of the 2008 economic crisis. However, very little research has been carried out to analyze how these changes have affected consumer identity construction projects (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Shopping centers as places of multiple functions

Despite the differences in market development, expansion and different industry structures, shopping centers everywhere in the world perform today a wide variety of functions that go beyond their obvious commercial goal. According to Firat and Venkatesh (1993: 233), shopping centers are "not only centers of shopping, but highly organized social spaces for entertainment, interaction, and other types of consumer excitement". They are seen as spaces that try to simulate the ideal modern town, one without pollution, traffic jams, crime and parking problems (Ferreira Freitas, 1996).

They are no longer mere "buying destinations" and can be viewed as "tracts to stroll as you shop, and to shop while you stroll" (Farrag et al. 2010: 97) in a controlled environment, giving consumers a feeling of safeness (Abaza 2001; Bauman 1996). Many researchers sustain that shopping centers all over the world are in fact "returning to their origins" and perform today very similar functions as those performed by the ancient Greek Agora or

the Forum in Roman times, a place where goods, services, currency and experiences are exchanged, a place for socialization (Gruen and Smith, 1960; Adburgham, 1979; Csaba and Askegaard, 1999; Finn et al. 1994; Ferreira-Freitas, 1996; Filser, 2010; Farrag et al, 2010).

Contemporary shopping centers are reallocating space from “traditional retailing” to leisure and entertainment: from an average of 5% of the surface a decade ago, these activities now take up to 15-20% of the floor space in Europe to as much as 25% in the US. More changes are expected to come as other activities, such as medical services, may be a new trend in the industry (ICSC 2013).

1.1.5. Addressing the Empirical Gap

This work addresses a series of empirical gaps in consumer culture literature: (1). Gaps in research on consumption as a coping mechanism under economic and social turmoil; (2) Gaps in research on consumption in LIC’s; (3) Gaps in research on status consumption. The following sections address these gaps.

1.1.5.1. Gaps in research on consumption as a coping mechanism under economic and social turmoil

Consumer Culture Theory research has focused primarily on North American, and Western European contexts although increasingly work has been done in developing economies, especially in Asian, African and Eastern European environments (e.g. Arnould 1989; Ferreira-Freitas 1996; Bonsu and Belk 2003; Ustuner and Holt 2007, 2010; Farrag et al 2010; Khare 2010; Ulvner-Sneistrup and Ostberg 2011; Varman and Belk 2012).

Nevertheless, although significant research on different aspects of consumption has been carried out in developed markets, very little effort has been put in understanding the role of consumption in coping mechanisms in larger middle class and blue collar groups facing socio-economic instability, sometimes for the first time, as is the case in Europe currently. In fact, previous research in developed economies generally addressed small groups within society facing adversity due to individual and circumscribed situations (for instance, loss of economic solvency due to personal debt) yet rarely when instability is generalized across larger groups.

Ulvner-Sneistrup and Ostberg (2011) assert that the term *nouveaux pauvres* has been applied to three groups of people: (1) the marginalized citizens in modern welfare societies; (2) the middle classes who come to feel poor by comparing themselves to wealthier citizens; and (3) people who engage in credit-paid indulgence in spite of not being able to afford it.

This research concerns itself with the latter two types of consumers, middle class and blue collar citizens engaging in a consumption filled lifestyle (Baudrillard 1984) as a means of identity construction in today's liquid social structures (Bauman 2000). By doing so, it contributes significantly to the body of work by combining findings from developed economies and LIC's regarding coping mechanisms in large blue collar and middle-class groups.

1.1.5.2. Gaps in research on consumption in LIC's⁶

Concurrently, Varman and Belk (2012) argue that little research has gone into understanding consumer identities and transitioning retail servicescapes of the Third World. According to them, most prior work on shopping centers has focused mainly on affluent cultures of the West⁷ (see Csaba & Askegaard 1999; Kowinski 2002; Lehtonen & Mäenpää 1997) and claim the emphasis of mall management in the developed world is on safety and exclusion of 'undesirables' - the poor, beggars, criminals, and most non-shoppers - (Kowinski 2002; Miller 2001; Zukin 2004 in Varman and Belk 2012).

The authors add that even in the few studies of malls in post-colonial spaces (e.g. Abaza 2001), the post-colonial aspects of these malls are not recognized and the focus of the research is on what they call "the postmodern aspects of these spaces" - their theatrical and hyperreal environments.

For these authors, window shopping and browsing are considered recreational activities in the developed world considering that visitors can aspire to buy the goods on display (e.g. Bloch, Ridgeway, & Dawson 1994; Bloch, Ridgeway, & Nelson 1991; Bloch, Ridgeway, & Sherrel 1989). However, they sustain that the outcomes of these displays of economic solvency are different when transferred to Less Industrialized Countries (LIC's) and that there is still substantial potential for contribution to the body of research in these markets considering the overall growing global

⁶ LIC is an acronym for Less Industrialized Country

⁷ The term "the West" is applied in most research to mean North America and Europe, although formally Central and South America and part of Africa are also in the western hemisphere. Nevertheless, it has been applied largely as a proxy of industrialized and economically developed countries, being used to refer for instance to Australia.

interest in their potential (see Arnould and Thompson 2005, Arnould et al. 2013; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Askegaard and Scott 2013).

Particularly, in spite of the incipience of a CCT-friendly group of researchers interested in and emanating from Latin America, the region continues to be a largely unexplored domain in the CCT literature. One possible explanation for this fact is that journal editors and reviewers are still biased towards western⁸ subjectivities in terms of consumption research and frequently pose the dreaded “so what?” question when faced with differing and novel contexts.

Another factor could be that, contrary to other emerging economies like India and South Africa, French was the second language traditionally taught to the intellectual elite in Latin America until the 1970’s. As English has since become the predominant language in academia, as reflected by journal impact factors and business school rankings, not being proficient in English is a clear handicap for the more senior researchers in these regions.

1.1.5.3. Gaps in research on status consumption

Understanding how status consumption works in LICs is paramount for companies nowadays due to the rapid rise of a “new consumer” class in these markets (Myers and Kent 2004, cited by Ustuner and Holt 2010). In fact, this incipient global class has growing discretionary purchasing power and is thus able to pursue a consumption-focused lifestyle, much like their developed country counterparts, and is becoming the most prized target of multinational companies, as they seek growth opportunities beyond saturated mature markets (Ustuner and Holt 2010: 37).

⁸ Again applied by the authors to mean North American and Western European.

In particular, albeit recent turmoil, Brazil has been of distinctive interest to a variety of industries after the economic stabilization of the last decade and yet it is largely underrepresented in consumer culture literature. With growing middle and upper classes with an appetite for the consumption of luxury goods⁹, Brazil – as well as other Less Industrialized Countries (LICs) - has become a fertile ground for understanding status consumption. In fact, the topic has been discussed extensively in practitioner literature, nevertheless generally from a firm-centric perspective and usually based on quantitative findings, although on occasion some qualitative research has been carried out (IPSOS 2010).

To that effect, Holt and Ustuner (2010) called for more culturally embedded research on status consumption in LICs. They claimed that although status consumption has been discussed extensively (Bourdieu 1984; Lamont 1992; Simmel 1904, 1957; Veblen 1899, 1970), this research stream bared a fundamental limitation since key empirical studies had focused on consumption patterns in Europe and the United States to frame a theory that is inadequately suggested to be universal (page 37).

In fact, findings from studies carried out in LIC's have aided in understanding consumption patterns in developed economies, especially in moments of social and economic change. Alternating periods of crisis with accelerated economic development, these countries provide ideal environments to study changes in consumption patterns and cultural evolution. Appadurai, Bhabha and Holt, to name a few, have made significant contributions to the literature in that sense.

⁹ Although there is no consensus in the definition of luxury (Heine, 2012), there is consensus that it is a relative concept. According to Mortelmans (2005), it is a sign-value that distinguishes one person from the next. Once an object plays a hierarchical role in intragroup or intergroup processes, this consumption sign takes the form of a luxury item. This definition implies that even local brands can attain the significance of luxury. This is the definition that will be applied throughout this work.

1.2. Theoretical Background of the research

A primary purpose of this work will be to analyze the relationship between the shopping and consuming activities occurring within shopping centers in different cities and the construction of communal identity projects within these retail spaces (Arnould 2005). It will, at the same time, recognize the similarities and differences in the contexts in which these experiences take place and the contextual effects on the process (Askegaard and Linnet 2011:96).

Additionally, this research will attempt to understand firm responses in terms of business models and positioning through the creation of operand and operant resources (Constantin and Lusch 1994; Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Vargo and Lusch 2004, Arnould 2005; Arnould et al. in Lusch and Vargo 2006; Badot and Lemoine 2008).

The following sections will provide a brief overview of the key theoretical concepts on which this research project was based. Given that this research follows a phenomenological inductive posture, the object of the research is defined and redefined throughout the research process and the iteration between literature review, fieldwork and analysis aids in shaping the final design of the research (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

The literature review presented here is organized thematically. Although some of the works referenced in the following sections are rather recent and in some cases had not been published at the beginning of this research project, they were incorporated through this iteration process and are included in this section for structuring and clarity purposes.

The first section displays a review of the literature on shopping centers and the following segments continue with an articulation of key existing research concepts on retailing and related topics that were deemed relevant for this work. Seminal works on each of the key relevant themes for this research are portrayed in the highlighted portion of the following figure:

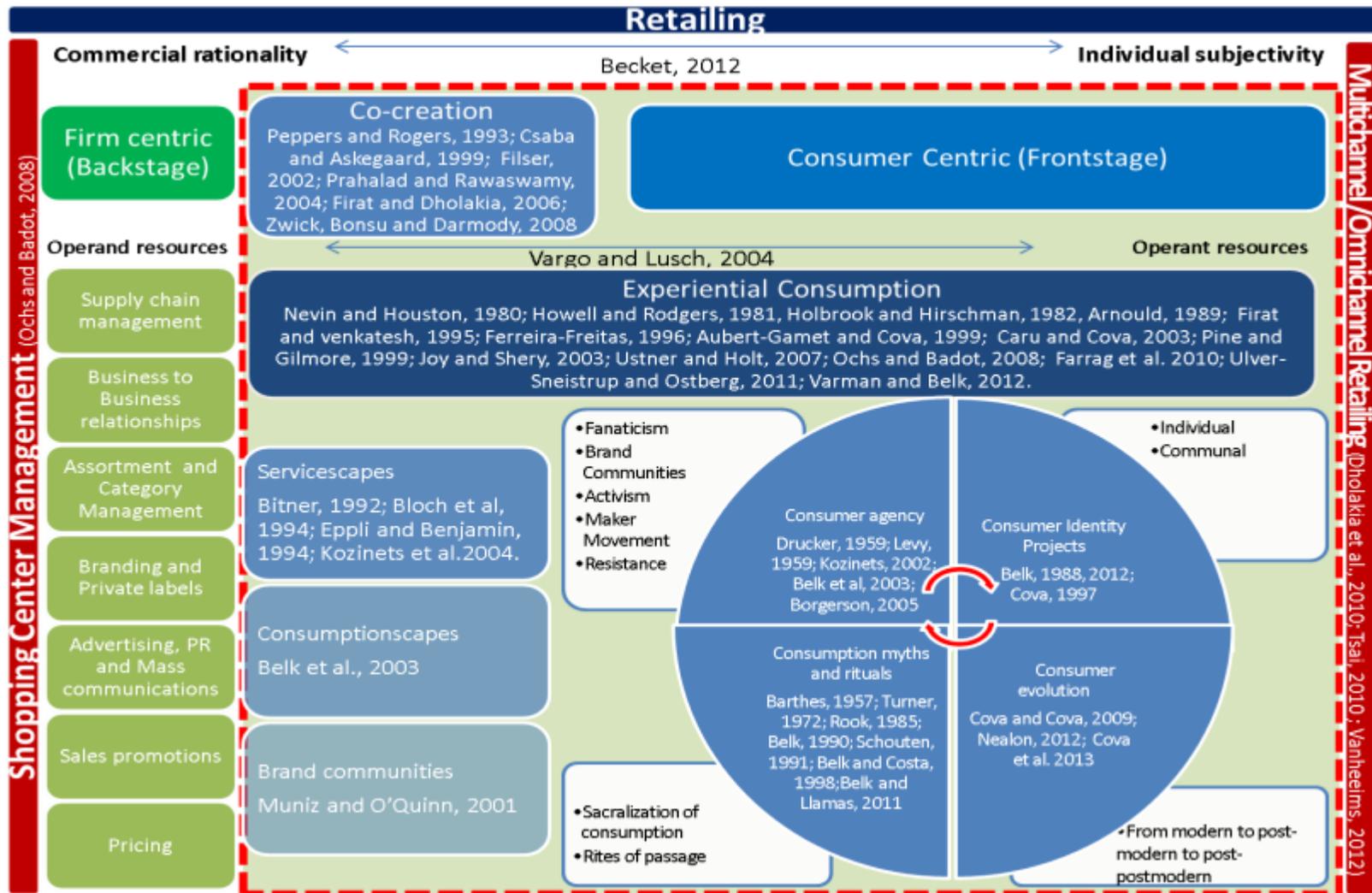


Figure 1 - : Literature review

1.2.1. Shopping Center Management literature in retrospect

Research in the social sciences generally assumes that commercial settings are impersonal non-places, portraying malls and chain stores as nonplaces, too large and standardized to be able to offer significant social and psychological interaction (Augé 1995). Nevertheless, operators have made consistent efforts to “reenchant commercial settings” by providing enjoyable, extraordinary, and meaningful experiences and social interaction (Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Kozinets et al. 2002), providing a stage for co-created meanings (Carù and Cova 2007; Sherry 1998) and spectacular experiences.

Consumer research has consistently shown that commercial places can in fact lead to emotional and symbolic meanings (Aubert-Gamet and Cova (1999) and solid emotional links are created with commercial places (see for instance O’Guinn and Belk 1989; Maclaran and Brown 2005; Sandikci and Holt 1998; Borghini et al. 2009; Kozinets et al. 2002; McAlexander, Schouten, and Koenig 2002).

1.2.1.1. Shopping Center Research in retrospect

Eppli and Benjamin (1994) did a thorough review of Shopping Center Research until the early 1990’s and specified four different theoretical foundations which were prominent at that time: (1) central place theory (focusing on the attractiveness of one-stop shopping trips);(2) homogeneous retailer agglomeration (focusing on the attractiveness of homogeneous retail agglomerations); (3) shopping center demand externalities (focusing on anchor store attractiveness and its effect on non-anchor tenants; and (4) shopping center valuation (focusing on models to estimate current and future cash flows.

All these foundational research approaches were based on a retail state development model and a firm centric view of shopping centers. Nevertheless, the authors anticipated the metamorphosis of shopping center models to accommodate “an ever-increasing diversity of human behavior” (Eppli and Benjamin 1994:24)

1.2.1.2 The paradigms in Shopping Center Management

Since its creation, the format of the shopping center¹⁰ has largely evolved, not only in terms of physical characteristics (size, architecture, etc.) but also in terms of its operation, management and expansion strategies (Dennis 2005). According to Ochs and Badot (2010), four major paradigms that have emerged successively account for the format that most shopping centers have today: the real estate paradigm, the geographical paradigm, the marketing paradigm and the experiential paradigm.

The real estate paradigm, under which the first modern shopping centers were built, understood shopping centers as land and financial assets. Management of shopping centers under this definition acted based on a “property management logic” rather than based on the expectations of consumers (Howard 1997).

The geographical paradigm, which succeeded the real state paradigm, started to consider location, demographics and spatial factors within the shopping center as the most important factors in shopping center management. These were called “gravitational” approaches (Feinberg 1991; Stoltman et al. 1991).

¹⁰ See section 1.3 for the definition and a thorough description of the concept of “shopping center”.

However, with the increase in competition between shopping centers - associated with a higher mobility of consumers - researchers in the 1980s began to contemplate other factors such as average ticket, zoning and intrinsic characteristics of the shopping center as determinants of the consumer attendance rates and the success versus failure of shopping centers. Badot and Ochs (2010) defined this period as the marketing paradigm.

Shopping center operators eventually abandoned a purely utilitarian approach of the consumer and started to consider more subjective variables that could intervene in the choice of visiting a shopping center, such as the influence of image on the performance of the shopping center (Nevin and Houston 1980; Howell and Rogers 1981; Eppli and Benjamin 1994; Finn and Louvière 1996). Ultimately, the concept of "browsing"¹¹ gained more relevance and commercial spaces began to be seen as a places of recreation and socialization (Bloch et al. 1994).

With the consumer at the center of the research paradigm in retailing, social or sensory experiences are now considered key factors in shopping center management (Hetzl 1997; Sandikci and Holt 1998; Andrieu et al. 2004; Ochs 2006). Under this more recent paradigm shopping centers were not only managed as a product or a brand but are also understood as a part of the consumer's life.

This movement suggests that although not always systematically – or at least at different rhythms - shopping center operators have begun to take into account the micro cultural context at play. Badot and Ochs (2010) define this period as the experiential or entertainment paradigm. This is where most of the CCT related research into shopping centers inserts itself.

¹¹ Browsing was defined by Bloch and Richins (1983:389) as the "inspection of products in store, for informational or recreational purposes without specific intent to purchase".

1.2.2. Commercial spaces as social places

Commercial space is thus considered as a place for experimentation, appropriation, self-expression or even relaxation with multiple functions - cultural, symbolic and religious - facilitating the exchange of goods, services, currency and experiences (Dupuis et al. 2002). Furthermore, several researchers suggest that retail spaces are cultural resources through which consumers construct their identities (e.g. Arnould 2005; Hollenbeck, Peters, & Zinkham 2008; Kozinets et al. 2002 in Varman and Belk 2012).

According to Firat and Venkatesh (1993: 233), shopping centers are "not only centers of shopping, but highly organized social spaces for entertainment, interaction, and other types of consumer excitement". They are seen as postmodern spaces that try to simulate the ideal modern town, one without pollution, traffic jams, crime and parking problems.

Common spaces are often places where people want to see and be seen. For this reason, many researchers sustain that shopping centers all over the world are in fact "returning to their origins" and perform today very similar functions as those performed by the ancient Greek Agora or the Forum in Roman times, a place where goods, services, currency and experiences are exchanged, a place for socialization (Gruen and Smith 1960; Adburgham 1979; Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Finn et al. 1994; Ferreira-Freitas 1996; Filser 2010).

Shopping malls have been viewed as places for tribal socialization (Cova 1997; Goulding et al. 2009; Canniford 2011). They are places where actors can exercise active play with marketplace resources although members often have conflicting goals (Cova et al. 2007).

Under this new paradigm, shopping centers in various parts of the world have recently undertaken significant changes in terms of format, types and functions in an effort to adapt to a changing environment, sometimes leading to a positioning and size “inflation” (Dennis 2005). This movement represents a mutation from the format of the “modern mall” to what some authors call the “postmodern mall” of spectacles, carnival, and dreamworlds (Belk & Bryce 1993; Gottdiener 1997; Sandikci & Holt 1998 in Varman and Belk 2012).

According to Varman and Belk (2012), the reflective surfaces of steel, glass, chrome, plastic, and mirrors “serve to double and redouble images of plenitude, adding further to the cornucopian image of abundance” an effect that has been called Kaleidoscopic by Baudrillard (1988) and compared to television by Kowinski (2002). The resulting atmosphere “is designed not just to give the general impression of sparkle and plenitude, which seems to endow commodities with a magical inner life of their own; but, more importantly, it is designed to enhance this power and pleasure of looking” (Fiske, Hodge, & Turner 1987, p. 98, cited By Belk and Bryce 1993).

1.2.3. Shopping and consumer experiences in consumer culture research

The term “experience” has different meanings in the different fields of social science and can be seen as objective or subjective in nature therefore leading to different methodological approaches. For interpretive researchers¹², experiences are seen as subjective and therefore need to be observed and interpreted in context (Carù and Cova 2003; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Schmitt and Zarantonello 2013).

¹² See section 1.4 for a description of the epistemological positioning of this work.

For Kierkegaard (2009), experiences are subjective interpretations of phenomena, which are true for one particular individual, although not necessarily true for others. Sociologists, on the other hand, see it as a means of constructing and representing reality, a process that is sometimes seen as a collective (Moscovici 1988) and sometimes individualistic (Richardson 1999). Anthropologists and ethnologists agree that experiences are group based and believe they are tied to traditions and rituals (Turner and Bruner 2004).

1.2.4. Symbolic processes and meaning transference

While advertising transfers meaning from the culturally constituted world to goods, rituals transfer meaning from goods to consumers (McCracken 1986). Rituals are meaningful symbolic processes constituted by a series of behaviors occurring in a fixed sequence. They tend to be recurrent and to be accompanied by formality. They are often associated with the consumption or the use of objects that are related to the conduct forming the basis of the ritual (McCracken 1986; Munn 1973; Turner 1969; Rook 1985).

A canvassing of the growing body of research on shopping and consumer experiences suggests that interest on the subject grew significantly after the publication of Douglas and Isherwood's (1979) seminal work "The World of Goods - Towards an anthropology of consumption". In this work, the authors claimed that consumption is a group behavior rather than an individualistic conduct.

The authors further sustained that while economists believe that consumers acquire goods and services for personal or psychological, generally utilitarian and individualistic, reasons, anthropologists believe that goods and services are purchased to fulfill social obligations and thus have a symbolic dimension and a key role in the construction of social relations. This view is coherent with the sociological understanding of consumption,

especially works emerging in the 1980's and specifically Bourdieu's (1979) view of social distinction and cultural capital¹³.

1.2.5. Experiential Consumption and shopping experiences

The concept of experiential consumption was firmly established in the field of consumer research by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982). It has since evolved considerably, having been adopted with varying levels of support and diverging yet complementary interpretations by researchers with sometimes conflicting methodological positions.

Holt (1995) advocates that the role of consumption in community life goes well beyond the utilitarian function of goods and services by stating that shopping behavior encompasses at least four dimensions: experience (consumer's subjective and emotional reactions to consumption objects), integration (acquisition and manipulation of object meanings), classification (how consumers structure meaning and are classified by it) and play (understanding the acquisition and manipulation of objects as a mediating resource to the interaction with fellow consumers).

These consumer interactions with marketing objects that result in consumption experiences have been structured into four phases (Arnould et al. 2002): (1) anticipated consumption; (2) purchase experience; (3) consumption experience; and (4) remembered consumption. Consumption experiences consequently involve a series of feelings displayed in a variety of activities, ranging from routine or automated purchase (Prus and Dawson 1991), to hedonic consumption (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), to status consumption (e.g. Bourdieu 1984; Lamont 1992, Simmel 1957), and to the theatrical spectacle of shopping places (Belk and Bryce 1993).

¹³ See section 1.2.6 for a more detailed description of Bourdieu's work on this topic.

Consumers would therefore select specific products or services not only for their utilitarian function but also as symbolic indicators of their consumption behavior. These purchases would portray a style and an identity and would in fact be part of a larger purchasing experience involving all senses (Schmitt 1999; Schmitt 2003; Gentile et al. 2007). Although the world is primarily accessed through the body (Joy and Sherry 2003), the perception of consumption experiences would be closely linked with imagination since part of the process occurs in the mind and is thus both a physiological and intellectual activity (Schmitt 1999; Joy and Sherry 2003: 278).

The term experiential consumption currently refers generically to how the consumer interacts with multiple factors, such as products, services, brands, cultural meanings and with other consumers both in online and off-line environments. In fact, Pine and Gilmore (1999) sustained that in the 21st century many developed economies are entering the Experience Economy. Under this new economic stage, businesses would perform remarkable experiences which would have an entertaining and educational goal rather than fulfill a functional and utilitarian objective as the one proposed by Kotler (1983).

In their critical review of experiential marketing, although Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) agree that one of the central ideas of experiential marketing is that value does not exist solely on the object of purchase itself (and its utilitarian and functional benefits), but also in the hedonic and experiential components surrounding the consumption experience (page 26), they question whether in fact many societies have entered the Experience Economy as sustained by Pine and Gilmore (1999), since products and services still account for the majority of economic value. They conclude that while understanding consumers and consumption experiences is one of the key tasks of marketing management, experiential value actually resides in the marketing of products and services.

Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) go on to describe five areas of marketing research on experience: (1) consumer experience (Arnould et al. 2002), the broadest of all five areas, focusing on consumer interactions with marketing objects which result on experiences; (2) product and service experience, focusing on the interaction of the consumer specifically with the product and service and how its design, aesthetics and technology affect consumer responses, before or after the purchase (Honea and Horsky 2012); (3) offline and online experiences, emanating from Kotler's (1973) work on atmospherics but nowadays involving broader aspects of the interaction such as identity construction (Darmody and Kedzior 2009); (4) consumption experiences (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1986), focusing on the emotional or "hedonic" aspects of consumption; (5) brand experience (Kapferer 2008; Brakus et al. 2009), focusing on the consumer responses evoked by brand-related stimuli.

Most studies on shopping behavior, however, understand "consumer experience", as an extreme hedonism-driven experience, with a peak emotional response. Carù and Cova (2003) criticize this approach. They argue that peak - or extreme - experience accounts for only a small portion of what consumers are usually searching for through consumption. They sustain that most often consumers are looking for small everyday gratifications related to valuing quality, aesthetic superiority, simplicity of product usage, as well as sharing the symbolic and functional benefits of the product with their community.

According to Urry (1995), in the consumption of spaces the visual component is paramount. The concepts of the "*flaneur*" and the "*badaud*" (Benjamin 2002) and more recently the tourist "*gaze*" (Lash and Urry 1994) are examples of the importance of the experience of seeing and being seen is

in specific public spaces for the construction of individual and group identities¹⁴. Consumption spaces are in fact mediums for emotional experiences where the atmosphere, the ambience can be consumed as well as consumer dreams, desires, ideologies and identities.

While the words shopping and buying are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature, many authors in fact acknowledge a differentiation between the activities of shopping and buying. Buying would aim primarily at fulfilling a need with a product or service and privilege the price-performance relationship, while shopping would usually encompass a somewhat flexible budget, some amount of free time and "a certain aimlessness" (Tsai 2010: 322).

In summary, buying would be primarily associated with the utilitarian and functional attributes of the purchase, while shopping would involve a more significant experiential component. This is the interpretation of shopping and buying that will be applied in this work.

1.2.6. Consumer fanaticism and desire

According to Belk and Askegaard (2003), there is a significant difference in tone between a desire and a need as a desire is uncontrollable while a need is planned for: "Needs are anticipated, controlled, denied, postponed, prioritized, planned for, addressed, satisfied, fulfilled, and gratified through logical instrumental processes. Desires, on the other hand, are overpowering; something we give in to; something that takes control of us and totally dominates our thoughts, feelings, and actions".

¹⁴ Benjamin (2002) defined the "flaneur" as the individualistic stroller, a spectator who rejoices at observing the crowd while retaining its own individuality, while the "badaud", the gawker, who would disappear into the crowd, unable to maintain differentiating traits. The tourist "gaze"; which is defined by Lash and Urry (1994) as the search and consumption of experiences which are not encountered in everyday life.

They sustain that consumer desire is a passion built on consumption fantasies –or myths- and the consumer’s sociological context. This would be the arena where marketing tools and techniques work toward the “enchantment of consumers”, with marketers acting as “sorcerers” in a magical experience, complete with rites and formulas. Under this interpretation, consumers would act as “sorcerer’s apprentices”, as they are willing to participate in the experience (Arnould and Price, 1993; Firat and Venkatesh 1995, cited by Belk and Askegaard, 2003).

Fanaticism is defined by Chung et al (2008) as a beyond the ordinary devotion to an object, consisting of passion, intimacy, and commitment to it. Fanatics tend to insist clear of logic that their ideas are the correct ones, even when there are strong arguments in the contrary, with extreme enthusiasm to the point where it is sometimes considered excessive (Perkinson 2002 Passmore, 2003, cited by Chung et al., 2008).

This phenomenon has been widely studied (Belk and Tumbat 2005; Ahuvia 2005; Belk 2004; Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003; Brown, Kozinets and Sherry 2003; Celsi, Rose and Leigh 1993; Celsi 1992; Kozinets 2001; Kozinets 1997; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Thompson and Troester 2002, Bristow and Sebastian 2001; Cova and Cova 2002; Funk and James 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002; Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Oliver 1999; Redden and Steiner 2000, Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry 1989; Belk, Wallendorf, Sherry, Holbrook and Roberts 1988.) and fanaticism is viewed as a particular type of loyalty defined by solid, powerful and severe levels of dedication and emotional attachment, sometimes bordering dangerous levels.

Fanatics can be the very effective brand enthusiasts, spreading word-of-mouth and acting as brand ambassadors, helping create desire in other consumer groups. Alternatively, they can also cause negative effects on the brand in case they feel betrayed by it, usually due to changes in brand identity.

1.2.7. Toward a service dominant logic (SDL) and the co-creation of consumer experiences

As the relevance of the concept to “consuming experience” grew in importance, complementary frameworks developed. Vargo and Lusch (2004) suggested that the focus of marketing management was shifting from the manufacturing of tangibles to the exchange of intangibles, and therefore a more appropriate logic would be services-based rather than the traditional goods-centered paradigm.

This is true for any industry and particularly for retail, where operand and operant resources work together continuously through the interaction of producers and consumers (Constantin and Lusch 1994; Vargo and Lusch 2004a; Arnould 2005; Arnould et al. in Lusch and Vargo 2006). Arnould (2005) concurs with the importance of the complementarity between management produced and consumer generated resources and argues that retailing innovation resides in the managerial ability to understand and contribute to consumers cultural projects. However, he prefers to conceptualize retailers as resource purveyors rather than orchestrators. The following sections discuss some of these complementary frameworks.

Servicescapes, Consumptionscapes and the co-creation of experiences

The concept of “servicescape” is defined by Bitner (1992), as the manmade, physical surroundings in service organizations that affect consumers and employees both at the individual and group levels and is central to shopping center management under the experiential paradigm (Ochs and Badot 2010).

Bitner sustains that "servicescapes" can be designed to stimulate certain types of behaviors and discourage others (Bitner 1992) and establishes a framework of analysis including three dimensions: environmental, holistic and internal responses/ behaviors.

She further suggests that service organizations are therefore capable of anticipating consumer behavior and are thus able to make adjustments in order to achieve certain goals. A point of sale must therefore carefully plan its image and personality, since each personality attracts a different type of consumer.

For instance, storytelling is a tool that has been used frequently in order to construct enriching experiences (Holt 2003; Cordiner 2011). The creation of a "story" within a commercial space through the development of specific servicescapes aids in this process and encompasses all the dimensions mentioned by Bitner (1992).

In effect, Holt (2004) agrees that firms have the ability to intervene in consumer decision making through the implementation of tactics based on a deeper cultural understanding and on the complementarity of firm centered and consumer created resources.

To that effect, the term "consumptionscape" refers to the transformation of a servicescape by the actions of consumers to achieve their own purposes (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1997; Ger and Belk 1996). In this process, consumers embrace and in turn affect the servicescape in the construction of personal experiences that match their life themes and schemes, associated with culturally embedded rituals and meanings (Arnould and Price 1993; Schmitt 2003; Sherry 1998).

According to Arnould (2005), A Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) viewpoint portrays the underlying social and cultural contexts driving retail patronage and purchase behavior and the numerous causal factors guiding the purchase decision making process. A CCT-based approach to retailing views consumers as resource integrators, striving to account for co-creation, namely, how consumers deploy their own cultural resources, aided by retailer provided resources, to accomplish the pursuit of their personal identity and communal projects" (page 89).

Marketing discourse has indeed highlighted the self-governing characteristic of the consumer and as a result has placed responsibility on the producer to react to consumer needs for decades (Drucker 1950; Levy 1959; Levitt 1975; 1983). Accordingly, Beckett (2012) claims that the relationship between commercial rationality and individual subjectivity has been central in discussions of consumption and its role in contemporary society (du Gay 2004a). He sustains that one of the key facets of these discussions is the tension in the power relationships between consumers and producers.

Nevertheless, the concepts of "value creation" (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) and "collaborative marketing" (Peppers and Rogers 1993) suggested that rather than passively reacting to consumer needs, marketers were in fact facilitators of consumer sovereignty, "framing and anticipating consumer agency" instead of attempting to control it (Arvidsson 2004, in Beckett 2012: page 1). Marketing's role would therefore be one of creating bonds between producer and consumer through interaction, thus raising levels of loyalty and ultimately profitability (Gronroos 2004).

Arguably, the barriers between consumers and producers would be gradually eliminated by these interactions. This implies that producers would be increasingly yielding power to highly informed and articulate consumers (Peppers and Rogers 1993; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Firat and Dholakia 2006).

A co-creation perspective is one in which consumers become co-producers rather than targets of managerial efforts (Vargo and Lusch 2006). In the era of co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2000) , consumer experiences should be viewed as a product of these interactions and consumers' central role in the creation of these experiences calls for further consumer centric research. Only by understanding these relationships would management be able to mediate in the outcome of these co-driven experiences.

1.2.8. Conceptualizing culture and subcultures of consumption

Culture can be defined in various ways and although there is not much consensus about a single definition, it is generally agreed that it affects what people do in society and that it involves the distribution of information – or knowledge transfer – between groups. It encompasses a set of shared values, beliefs, attitudes, and certain normative or expected patterns of behavior that are not genetically inherited but are passed along individuals (Hall 1976; Carley 1991; Mulholland 1991).

The treatment of culture in mainstream marketing literature has varied throughout the years but two major currents dating from the 1980's can be clearly outlined (Askegaard et al. in Nakata 2009). On one side is Levitt's (1983) concept that although cultural differences exist, they can be overcome by technology. He claims that product attributes unrelated to culture such as price and quality, combined with consumer desire to participate in the "modern world" would eventually lead to standardized products (page 93).

On the other side of the spectrum is Hofstede's (1980) work on national culture and his argument that it affects business relationships which was developed under an experientialist paradigm. Hofstede work is based on extensive experimental research and it describes culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another" (pages 21-23). He sustains that it evolves as it is transmitted and assimilated throughout history and implies limited – or at least slow - change over time.

Over the years Hofstede's framework has become the leading cultural paradigm in business studies (Nakata 2009) and several authors have worked along the same lines, equating "cultural comparison with a measurement of "cultural distances". Epstein and Axtell (1996) suggest that culture transmission can be both vertical (through generations) and horizontal (between agents at the same point in time) while Axelrod (1997) considers that culture is subject to social influence, it is "mutant" in nature and changes through interaction.

However, with globalization driving increasing cultural interpenetration, migration and multiculturalism, the use of nations as proxies for cultures has been severely called into question and Askegaard et al. (in Nakata 2009: 112) suggest a "choice of cultural profile" rather than an unconscious "collective programming" as proposed by Hofstede (1980). They sustain that culture is not a static concept and is better understood as a "organized network of systematic diversity of principles of action and understanding". Working from an interpretivist point of view, they sustain that it is reflexively negotiated on a continuous basis as a result of globalization

processes and the increasing multilayeredness of commercialized cultural content (page 112)¹⁵.

This is similar to the view of culture applied in sociology. Bourdieu (1979) developed the concepts of "habitus" and "Cultural Capital". He proposes that the "habitus" is the structuring force that drives the individual agents to both influence and be influenced by the overall system.

Through systems of practices which include both intentional and unintentional behaviors, individuals capture a position in a "multidimensional social space" while interpreting the world in a certain way. He argues that several types of capital are at play in social spaces: economic (property), social (social relations) and cultural capital, with symbolic capital (prestige, honor) acting as a crucial source of power.

According to him, economic capital is the source of all other types of capital, but that there are costs associated with the transformation of one type of capital into another. For Bourdieu (1979), "cultural capital" can take three forms:

In the embodied state - or "cultivation" - it presumes an effort of assimilation and is time.-consuming. This type of cultural capital cannot be transferred instantaneously by gift or legacy, purchase or exchange (contrary to money and property rights) and therefore cannot be accumulated beyond the capabilities of an individual agent. It is tied permanently to the bearer (dies with the agent), unless it can be transferred within a group through a process of acculturation or knowledge transfer.

¹⁵ See section 1.4. for the epistemological positioning of this work.

In the objectified state, it takes the shape of "cultural goods" - such as pictures, and books. Under this form it can be more easily transmissible in its material form. Nevertheless physical property of a cultural good does not imply the ability to use or apply the good (e.g. a library of foreign language books can be physically transmitted from one generation to the next, yet the ability to read those books is intrinsic to the agents involved and consequently implies knowledge transfer).

In the "institutionalized state", represented by academic qualifications, it is also intrinsic to the agents involved, which also implies knowledge transfer, although not necessarily within a kinship group.

McCracken (1986) sustains that cultural meaning in a consumer society transfers incessantly among agents. He claims that "In the usual trajectory, cultural meaning moves first from the culturally constituted world to consumer goods and then from these goods to the individual consumer. He sustains that several instruments are responsible for this movement: advertising, the fashion system, and ... consumption rituals (page 71)".

Subcultures of consumption are groups of individuals who relate to brands, products and consumption activities in a similar way and through those establish social relationships. They are omnipresent in society and provide gratifying leisure activities while permitting group members to factor in their subcultural membership into their self-definition (Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Arthur and Sherman 2010).

The Consumer Culture Theory research tradition attempts to understand how "consumption as a dominant human practice affects the cultural blueprints for action and interpretation and vice versa" through the study of the inter-relationships between the marketplace and cultures (Arnould and Thompson 2005: 873). It sustains that these relationships are facilitated by real and virtual "culturescapes" and "consumptionscapes" of mixed ethnicities, ideas,

media, finance and technology (Appadurai 1990; Ger and Belk 2006) and focuses on the consumer's leading role as a culture "producer" as opposed to the "traditional" anthropological view of the individuals' passive roles as culture "bearers" (Arnould and Thompson 2005). This is the view of culture that this work will be based on.

Mary Douglas's (1978) Cultural Theory framework and its further developments will be used in order to structure cultural analysis. She sustains that people's greatest concerns are their interpersonal relationships and the degrees of freedom with which they operate and thus provides two dimensions to consider: group and grid.

According to her, the group dimension relates to the extent to which people's actions are a consequence of social group commitment, while the grid dimension is concerned with normative role differentiation (See Altman and Baruch 2010 for a conceptual overview).

1.2.9. Addressing the Theoretical Gap

This work addresses theoretical gaps in the body of work on shopping centers and shopping experiences by (1) factoring in a paradigm shift in consumer culture research on shopping and consumer experiences; (2) Introducing a multi-sited protocol to cross-cultural research on consumer and shopping experiences. (3) Going beyond the mainstream approach to cross-cultural research

1.2.9.1. Factoring in a paradigm shift

Extensive work has been carried out in studying shopping and consumer experiences (Arnould and Wallendorf 1988; Belk et al 1989; Belk and Coon 1993; Arnould and Wallendorf 1994, Bloch et al. 1994; Hetzel 1997; Belk and Costa 1998; Badot 2000, Badot and Depuis 2001; Andrieu et al. 2002,

Joy and Sherry 2003; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Badot and Filser 2007; Badot and Lemoine 2008; Badot et al. 2009). However, most of the CCT related research on shopping centers and shopping experiences has been connected with postmodernism (Farrag et al 2010, Csaba and Askegaard 1999).

In fact, most of the CCT related research on shopping centers and shopping and consuming experiences has been closely linked to postmodernism, yet recent research has identified limitations to additional contributions from a postmodernistic critique standpoint, although highlighting its significant impact on previous research and specifically its key role in differentiating Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) approaches from mainstream firm-centric literature.

Cova et al. (2013) do a thorough assessment of the current adequacy of this critique to today's changing marketspaces and, as Holt (2002) predicted, the authors sustain that as the new and more realistic optics should be considered as the new focus of consumer culture research.

Nealon (2012) describes this new era as an exacerbation of some postmodernistic ideals in much the same way as "postmodernism was a historical mutation and intensification of certain ideals within modernism" (page 10). He argues that this is an evolutionary change, or a modification in intensity, rather than a revolutionary change which would imply rendering obsolete the status quo.

Along the same lines, various critics of this postmodernistic approach (e.g. Campbell 1995; Morris 1998), consider that much of current of research on shopping centers and shopping experiences fails to take into account the points of view of consumers, as they focus primarily on the hyperreal and theatrical aspects of the shopping centers. They sustain that it is necessary to

have a stronger empirical focus, based on ethnographic account of shopping experiences.

Actually, over ten years ago Holt (2002) had already forecasted that this approach was becoming dated and in many aspects ineffective. He predicted firms would eventually run into contradictions in their attempts to maintain relevance in the construction of consumer identity projects. Nevertheless, he claimed that a the intensification of consumer sovereignty would in fact create new cultural resources that would help rejuvenate the market and benefit innovative firms which understand these new principles rather than threaten the health of the market system (page 89).

Moreover, considering that, in recent years, protests and other types of social movements have occurred both in places where things were seen as “worse” from an economic and political standpoint and where things had been deemed as “better”, perplexed analysts, using predominantly mainstream firm-centric approaches, now do not understand the rolling of events. The fact is that recent events are very difficult to understand under a postmodernistic paradigm of research and show a clear disruption from the lethargy and self-detachment characteristic of postmodernism (see Cova et al. 2013). Little has been done in terms of factoring in this paradigm shift into the study of consumer and shopping experiences.

1.2.9.2. Introducing a multi-sited protocol to cross-cultural research on consumer and shopping experiences.

According to Sherry (2008), ethnography can provide an opportunity to bring together theory and method in providing a solution to a practical problem in business. Farrag et al. (2010) sustain that a phenomenological approach may provide deeper insights into consumer culture at shopping centers. However, given that previous ethnographic work on shopping centers was mostly single sited, a case selection process that would warrant

variability of cases and favor a comparative analysis in a multi-sited study has not been developed.

Actually, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) argue that there still a need to further understand how cultural contexts affect experiences and to what degree these experiences are “universal or culture-bond” (page 52), although significant contribution has been made recently. In fact, evidence from recent studies suggests that the mechanisms and social consequences of consumption may be different between developed economies and Less Industrialized Countries (see for instance Zhao and Belk 2008; Ustuner and Holt 2010; Varman and Belk 2011; Izberk-Bilgin 2012).

To that effect, although some cross-cultural research on consumer experiences from different ethnic backgrounds or at different regions was performed over the years (e.g. Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003; Peñaloza 1994; Ferreira-Freitas 1996), the majority of these studies were done with one or at most two locations as the units of investigation. Also, Venkatesh (in Costa and Bamossy 1995) argues that most of the cross cultural research carried out had privileged a view of either similarities or differences between cultures, rather than applying a comprehensive analysis including both aspects.

Additionally, most frequently these cross-cultural studies focused only on the experiences undergone by consumers without necessarily considering the interplay of activities by developers, management and retailers who are also affected by context. Although various authors acknowledge the complementarity of consumer generated and firm-centric resources (i.e. Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Filser 2002; Holt 2004; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Arnould 2005), surprisingly little has been added to the literature in this front, especially in comparative terms.

1.2.9.3. Going beyond the mainstream approach to cross-cultural research

As previous research specifically on shopping experiences has again been focused majorly on the USA and on other developed economies (Nevin and Houston 1980; Howell and Rodgers 1981; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Stoltman et al. 1991; Bloch et al. 1994; Eppli and Benjamin 1994; Finn and Louviere 1996; Hetzel 1997; Csaba and Askegaard 1999; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Ochs and Badot 2008), only limited attention has been given to emerging economies.

At the same time, to the best of this author's knowledge, with the exception of a number of CCT contributions (e.g. Farrag et al 2010; Varman and Belk 2012) most of the recent research on shopping centers in LICs still takes a Hofstedeian approach which presupposes that culture is an independent variable affecting business outcomes and focusing on measuring cultural differences (see Tsai 2010 and Schmidt and Zarantonello 2013 for an extensive review of previous research). The expansion of a cross-cultural research protocol that would attempt to provide a deeper understanding of cultural differences and their effects on the experiences undergone and produced at shopping centers would be a significant contribution to the literature.

The central notion of case research is to use case information to build theory inductively. Cases could be said to be analogous to stand-alone replicated experiments in a laboratory, but with the robust advantage that - contrary to lab experiments - cases are not isolated in controlled environments but rather are subject to outside interference, allowing the researcher to analyze the data in real world context. Theory emerges through pattern recognition within and across cases and their underlying logical arguments. (Eisenhardt 1989b; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

According to Arnould and Thompson (2005:869), “consumer culture theorists do not study consumption contexts; they study in consumption contexts to generate new constructs and theoretical insights and to extend existing theoretical formulations. Consumer culture theory has its historical roots in calls for consumer researchers to broaden their focus to investigate the neglected experiential, social, and cultural dimensions of consumption in context (Belk 1987a, 1987b; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982 cited by Arnould and Thompson, 2005 – underlining added by author).

An initial, broad definition of the research question or “Grand Tour Question” (Fetterman 2010) is necessary for building solid theoretical frameworks from case research, since it helps guide data collection. However, it is important to start this type of research with no pre-conceived theory in mind and no hypothesis to test in order to avoid biases in the data collection phases. Nevertheless, although not paramount, *a priori* specification of constructs may prove valuable in the initial stages of research building theory.

According to Eisenhardt (1989b): “If these constructs prove important as the study progresses, then researchers have a firmer empirical grounding for the emergent theory”, or, in other words, by having a specific focus for data collection, it is likely that more data will be available to corroborate findings in later stages of the research. Yet, these *a priori* constructs are tentative, and will be reviewed throughout the process of data collection and analysis: “No construct is guaranteed a place in the resultant theory, no matter how well it is measured. Also, it is acknowledged that the research question may shift during the research...by taking advantage of serendipitous findings” (page 536).

1.3. Definitions and Research Questions

The research topic has been subdivided in three parts, explored in the following sections.

1.3.1. Shopping malls

The origin of shopping centers can be attributed to the ancient Greek Agora or the Roman Forums, which were public areas of leisure and socialization (Forshaw and Bergstrom 1983). The concept of a shopping center, in terms of an enclosed area destined for commercial use, appeared in the 16th and 17th centuries in the United Kingdom. They were an evolution of the atrium of the Royal Exchange and Covent Garden (Adburgham 1979).

The first fully enclosed modern shopping center designed and built for that purpose was Southdale Shopping Center, opened in 1956 in the US. It was designed by Victor Gruen, who was later to be considered "the father of the shopping center" (Csaba and Askegaard 1999). The model was evolution of a concept that had first appeared in the Nordic countries, namely Vällingby Centrum in Sweden, which was part of a planned community and was built in 1954, and the Farsta Centrum, which opened in 1960. (Solal 2008; cited by ICSC 2008).

There are several definitions of shopping center in management literature. It is defined by Guy as: "An enclosed and managed shopping area, either in town or otherwise, having a gross retail area of at least 5,000 m²" (Guy 1994). For the purpose of this study, we will use the definition by the International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC 2012), which defines the modern shopping center as: "a retail property that is planned, built and managed as a single entity". Shopping centers under these criteria have three basic designs:

- Malls are “typically enclosed, climate controlled and lighted, flanked on one or both sides by storefronts and entrances”.
- Open –air centers are “an attached row of stores or service outlets, managed as a unit, with on-site parking...”
- Hybrid centers, which merge characteristics of both types of shopping centers.

According to the ICSC (2012) criteria, shopping centers could be further classified into formats and by size: the “Traditional Format” is: an all-purpose center that could be either enclosed, hybrid or open-air, while the “Specialized Format” is: “a specific purpose-built retail scheme that is typically open-air”. Specialized formats under this definition include retail parks, factory outlets and theme-oriented shopping centers. Dupuis et al. (2002) expanded on these ICSC (2012) definitions and created a typology of shopping centers which describes each one of these types of shopping centers in detail.

Although some specialized formats seem profitable in most markets, as is the case with factory outlets, the goal of this work is to understand how traditional format shopping centers, which are still the mainstream offer in all the markets included in this work, are evolving in a changing industry (Ochs and Badot 2008). This research will concentrate on three types of traditional shopping centers as described by Dupuis (2002): super regional center (attracts visitors from outside the region, as the center is an attraction in itself) regional center (attracts visitors from the region due to its mix and entertainment options, and fashion shopping center, specialized in fashion and apparel.

1.3.1.2. Experiences produced and undergone

Pine and Gilmore (1999a) describe the marketplace as a theatrical setting, where experiences are "sold". They argue that while products are external to the buyer, experiences are internal, inherently personal and memorable, "existing only in the mind of an individual who has been engaged on an emotional, physical, intellectual or even spiritual level (page 99) "

Csaba and Askegaard (1999) called for more research on the "orchestration of consumer and shopping experiences" on the part of retail operators in order to fully comprehend the complementarity of the backstage (developers, designers, retailers) and frontstage (consumer) activities going on at retail spaces at one point in time (page 35). According to Filser (2002 in Roederer 2008), there is a continuous opposition between the experience "produced" by the organization (in which the consumer would be a mere spectator, mass advertising, for instance) and the experience "undergone" by consumers independent of managerial interventions (a family outing, for example). He sustains that there is a complex universe in between, one in which experiences are co-produced by management of retail organizations and consumers visiting those locations.

This is consistent with the ideas expressed by Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody (2008), who suggest that through co-creation, producers attempt to capture consumer know-how and creativity. Accordingly, the goal is no longer to discipline but to govern, to structure agency rather than control it. To Beckett (2012), this progressive shift from attempting to discipline consumers to governing co-creation reflects the progression in society from disciplining its members to encouraging the "responsible exercise of freedom" as portrayed by Foucault's et al.'s (1991) work on "governmentality".

1.3.1.3. Experiences produced and undergone at shopping malls

Considering the community function of retail spaces (Adburgham 1979; Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999) and the contribution of the network of relationships which are built in commercial places to the construction of personal and group identities as proposed by Arnould and Thompson (2005), this work will focus on the symbolic, ritualistic and mythical dimensions of consumption which are intermediated by the co-production of shopping experiences at shopping malls.

Csaba and Askegaard (1999) propose the notion of orchestration of consumer experiences. The authors highlight the importance of management produced efforts and consumer's responses to those efforts as a key factor production for consumption while acknowledging that interpretive consumer research on shopping malls has often tended to neglect the management side of the relationship.

1.3.2. The Grand Tour Question

In light of the theoretical gaps that this work proposed to address and the expected contributions it is expected to provide, a "Grand Tour Question", as proposed by Fetterman (2010), was designed to aide data collection an initial analysis (Eisenhardt 1994):

From a Consumer Culture Theory perspective, which similarities and differences can be found in shopping and consuming experiences at shopping centers in Buenos Aires, London, Paris Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo?

1.3.3 Initial Research Sub-questions

Following this line of reasoning, the initial, broad, research sub-questions developed for this study are:

- i. Which contextual factors may be influencing shopping and consuming experiences at shopping centers in each location (emerging from findings)?
- ii. What is the role of shopping and consuming experiences at shopping centers in the processes of consumer identity construction in these locations (consumerscapes; subcultures)?
- iii. What are the similarities and differences in terms of orchestrated experiences (management driven, servicescapes: design, shopping center mix, zoning, positioning, etc.¹⁶) between locations?
- iv. Are there any similar patterns across cases?
- v. Which marketing insights can be derived from these analyses?

¹⁶ By reconciling practitioner terms and tactics with a deeper cultural understanding of Consumer experiences

1.4. Epistemological Positioning and Research design

This research follows a phenomenological inductive posture, along the lines of the Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005) and thus the object of the research is defined and redefined throughout the research process. The iteration between literature review, fieldwork and analysis aids in shaping the final design of the research. Under this posture, serendipity findings are taken into account and may contribute to a shift the focus of the research (Eisenhardt 1989b). Murray and Cherrier (2007) propose that interpretive research findings should then be contextualized and contrasted with existing theory.

This work applies an interpretive case design. In phenomenological case research, the challenge for the researcher is to frame the work in terms of the importance of the phenomenon and the existing theoretical gap (Eisenhardt 1989; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). Interpretive case research should therefore follow an iterative scheme, allowing for the incorporation of new data sources, new constructs or even new cases along the way until theoretical sufficiency is reached (Diaz Andrade 2009)¹⁷.

1.4.1. Epistemological Positioning

While positivist researchers believe reality is objective and separate from the object of analysis, interpretive researchers begin with the assumption that reality is socially constructed and accessible only through social structures such as language, consciousness and shared meanings (Diaz Andrade 2009).

¹⁷ Diaz Andrade (2009) proposes that interpretivist researchers should seek "theoretical sufficiency", in which findings are corroborated by using various data sources and seeking alternate cause-effect relationships. See section 1.4.1. for details.

The philosophical foundations of interpretive research are hermeneutics¹⁸ and phenomenology. It usually aims at grasping phenomena through the meanings that people allocate to them (Boland 1985, cited by Diaz Andrade 2009). Dependent and independent variables are thus not pre-determined and it privileges an understanding of the full complexity of human sense making as the events unfold (Kaplan and Maxwell 1994, cited by Diaz Andrade 2009).

According to Spiggle (1994: 492) interpretive, empirical research that studies consumer experience and behavior can be carried out using ethnographic participant observation (e.g. Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989; Belk et al. 1988; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Hill 1991; Hill and Stamey 1990; O'Guinn and Belk 1989; Sherry 1990) and from data gathered from in-depth interviews (e.g. Bergadaa 1990; Heisley and Levy 1991; Hirschman 1992; Mick and Buhl 1992; Mick and DeMoss 1990; O'Guinn and Faber 1989; Schouten 1991; Thompson et al. 1990; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), historical documents (Belk 1992), and introspection (Gould 1991).

These methods allow researchers to understand and interpret the meanings and experiences of their informants and to translate cultural meanings displayed through the use of symbolic codes and the enactment of cultural rituals which sustain and replicate cultural themes and patterns. This can be achieved through the structuring of a thick description that combines "emic" and the "etic"¹⁹ points of view (Geertz 1973; Wallendorf and Brucks 1993, cited by Spiggle 1994).

¹⁸ Defined here as the science of interpretation

¹⁹ Emic comes from the linguistic term phonemic and is applied here as a description of an experience that is meaningful to the actor. This can be represented by field journal transcriptions.

Ethnography, as defined by Mariampolski (2006), is the “theoretical perspective that focuses on the concept of culture and its relation to observed behavior as the principal tool for classifying and explaining consumer dynamics”. Its methodological orientation relies on direct contact with the consumer in its natural environment and provides behavioral and attitudinal data.

The main characteristic of ethnographic research is that through the use of participant-observation it establishes as few barriers as possible between the consumer and the researcher, and therefore it allows for a more comprehensive and contextual understanding of the consumers, making it context sensitive, which means that the influence of other consumers or the physical setting can be taken into account. Ethnography work tends to be less structured and spontaneous in the sense that it allows for improvisation, which permits the researcher to explore unanticipated discoveries as they emerge during fieldwork.

As proposed by Sherry (2008), ethnography is an adequate method to study consumer and shopping experiences in order provide deeper insights into consumer culture at shopping centers. Since this work attempts to carry out a comparative understanding of consumer culture, it seemed appropriate to apply a case study design with an ethnographic approach.

Desjeux (1997) proposes the use of a variety of methods in studying consumer behavior in retail settings, including participant-observation, field journals, introspection, photography and analysis of promotional materials as an effort to understand consumption at micro-social and micro-individual levels. His approach, which he calls “ethnomarketing”, is similar to Arnould

Etic comes from the linguistic term phonetic, and is applied here as description or interpretation of the experiences that is meaningful to the researcher. It includes the theoretical framework guiding the research.

and Wallendorf's (1994) market-oriented ethnography, yet the French approach tends to be more often directed towards an interaction between theory and practice (Badot and Lemoine, 2008; Özçağlar-Toulouse and Cova, 2010)

This work is based on case studies. In case research, theory emerges through the identification of patterns and their underlying logical reasoning within and across cases (Eisenhardt 1989b; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007). Although case study design is sometimes connected with a positivist approach, this study takes on an interpretivist stance. Yin (2003) suggests that the object of case studies is to "develop ideas for further study" (page 120). This is not necessarily the case with interpretivist research. The aim here is to produce theoretical generalizations rather than test hypothesis, which would be the case in positivist research (Diaz Andrade 2009).

Given the difference in goal between a positivist case design, as proposed by Yin (2003) and the objectives sought by researchers pursuing a case study design to construct theory under an interpretive approach, the process guidelines suggested by Yin (2003) need to be adapted. Construct validity (internal and external) and reliability (Yin 2003) may not be the ideal criteria to ensure research rigor under an interpretive approach (Diaz Andrade 2009). This work relies on processes typical of a grounded theory approach to adapt the case study design proposed by Yin (2003) to an interpretivist worldview.

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) has evolved from its positivist origins to an interpretive stance (Charmaz 2006, cited by Diaz Andrade 2009) and can be complementary to case study design. According to Fischer and Otnes in Belk 2006), a grounded theory inspired approach can aid in questioning mainstream frameworks in marketing and consumer behavior. Theoretical case selection is a characteristic of grounded theory methodology and is bound to the intention of generating and developing

theoretical ideas, rather than focusing at either yielding results that are representative of a population or at testing hypotheses. In theoretical case selection cases are chosen for theoretical, not statistical, reasons (Glaser and Strauss 1967), and are therefore selected in order to highlight similarities or differences or to extend emergent theory.

Instead of internal construct validity (through data triangulation) as proposed by Yin (2003), Diaz Andrade (2009) proposes that interpretivist researchers should rather seek "theoretical sufficiency", in which findings are corroborated by using various data sources and seeking alternate cause-effect relationships. This differs from the positivist approach - which implies completion and objectivity - as in interpretive research the subjectivity of the analysis is acknowledged. As for external validity, which refers to the extent to which findings can be generalized; Walsham (1995a) suggests that interpretive researchers should factor-in temporal and spatial dimensions of the phenomenon in the analysis.

Regarding "reliability", as proposed by Yin (2003), although still advocating for correct data categorizing and record keeping, Diaz Andrade (2009) suggests that instead of seeking that a second researcher analyzing the same data set should arrive at the same conclusion – as would be the case under a positivist approach -record keeping should warrant persuasiveness in theory building studies, while allowing for different interpretations for the conclusions.

It is worth mentioning that, although partially inspired by grounded theory concepts, this work does not aim at building a generalizing theory, but rather it attempts to confront findings with existing theoretical frameworks in order to further the academic debate on consumer culture both in developed markets and in LIC's.

1.4.2. Research Design

Spiggle (1994) proposed an ethnographic protocol in three phases (observation, analysis, interpretation) was adequate for interpretive consumer research. Badot and Lemoine (2009) made a significant contribution to this protocol by incorporating a fourth stage - marketing implications - and by applying a multi-technique approach as described by Bonoma (1985) according to which different data sources were used. Contemporarily, Cherrier and Murray (2007) proposed a scheme to analyze interview data that articulated intra and inter narrative analysis yet did not present marketing implications nor did it propose a multi-technique approach.

Due to the multi-cultural component of this study, and its goal of presenting managerial implications, it demanded a complex design which would accommodate a combination of previous schemes and various research methods applied in interpretive research, namely participant observation, interviews, review of historical documents and visual ethnography.

By combining the expanded protocol for single case analysis proposed by Badot and Lemoine (2009)²⁰ with the multi-story line approach proposed by Cherrier and Murray (2007) the protocol applied in this work attempts to deliver in depth case by case and inter-case analysis and interpretation, as well as marketing implications in a cross-cultural context.

One key contribution of this model is to include a detailed cross-cultural case selection process. It also provides managerial implications as proposed by Badot and Lemoine (2009)²¹. The following figure displays the research design:

²⁰ Which in turn is based on Bonoma (1985) and Spiggle (1994).

²¹ Introspection was applied as a complementary process in the analysis and interpretation phases in order to minimize bias considering the cross-cultural nature of the study.

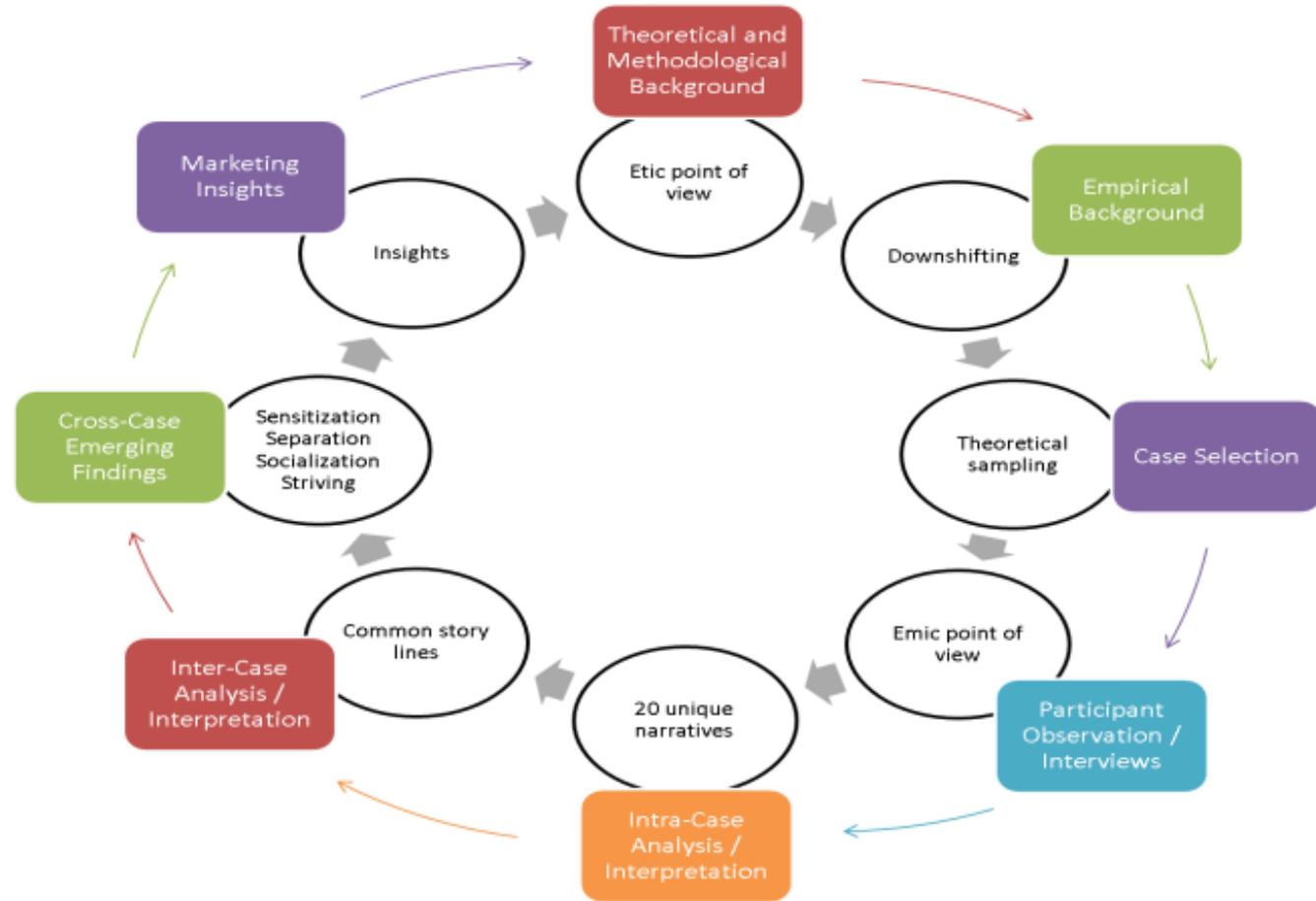


Figure 2 - Research Design. Adapted from Holbrook (1986, 1995); Gould (1991, 1995); Spiggle (1994); Murray and Cherrier (2007); Badot and Lemoine (2009).

1.4.3. Choice of research locations

Context selection is key in research development because “a theory is a story about why acts, events, structure and thought occur” (Arnould et al. in Belk 2006: page 107). From the perspective of a global marketplace increasingly integrated, it seems relevant to understand – rather than classify or measure – the similarities and differences in consumer culture across markets. The goal was to study the phenomena of shopping centers and the shopping and consuming experiences produced and undergone within them, outside the United States borders, where it has been widely researched.

With this goal in mind, two regions were chosen, Western Europe and Latin America, one representing the developed economies and the other the emerging economies²². Within each region two countries were chosen under several criteria:

- i. Importance of the country for the region, both economically, politically and socially
- ii. Significant *a priori* difference in culture²³ between the two countries in the region, represented by a difference in language, history and currency.

²² Latin America was chosen given its relative importance and underrepresentation in the literature

²³ See section 1.2.6 for the application of the concept of culture in this work

It is important to clarify that the nation-states chosen for the study are simply initial geographical and structuring limits to the research and that this work attempts to avoid one of the typical pitfalls of cross-cultural work under the mainstream optic: the "Onomastic Fallacy" (Georgas and Berry, 1995 in Nakata 2009), which is to assume that culture is a unitary and mostly static variable, to equate it with the country name, base the analysis on stereotypes and use it to account for a wide range of variables. On the contrary, this work starts out with the premise that culture is not static and not necessarily country specific.

It will thus concentrate on a limited period of time in order to minimize the time-effect. As for the cultural variability within each country, after the country selection, cities first and then shopping centers within each city were chosen to limit the effect of contextual factors on variability and focus on smaller population groups in order to allow the researcher to be open to variability within the groups²⁴. The fundamental logic of case selection was to highlight similarities and differences in underlying symbolic meanings of consumer and shopping experiences in shopping centers within and across various geographical regions²⁵

1.4.3.1. Country and city selection

Under these criteria, France and England were chosen as targets for the Western European fieldwork and Brazil and Argentina for the Latin American fieldwork. The chosen countries in each region fulfill each of the above describe criteria²⁶, as can be seen in the chart below:

²⁴ See section 1.4.3 for a description of the chosen cities and justification.

²⁵ See section 1.4.4 for details of the case selection process

²⁶ Criteria: Importance of the country for the region, economically, politically and socially; significant a priori difference in culture between the two countries in the region, represented by a difference in language, history and currency.

Europe		Latin America	
<u>France</u>	<u>England</u>	<u>Argentina</u>	<u>Brazil</u>
Members of the European Union, playing key roles in the region's development.		Members of the Mercosur, playing key roles in the region's development.	
Language: French	Language: English	Language: Spanish	Language: Portuguese
Currency: Euro	Currency: Pound	Currency: Peso	Currency: Real
Monarchy overthrown through revolution.	Parliamentary monarchy to this day.	Former Spanish Colony. Independence obtained through war.	Former Portuguese Colony. No war of Independence.

Figure 3 - Selection criteria. Source: author

The capital cities were chosen in each country, with the exception of Brazil. In each of the other countries, the capital cities were the political and economic center for the country²⁷. In the case of Brazil, Brasilia, the country's capital, is an administrative center, while the political and economic power in the country is shared between São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. Both cities share similar social structures in terms of occupation and income but could not be more different in terms of social relations and consumption habits (Marques, Scalon, Oliveira 2008) and therefore these two cities were chosen for the study. Shopping malls were selected in inner city or in suburban areas surrounding the city.

Over the last 5 years, partly due to the world economic crisis of 2008, market dynamics have changed in all five locations. An initial slowdown in corporate spending has now been replaced by investment driven by industry consolidation and, with the exception of Argentina, innovation.

²⁷ A review of existing managerial and academic data on each country's characteristics was carried out to aid in site selection.

i. Argentina Quick Facts

After the dramatic 2001 crisis, Argentina experienced a few years of economic prosperity and stability. The country was even listed as one of the "next seven" promising emerging markets while total GDP reached US\$ 302.7 billion by 2009 with a GDP per head of US\$14.538PPP, higher than that of Brazil.

Although the quality of public education is declining, enrollment is still high for an emerging economy. Nevertheless, recent political and economic troubles with rising inflation, discussions about freedom of the press, unreliable official statistics, weak institutions - followed by unfavorable IMF reports - coupled with the country's strong reliance on the high prices of commodities and a lack of a clear alternative political force to the current government have raised discussions as to whether Argentina should continue to be viewed as a "rising star" in the world market²⁸.

In 2013 Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner faced the most difficult year in her presidency. After being re-elected with 54% of votes in the last election (following two terms by her late husband Nestor Kirchner), her approval rates were declining fast and she was having difficulties in her attempt to change the constitution in order to allow her to pursue a third term.

The country has a long history of bank failures and government interventionism and lack confidence in the banking system. Cash currency is still widely used and although the banking and the retail industries have joined forces to stimulate the bankarization of the economy, Argentinians still prefer to keep their savings at home in cash and in strong currencies.

²⁸ According to a study by The Economist (2012): The world in figures. Official statistics are deemed unreliable by both local and international analysis.

Government policies to diminish the economy's reliance on US\$ dollars had been gradually implemented since 2012. The population could no longer buy foreign currency without government permission, which was granted on a "case by case basis" for travel expenses only; and even so with unclear rules.

The wide gap between official inflation figures and those perceived by consumers in the market, coupled with the above mentioned practices, have caused the population to revert to "buying as a way of saving". Even so, Argentinians considered themselves to be conscious consumers and 37% declared that their top concern was economic problems, followed by political problems with 20% (National Geographic & Globescan, 2012).

Banks have had to adapt as consumers have resorted to consumption over savings accounts or other types of bank mediated investments. The practice of buying products in fixed installments with low or zero interest with bank issued credit cards had become routine procedure as this was the solution found by the financial industry to remain operative under this new market reality (Euromonitor 2011).

Buenos Aires and surroundings

Argentina is a late entrant into the shopping center market. The first malls opened in the late 1980's but it was not until the 1990's, with the launch of the Shopping Alto Palermo, that the industry established itself in the country. Argentinians still preferred to shop on the streets and only 12% of purchases are made at malls by 2010 (CASC 2010). Even so, a strong expansion of shopping centers is perceived in Argentina (+ 40% between 2005 and 2011) although rising inflation and political and economic instability have become a concern.

By 2013, very few sites were prepared for mothers with young children, although the number of children per family in the Argentinian middle classes is relatively high, slightly over 2 children per family (INDEC 2012). Major players in the industry were not prone to innovation and mall mix and architecture are both very traditional (CASC 2011).

Buenos Aires is the most important market for the shopping center industry in Argentina. Major players are IRSA and the Chilean group CENCOSUD. Shortage of prime locations has driven prices up and average m² at shopping centers in Buenos Aires is US\$500 and industry growth rate is higher than that of the country (CASC 2011). Since 2010, various sites were being remodeled and were becoming more upscale. Tourism had propelled growth in the sector but high inflation had cast doubts on whether growth could continue to be sustained by tourists.

ii. Brazil Quick Facts

In 2009, Brazil was the topic of the cover of *The Economist* under the headline: “Brazil Takes off”. Until 2010, Brazil was the poster child for a successful emerging economy. Democracy had been restored, was respected and maintained; inflation was under control. Brazil became the world’s sixth largest economy and statistics showed that 35 million people left poverty and entered the middle class in the last decade. São Paulo became the third largest city in the world, with 11 million inhabitants and a GDP of US\$ 147 Billion, or nearly US\$ 16.000 per capita (IBGE 2011).

Brazilian democracy and economic stability allowed for social mobility, exemplified by a Nation's President not only symbolizing the less privileged, but rising to power from outside the margins of the elite's circle of power. Although much work still needed to be done, most indicators showed improving living conditions for the majority of the population. Financing opportunities enabled a larger group of consumers to contemplate the possibility of reaching social projection through the acquisition of consumption goods.

The country had been only marginally affected by the 2008 crisis and optimism reigned as former President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva was able to elect his successor, Dilma Rousseff and ensure that the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics were to be held in Brazil (The Economist 2012). In fact, the country seemed to be doing so well that the government started a campaign to promote a better image perception from abroad; with views on the promotion of tourism and investment in the years to come.

The animation film Rio was released in 2011. It was received with conflicting reviews in Brazil. While some were proud to have their country portrayed in a blockbuster Hollywood movie, directed by a Brazilian - arguably a sign of international interest in the country, others viewed it as a perpetuation of the clichés about Brazil, its people and culture.

The movie featured a Blue Macaw - an endangered tropical species - who had been smuggled out of the country and was brought back by a Brazilian researcher without much concern for rules, landed in the middle of Carnival, was met by a child holding a weapon, the "good guys" were kidnapped by the "bad guys" and had to find their own way out of the problem since nobody (not even the police) seemed to care... The critics' argument was that although all these things do happen in Brazil, these are not the only

important aspects of Brazilian society (OESP 2011; UOL 2011). But what are the important aspects of Brazilian society?

As protests emerged in every major city across the country in June 2013 amidst the 2013 Confederations Cup - the country's final test before the 2014 World Cup - journalists, consultants and academics alike all agreed that no one expected these protests to take place in Brazil, especially not during a major soccer event. President Rousseff's popularity fell from 57% to 30% in three weeks (Datafolha 2013). But why?

Even at the peak of its economy stability, the 10% richest still accounted for nearly 47% of the purchasing power and 75% of sales of luxury items in the country, (IBGE 2011; Shopping Cidade Jardim 2011). With inflation rising, urban violence soaring (both criminal and police violence), high taxes, a series of corruption scandals and impunity, and last (but not least) the high costs absorbed by the government (both direct and through subsidies) to build stadiums for the world Cup - without the parallel infrastructure improvements in terms of transportation, education and health that had been promised during the election campaign (The Economist 2012) - there were clearly enough reasons for the population to be angry. So why did everyone agree it was surprising?

The picture was not as bright for Brazil in 2013 as it had been a few years earlier. Four years down the road, in September 2013, Brazil was once more the topic of the cover article of The Economist. This time the headline was: "Did Brazil blow it?"

a) *Rio de Janeiro and surroundings*

Rio de Janeiro is the former capital of Brazil and many government institutions are still based in the city. The proximity of the Baía de Campos oil exploration area has driven many oil companies to base their operations in Rio de Janeiro. Rede Globo, the major media empire in the country is also based there. Rio is a touristic city, and the industry is of vital importance to local economy.

The shopping center industry entered late into the Carioca²⁹ market, and although the city has over 30 shopping centers nowadays, consumers still prefer to shop in the streets. Most sites are catered to so-called “blue collar and middle classes” and attempts to launch more upscale centers had not been successful in the past. A noteworthy example is Rio de Janeiro’s São Conrado Fashion Mall, which was conceived to be an upscale mall but has initially struggled and changed hands in 2007 (ABRASCE 2013).

The launch of Shopping Leblon seems to have reversed the tendency as the mall seems profitable and on December 4th, 2012, Multiplan³⁰, a major player in the Brazilian market, opened in Barra de Tijuca, the new Village Mall, positioned as a luxury shopping center. It started its operations in a “soft-opening” to benefit from the market upturn driven by Christmas shopping. Brands offered at the mall include Cartier, Gucci, Ermenegildo Zegna, Louis Vuitton and Tiffany & Co. Prada and Miu Miu stores are due

²⁹ Natives of Rio the Janeiro are called “Carioca” by Brazilians, while natives of São Paulo are called “Paulista”.

³⁰ Multiplan is a full service, publically traded company operating in the shopping center industry and in real estate development primarily in the Brazilian market, but with interests also in the US (Florida) and in Europe (Portugal). Multiplan is one of the leading players in the shopping center industry in Brazil, currently operating 17 sites in key markets such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraná and Brasilia, totaling over 1.5 Million square meters of built and a leasable area over 712.000 square meters, more than 4.400. stores and 160.000 visitors per year.

to open in the first semester of 2013. The Village Mall also houses the first Apple Store in Rio de Janeiro (ABRASCE 2014).

b) São Paulo and surroundings

São Paulo was the 3rd largest city in the world by 2013, with 11 million inhabitants and a GDP of US\$ 147 Billion, or nearly US\$ 16.000 per capita. São Paulo accounted for 60% of Brazil's millionaires in 2011, with 165.000 High Net Worth Individuals (HDNIs, a 50% increase since 2005 (Shopping Cidade Jardim 2011).³¹

There are currently over 80 shopping centers in São Paulo (ABRASCE 2014), catering to different profiles of consumers and to all social classes. The newly found economic stability, paired up with the strong REAL currency, has given birth to a new group of consumers, who came mostly from the aspiring middle class of the 1990's, but who now have access to the purchase of luxury products, readily available at major Brazilian cities (IBGE 2010). In recent years the implantation of upscale shopping centers in selective inner-city locations in São Paulo seems economically profitable (ABRASCE 2014; Cushman and Wakefield 2010).

The exponential growth of the shopping center industry in the city occurs in parallel to an extremely rapid rate of deterioration in living standards in the city (IBGE 2010, Waiselfisz 2011). As the city grows vertically - and becomes overly populated, violent and chaotic - commercial retail spaces are developed to cater to the needs of this ever growing population. With the toughening of the conditions in the "real world" the construction of "artificial ecosystems" such as gated communities and shopping centers that

³¹ HDNIs are individuals with a net worth of at least US\$.1.000.000, 87% of which are ultra-HDNIs, with over US\$30MM in assets.

will simulate the ideal living conditions sought after by the population becomes a very attractive market.

The exponential growth of the shopping center industry in the city has often caused the reshaping of entire neighborhoods. When Levi-Strauss (1955) described his first impressions on the city of São Paulo, he conceded that new world cities were not built under the same standards as old world cities and that the growth rate of these cities was as impressive as their rate of deterioration. However, he sustained that this deterioration did not seem to be a concern in these societies, as these cities “were not merely ‘newly built’, they were built for renewal, and the sooner the better (page 134)”. Over 70 years after Levi-Strauss’s first visit to São Paulo, many of his observations are still accurate.

iii. France Quick Facts

France has a GDP per head of US\$33674PPP, slightly below that of England with a relatively low inflation rate (1.5%) and ranks at number 13 in terms of the Human Development Index (The Economist 2012). However, overly protective labor laws, high taxes and product-market regulations have led to an overall unemployment rate of 10% and rising, with over 25% of the youth out of a job. In 2012 the most important concern for the French are the economic problems with 40% of top of mind mentions, followed by unemployment with 35% (National Geographic & Globescan 2012).

Contemporary France has been persistently alternating between right and left wing governments. With the persistence of the crisis in the euro zone, even socialist President Francois Hollande was forced to make significant budgetary cuts, as public debt has risen to nearly 90% of GDP (the Economist 2013).

Although other European countries have made efforts to reduce state spending, France still has nearly 57% of the GDP linked to government expenditure. A tough spot to be in, considering that the business climate is deteriorating as well, as the country loses competitiveness to Germany.

In June 2013 the consumer confidence index reached the lowest level in history³² and the economy was projected to continue stagnant for at least one more year as consumer spending remained contracted. The personal savings rate was high, at 15.5% in 2013, with consumers building personal safety nets in an unstable environment (Insee 2013).

The aggravation of the crisis in the Eurozone has increased immigration and has brought the issue back into the spotlight. Although France has always been an immigration destination and had been dealing with social instability for decades, the high unemployment rates have accentuated nationalistic tendencies in some sectors of society, with extreme right wing parties gaining representation in congress (Estèbe 2004). At the same time, living conditions for blue collar workers in general and immigrants in particular, especially in the outskirts of France's major cities, have been deteriorating steadily over the years, culminating in riots in 2005 – fueled by police violence- and in 2010 – against an unpopular pension reform (Lagrange 2012).

Permeated by strong protests pro and against it, was the approval of Gay marriage in France in June 2013. Amidst social and economic instability, France has been called by The Economist (2013) "a time bomb in the heart of Europe".

³² Record keeping started in 1972.

Paris and surroundings

France is an early entrant into the shopping center market, and the industry is controlled by two major corporations, Unibail-Rodamco and Klepierre. Significant investment had been done in the last five years and innovation is a key driver in the market dynamics.

Despite the economic crisis an initial drop in consumer confidence, shopping center sales have remained relatively stable over the last five years. Sales at shopping centers represent over 28% of total sales in the country (ICSC 2008).

Paris ranks at number 16 in the city livability index (The Economist, 2012). It is one of the most important touristic areas in the world and a shopping destination for many tourists, especially from emerging economies in the last few years (The Economist, 2012).

Major sites are generally located outside of the 20 Paris *arrondissements*. They focus on "blue collar and middle classes" and "upscale" centers have struggled in spite of apparent favorable conditions (Ochs and Badot 2008).

iv. England Quick Facts

After laborists Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, Britain elected conservative David Cameron amidst economic turmoil and social instability, which culminated in the 2011 London riots. The disturbances begun in North London in August 2011 and different parts of the city experienced varying levels of violence.

Although the "trigger" for the riots was police violence toward peaceful protesters demonstrating against the police's handling of a shooting case, underlying causes could be traced back to various social and economic factors. Among those factors are high unemployment - especially among the

youth, with over one million out of a job - and unstable social connections among the younger generation, particularly in some London suburbs, complemented by a growing feeling of impunity as the riots escalated (Morell et al. 2011).

Ranked at number 25 in terms of Human development Index– considerably lower than France’s – and number 10 in terms of highest cost of living in the world, England’s GDP per head in 2010 reached US\$35.155PPP (The Economist 2012). Economic problems continued to be the top of mind concern for British consumers in 2012 with 42% of the population mentioning it, followed by unemployment with 19% and immigration with 15% (National Geographic & Globescan, 2012. The conservative party was pushing for a plebiscite to evaluate permanence in the European Union.

England’s government started to undergo several budgetary cuts in the aftermath of heavy – and controversial - investment in infrastructure for the 2012 Olympics, which reached just over US\$ 16 billion. By the end of 2012, new forms of injecting capital into the slowed down economy had to be found urgently, as retailers reported industry-wide revenue decrease over the last seven consecutive years, with retail vacancy rates increasing five times to 14% since 2008 and commercial failures pressuring the unemployment rate (The Economist 2013).

By mid-2013, though, some pale signs of recovery begun to emerge and Britain dodged recession, after two years of stagnation. A mild growth in the services sector, accompanied by a small decrease in labor costs and a halt in inflationary pressures warranted a wave of optimism, although it was still too early to know whether these trends were sustainable in the long run (Schomberg and Milliken 2013).

London and surroundings

England is a pioneer in the current format of shopping center. They first appeared as an evolution of Covent Garden. England's retail industry in general and the shopping center industry in particular have received great attention over the last few years, propelled by the transformations under development in the London and surroundings area in preparation for the 2012 Olympics.

Sales in shopping center represent over 28% of total sales in the country. Major players are Westfield, Lend Lease and Capital Shopping Centers (ICSC 2008).

London is a highly sought after tourist destination and this condition was capitalized during the 2012 London Olympics. The Westfield group invested heavily in the London and surroundings area, acquiring two prime locations and developing the London Westfield, which features a luxury mall-within-a-mall (The Village at Westfield), and the Westfield Stratford City, launched in 2011 but designed to be the center of the new redeveloped area surrounding the 2012 Olympic Stadium and Olympic Village. The latter was conceived to be transformed into regular housing units once the games were over.

1.4.3.2. *Comparative Summary of Industry Characteristics in chosen locations*

The chart below shows a comparison of key industry characteristics across the four countries, based on pre-existing economic and managerial data:

Argentina	Brazil	France	England
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Late mover in the Shopping Mall business with the first entrants opening in the 1990's • Currently certain sites are being remodeled and are becoming more upscale ... but argentine consumers still shop in the streets • Over the last few years IRSA has acquired many of the main sites but CENCOSUD is starting to react. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Malls opened in the 1970's • New upscale malls are opening in all major urban areas but especially in Sao Paulo • 3 major players competing for the main sites + other independent properties mostly struggling in the market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Malls opened in the late 1960's • Malls mostly target middle and working class families near major cities • Many are being remodeled to be up to date and increase profitability ... but few are repositioned • Major players are KLEPIERRE et Unibail-Rodamco 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The birthplace of the modern shopping mall concept. • Malls mostly target middle and working class public but The Village at Westfield is a luxury mall • Many players compete for major properties (Westfield, Capital Shopping Centers, Prudential, among others)

Figure 4 - Summary of Market Characteristics- Developed by author

1.4.4. Case Selection Process

This research had the objective of looking for similarities and differences in shopping and consuming experiences at different shopping centers across regions, and therefore theoretical case selection, rather than random sampling was adequate. This form of selection does not occur at a specific point in the research process, it is in fact a continuing trait. On several occasions during the study the researcher must reconsider whether the cases chosen cover all the aspects worth investigating so as to develop facets of the emerging theory.

Theoretical case selection is directed towards the ‘theoretical sensitivity’ that is paramount in grounded theorizing, and in qualitative and ethnographic work. The logic behind the choice of cases was to highlight these similarities and differences (Glaser and Strauss 1967) given the comparative nature of the study. Once the countries and cities had been decided on based on empirical gaps this study was set to pursue³³, 15 shopping centers were chosen *a priori* to be part of the study, three in each city.

Granted that CCT focuses on the “experiential and sociocultural dimensions of consumption”, Sherry (1991, cited by Arnould and Thompson 2005: 870) argues that “issues such as product symbolism, ritual practices, the consumer stories in product and brand meanings, and the symbolic boundaries that structure personal and communal consumer identities” are not “plainly accessible through experiments, surveys, or database modeling”.

However, CCT researchers have resorted to what Arnould and Thompson (2005: 870) call “methodological pluralism whenever quantitative measures and analytic techniques seem adequate to advance the operative theoretical agenda”. The authors cite as examples works such as Arnould and Price (1993), Coulter et al. (2003), Grayson and Martinec (2004), Grayson and Shulman (2000), McQuarrie and Mick (1992), Moore and Lutz (2000), Sirsi et al. (1996). A more recent example is Farrag et al. (2010) where quantitative and ethnographic methods were applied.

Given that to the best of this author’s knowledge not enough systematically collected ethnographic data was available to begin with, “hard economic and managerial data” provided an objective criterion for case selection. Considering that the research would analyze both frontstage (consumers) and backstage (management) activities, it seemed adequate to carry out case

³³ See 1.4.3. for details of country selection.

selection using available management produced data (corporate and financial information, demographic data, frequency of visits, average ticket price, design, shopping center mix, zoning, positioning, etc.).

In other words, cases were chosen so that at least "on the surface" they represented the variation of the offer in each of the chosen cities. Initial data was collected on many different shopping centers in all five cities and eventually 4 shopping centers in every city were selected as focus of the study based on available management produced data.

Once the initial case selection was carried out, the subsequent data collection was done under ethnographic protocol. Qualitative data was then collected (behaviors, experiences, marketing materials).

Arnould and Thompson (2005) maintain that marketing activity is modeled by the macro context in which it is inserted, which includes economic, social, political and cultural factors. However, according to Dupuis (Dupuis et al. 2002), shopping centers traditionally focus predominantly on large groups of consumers denominated collectively by management as "blue collar and middle classes", which implies a social class differentiation in economic terms but without necessarily applying other variables which may be at play within those economic groups. In fact, all of the management produced data obtained for case selection used this socio-demographic and economic segmentation approach.

Nevertheless, according to Douglas and Craig (in Nakata 2009), subcultures such as ethnic or socio-demographic groupings often have varying interests, consumption habits and buying behavior. The authors sustain that both the macro context and the micro context (ethnicity, neighborhood, living conditions, etc.) should be taken into account. Although most likely unconsciously, management seems to take on a Hofstedeian approach and give consumers a generalizing treatment based on the assumption that

culture is accounted for by nationality and assuming the majority of its consumers to be local nationals. This meant that although *a priori* the cases presented variability; there would be no guarantee that they would in fact be “theoretically sufficient”.

In fact, once the initial cases were selected, a preliminary analysis of the ethnographic data collected suggested that a second round of field work was necessary to attain theoretical sufficiency. Five new shopping centers were then added, also with the aid of quantitative or management produced data. This two-step process combining managerially produced data and ethnographic observation warranted a solid theoretical case selection process and the necessary variability among cases.

1.4.5. Sites and phenomena observation

Observation protocol followed directions proposed by Badot and Lemoine (2009). Data was collected and organized in field journals during several visits to the shopping centers, and included informal interviews with consumers, shopkeepers and in depth interviews with management on different dates. Photographs were taken by the researcher and videos posted on YOUTUBE by consumers, shop owners, reporters and shopping center management were also collected as materials to analyze. Data was catalogued and organized for easy access.

Selected shopping centers were visited for long periods of time and in different days and hours. Although according to the Spiggle (1994) paradigm this phase does not include theoretical discussion, a priori constructs may be used in order to aid data collection, and therefore two different points of view were taken into account: an experiential marketing perspective and ethnology of consumption perspective.

1.4.6. Intra-case analysis process

Analysis was carried out using data corroboration (comparing findings from different data sources) and semiotic analysis of marketing materials. Spiggle (1994) states that analysis "breaks down or divides some complex whole into its constituent parts. Through analytical operations researchers dissect, reduce, sort, and reconstitute data".

It is in the analysis phase that researchers organize data, extract meaning, arrive at conclusions, and generate or confirm conceptual schemes and theories that describe the data (page 493). At this stage data is checked for "theoretical sufficiency" (Diaz Andrade 2009).

It is important to note that observation and analysis were not done in a completely sequential way. In fact, the analysis carried out on already collected data on some cases aided on data collection on other cases. In some occasions, it was necessary to go back to sites and collect additional data as "theoretical sufficiency" was not achieved with existing data.

1.4.7. Inter-case analysis process and emerging findings

Once intra-case analysis was concluded on all cases, a cross-case theme development process was carried out. Patterns of similarities and differences were detected. Themes were constructed emerging from the findings and were then further developed by contrasting findings with the literature. Each one of the emerging themes was then discussed extensively in of this work.

1.4.8. Theoretical discussion process

The third phase of the research, theoretical discussion is dedicated to confronting the findings with the literature, although there is no clear limit between phases. According to Spiggle (1994: 492), "Inferences result from the processes of analysis and interpretation that investigators use to generate

conclusions, insights, meanings, patterns, themes, connections, conceptual frameworks, and theories—their representations of the reality described by the data. Investigators use both analysis and interpretation, employing them in a linear or circular way”. She sustains that a second round of fieldwork (phase 1, observation) may be necessary to understand certain phenomena or to test alternate emerging theories.

She argues that “the intuitive, subjective, particularistic nature of interpretation renders it difficult to model or present in a linear way. In interpretation the investigator does not engage a set of operations. Rather, interpretation occurs as a gestalt shift and represents a synthetic, holistic, and illuminating grasp of meaning, as in deciphering a code.” (page 497) In other words, the researcher comprehends a meaning by seeing similarities between a new, emerging sign system, new data and previously understood information.

Interpretation can be viewed as translation, or framing phenomena as a metaphor or as a simulation. As with the analysis phase, interpretation was not completely linear and sometimes work was being done on more than one case at a time.

In summary, according to Spiggle (1994: 497), researchers attempt to understand underlying meanings in consumer behavior by studying and interpreting:

- (1) The connotations given by consumers to their experiences
- (2) How those meanings fit together and form understandable patterns
- (3) How symbolic forms, rituals, traditions, and consumption and shopping related cultural codes reinforce and represent group culture in general.

1.4.9. Marketing insights

The last phase of the research involves developing marketing implications and managerial recommendations from the conclusions drawn from research findings (Badot and Lemoine 2008). One of the key predicaments concerning ethnographic methods is generalizability (Goulding 1998; Johnson 1990; cited by Pettigrew 2000): According to Pettigrew (2000), one way to overcome this limitation is to focus on causal conduct rather than focus on specific experiences. Under these conditions, useful marketing implications and managerial recommendations can be formulated from ethnographic marketing research. Both strategic and operational insight emerged from this analysis.

1.4.10. Dissertation Scheme

This work is presented in four parts as depicted in Figure 5 below. The scheme will be presented at the beginning of each chapter.

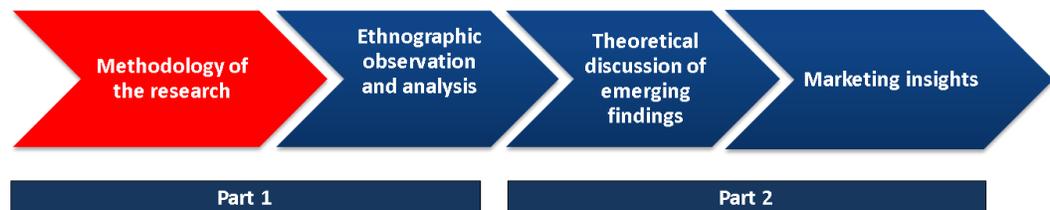


Figure 5 - Dissertation scheme

1.4.11. Research Timeline

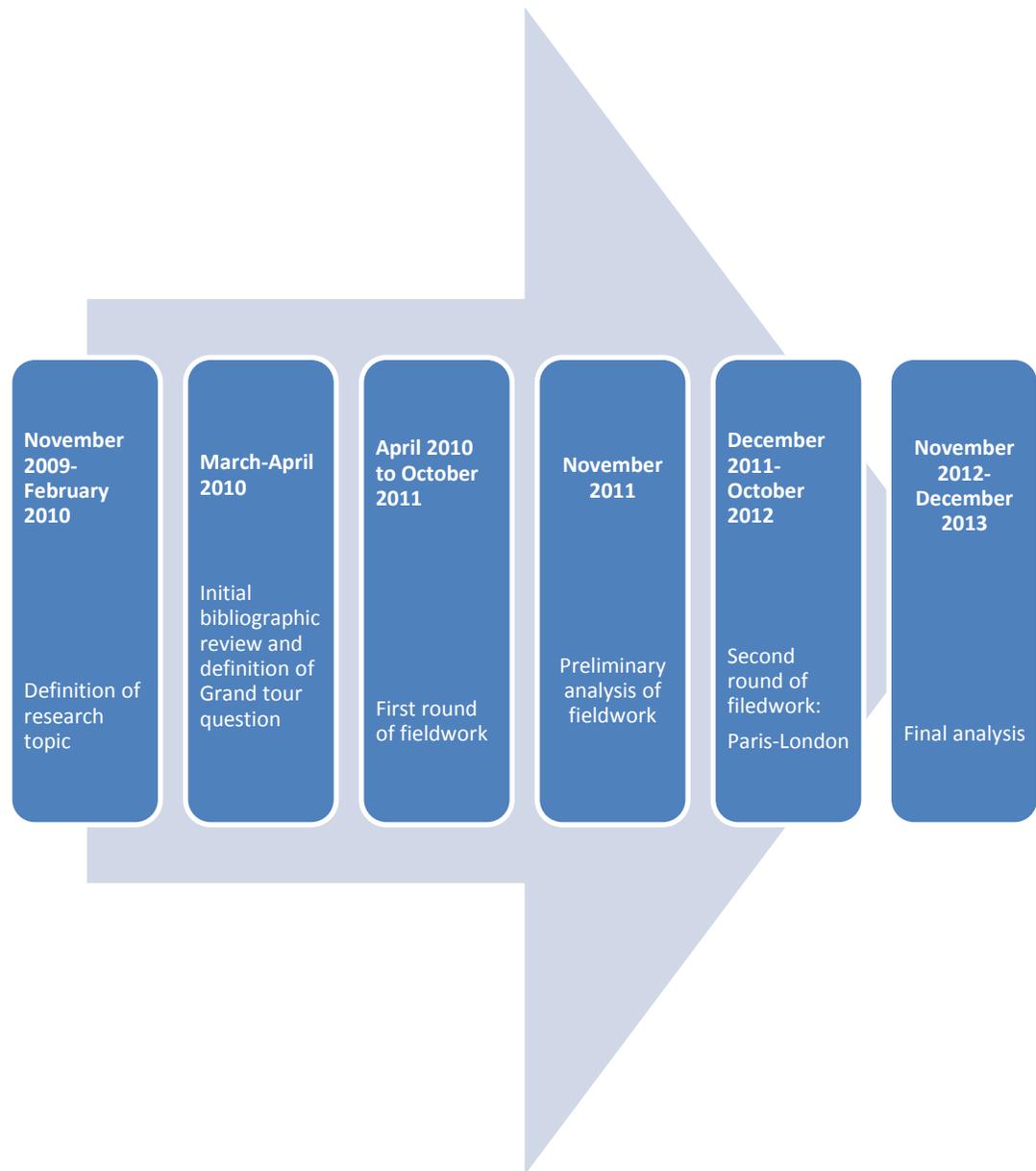


Figure 6 - Dissertation Timetable

1.5. Expected contributions of this research

This work builds on the existing CCT related literature on servicescapes, shopping and consumption experiences and on literature on shopping centers and it attempts to address current gaps in this body of work, as well as to provide managerial recommendations based on research findings. It will differentiate itself from previous research on shopping centers on five main aspects:

- By studying the phenomenon of shopping centers in Latin America, a largely unexplored domain
- By adding a multicultural perspective to the body of research on consumer and shopping experiences at shopping centers through the study of 20 cases.
- By establishing a process of case selection to provide *a priori* variability of cases³⁴.
- By comparing on “continuum” (Carù & Cova 2007; Roederer 2008) the full array of shopping experiences: produced, undergone and co-driven. This work takes into account both points of view: backstage - management and frontstage – consumers (Csaba and Askegaard 1999) and assesses whether these experiences vary across locations as well as the possible causes of variation. Not much has been done in terms of the backstage activities and in multiple locations (Tsai 2010).
- By developing a comprehensive research design to accommodate all of these goals.

³⁴ Cases can be said to be different “on the surface”. The goal of this research is to analyze whether these supposed differences are supported by the deep ethnographic data collected in this work.

Although it may seem counter intuitive at first, opposing mainstream marketing literature, this study puts culture in the forefront of cross-cultural shopping center research in the sense that it challenges the Hofstedeian stance and attempts to comprehend – instead of calculate – similarities and differences.

Contrary to previous approaches, in this work the geographical component is used as a structuring tool and a strong effort is made to escape – or at least to acknowledge - the negative effects of stereotyping in the analysis. The term “to compare”, which in the Hofstedeian tradition is equated with “measuring differences”, is here applied more broadly as “to examine the character and qualities of, in order to discover resemblances and differences” (Merriam Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary 1997).

In this work, culture is seen in the sense applied by Askegaard et al. (in Nakata 2009: 114), as a reflexive process “influenced by individual actors (consumers, marketers) who monitor and modify their actions accordingly (marketing strategies or consumers’ strategies of identity with regard to social differentiation) “. An important theoretical contribution of this research is thus to attempt to understand - through the analysis of shopping and consumer experiences at shopping centers - how cultural identities are constructed within retail spaces both at the macro (geographical regions) and micro levels (each shopping center).

This work will suggest how cultural identities affect these consumer and shopping experiences and how they relate to the specific macro level contexts in which they are embedded (Arnould and Thompson 2005) in different parts of the world at one point in time. This is a particularly interesting topic under the current trend of globalized corporate investment and in light of the recent world economic crisis.

This research will also provide insights for managers in the shopping center industry by reconciling practitioner literature and the cultural paradigm, thus providing comparable data on the relationship between front and backstage activities (Bonin 2000; Carù and Cova 2003a; Badot and Lemoine 2008) in various locations allowing for an understanding of both sides of the consumer and shopping experience (the “orchestration” as well as the “consumer culture” at the root of the experiences). The figure below portrays the combination of research approaches considered:

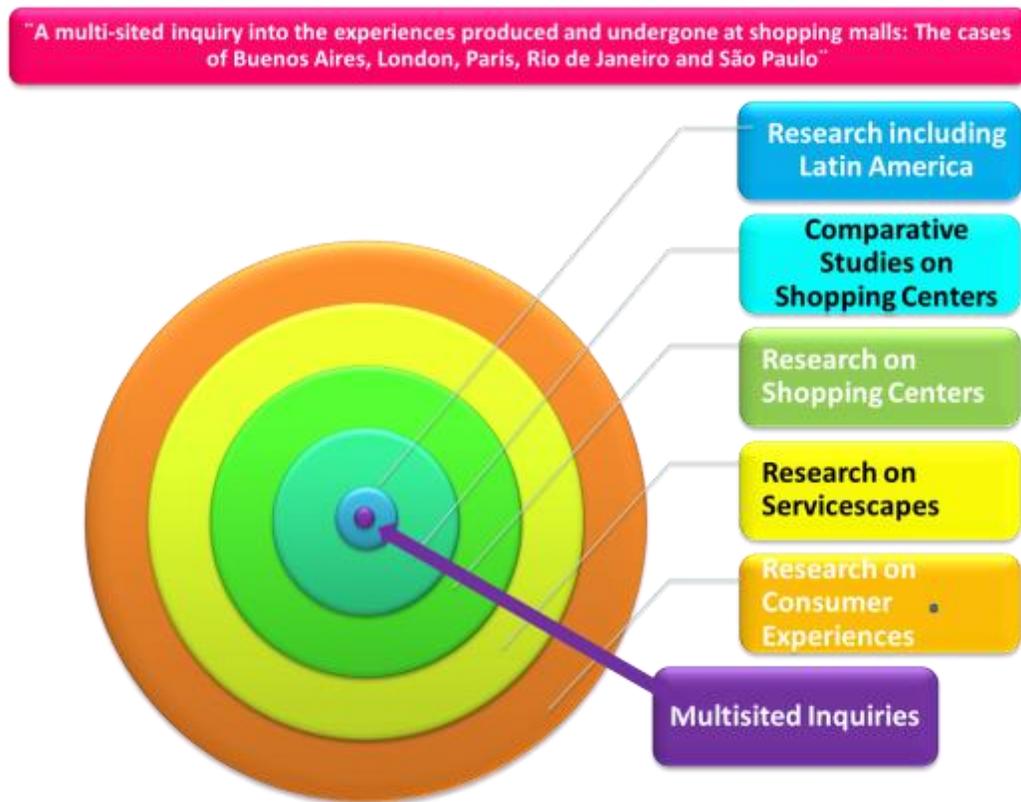


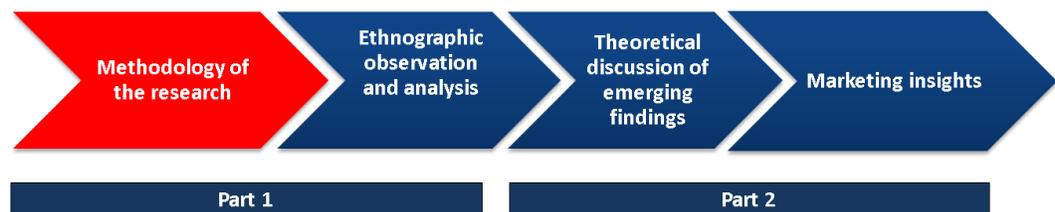
Figure 7 - An overview of related research. Developed by author.

Part 2 Observation and Case Analysis

“The paradox is irresoluble: the less one culture communicates with another, the less likely they are to be corrupted, one by the other; but on the other hand, the less likely it is, under such conditions, that the respective emissaries of these cultures will be able to seize the richness and significance of their diversity”

Claude Lévi-Strauss (1955)

Tristes Tropiques



2.1. Methodology of the research

At the beginning of any research project, and especially a debutant researcher’s project as this one, some hard choices have to be made. Being new to the trade comes with advantages and challenges. It is analogous to a blank page. With no previous commitment to a specific line of thought or “methodological school”, a novice researcher could hypothetically resort to any approach. Yet being inexperienced in these approaches makes the task especially difficult.

The choice of the research topic is only the beginning of the process and then questions arise as to which research method to use, where to start from, which tools to use. The answer lies to some extent in the appropriateness of the method for the task at hand, but I firmly believe some degree of subjectivity is involved as personal characteristics and skills come into play.

This research will focus on the phenomenon of shopping centers in major urban areas and on the shopping and consuming experiences produced and undergone within these retail spaces in different cities and in different regions of the world. It will attempt to analyze consumer culture and the construction of a communal identity project (Arnould 2005) while acknowledging the "cultural, historic and societal conditions that make this identity and the means of attaining it attractive and legitimate" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011). It will also attempt to understand how the construction of communal identities affects the retail environments in which they take place.

It is important to recognize that businesses respond to the communities in which they are inserted, and therefore it is interesting to evaluate how shopping center models and positioning have responded to these constructed communal identities through the creation of new operant and operand resources. It is consequently worth assessing whether the experiences undergone by consumers are in line with the management produced shopping experiences in each one of the sites, or in other words, whether consumers experienced what management expected them to experience.

With that goal in mind, I set out to choose a methodology that was adequate to fulfill these research goals, but one that was equally adequate to my personal characteristics. Although I am confident that my choice is the best one I could have made to reach my objectives, I am sure that other research methods and techniques could have been used in order to investigate the

same phenomena, maybe just as effectively. I dedicate this section to the justification and detailed explanation of my methodology.

2.1.1. Case selection protocol

This research concentrated on mainstream “traditional format” shopping centers (ICSC 2012; Dupuis 2002) and yet included shopping centers positioned as more upscale and even luxury as these seem to be the new trend in the industry and are the core interest of major players in all five cities, in the four countries. As previously mentioned, cases were chosen so that at least “on the surface” they represented the variation of the offer in each of the chosen cities.³⁵

It is worth noting, however, that in the last decade shopping centers dedicated to a lower income consumer, in and around the poverty line, have emerged especially in the outskirts of Brazil’s largest cities. Shopping Aricanduva in São Paulo, Shopping Grande Rio in Rio de Janeiro, Shopping Center Piedade in Salvador; North Shopping in Fortaleza, Tabatinga Shopping in Brasilia; Buriti Shopping in Aparecida de Goiania, to name a few, all cater to this emerging consumer basis (ABRASCE 2013).

The subject of consumption of populations with limited economic resources has been covered by many scholars and practitioners alike and is a recurring interest of CCT scholars, especially in the last decade (e.g. Ulvner-Sneistrup and Ostberg 2011; Small et al. 2010; Ustuner and Holt 2007; Lehtonen 1999;). Many large corporations have entered this market propelled by Prahalad and Hart’s (1998) claim that there is “a fortune to be made at the bottom of the pyramid”. It is a very interesting phenomenon, with implications ranging from ethical issues to managerial tactics but beyond the scope of this project and shall be the subject of further research.

³⁵ See section 1.4. for a conceptual description and justification of the case selection process.

2.1.2. Investigation units: 20 Shopping Centers

After country and city selection was finalized, 15 shopping centers were chosen *a priori* to be part of the study. Originally three shopping centers in each city were chosen. Eventually a fourth shopping center was added to test constructs that were being developed throughout the data collection work. This section provides a brief description of key characteristics of the shopping centers selected in each city.

2.1.2.1. *Buenos Aires and surroundings*

The selected shopping centers for this city were Patio Bullrich, Alto Palermo, Shopping Abasto and Unicenter. The original sample included only inner city malls, but as the most representative ones were all managed by the same company and data showed that Unicenter, although located in the Buenos Aires and surroundings area, was a strong competitor, it was included in the study for a second round of fieldwork.

*i. Patio Bullrich*³⁶

Patio Bullrich is positioned as the most upscale shopping center in Argentina, offering the main luxury brands present in the country³⁷ as well as some local brands. It occupies a historical building, but several additions and reconstructions have made it into a hybrid of modern and classic architecture.

It opened in 1988 in a high income inner city location surrounded by embassies and five star hotels. It is a small enclosed mall, with 11.918 m² of leasable space, 84 stores and 210 parking spaces. It receives 450.000 visitors

³⁶ <http://www.shoppingbullrich.com.ar/>

³⁷ Many luxury brands (such as Lois Vuitton) withdrew from the Argentinian market in 2012, after the government current economic policies limiting imports were put in place. The tenant mix at Patio Bullrich was severely affected.

per month on average and retail sales in 2011 reached approximately US\$120 million (Estados Contables Alto Palermo SA 2011). It belongs 100% to Alto Palermo SA, an IRSA Group subsidiary dedicated to shopping center ownership and management.

Patio Bullrich invests heavily on building relationships with hotels and credit card companies rather than investing on mass media. It has a magazine -but no mobile application- which is sent to preferred customers mostly in surrounding neighborhoods and makes no effort to attract families. In fact, although until 2007 they offered activities for children, the space has now been converted on a large sporting goods store.

*ii. Alto Palermo*³⁸

Alto Palermo opened in 1990 and is another IRSA property (100% ownership). It has a leasable area of 18.701 m² and 174 stores and 654 parking spots and is currently the most efficient shopping center in Argentina in terms of sales per square meter. Its nearly 1.000.00 visitors per month generated approximately US\$ 280 million in sales in 2011 (Estados Contables Alto Palermo SA 2011).

It is located in the middle class neighborhood of Palermo, in the intersection of two main traffic outlets in the city (Avenida Santa Fe and Avenida Coronel Diaz). It is served by various bus lines and a subway station.

Alto Palermo invests heavily on mass media advertising, as well as building relationships with hotels to attract middle class tourists, but does not offer a mobile application. It caters to middle class families, especially on weekends, and business people during lunch time. It has a recreation area for

³⁸<http://www.altopalermo.com.ar/>

children, although there is not baby-sitting service available, so parents need to be present at all times.

*iii. Shopping Abasto*³⁹

Shopping Abasto opened in 1998 and is currently 100% property of Alto Palermo SA, (IRSA subsidiary). It is the largest shopping center located within city limits and caters to blue-collar and middle classes, with sales in excess of US\$ 300.000 in 2011 (Estados Contables Alto Palermo SA 2011).

The Abasto neighborhood was one of the places where immigrants settled in Buenos Aires during the 19th and 20th centuries and is arguably one of the "hot spots" of the Tango scene. The mall was built on the structure of the historical Abasto Market, which used to be the main outlet of fresh foods during that time period, and where Carlos Gardel's⁴⁰ mother was said to have worked. It has a surface of 116.645,51 m² of which about 38.000m² is leasable space. It has 1200 parking spots, 173 stores plus 24 restaurants and an average of 1.600.000 visitors monthly.

It is visited mostly by families on weekends and during vacation periods, attracted by the entertainment offers for children, which include the "Museo de los niños"⁴¹ or "The Children's Museum"; a miniature city where children can learn about professions and city life in general. Shopping Abasto does not invest heavily on advertising, but rather promotes its offers for children in specialized magazines and through press actions.

³⁹ <http://www.abasto-shopping.com.ar/>

⁴⁰ Carlos Gardel was one of the most prominent figures of the Tango scene in the beginning of the 20th century. He was the son of a single mother, who is said to have worked in this market.

⁴¹ <http://www.museoabasto.org.ar/>

Unicenter opened in 1988 and was the first regional shopping center in Argentina. It is located 17 Km outside of city limits and attracts not only visitors from the suburbs, but also inner city residents looking for a wider offer or a family outing.

It is currently 100% property of Cencosud, a Chilean based Retail Holding. It has a surface of 220.000 m² with over 300 stores and 14 cinema projection rooms and its food court has capacity of 1800 patrons. By 2010 it was generating about US\$ 750.000 in retail sales (CASC 2010).

Unicenter invests heavily on mass marketing, with street advertising as well as sales promotions and sponsorship of events. It went through a brand and mall mix modernization over the last five years, aiming at younger clientele: The mall started to innovate sponsoring music events such as the Coldplay, Guns & Roses and Lady Gaga concerts in Buenos Aires and pairing these sponsorships with sales promotions, sometimes with credit card partners.

2.1.2.2. Rio de Janeiro and surroundings

The original sample of investigation units for Rio de Janeiro included RioSul, Shopping Leblon and BarraShopping. São Conrado Fashion Mall was later included in the second round of fieldwork as it was the first upscale mall to be launched in Rio de Janeiro and had reportedly struggled until its acquisition by BrMalls in 2007 (BrMalls Annual Report 2013) and now continues to operate, using the same upscale positioning strategy.

Rio de Janeiro is surrounded by a poverty belt and apart from the town of Niteroi, which is connected to the city by bridge; no other middle and upper class communities are available. Considering that Shopping mall offer is

⁴² <http://www.unicenter.com.ar/>

extremely limited from Niteroi residents, and that a large proportion of the population works in the city, all shopping malls included in this study are located in inner city areas. Studying the identity construction projects of Niteroi residents and effect of their relationships with both Rio de Janeiro and Niteroi is also an interesting topic of research, but beyond the scope of this project.

i. RioSul⁴³

RioSul opened in 1980 and was the first modern type Shopping Center to be built in the city. It currently has seven fully enclosed shopping floors with 361 stores, cinema and other activities for children and teenagers.

It has a total area of 128.320 m² and a leasable area of 49.200 m² and offers 1.869 parking spaces. RioSul is managed by Brookfield, and is linked to an office building and reports 22.000.000 visitors a year, of which 19% would be high income individuals and 80% blue collar and middle classes (ABRASCE 2013).

RioSul's central location has aided in its efficient performance throughout the years and it currently offers a bus service to major hotels. It is considered to be a prime property in the industry and attempts to capitalize on its "tradition" as the first shopping center in Rio by positioning itself as "The Carioca⁴⁴ Shopping Center"

⁴³ <http://www.riosul.com.br/#>

⁴⁴ Carioca is the way natives of Rio the janeiro are referred to in Brazil

*ii. Shopping Leblon*⁴⁵

Shopping Leblon is a fully enclosed mall located in a very traditional upscale neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro. It opened in 2007 and currently has 188 stores, cinema projection rooms, a theatre and 1200 parking spaces (valet parking is available), distributed on four levels, with a total area of 61.759 m² and a leasable area of 23.188 m²: It reports having 68% high income consumers among its 700.000 visitors per month (ABRASCE 2013). It is managed by Alliansce, a major player in the Brazilian shopping Center Industry and is connected to a commercial tower offering upscale office space.

Shopping Leblon attempts to cater to the “traditional” upper class in Rio, by offering a mix of local and international brands. Right after opening it attracted various brands which were originally located in Sao Conrado Fashion Mall (Alliansce 2013).

The mall offers exhibits related to fashion topics and is also prepared to receive tourists, with English speaking staff on the information desks, and even hiring a polyglot Santa Claus during Christmas season. It offers free Wi-Fi on site and a mobile application. It positions itself as upscale, yet connected to Rio de Janeiro lifestyle.

*iii. BarraShopping*⁴⁶

BarraShopping is a regional shopping mall opened in 1981 in an area considered as far away from the city center at the time and contributed significantly to the area’s development. Barra de Tijuca is nowadays the neighborhood undergoing the greatest growth in Rio de Janeiro. The shopping center has undergone a serious of expansions and modernizations

⁴⁵ <http://www.shoppingleblon.com.br/>

⁴⁶ www.barrashopping.com.br

over the years. It has a net leasable area of nearly 70.000 square meters, with 578 stores and over 27.000.000 visitors per year (Multiplan 2012).

BarraShopping currently has 578 stores, including a full blown gym, over 25 cinema screening rooms, a bowling alley, a gaming zone for teenagers and a kid's space where parents can leave the children while shopping on site. It is part of a large complex composed of a smaller mall focused on entertainment with an additional 52 retailers, the Centro Médico BarraShopping with 31 medical offices and clinics, the Centro Empresarial BarraShopping with 11 office buildings connecting to BarraShopping through a suspended pedestrian bridge.

Consumers at the shopping center are majorly women (72%) and 61% belong to A/B social classes⁴⁷. This overall mix is attained in spite of an unbalance in the consumer profile between weekdays and weekends, as on weekdays visitors are majorly professionals working in the office buildings around or near the complex, while on weekends the suburban population visits the center in search of family entertainment (Multiplan 2012).

The most recent addition, the VillageMall, is an upscale complex with over 26.560,00 square meter of leasable space, 105 stores, with the presence of luxury international brands such as Ermenegildo Zegna, Gucci, Montblanc, Prada and Tiffany & Co.. BarraShopping is 51.1% Multiplan owned and a 100% Multiplan managed property.

Sales in 2012 were in excess of R\$ 1,624.7 Million⁴⁸, with a 7,8% increase on the previous year, just beating inflation but slightly below industry average growth, estimate in 8,8%. This does not include sales of New York

⁴⁷ The social classification in A/B/C/D and E classes is widely used in Brazil. The middle class would correspond to the C class and the wealthiest individuals would be classified as A class. The E class is just above poverty line.

⁴⁸ Roughly US\$ 700,000,000 using the average exchange rate for 2013 of R\$2, 30 US\$.1.

City Center, which grossed nearly R\$ 210 Million⁴⁹ and VillageMall sales, since it opened on December 4th, 2012 in soft opening⁵⁰. The VillageMall is said to not have yet reached sales expectations as of 2014.

iv. São Conrado Fashion Mall⁵¹

São Conrado Fashion Mall opened in 1982 in an area where very upscale housing was developing due to the overcrowding of the traditional upscale neighborhoods in the city and the limited land availability in those areas. New apartment buildings offering full services - including golf courses - were being launched by the beachfront, yet the largest slum area in the country was located only a few blocks away (ABRASCE 2013, IBGE 2013).

It is a hybrid mall, part enclosed part open air and does not have anchor stores, rather it focused on having a wider cultural offer, with a theatre and four cinema projection rooms. Its total area is 44.432 m² and its leasable area 15.000 m² and receives 2.500.000 visitors per year, generating sales of over US\$ 110.000.000 (BrMalls Annual Report, 2012).

The mall has a client mix of 65% high income consumers (ABRASCE 2013). It houses the first Ferrari store in the city of Rio, and has a wide offer of luxury brands, although recently some luxury retailers have left the mall and opened stores at Shopping Leblon and Village Mall.

⁴⁹ Or just over US\$ 91,000,000

⁵⁰ Partial results had not been disclosed by the conclusion of this work.

⁵¹ www.scfashionmall.com.br

2.1.2.3. *São Paulo and surroundings*

São Paulo's original investigation units were Shopping Iguatemi, Shopping Cidade Jardim and Morumbi Shopping. Shopping Center Norte was later included since it became evident that both Shopping Iguatemi and Morumbi Shopping had undergone transformations that significantly changed their original target market and as Shopping Cidade Jardim was an upscale shopping center, it was necessary to include a shopping center catering to a blue collar target segment.

No shopping centers were selected outside of the inner city borders for a series of reasons. Although there are limited middle and upper class gated communities outside of the city borders, which mimic in many ways the suburban lifestyle of the north American middle classes, those are far from being the reality of the majority of the population in this study. Although observing the shopping and consuming behaviors of these groups is certainly an interesting topic, it is beyond the scope of this project.

As for the middle class and blue collar families living in satellite towns in the São Paulo and surroundings area, especially those working for the automotive industry in the surrounding areas of the city, they tend to do their shopping either at shopping malls in the city or on the streets, given the limited availability of malls in those areas.

Apart from the above mentioned groups, the Greater Sao Paulo area is surrounded by a poverty belt. This is yet another interesting topic to study; it is also beyond the scope of this project.

i. *Shopping Iguatemi*⁵²

Shopping Iguatemi was the first mall to open in São Paulo in the 1960's. It is a fully enclosed mall and after a series of renovations, it currently has a leasable area of 412.104m², with 296 stores and 2.430 parking spaces. In spite of its location in a high income residential and business area⁵³, it was originally positioned as a middle class mall.

Over the last 10 years it has successfully repositioned itself as an upscale mall using its tradition, upscale brands present (Burberry, Chanel, Gucci, Christian Louboutin, Ferragamo, Luis Vuitton, Tiffany & Co., among others), services offered (valet parking, personal shopper, delivery of purchases, meeting rooms free of charge for members of the loyalty program, etc.) and location as differentiating tools, but it still struggles with a certain number of inconsistencies that were inherited from the previous business model, such as not being able to place all the luxury brands together due to contract restrictions. Nevertheless it is the fifth most expensive retail space in the Americas, US\$4,500/m² (Cushman & Wakefield 2010).

It reports profits of over US\$ 60.000.000 annually and reports receiving up to 50.000 visitors a day at peak season (Iguatemi Annual Report, 2010). According to ABRASCE (2013), 46% of visitors are high income individuals and 43% middle class individuals.

⁵² <http://www.iguatemi.com.br/saopaulo>

⁵³ Although not as high as Shopping Cidade Jardim, featured below

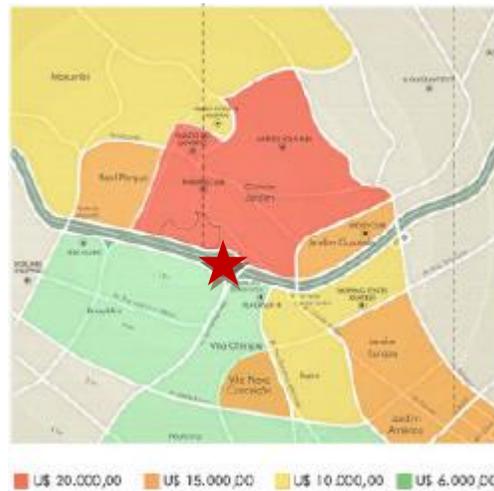
*ii. Shopping Cidade Jardim*⁵⁴

Shopping Cidade Jardim is a fashion shopping center, part enclosed, part open air, located in São Paulo, Brazil in an inner city location with the highest annual per capita income in the city, approximately US\$20.000 (Shopping Cidade Jardim 2010. It was opened in 2008 with good perspectives in spite of the worldwide economic crisis, the unstable real state environment and low consumer confidence (IBGE 2010; Cushman & Wakefield 2010) and has had two expansions since then, 2010 and 2011.

The mall is part of a larger real state complex occupying a parcel of 80.000 sq. meters, involving 9 upscale residential buildings with 325 apartments (each apartment has between 235 and 1,885 sq. meters of area) and 3 high-end corporate buildings with a circulation of 10,000 people per day (Shopping Cidade Jardim 2010; 2011). The complex is 100% property of JHSF, a key player in Brazil's construction industry with a market cap of US\$ 620 MM in 2010 (JHSF annual report, 2010; 2011). It is the only mall in the São Paulo area that is a part of a real estate complex with residential and corporate buildings, guaranteeing a regular inflow of high-income consumers.

It has a total gross leasable area (GLA) is 46,000 sq. meters, with 200 stores in four shopping floors and two additional floors with 7 upscale movie theaters, a luxury spa, gardens a high-end hairdresser and a famous bookstore with conference space and a Reebok gym. Annual consumer traffic is 10,800,000 or 30 thousand per day and annual vehicle traffic: 2,000,000. It has 1,700 parking spaces, generates 2,150 direct jobs and a Net Operating Profit of over US\$ 33.000.00 (Shopping Cidade Jardim 2010; 2011).

⁵⁴ <http://www.shoppingcidadejardim.com/>



**Figure 8 - Shopping Cidade Jardim and the monthly per capita income distribution in the area.
Copyright JHSF**

In 2011 an expansion added more commercial space, with new stores and a reorganization of the floor mix, concentrating luxury brands on the ground floor, mid-range brands on the first floor, and more popular brands on the 2nd floor. By 2013 there were more than 25 international luxury brands represented at Shopping Cidade Jardim, some with exclusivity, which account for over 40% of total sales. There was a 51% increase in sales from 2009 to 2010 and a 20% increase from 2010 to 2011. Average sales per sq. meter for Hermès, Luis Vuitton, Chanel and Rolex range from US\$ 6.000 to US\$ 8.000 (Shopping Cidade Jardim Investor Report 2010; 2011), and the average ticket price for the mall is US\$ 1,700.

There is a membership program with 3,000 people enrolled. These clients spend on average US\$ 4,325 per month on clothing and apparel and 10% visit the mall on average 10 times a month. Luxury brands present include: Balenciaga, Carolina Herrera, Cartier, Chanel, Dior, Emilio Pucci, Ermenegildo Zegna, Fendi, Giorgio Armani, Gucci, Hermès, Issa, Jimmy Choo, Louis Vuitton, Miu Miu, Mont Blanc, Petrossian, Prada, Rolex, Salvatore Ferragamo, Tag Heuer, Tiffany&CO, Valentino and even a store

that sells boats and helicopters (and is called, interestingly enough, Tools and Toys).

*iii. Morumbi Shopping*⁵⁵

Morumbi Shopping is a regional shopping mall opened in 1982 in an area considered as far away from the city center at the time, but which eventually became an economic center for the city. After several renovations and expansion, it currently it has 480 stores in its 207.,712 m2 and 55.085m2 leasable area, with 3100 parking spaces. It receives over 15 million visitors per year (Multiplan, 2011) and was the chosen location for leading global retailers Zara and Fnac and by Starbucks to open their first store in São Paulo. It is a 65.8% Multiplan owned and 100% Multiplan managed property.

Morumbi shopping is part of a complex involving various office buildings, some already in operations. Next to it (literally across a small side street) there is a smaller Shopping Center, Shopping Market Place, managed by a major competitor, Iguatemi. Its sales were in excess of R\$ 1.306,6 million⁵⁶ in 2012, a 5,5% increase in comparison with 2011, but when inflation is factored in, sales can be considered to have been stable yet below industry average growth, which was 8,8% (Multiplan 2012).

The center is not located at a high-end residential neighborhood, but rather within easy accesses of a few upper middle class zones where income is 143% higher the city's average. It is placed in a very important business area, which favors traffic of high-income, highly educated, young patrons on weekdays and has become a convenience option for professionals working at the Av. Luis Carlos Bernini and surrounding areas, which explains why a

⁵⁵ <http://www.morumbishopping.com.br/portal/>

⁵⁶ Or approximately US\$ 610,000,000

center not positioned as high-end has a 91% patronage of A/B class consumers, 79% with an undergraduate degree or higher (Multiplan 2009). Weekends are a completely different story. Aisles are full of lower middle class and blue collar patrons, mixed with neighborhood upper middle class regulars looking for a family outing.

*iv. Center Norte*⁵⁷

Shopping Center Norte opened in 1984. It was the first Shopping Center on the north side of the city, where an emerging middle class was growing rapidly in a traditionally blue collar zone. It is located right on the edge of the Marginal Tietê speedway, which is one of the main accesses of the city. Today the shopping center is part of a complex composed of an exhibit center (Expo Center Norte), a Home Center (Lar Center) and a Four Star hotel, under the Novotel flag.

The complex is 100% property of the Baumgart Group, a very large family owned industrial group and one of the largest fortunes in Brazil. The family is known for being low-profile and ethical in business and still participates actively in management.

Shopping Center Norte alone is estimated to generate R\$ 600.000⁵⁸ in income, with 120.000 visitors per day making it the highest income per square meter in the city. It has 330 stores and a hypermarket. Anchors are C&A, Cinemark, Renner, Riachuelo e Saraiva MegaStore, and over 50 restaurants (Shopping Center Norte 2013).

⁵⁷ <http://www.centernorte.com.br/>

⁵⁸ Approximately US\$ 260,000,000.

2.1.2.4. *Paris and surroundings*

Original investigation units in Paris were Parly 2, Le Quatre Temps and Créteil Soleil. Le Millenaire was launched after the first round of fieldwork in Paris and although marketing investment was significant, results seem to be below expectations and therefore it was a case worth including.

i. Parly 2⁵⁹

Parly 2 opened in 1969 and was one of the pioneers of the format of modern shopping centers in Europe. It currently has 200 stores and averages 13.300.000 visitors per year (Unibail-Rodamco, 2012) with sales exceeding 700.000.000 Euros per year (Nappi-Choulet 2012).

It was renovated between 2011 and 2013 and a new expansion phase was launched in 2013. The goal is to preserve the mall heritage as a classic shopping destination for suburban upper and higher classes around Paris, while catering to a contemporary consumer pool. The décor is thus themed as "60's cool" recognizing a consumer trend of appreciation of vintage references.

Although the mall currently offers a Gym and movie theaters and on Wednesdays⁶⁰ and during vacation periods there are activities for children, the center is not positioned as an entertainment center, but rather a fashion destination. Its restaurant offer is limited and composed mostly of fast food options. There is free Wi-Fi and a mobile application aids in store location and has an activities and promotions guide.

⁵⁹ <http://www.parly-2.com/W/do/centre/accueil>

⁶⁰ Primary school children do not have classes on Wednesdays in France.

ii. *Le Quatre Temps*⁶¹

Le Quatre temps opened in 1981 and was renovated fully in 2008. It is located at the Esplanade de La Défense, a prominent business area right outside of the Paris Metropolitan area, yet it is still served by the subway system. Its privileged location aids in attaining over 61.7 million visits every year and generating sales in excess of 850.000.000 Euros per year, the highest sales turnout at a Shopping Center in France. As in all Unibail-Rodamco centers, free Wi-Fi and a mobile application are available (Unibail-Rodamco 2012).

The mall offers a variety of events, such Christmas festivals and music and dance performances on weekends or during lunchtime. Its 230 stores occupy a leasable area of 130.000 m², spread out in four floors and four different décors, differentiating target segments in each area. Its four areas have different appeals (Unibail-Rodamco 2008):

- The Kiwi zone: dedicated to home equipment, the décor is based on green and brown tones and is partially naturally lit, with large planters and its two levels are connected by a panoramic lift.
- The Cassis zone, centrally located, is also partially naturally lit, has a minimalistic décor, offering a pleasant shopping experience.
- The Framboise zone is built around the "Dome", a large glass ceiling allowing the entrance of natural light. It offers apparel and is positioned as "glamorous" and "girly" and is generous in the use of fuchsia tones.
- The Mandarine zone is the largest area of the mall, comprising the food courts the cinema offerings and the anchor supermarket. It portrays several artistic works.

⁶¹ <http://www.les4temps.com/W/do/centre/accueil>

*iii. Créteil Soleil*⁶²

Créteil Soleil was opened in 1974 and currently has a leasable area of 140.000m² with 230 stores in three levels and a three level parking with 5300 parking spaces. It has a traditional and modest architecture and received 19.000.000 visitors in 2012. It is currently the third shopping mall in terms of sales figures in the Paris and surroundings area (behind Le Quatre Temps and Velizy 2), exceeding 635.000.000 Euros in 2012 (Klepierre 2012).

It has a strong focus on the local community and offers events and services to contribute to community life while increasing visitation. Through contracts with government agencies and the chamber of commerce it has contributed with scholarships and hosted a center aimed at aiding youth in job each as well as in the communication of professional training available through various sources.

It is located in an area where youth unemployment is high and urban violence is increasing, yet it is relatively close to other middle class neighborhoods with higher living standards. It caters to blue-collar and middle classes (Klepierre 2012).

*iv. Le Millenaire*⁶³

Le Millenaire was opened in 2011 with high expectations. It used its location by the riverside as a differentiating component of its positioning: "The Shopping Center by the waterfront". Its contemporary and clean architecture with plenty of natural light, its restaurants bordering the river and most major retailers present, the mall was estimated to attract large crowds. Yet sales were disappointing as only 6.000.000 visitors went to the mall during its first year (Klepierre 2012).

⁶² <http://www.Créteilsoleil.fr/actualites>

⁶³ <http://www.lemillenaire.fr/>

It is located in Aubervilliers, a fast growing middle class area and has over 1.000.000 inhabitants within its area of influence. However, the mall encountered several difficulties during implantation, ranging from transportation deficiencies to a unions ban on Sunday opening (Le Parisien 2013).

Through the use of heavy promotions, the mall has managed to remain open and by enforcing contracts with anchor stores, store closing has been minimized. Nevertheless, after a legal and a public relations battle, FNAC, one of the original anchor stores, closed its store at the mall in 2013. The closing was credited to low traffic, although sales were reported to have increased 7.9% over the second year of operation (Klepierre 2013).

2.1.2.5. London and surroundings

The fieldwork for Westfield London and Bluewater Kent was done during the first round of work in London and although Westfield Stratford City had already been launched at that time, it was decided to leave it for a second visit later on, when, after the London Olympics, the center would be more established. Brent Cross was later added since it is a traditional center, target at blue collar and middle classes and was the largest shopping center with the largest visitor's pool reachable by London Underground until Westfield Stratford City was launched. The study of how these two centers interacted and affected each other in terms of consumer base and the similarities and differences in architecture and design between two centers targeted at the same public but built under different paradigms seemed interesting.

*i. Westfield London*⁶⁴

The Westfield London mall opened on Shepard's Bush in 2008, right after the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis, but has managed to remain competitive at targeting fashion conscious upper middle class and high income consumers, as well as families on weekends. In fact, its luxury "wing" - The Village at Westfield" - is attracting new retailers and expansion plans involving retail, residential and mixed-use spaces have been approved. An investment of over £1 billion will add an additional 51.000 m² to the project.

Currently Westfield London offers 162.539 m² of leasable space and 374 retailers. Its 20.000.000 visitors a year generated nearly £962.000.000 in sales in 2012 (Westfield 2012). As with other Westfield properties, free high speed Wi-Fi connection is available at the mall. A mobile application offers access to general information – such as floor plans – but also provides a list of promotions, an event datebook and direct link to the London Westfield channel on YouTube, broadcasting fashion videos.

Westfield London launched its first prime Fashion TV ad in 2012 during London Fashion Week. It was part of a larger campaign including print and outdoor media. As part of the same campaign it also became the first mall to take part in Vogue's "Fashion Night Out" event by holding a runway show at the mall featuring UK models such as Yasmin and Amber Le Bon and Lizzy Jagger. The event was accompanied by promotions from top fashion retailers at the mall.

⁶⁴ <http://uk.westfield.com/london/>

*ii. Bluewater Kent*⁶⁵

Bluewater is a regional shopping center by ICSC standards. It is located 27 Km outside of London, in Kent, and receives nearly 30.000.000 visitors per year. Visitors spend, on average 151 minutes at the mall and distance travelled to Bluewater is steadily increasing, which demonstrates the regionalization of its client base. The center has a leasable area of approximately 150.000 m² over two levels, employs over 7.000 people, has 7 lakes on the property and is currently the fourth largest shopping center in England, and the second largest in the London and surroundings area, after Westfield Stratford City.

Bluewater is constantly evolving and in 2011 a new events venue, with a 3.000 m² green roof and an increase in the leasable area by 20%, converted it into the largest shopping center in the London and surroundings area⁶⁶ and created at least 1.500 new jobs. The events venue adds to the entertainment component of Bluewater's strategy, by organizing themed promotions linked to trade shows being held at the event. Bluewater is currently owned by four groups, Prudential PLC and PRUPIM (35%), Lend Lease Europe Ltd (30%), Lend Lease Retail Partnership (25%) and Hermes (10%).

Customers spend on average over £130 on each visit, generating over £1.0900.000.000 in sales revenues. Its sales concentrations are second only to Heathrow Airport. According to Lend Lease Investor information (2011), 72% of consumers are upper middle class, "spending £1 in every £10 spent in England". (Lend Lease 2011). Bluewater has reported a sales increase of 6% in 2012 over the same period in 2011.

⁶⁵ <http://www.bluewater.co.uk/>

⁶⁶ Westfield Stratford City, opened in 2012 is now the largest Shopping Center in the London and surroundings area.

The current floor plan is a triangular shape with 330 stores, including 3 anchor stores, over 50 cafés and restaurants, 13.000 free parking spaces and a great variety of leisure activities, including miniature golf, activities for children and a 13-screen cinema. The architecture of the mall was a result of consumer research and the triangular design was conceived to make shopping easier. Each of the three anchor stores (John Lewis, Marks & Spencer and House of Fraser) is located in one of the edges of the triangle, connected by three distinct shopping areas, each with a different name. The idea behind this design was to appeal to different customers:

- The Guildhall features premium (although not luxury) fashion retail, together with lifestyle stores and gourmet restaurants and cafés.
- The Rose Gallery is family oriented with mainstream retailers.
- The Thames Walk offers mainstream fashion, cafés and entertainment.

Since its launch, the mall was positioned as a "real alternative to shopping in London's West End" Bluewater was presented in its launch campaign as a "tranquil, modern, cool and orderly environment, a leisure and retail destination that would attract upmarket mainstream retailers and a broad spectrum of customers". The key aspects of its brand identity were innovation, excellence, integrity and customer focuses. (Glazer 2012).

Bluewater prides itself on being part of the community, and aiding the development of the Dartford area through its Learning Center, which has prepared over 30.000 adults for the job market, and its sustainability actions, which were recognized by a number of awards. Management consults with the community before taking any major action that could affect the development of the region.

*iii. Westfield Stratford City*⁶⁷

Westfield Stratford City opened with 97% occupancy in 2011, shortly after the London riots, next to the London 2012 Olympics Stadium. It received approximately 47 million visitors on its first year (9 million of which during the Olympics and Paralympics events) and sales exceeded £500.000.000 on the first six months and reaching £1.060.000.000 after the first full year (Westfield 2012).

Westfield Stratford City is all about entertainment. It has a leasable area of 174.851 m² and offers 250 shops, 70 bars and restaurants, a 17 cinema projection rooms, a Bowling alley and the largest casino in the UK (Aspers), located on the mall's third floor and open 24 hours a day. As with all Westfield mall, there is free Wi-Fi on site and a mobile application aids visitors in locating stores, promotions and special events, as well as accessing the Westfield channel on YouTube.

The mall is located on a former industrial zone, which is now being remodeled. The Westfield group also has shares on residential projects in the area. Attendance has remained strong after the games, although some adaptation of the mall mix has taken place, as fewer tourists are expected to visit the mall. The post-Olympics target of the mall is middle class families and young adults.

⁶⁷ <http://uk.westfield.com/stratfordcity/>

Brent Cross opened in 1976 and the first "stand-alone"⁶⁹ shopping center in the UK. It was remodeled in 1995 and currently has 117 retailers and a surface of 260.000 m², and is currently undergoing an expansion that will nearly double its size, as a part of the Cricklewood - Brent Cross regeneration project. It is located in the outskirts of London, in the second largest borough by population, with over 330.000 inhabitants, of which 67% are owner-occupants of their homes. The area holds a large Jewish community (approximately 15% of the population), the largest concentration in the UK (office of National Statistics 2011).

The mall targets middle class families and offers a wide range of entertainment activities, especially on weekends. It attracts 15.000.000 visitors a year, who spend an average of 95 minutes and £105 at the mall. The average visitor frequency is 4 times a month, generating annual sales of £1.060.000.000 (Hammerson Portfolio Key Facts, 2012). It does not invest in mass advertising, as most of its visitors come from neighboring areas. Rather it focuses on providing entertainment for the local population.

Brent Cross was the focus on controversy on the safety of shopping centers in the UK, when it was raided by four masked men. Robbers stole an estimate of £2.000.000 in watches and other jewelry from a store during opening hours in 2012 (BBC News 2012). Hammerson and Standard Life share ownership of Brent Cross.

⁶⁸ <http://www.brentcross.co.uk/>

⁶⁹ Stand-alone as in not a part of a larger real estate development.

2.1.3. Summary of Selected Shopping Center Characteristics

The table below summarizes the characteristics of each of the shopping centers selected. The sites which were added for the second round of fieldwork are places in the last row of each table. All the selected shopping centers are either enclosed (malls) or hybrid (part enclosed, part open air), and belong to one of these three categories: superregional centers, regional centers or fashion shopping centers (Dupuis et al 2002).

These Shopping Centers represent the offer available in each of the cities in terms of the above mentioned format. According to their marketing and sales data, they cover different profiles of consumers and different geographical locations within each city. The tables below summarize the characteristics of each of the four selected shopping centers using the a-priori criteria of variability. The cases on the last column are the ones added in the second round of fieldwork.⁷⁰:

Selected Shopping Center Characteristics - Buenos Aires			
Patio Bullrich	Alto Palermo	Abasto	Unicenter
Fashion Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), in an upscale neighborhood, in an inner city location. It targets middle to upper classes, tourists (mostly high expenditure travelers).	Fashion Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). It is located in the city, in a middle class neighborhood. It targets blue collar to middle class, some tourists (mostly low budget travelers).	Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), targeting blue collar to middle class from inner city neighborhoods, families and some tourists (mostly low budget travelers). It is located in a former immigrant area of the city.	Superregional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), with a very wide range clientele, located in a prominent business area with a diverse mix of housing options.

Figure 9 Characteristics of selected Shopping Centers in Buenos Aires and surroundings.

⁷⁰ Shopping centers added for the second round of fieldwork were: Unicenter, Sao Conrado Fashion Mall, Center Norte, Le Millenaire and Brent Cross. Westfield Stratford City was included in the first round of fieldwork but was studied in the second round because it was still operating under soft-opening during the first round.

Selected Shopping Center Characteristics - São Paulo			
Shopping Iguatemi	Shopping Cidade Jardim	Morumbi Shopping	Center Norte
Pioneer in the Brazilian market. Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). Luxury brands share space with blue-collar/middle class brands (eg. Vuiton and C&A)..	Fashion Shopping Center, hybrid (part enclosed, part open air). Located in one of the highest GDP per capita zones in the country. Very wide offer of luxury brands .	Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), with a very wide range clientele including many business people from adjoining areas during lunch and after work (gym) (more upscale), and blue collar to middle class on weekends.	Fashion Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). It was one of the first shopping centers with such a large surface in Brazil. Built in a very traditional blue collar to middle class area.

Figure 10 Characteristics of selected Shopping Centers in São Paulo and surroundings.

Selected Shopping Center Characteristics - Rio de Janeiro			
Rio Sul	Shopping Leblon	Barrashopping	São Conrado Fashion Mall
Fashion Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). Located in the city, on a key access route. It targets blue collar to middle class, some tourists (mostly low budget travelers)	Fashion Shopping Center, enclosed (mall) in an upper class inner city neighborhood. It targets middle to upper class, tourists (mostly high expenditure travelers) and offers some upscale brands like Armani.	Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), targeting blue collar to middle class. It is located in the outskirts of Rio and is now attempting to appeal to the upper class by opening an adjoining upscale mall.	Fashion Shopping Center, hybrid (part enclosed, part open air). Although originally conceived to be an upscale mall, currently it has a very wide range clientele.

Figure 11 - Characteristics of selected Shopping Centers in Rio de Janeiro and surroundings

Selected Shopping Center Characteristics - Paris			
Parly 2	Le Quatre Temps	Creteil Soleil	Le Millenaire
Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). Located in the outskirts of Paris, near upscale neighborhoods. It targets middle to upper class from the Paris suburbs.	Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). It targets middle to upper class, business people from the area and some tourists visiting La Defense.	Regional Shopping Center in the outskirts of Paris. It is an enclosed (mall) targeting blue collar to some middle class.	Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), built in the outskirts of Paris. It caters to blue collar to middle class and had transportation issues at the beginning of its implantation.

Figure 12 - Characteristics of selected Shopping Centers in Paris and surroundings

Selected Shopping Center Characteristics - London			
Westfield London	Blue Water Kent	Westfield Stratford City	Brent Cross
Fashion Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). It is located right by the city edge and targets middle to upper class.	Superregional Shopping Center, hybrid (part enclosed, part open air), targeting blue collar to middle class and some tourists It focuses on offering an entertainment experience to groups and families.	Built for the 2012 Olympics, it is now a Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall). It is located in a former industrial zone, being developed to become an young families and professional	Regional Shopping Center, enclosed (mall), catering to blue-collar to middle classes in the outskirts of London.

Figure 13 - Characteristics of selected Shopping Centers in London and surroundings

2.1.4. Geographic location of selected shopping centers

The following maps show the location of the four shopping malls selected in each city:

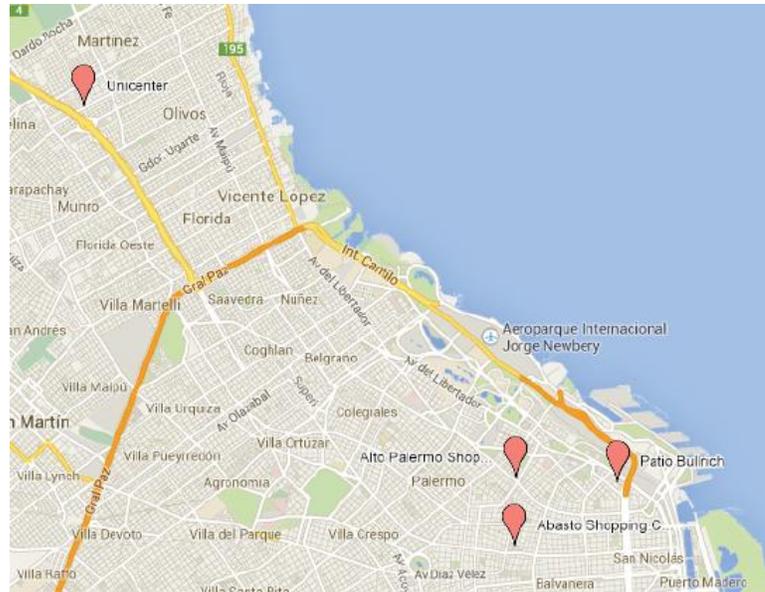


Figure 14 - Location of Selected Shopping Centers in Buenos Aires. Copyright Googlemaps

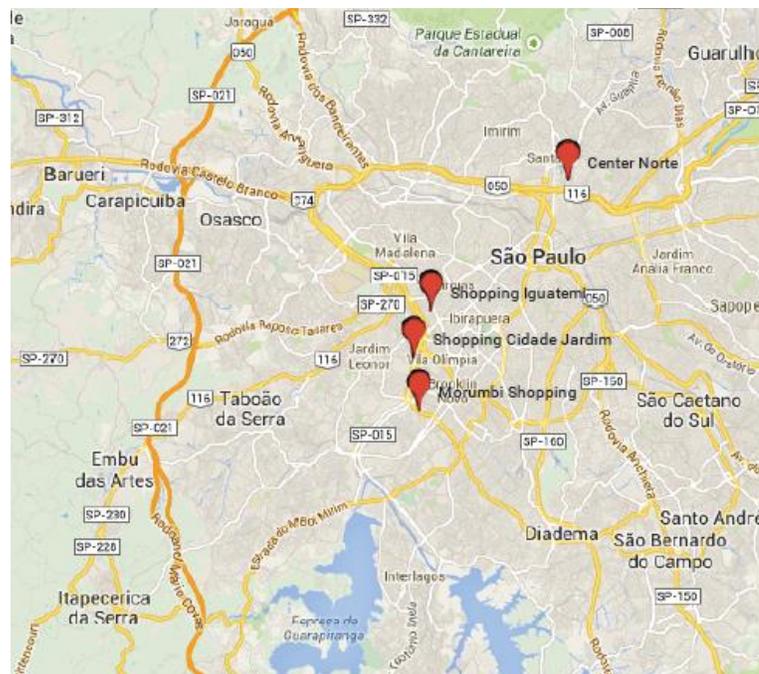


Figure 15 - Location of Selected Shopping Centers in São Paulo. Copyright Googlemaps



Figure 16 Location of Selected Shopping Centers in Rio de Janeiro. Copyright Googlemaps

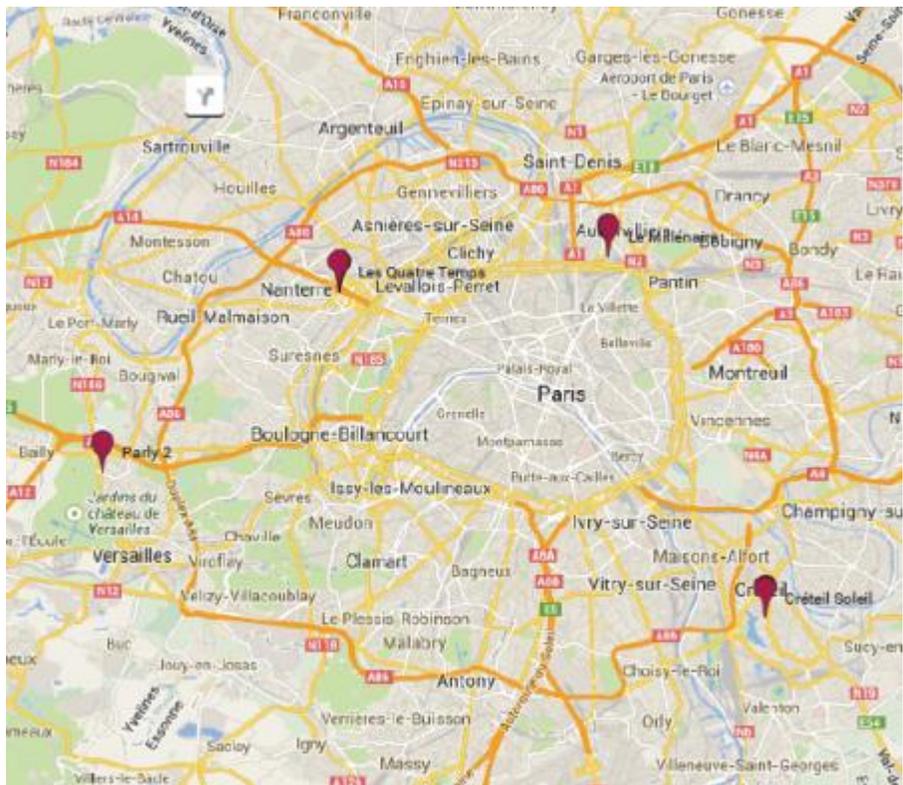


Figure 17 - Location of Selected Shopping Centers in Paris Copyright Googlemaps.



Figure 18 - Location of Selected Shopping Centers in London. Copyright Googlemaps

2.1.5. Research process

The research topic was defined in 2010. Initial statistical and management produced data was collected and *a priori* constructs were established in order to aid data collection (Eisenhardt 1994). Two different points of view were taken into account: an experiential marketing perspective and a cultural perspective. Selected shopping centers were then visited for long periods of time and in different days and hours during the two successive rounds of fieldwork, carried out in all five cities until October 2012.

Analysis and interpretation were done concurrently with the fieldwork on a case by case basis. The comparative analysis was done once all the cases had been analyzed individually. The fourth and last phase of the research encompasses obtaining marketing implications and managerial recommendations from the conclusions drawn from research discoveries (Badot and Lemoine 2008) and was carried out in September 2013.

2.1.5.1. *Access to the field*

The fieldwork required extended periods of immersion in each of the cultures involved and required that the researcher feel comfortable expressing ideas in all four languages, English, French, Portuguese and Spanish. In certain cases even the family participated in the fieldwork, acting as consumers at the sites and thus aiding the researcher in understanding consumer behavior in these locations. Creativity was also necessary to overcome difficulties during fieldwork, as can be seen from the picture below:



Photograph 1 My daughters playing at the children's club at Shopping Iguatemi. Taking pictures is forbidden, unless you are taking pictures of your own children. Taken by author.

The research schedule was built around the author's timing limitations. For instance, the Brazilian fieldwork was carried out during family vacations and the author's maternity leave from her teaching duties at the University in

Argentina, while London and Paris were studies during the extended stays in Paris programmed according to coursework.

2.1.5.2. *Introspection*

Béji-Bécheur et al. (2012) sustain that “the researcher’s own questioning of her own prejudices and her relationships to identity and the other are essential to defining the constructs” (page 509), especially in multicultural research. Given that this work relies heavily on cultural interpretation and that language skills as well as openness to understanding the different aspects of culture are key factors in this type of work⁷¹, it seemed relevant and adequate to pursue this approach.

According to Gould (2008) there are two forms of introspection: narrative and metacognitive. Narrative introspections would provide a description of a personal experience while acknowledging its insertion in a given cultural and personal context; metacognitive introspections, however, suggest a deconstruction of the cultural assumptions at the root of our narratives and subsequent interpretation of the phenomena under study. This work aligns itself with the latter type of introspection and aims at understanding the processes of acculturation and resistance embedded in the daily life of the researcher and her inner circle of relationships through the deconstruction of the researcher’s own identity, including her ethnic awareness.

With that goal in mind, a conceptual understanding of the processes of acculturation and resistance and their role in the construction of personal identities and ethnic awareness was used as an initial theme for the interpretation of the data (Eisenhardt 1994; Holbrook 1995).

⁷¹ Although this research is presented fully in English, observation was carried out using local language in all locations to minimize biases in interpretation.

Rather than using exclusively a narrative description of the facts, other forms of expression were used as suggested by Minowa et al. (2010). Specifically, photographic records and home videos of daily life events were analyzed. In fact, not only the content or visual element was examined, but also the context in which they were produced and the choices made regarding keeping or discarding records of certain events or alternatively not recording certain life experiences to begin with.

A careful organization of the data was followed, as proposed by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993). Initially photographic records and home videos were organized either chronologically or referring to the “main character” in the photograph or video (which could be the author or one of her close relations).

Subsequently records were analyzed according to emerging categories such as birthdays, vacations, events. They were then coded according to the initial themes of analysis - resistance and acculturation - and finally, as inferences emerged, sub categories were transformed into new themes of analysis. Manual coding was preferred to software mediated coding. Although software aids significantly in organizing data, this researcher felt that manual coding would require a deeper immersion on the data set, which would be more adequate for a metacognitive introspection piece.

This process was also used as memory aid for the author to develop a narrative text of her life experiences and her close relationships. Initially an objective analysis was carried out based on both the narrative text and the photographs and home videos. In a second approach, the symbolic interpretations of each of these events were registered. Finally, following and iteration between analysis and interpretation, the complete data set was catalogued around the final themes and each of them was then analyzed in further detail (Gould 2008). The process resulted in a wide list of emerging

themes including food, clothing, language, formal education and national traditions. The introspective narrative generated is included in Part 2 of this work.

2.1.5.3. *Fieldwork*

The fieldwork was divided into two consecutive phases. Both were permeated by processes of observation, analysis and interpretation on a case by case basis.

i. First round of fieldwork

Fieldwork was carried out in all five cities in the first round. It ran from April 2010 to October 2011. Observation started in Buenos Aires and three shopping centers were studied at this stage: Patio Bullrich, Alto Palermo and Shopping Abasto.

Work in São Paulo was intercalated and mostly done simultaneously with Buenos Aires. Three shopping centers were studied during the first round: Shopping Iguatemi, Shopping Cidade Jardim and Morumbi Shopping. Work in Rio started when fieldwork in Buenos Aires and São Paulo was mostly done. Three shopping centers were studied: RioSul, Shopping Leblon and BarraShopping.

The Paris and surroundings and London areas were studied simultaneously during my temporary residencies in Paris, which took place on eight occasions between 2009 and 2013. Three shopping centers were originally studied in Paris, Parly 2, Le Quatre Temps and Créteil Soleil. As for London, the following two shopping centers were studied in the first round: Westfield London and Bluewater Kent.

Westfield Stratford City had already been selected as an investigation unit by this time, but it had been recently launched and still operating under “soft-opening” at the time. Considering this fact and that by that time it was already clear that a second round of fieldwork would be necessary, it was decided that Westfield Stratford City would be included in that second round, allowing time for its operations to be stabilized.

ii. Second round of fieldwork

The second round of fieldwork was considered necessary after a preliminary analysis of the data collected for the initial cases. Some constructs that were being developed needed testing and gaps in the theoretical sampling initially done needed to be covered.

It followed the same process as the first round of work. One additional site was added to every city (with the exception of London that two sites were added, as Westfield London had already been selected but not researched).

The second round of fieldwork in Brazil and Argentina were done first as it was decided that the best timing for the fieldwork in London would be after the Olympics, when city life would be returning to normality. Shopping centers studied in the second round are: São Conrado Fashion Mall (Rio de Janeiro); Center Norte (São Paulo); Unicenter (Argentina); Le Millenaire (Paris); Westfield Stratford City and Brent Cross (London). After the second round of fieldwork, a second distancing from field was observed before moving into the analysis phase.

2.1.5.4. Ethical dilemmas in social research

Ethical dilemmas in social research have been subject for concern since the 1970’s and a series of questions have been raised that need to be addressed in order guarantee that social research works for the benefit of society and

does not jeopardize individual rights (Sieber 1982; Sieber & Stanley 1988; Hill 1995; Hyden 2008). Some of the issues that need to be addressed include:

- How can spontaneous behavior be studied without deception?
- How can individual interests in privacy be preserved while making data collection viable?
- How far can the relationship between a researcher and a subject go under participant-observation processes?
- Is informed consent always necessary? Is it feasible?

Considering that this work is based on participant-observation in public spaces, it deals with a series of ethical dilemmas. For instance:

- How can one compare cultures without implying a certain cultural judgment?
- How can one interact with people and obtain accurate information without interfering with the "natural course" of their actions?
- How can one respect privacy and at the same time gather enough data?
- How can one justify one's findings without disclosing "too much personal information"?

According to Lévi-Strauss (1955), it is impossible for one culture to observe the other without both affecting each other. The same applies to participant-observation in general. As long as the researcher needs to engage in the events under study in order to observe them, it is an unavoidable fact that researcher will affect the phenomena under observation. The key is hence to minimize this interference. For instance, the researcher should consider applying, at least to some extent, the dress codes of the culture under study.

Equally important is the issue regarding informed consent. When a researcher is observing crowd behavior in a public place, it might not be feasible to seek consent from all the individuals passing through that space. In those situations, waivers of consent may apply; as long as the research involves “no more than minimal risk for research participants” and it could not viably be carried out were informed consent to be essential.

Similarly, publicly available information about individuals, such as observations in public places, analysis of public records or archival research, may also be applied without obtaining consent, as long as the above conditions also apply. Under such conditions, the confidentiality of any private information must be upheld (American Sociological Association 2013).

2.1.5.5. Techniques and tools applied in site and phenomena observation

Market ethnography is the theoretical standpoint centered on the concept of culture and its relationship to observed behavior as the primary instrument for understanding and explaining consumer dynamics (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Desjeux 1990, 1997; Mariampolski 2006). This methodological approach depends on direct contact with the consumer in its natural setting and delivers behavioral and attitudinal data.

Healy et al. (2007) propose that ethnography can provide a holistic account of the experiential retail phenomenon through understanding, describing and interpreting the consumer in the authentic context in which human transactions occur. The essential distinction of this approach is that participant-observation establishes as few barriers as possible between the consumer and the researcher, and therefore it allows for a context sensitive understanding.

This implies that the effect of other consumers or the physical setting can be considered in the research findings. It is important to note that these characteristics of the technique frequently cause ethnographic work to be less structured and more spontaneous. It tolerates improvisation, allowing the researcher to explore unanticipated discoveries as they emerge during fieldwork: "serendipity findings" (Eisenhardt, 1994).

The study employs a multi-technique approach to data collection (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) and the case study method described by Bonoma (1985), as proposed by Badot and Lemoine (2008), according to which different data sources were used:

Quantitative data was collected for case pre-selection (corporate and financial information, demographic data, frequency of visits, average ticket price) using desk research methods. Qualitative data was collected (behaviors, experiences, marketing materials) using an ethnographic protocol to develop the case narratives. Personal interviews with mall operators and industry experts served a dual function of understanding market dynamics and collecting both quantitative and qualitative information of specific centers and of the industry in general.

Technology provided this work with a resource that was previously unimaginable to researchers. Every time this author was on the field she was able to access anything and everything she needed and all the data previously collected. Data collected on site visits was stored on an iPhone and it was synchronized with an iPad, a PC and with three different cloud storage providers (Dropbox, Sugarsync and iCloud) to minimize the risk of losing data.

2.1.5.6. *Participant-Observation*

According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), participant-observation is characterized by intense social interactions between the researcher and her informants in real life situations over a period of time. Data is systematically gathered while the researcher is immersed in the subjects' life, sharing their experiences. Bryman (1989) proposes that this process allows the researcher to understand these observed experiences -implying empathy - rather than simply explaining facts, which would be the result of an exterior causal analysis.

Under this protocol, the researcher has a dual role of observer and consumer at the shopping centers visited. This included reaching the center by the most commonly used form of transportation in each case, using the services provided as much as possible while at the center and interacting with both other visitors and employees of both the center and individual stores.



Photograph 2 - Paris Public Transportation Card. Taken by author.

presented by informants on a freely accessible public forum without affecting the research participants.

Due to its characteristics, Netnography assists in researching sensitive topics as the researcher can covertly gather and analyze data. As with any covert approach, it raises issues of ethicality. Nevertheless, considering that posts used were freely available to the general public and participants were kept anonymous, ethicality is maintained (Langer and Beckmann 2005, cited by Veer, 2011). According to Kozinets (2010) "if the researcher does not record the identity of the communicators and if the researcher can legally and easily gain access to these communications or archives" (p.142), the research may be exempt of the need for informed consent.

Netnography was applied in this work as Tripadvisor posts and Youtube videos posted by consumers who had visited the selected shopping malls were collected and analyzed together with information available on the shopping mall and operator websites to develop a priori constructs and thus aid in data collection. Developing constructs based on on-site participant observation was then contrasted with these a priori constructs and adjustments were made when necessary. As no actual quotes from online posts were used directly in the text and the online informants were not referred to by their screen name or real name, informed consent was not necessary.

2.1.5.7. *Interviews*

Two types of interviews were used: in-depth interviews and informal interviews. These interviews were not carried out with the intent to analyze individual responses or to do discourse analysis (which would require word by word transcription), but rather to understand industry practices (in the case of mall operators and industry experts) and to absorb the atmosphere of the moment and illustrate the experiences lived by groups of consumers at

the sites. Note-taking in the form of field journals was therefore preferred to electronic recording to guarantee that subjects would feel at ease, act as routinely as possible and therefore minimize bias (Fetterman1989).

i. In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews with mall operators and industry experts were utilized. They served a dual function of understanding market dynamics and collecting both quantitative and qualitative information of specific centers and the industry in general.

Notes were taken during the interviews and additional information (files, questions answered by email, photos, etc.) was provided after the initial personal contacts with interviewees. In those cases there was full disclosure of research goals to all interviewees. The chart below summarizes all the in depth interviews carried out:

Position held by informant at time of interview	Company	City	Country	Date
Strategic Marketing	Unibail-Rodamco	Paris	France	October 28 th , 2009
Marketing & Brand Events Coordinator	Unibail-Rodamco	Paris	France	October 28 th , 2009
Marketing Director	Shopping Cidade Jardim	São Paulo	Brazil	January 18, 2011
International Relations	Shopping Cidade Jardim	São Paulo	Brazil	February 5 th , 2011
Superintendent (Executive Director)	Morumbi Shopping	São Paulo	Brazil	February 10 th , 2011
Consultant	Consultant	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	July 25 th , 2011
Superintendent Barrashopping (Executive Director)	Multiplan	Rio de Janeiro	Brazil	July 27 th , 2011
Marketing Director	IRSA	Buenos Aires	Argentina	April 6 th , 2011
Interim Director	Westfield Stratford City	London	UK	September 26 th , 2011

Figure 19 – In-depth interview data Source: Developed by author

ii. Informal Interviews through social interaction

Informal interviews are the outcome of interactions of the researcher with employees and consumers during site visits. During these interactions the researcher collects *Verbatims* and notes down perceptions and opinions of these individuals. Informed consent was not obtained in this case, considering that:

- a) Full disclosure of the research goals would affect the responses
- b) Minimum risk is involved (no personal contact information was obtained, only first names and sometimes age and minimum geographical information (ethnicity, city of residency, etc.).
- c) Sometimes the dynamics of the interaction involved the participation of several subjects in a public space. Obtaining informed consent in those cases was not viable.

2.1.5.8. Desk Research

Desk research was used for quantitative data collection as well as for qualitative data collection: This information was saved on an iPad and organized in folders. Backup was done on a laptop and in the cloud (Dropbox, Sugarsync and iCloud).

Secondary source statistical or management produced data was collected to aid first country/city selection and then shopping center selection. Shopping centers were decided on in the bases of being representative of the offer in each location and also similarities and differences between sites were important to allow for both contrasting and consistent findings.

2.1.5.9. *Field Journals and content analysis*

Field Journals are important because they allow the researcher to generate empathy and thus understand, rather than simply deduce a causal relationship based on exterior observations. In participant-observation the researcher is immersed in the research field, in the sense that follows the same codes of conduct as the subjects of his study (Aunger 1995).

Two types of field journals were used, a field journal detailing observations and perceptions during site visits and a personal field journal recording the researcher's personal experiences throughout the research process and her personal circumstances at the time.

i. Twenty field journals detailing observations and perceptions

The notes are taken in order to correctly document action, their context and eventual explanations to specific behaviors given by subjects during the course of the research. Verbatims were recorded, as well as descriptions of sites, perceptions by the researcher and even unexplained sensations.

This practice has several functions in the ethnographic process including: aiding memory, allowing for a trustworthy record keeping, permitting the researcher to compare records between cases, making construct inconsistencies and research gaps to be spotted more efficiently (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994).



Photograph 5 One of the Field Journals used in the research. Taken by author

ii. One personal field journal

A personal field journal records the researcher's personal experiences throughout the research process and her personal circumstances at the time. This is part of the introspection process that allows a researcher to take into account these experiences and distance herself from the events and the subjects of her study.

The personal field journal also allows the researcher to address the problems she encounters in her research process and aids in redirecting her work (Ottenberg 1990). Excerpts of this personal field journal will be presented throughout this work to illustrate research difficulties and the development of the work. In order to differentiate these excerpts from the main text, they will be framed, signaled with the initials "PFJ" and the date, with an indent and letter type 10.

2.1.5.10. *Visual Ethnography*

The use of photographic and video resources has been applied in this study as a “living memory of experiences” (Hill, 1991 cited by Badot, 2005). This work uses a semio-ethnographic approach as proposed by Badot (2005), in which the social dimension of the discourse, its objects and messages are analyzed in context as well as in isolation.

i. Photographs

Photographic records were collected during site visits and requested when experts or mall operators were interviewed. Website photos were also collected. They represent, together with video recording, a key asset for analysis in ethnographic research.

During the first visits to Shopping Abasto and Patio Bullrich, a Nikon Coolpix Camera was used, but it soon proved more practical to use an iPhone instead. I was always accessible and no explanation to security guards was necessary. As with the Desk Research data, this information was also saved on an iPad and organized in folders. Backup was done on a laptop and in the cloud (Dropbox, Sugarsync and iCloud).

ii. Video

As with photographs, videographic records were collected during site visits and requested when experts or mall operators were interviewed. Videos of consumer visits and events recorded at the sites were also reviewed. Specifically a review of Youtube posts related to the selected shopping malls was carried out.

They represent, together with photographic records, a crucial asset for analysis in ethnographic research. Videos were also saved in folders on the iPad and backup was done on a laptop and in the cloud (Dropbox, Sugarsync and iCloud).

2.1.5.11. Summary of techniques and tools in sites and phenomena observation

A significant amount of data was collected using the techniques and tools described above. The following chart summarizes the data collected:

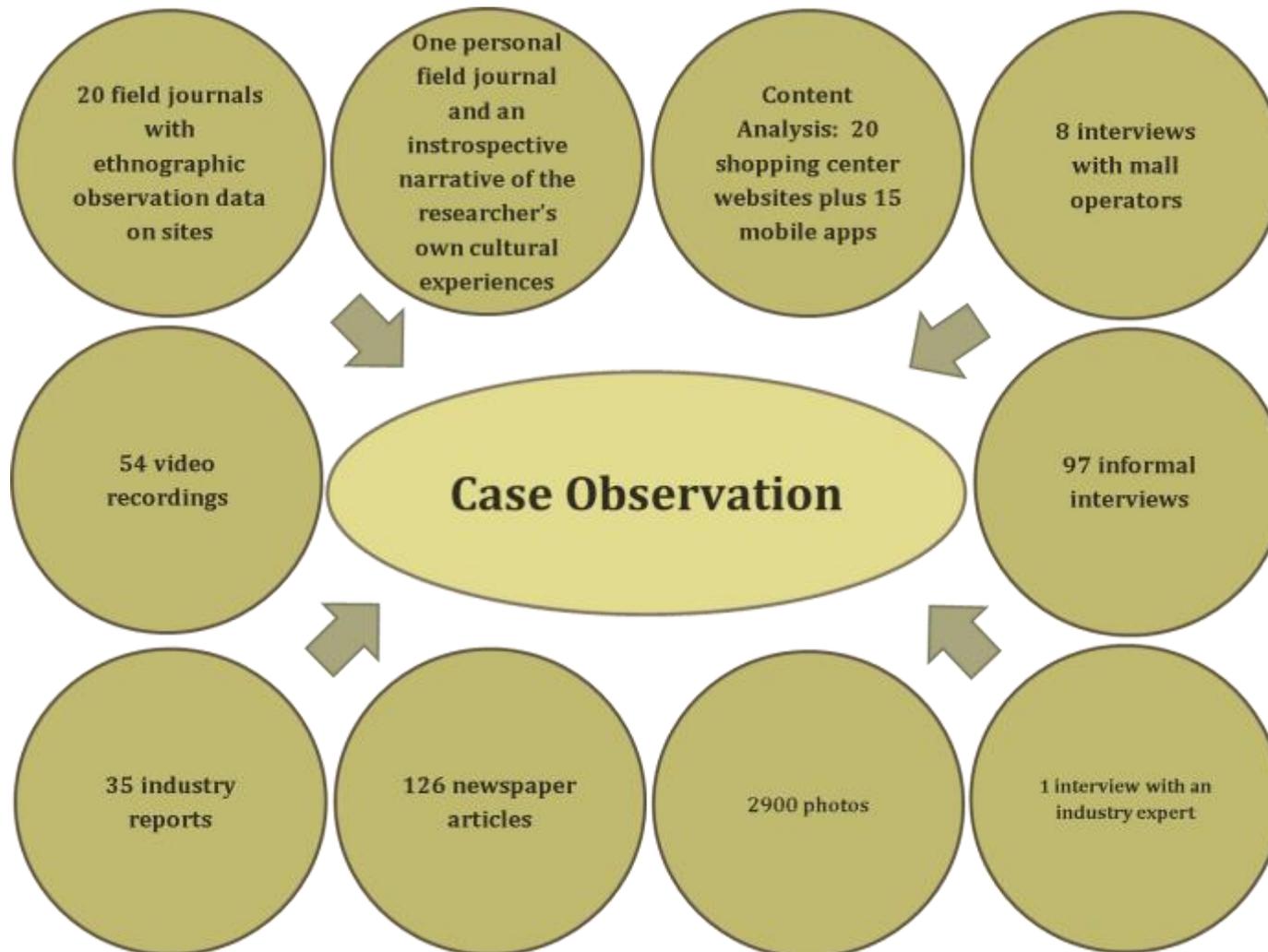


Figure 20 – Data Sources

“We live in a society with more and more information and less and less meaning”

Jean Baudrillard (1981)

Simulacra and Simulation



2.2. Ethnographic Observation: Case by case approach

In interpretive research, researchers can take their previous knowledge into account both from existing literature and from previous experience. Especially in consumer research, it would be unrealistic to attempt to analyze consumer culture without acknowledging one’s role as a consumer in society.

Siggelkow (2007 p. 21, cited by Diaz Andrade 2009) sustains that although observations are guided by some initial hunches and frames of reference, this previous knowledge should not impose previous theories when analyzing the data instead of generating new categories. It should aid in building *a priori* constructs to aid in data collection without jeopardizing the creation of new insights. He emphasizes that “an open mind is good, an empty mind is not”.

Ethnographic observation in this work was carried out initially on a case by case basis, although sometimes data on various cases was collected simultaneously. *A priori* constructs were used solely to aid in data collection

and theoretical frameworks developed from one case were not necessarily applied in subsequent ones.

2.2.1. The Analysis and Interpretation Process applied to the 20 malls

This work involved holistic data collection in multiple sites in five different cities in four countries and in two continents and thus relied on significant international travel. It applied the theoretical discussion of emerging themes at three levels: on the individual case level, across all cases and in terms of similarities and differences between and across geographical regions.

As can be seen from the project timeline, data collection took place at various sites sometimes simultaneously, but at times with relatively long intervals between site visits. Although a distancing from the field was sometimes applied purposely, some of the breaks between site visits were due to more practical reasons, related to coursework and personal circumstances of the researcher. During those periods, data analysis and interpretation was carried out on completed cases.

Beginning the data analysis and interpretation process on a case by case basis offers the advantage of allowing the researcher to immerse herself into each community more deeply (Diaz Andrade 2009). It also allows for more flexibility, as sometimes different cases need different frameworks to be analyzed and simultaneously analyzing multiple cases may cause the researcher to instinctively structure cases similarly to facilitate the task.

Once data had been collected for each shopping center, theoretical coding was applied. Manual coding was preferred to software mediated coding. Although software aids significantly in organizing data, this researcher felt that manual coding would require a deeper immersion on the data set and favor building a closer relationship with it.

A continuous coding system provided the development of initial codes for each case, which were transformed into focused codes and then categorized. Categories were then converted into themes for analysis. This process involved the coding of interview, observation and photographic and videographic data. A systematic coding system allows for inferences to emerge naturally from the data, as is typical of grounded theory techniques.

According to Spiggle (1994), inferences generate conclusions, insights, meanings, patterns, themes, connections, conceptual frameworks, and theories, which are representations of the reality described by the data. In this project, analysis and interpretation were carried out by corroborating findings from different data sources, including semiotic analysis of marketing materials in a circular way.

Although ethnographic observation was carried out following the guidelines proposed by Spiggle (1994), for practical reasons, in the case descriptions to follow, contextualizing data -such as historical information about the site and other contextual data that seemed relevant to the analysis - which were clearly not collected through participant observation, were inserted into the narrative to facilitate comprehension of the findings.

As sustained by Askegaard and Linnet (2011), the "focus on lived experiences should not lead CCT to repeat the individualizing tendencies of the remainder of the consumer research community. Experiences are individualized, but the element of 'lived' draws our attention to the conditions under which these experiences unfold, conditions that are not necessarily experienced per se" (page 397). Circumstantial information gathered for each of the cases was therefore inserted in the narrative of the following section in order to warrant contextualization.

Inferences are inserted in the narrative, along with the data collected for each one of the cases. In subsequent sections analysis and interpretation was carried out across all cases and between geographical regions using the same process.

2.2.2 Introspective narrative

In order to minimize bias in analysis and interpretation, introspection was applied. The following sessions comprise the introspective narrative developed.

2.2.2.1. *Who am I? A formal bio*

“You are not normal”. This is a claim I have often heard in different parts of the world made by people of very diverse backgrounds. It has often triggered a self-questioning of what is normal and why I am possibly not normal.

I am Brazilian in origin and have lived both in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro prior to this research. These two cities represent together the political and economic power in Brazil yet, in spite of sharing similar social structures in terms of occupation and income, they could not be more different in terms of social relations and consumption habits (Marques, Scalon, and Oliveira 2008).

I currently live in Argentina, where my three children were born, and I have been married to an Argentinian – whom I met while studying in the US - for over ten years. I have also experienced long stays and residency in Europe (The Netherlands and France) and in the US, for both educational and professional purposes prior to this research project. I currently teach at an Argentine University while I finish my PhD dissertation – in France - on a multicultural topic. I previously had 15 years of corporate experience in both Brazilian and US firms in Brazil and in France.

Having lived a significant proportion of my life outside of my home country - and my entire motherhood - it seems pertinent to note the efforts I have made to preserve what I consider to be "my culture" and to eventually transmit it to my children despite the difficulties. Although this was initially an unconscious process, the difficulties found along the way - and the persistence demonstrated - eventually made me aware of my choices.

During this process it became clear that although mostly unconsciously, as a family, both parents were trying to preserve their cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979), by transferring it to their children. Choosing names for the children was the first challenge. It was easy enough to get the father to agree on names that were written and pronounced in much the same way both in Portuguese and Spanish. The difficulty was found to be the different cultural and symbolic meanings that these names carried for mother and father coming from "different cultures"⁷².

i. Language and education

What language to speak at home was the next issue to address. For various reasons – including the ability to communicate with family members from both sides, and the parents' desire to prepare the children for possible international transfers along the line (a reality for both parents) - the household became bilingual (Portuguese-Spanish⁷³) and the children attend a bilingual Spanish-English school.

⁷² Culture is used here in the sense applied by Askegaard et al. (in Nakata, 2009:112): an "organized network of systematic diversity of principles of action and understanding".

⁷³ Having lived in Brazil and in the US, the father is also tri-lingual.

As I child I attended a Spanish bilingual (Portuguese-Spanish) primary school in Brazil, a British bilingual (English-Dutch) secondary school in the Netherlands, completed my undergraduate studies in Brazil (in Portuguese), my post-graduate studies in the US (in English) and finally my PhD in France (bilingual English-French). Under this scenario, raising trilingual children did not seem odd at all.

This progression was not “glitch-free”, though, and often I questioned myself about my choices and whether this practice was causing a “identity crisis” on my children. Situations such as having a three year old who could not speak beyond three or four words, and having my children ask me where they were from after having cheered for both Brazil and Argentina during the soccer world cup were triggers for this type of questioning.

The context in which these facts took place is also relevant. I insisted that my children should learn Portuguese (and English) as well as Spanish even after three speech therapists had told me to give up and family members had started questioning me about my decisions. Instead of complying, I searched for a professional and a school that would work with me in teaching the children Spanish, Portuguese and English at the same time. I looked for academic literature that would support my thesis that children are capable of multilingualism for birth, so I could reassure myself of my decisions.

The eldest child had in fact rejected learning Portuguese for years, until she started to learn other languages at school. Once the additional language became a positive attribute, the attitude changed and she now praises learning multiple languages (and has even requested to learn more foreign languages spontaneously).

This rejection situation did not repeat itself with the second and third child. Portuguese language acquisition was a much simpler process and although all the children opt for Spanish as the language of the siblings, there was never any rejection involved with the younger children.

Several factors may have affected this different outcome, individual characteristics of each child were certainly at play here, but possibly the level of confidence demonstrated by the parents -which had been acquired after going through the process with the first child - had certainly changed both parents attitudes and favored the process with the second and third child. Also, the younger children were already born into a household system where Portuguese was spoken to the mother and Spanish to the father, and therefore they simply had to mimic the already established codes, while the first child participated in the construction of these codes.

ii. Nationality and citizenship

Nowadays, if an Argentinian asks the children if they are Argentinian, they will undoubtedly answer yes, however, when a Brazilian asks them the same question, they will stutter, although they know they have dual citizenship. The fear of being excluded (Venkatesh 1995) seems to guide this response.

Retrospectively thinking, I believe I decided to maintain the course of action as I chose to believe that awareness of their ethnic background would be helpful in the long run. I trust that being aware of my identity as a foreigner has not hindered me from integrating into society at every location where I have lived. Rather my position has always been that of being "different yet equal", and I use this identity attribute as a differentiating trace that sets me apart from the crowd. I factor in my slight accent in every language as part of my personality and have learned over time to be less and less introverted, although I prefer small group interaction to larger groups.

This “foreign identity” also affects my consumption patterns in terms of the way purposely dress – colorful and informal- and my food choices – adapting local ingredients to Brazilian everyday food recipes and insisting that my children are accustomed to them-, as well as the informality with which I address people in every context. I believe that Brazilians are less formal than most: it is one of the very few countries where the jerseys of the soccer national team have first names or even nicknames rather than last names printed on them.

iii. Heritage versus fitting in

I remember being shocked when I first moved to Argentina from Brazil by what I considered people’s “ostensive” use of last names and was surprised at the importance of last names even in informal contexts. My experience having lived in other parts of the world had been that last names were relevant in formal contexts and not so much in friendly, informal occasions.

Despite considering myself a “citizen of the world”, my Brazilian origins are not neglected. I try to reinforce Brazilian traditions on the children by engaging them in authoritative performances (Arnould and Price 2000) which function as rituals of immersion into Brazilian culture. I make an effort for my children to learn about Brazilian history, read Brazilian books and participate in Brazilian traditions like Carnival and other festivals - extended vacations in Brazil contribute to this immersion activity- as well as to read Argentinian books and participate in the country’s traditions.

I consider these practices to be part of my “Brazilian heritage”, although my Brazilian friends and family point out that I sometimes act and look as if I were not Brazilian. This is most likely a result of my day-to-day negotiations with my inner circle of relationships –and particularly my husband- to adapt contrasting aspects of what I consider to be my “ethnic background” and the

different forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1979) that I have been acquiring throughout my life.

On reflection, I trust that I am in fact transmitting “my culture” to my children. However, this culture is not a mirror image of the way I grew up. Rather it is a personal reading of what I enjoyed of my upbringing, seasoned with influences I have picked up along my journey through life. Still I consider this to be my ethnic identity, and if you ask me, I am undoubtedly Brazilian.

As for the children, they too seem to be constructing their own “Argentinian way”. They pick and choose from all the influences they receive from both parents and from interactions with other cultural influences and build their own individual notion of what it is to be Argentinian, their nationality of choice for the moment, although they are sometimes afraid to recognize it.

The fact that I prefer the term “citizen of the world” to “migrant” is also relevant. I prefer to be categorized as “from nowhere” than as “not from here”. I do not like to be seen as a migrant, the term carries negative connotations and a heavy emotional weight. Being reminded of my immigration status whenever I need to renew documents brings on a feeling of detachment and usually triggers efforts to exacerbate my original culture. By that I mean an exacerbation of my accent, intensification of Brazilian style foods in the family diet, more frequent calls to relatives in the country, wearing clothes bought in Brazil, and maybe even excessive informality in my social relations.

iv. *Identity construction in a nutshell*

Consumption decisions in the household are based on daily negotiation between family members, but final choices are made by the parents. My consumption patterns are shaped to solve the incoherencies of my identities (Belk 1988; 2013; Ahuvia 2005). These authenticating acts (Arnould and Price 2000) are evidence of an explicit identity construction tactic (de Certeau 1980). Since the notions of self of the family members are interrelated, these decisions affect the children's identity construction processes.

My ethnic origin is applied as a key element of identity, manipulated according to the occasion (in Béji-Bécheur et al. 2012). In fact, I like to be treated as local everywhere I go and try not to have an accent in any language. However, I enjoy being complemented on my slight accent when I proudly tell them I am from Brazil.

Even though being reminded that I am “not from here” by others makes me eager to reinforce my tradition, I have no problem telling people I am from Brazil spontaneously. It is as if by spontaneously pointing it out it comes across as a choice while being reminded by others appears to be an “imposed condition”. The reality is neither. It is both a choice and an imposed condition depending on the time and context. My life choices brought me willingly to this position, yet changing it is neither simple nor automatic.

I refuse to be stereotyped and excluded so I make an effort not to suffocate the children's Argentinian identity, although I would prefer that they “chose” to be Brazilian. I feel challenged when they do not want to speak Portuguese and enjoy when they do speak Portuguese to each other (on rare occasions).

The children naturally mimic the dominant culture while incorporating minor aspects of the minority tradition. However, my posture has sometimes created a pendulum movement on the children (Askegaard et al.2005), which I view as an identity crisis.

2.2.3. Intra-case analysis

No single format was used as some cases proved to be more complex – and richer - than others and were thus awarded thicker descriptions. More photographic resources were used for the cases that were better understood through visual aids, while others relied more on written description.⁷⁴

Certain cases are filled with personal references. Some of these references are due to access to the field issues (i.e. access to the children’s area in shopping malls is restricted to adults accompanying children for security reasons), while others could not be avoided since the author had significant experiences occurring at these places that were thought to have relevance to the analysis.

As is discussed in the introspective⁷⁵ part of this work, these references were reviewed carefully in an attempt to minimize bias, yet were not excluded as the exclusion of relevant information justified merely by its personal content would also represent a bias. Notwithstanding, it seems pertinent to acknowledge that a lot goes on at each one of these malls and not everything could be explored in this work.

⁷⁴ Section 2.3 portrays the narratives constructed for each case throughout the research project.

⁷⁵ Section 2.2.2.

2.2.4. Case by case narratives

The narratives below are constructed to cater to the goal of this research: searching for similarities and differences between experiences produced and undergone at the different shopping centers from a cultural and anthropological perspective in order to produce significant insights for management operating shopping centers. The narratives in the following sections follow this logic.

2.2.4.1. *Patio Bullrich*

Patio Bullrich was built preserving the structure of a traditional auction house dating from the late 1800's, and is a clear reminder of better times in Argentina's history. The neoclassical façade and some of its architectural characteristics were adapted to its new function as an upscale Shopping Center in 1988 and has served the traditional elite of the neighborhood since then.



Photograph 6 Outside view from Av. Libertador. Copyright La Nación.

Nevertheless, the architectural inconsistencies that can be observed from the façade are a “preview” of what you can experience inside. The superficial idea of a society hanging on to its historical splendor are undermined by the noisy buses, many dating from the 1980’s and 1990’s and the proximity to the deteriorated Retiro train station and the view of the Villa 31 shacks on the other side of the train tracks.



Photograph 7 - Aisles at the mall. Copyright IRSA.

After the 2001 economic crisis, when violence rates raised significantly in Buenos Aires, many luxury brands started moving from their traditional street locations to the mall, which stood as an “oasis” where the more fortunate could pretend “business was as usual”. This changed the mall mix as more and more luxury stores were represented. Nevertheless, over the last few years, the government’s efforts to control the exchange rate and its protectionist policy severely affected luxury brand’s operations in the country, as it was ever more difficult to import goods.

Many international brands have left the country since, and those who stayed had to develop alternate methods to circumvent the prohibition – some started to export other products to counterbalance the imports, for instance⁷⁶ – and even so were forced to operate with reduced stock. Patio Bullrich’s process of transformation into a luxury mall was severely affected by these contextual factors and management is currently reevaluating its alternatives.

Nevertheless, even with the shelves under stocked, the mall is still seen as a synonym of luxury in the city. The location, combined with the architectural structure, the classical décor and the history of the building have contributed to the construction of a mythical significance for the mall (Sassano Luis 2012).

Different groups of consumers build a heterogeneous community at Patio Bullrich. Tourists, older ladies from the neighborhood, business people and late in the afternoon, teenagers from traditional schools in the area all share this common space and although superficially different, they all search for the same mythical and nostalgic idea of Buenos Aires: a safer, richer version of the city.

Large groups of tourists, particularly from Brazil, visit Buenos Aires and also come searching for what the city “ought to be”. The idea of a “European City” in South America, with French style buildings, populated by well-educated yet arrogant Argentinians who dance Tango is a well-rooted myth amongst Brazilians.

The “grandmothers” from the neighborhood drink their coffee in the pleasant air-conditioned environment while they remember when the mall was a

⁷⁶ BMW exports rice from Argentina in order to be allowed to import cars.

luxurious auction house where “everyone who was someone once bought something”⁷⁷. It is a symbol of “the good old days” that still stands.



Photograph 8 - The food court. Copyright IRSA

The teenagers promenading in the aisles after school are also in search of something the real city cannot offer: freedom. In other times, when the city was considered safe, teenagers would enjoy a type a freedom that parents, wary of the crime rates in the city, no longer admit. Under this scenario, the mall represents a safe environment - guaranteed by the uniformed security personnel out front- pleasing both parents and teens. Yet right outside its gates, young children dressed in rags are begging for change, while security personnel try, constantly and with no success, to scare them away.

For independent professionals, meeting clients at Patio Bullrich is a routine activity. The central location and the mall’s association with the traditional elite are seen as a favorable attribute, sometimes preferable to meeting in an unattractive office.

⁷⁷ Informant, 78 year old widow drinking coffee at the mall.

“I come here to meet clients almost every day. We meet for lunch or coffee. Parking is easy and the place is much nicer than my office”. – Informant, 32 year old insurance salesman.



Photograph 9 - Inside Patio Bullrich. Taken by author.

Patio Bullrich represents the ideal city that does not exist, as in Ferreira Freitas (1996) notion of the artificial environment replacing the real one by offering a nostalgic and utopic reality. However, for this utopic ecosystem to be effective, none of the “nuisances” of everyday life must be present.

The mall is calm and efforts are made to keep it that way. It once housed an indoors amusement park for children, which has now been replaced by a Sporting goods megastore. Management justified the move by arguing that *“mothers with young children do not buy much”*⁷⁸ even though this is not

⁷⁸ Informant, mall management

consistent with their own strategy at other malls, which stimulates family outings.

PFJ-April 11th, 2010

I have had some difficulties taking photos at the sites. Even with authorization from management, having to explain the research to security every time is time-consuming and distractive. I suppose it is lack of experience. I need to think of a better approach.

The fact is that the servicescape is built at Patio Bullrich to attract a specific group of consumers who are searching for a break from the routine, an idealized version of their real lives. Even if only for a short period of time.

i. Emerging findings – Patio Bullrich

- a) The urban and social deterioration that has affected Argentina in general and Buenos Aires in particular has created a mythical opposition in the consumer's mind.
- b) Buenos Aires was once the richest city in Latin America and locals and tourists alike search for this mythical paradise in one of the few places where history has been "preserved", even if in a mutated form.
- c) As a former auction house, Patio Bullrich has always been connected to abundance and consumption and a nostalgic environment contributes to the identity construction of its patrons.
- d) The Brazilian tourist does not want to visit the dirty, beaten up Buenos Aires of today, but rather the turn of the century metropolis which transpired luxury.

2.2.4.2. *Alto Palermo*

PFJ-April 15th, 2010

Circulation is a nightmare at this mall. Sometimes you have to leave the building and walk on the streets to get to a different part of it.

Alto Palermo was the first modern shopping center to open in Argentina, although Patio Bullrich was opened shortly thereafter. It was launched under the prevailing marketing paradigm (Ochs and Badot 2008), which was the model applied to most shopping centers at the time. Its several expansions since then, including an air passage across a street have expanded the mall mix, yet they have also made circulation very difficult and extremely unpleasant.



Photograph 10 - Alto Palermo in the morning: empty aisles contract with the busy afternoon hours. Taken by author.

Alto Palermo has never pursued an upscale positioning; but rather it has always attempted to be a practical choice for women, as most of the household shopping in Argentina is done by women (Indec, 2012). Millions of anonymous people pass through it every day, partially due to its privileged location in terms of public transportation. Nevertheless, it lacks identity in spite of several marketing campaigns and heavy investment to change this situation.

Alto Palermo is not chosen primarily for its experiential characteristics, and in fact informants usually refer to Alto Palermo as “*easily accessible*”, “*good brands*”, “*traditional*”. Nevertheless, most also use the words “*extremely busy*”, “*noisy*” and “*difficult to get around*”.

It is actually going on the opposite direction of most shopping malls which are investing heavily in entertainment. It does not even offer movie theaters or other entertainment options apart from an area with children’s attractions that is the nightmare of every parent: extremely noisy, expensive and dark.

Although it is many people’s first choice of shopping center, evidenced by the high sales figures and attendance rates, informants do not willingly use it as a symbolic representation of their identity. In fact, in spite of acknowledging frequent visits, most informants impart both positive and negative judgments alike on Alto Palermo, as if it was a “*necessary evil*”, much like the use of corticoids for a viral infection : effective yet with unpleasant side effects.

“Last year I freaked out while doing my Christmas shopping here and swore I would never come to Alto Palermo again. There were so many people that the whole Christmas experience lost its meaning! In fact I said I would never buy presents for Christmas again. This year my husband called me crazy, said I would have to pay therapy for the kids if they were the only ones who

didn't get presents in their class and here am I. – Informant, 39 year old marketing manager doing Christmas shopping.

Doesn't you husband help you with the Christmas shopping? - Researcher.

No, he hates shopping malls. – Informant.”



Photograph 11 - Escalator next to one of the entrances. Difficult circulation. Taken by author.

Recent remodeling, paired by heavy marketing investment and an upgrade of the mall mix with many international food chains such as Starbuck and TGI Friday's have attempted to revert this trend. In fact, ads have become viral in social networks and informants made reference to those efforts. Notwithstanding, it is too soon to know whether Alto Palermo will be able to meet the changing consumer's expectations given its architectural restrictions and heterogeneous visitor pool.

The fact that it pursues primarily a female clientele is risky in the face of a new consumer era and the increasing participation of men in the daily tasks of the family. Although Argentina's middle and upper classes are relatively traditional (Euromonitor 2010), things are changing in the country as well and men are assuming a more relevant role in the household tasks.



Photograph 12 - Starbucks store, seating on the sidewalk may seem nice, except it is right on Avenida Santa Fé, on one of the noisiest spots in the city. Taken by author.



Photograph 13 - Long line at Starbucks at rush hour. Everyone wants a seat inside! Taken by author.

i. Emerging Findings –Alto Palermo

- a) Shopping Alto Palermo’s strategy to focus on women primarily is deeply rooted in Argentina’s social structure where the mother is still the primary caretaker of the children and the one responsible for most of the shopping activities in the household, while fathers are only marginally involved in these processes.
- b) Nevertheless, with increasing numbers of women entering the marketplace, women now must increasingly balance their active lifestyles with the household responsibilities and stress levels are increasing.

- c) Alto Palermo creates a love-hate relationship with its customer base: it offers everything you may need in one place, it is easily accessible yet the whole experience is viewed more as an obligation than a pleasure.
- d) The mall clearly operates under a less developed paradigm where shopping, rather than consuming, is the goal.
- e) It is questionable whether this business model will prevail in the era of co-creation, when the consumer searches for a more active role in their consuming experiences, and the utilitarian value of the goods and services is becoming less important relative to its experiential value.

2.2.4.3. *Shopping Abasto*

PFJ-December23rd, 2010

I have started using my iPhone to take pictures. Much better!



Photograph 14 - Outside view of Abasto Shopping. Copyright IRSA.

The Abasto neighborhood was one of the places where immigrants settled in Buenos Aires during the 19th and 20th centuries and was arguably one of the “hot spots” of the Tango scene. The neighborhood is currently populated by blue-collar and middle classes and many immigrants –particularly from Peru, Bolivia and Korea. While the majority of Argentina’s population is Catholic, there is a strong Jewish community in the Abasto Shopping area - reminiscent from the immigration period – whereas an incipient gay community is forming in the nearby Parque Centenario zone.

The mall was built on the structure of the historical Abasto Market, which used to be the main outlet of fresh foods during that time period, and where

Carlos Gardel's⁷⁹ mother was said to have worked. The building is an impressively luxurious architectural complex and the fact that it was built to be a market for fresh produce in an immigrant neighborhood reminds you that Argentina has seen better times. In fact, in spite of being managed by the same company⁸⁰ as Patio Bullrich and Alto Palermo, the architecture of this mall is quite well executed and the modern versus vintage merge has been much better accomplished.

It is visited mostly by families on weekends and during vacation periods, attracted by the entertainment offers for children, which include the "Museo de los niños"⁸¹ or "The Children's Museum", a miniature city where children can learn about traditional professions and city life in general. It is one of the few shopping centers in the country to offer a wide array of entertainment options for children, and clearly the best option in the city. The attractions at the Children's Museum are very consistent with the pool of visitors the mall aims at attraction: blue-collar and middle classes.

During the week the public is very diverse. Neighborhood residents are joined by passers-by, especially due to its central position in the city's transportation web, particularly subway and bus lines.

The project that transformed the traditional market into the shopping center involved a severe transformation of the surrounding area. Architecturally relevant houses, many in precarious conditions and housing illegal occupants, were demolished to give room for a strong real estate investment led by IRSA, the mall's proprietor and operator.

⁷⁹ Carlos Gardel was one of the most prominent figures of the Tango scene in the beginning of the 20th century. He was the son of a single mother, who is said to have worked in this market.

⁸⁰ Alto Palermo, Patio Bullrich and Abasto are all managed by IRSA.

⁸¹ <http://www.museoabasto.org.ar/>

Nevertheless, in spite of all the investment made, the severe economic crisis of 2001 slowed down the transformation process and even after the short lived economic recovery between 2004 and 2008, the country's unstable situation has caused violence to soar in the city. The Abasto area is no exception and the mall's surrounding area is now viewed as dangerous and unpleasant.

The shopping center is very nice, but the surrounding area is very dangerous, particularly at night. – Informant, 32 year old information systems technician.

I like coming here a lot. It's the best option for a family outing on the weekend. But you need to pay for parking. Last time I left my car outside and they broke into it. – Informant, 40 year old housewife with two children leaving the Children's Museum.

On busy days the place resembles a modern-time Babel, with the ambient music playing concomitantly with the noise coming from the children's attractions and the diverse conversation from the patrons with various accents.

<p style="text-align: right;">PFJ-March 11th, 2010</p> <p>The noise in this place drives me crazy. Ambient music is very loud. It stresses me out.</p>



Photograph 15 - The Mary-go-round inside Abasto Shopping contributes to a hyperreal environment and the mall transpires fantasy and fun feelings. Copyright IRSA.

At Abasto Shopping, diverse minority communities - orthodox Jews, teenager groups and middle class catholic families to name a few – interact on a daily basis. It is common to see teenager groups in colorful, hip-hop style clothes dancing or simply meeting up on the stairs outside, while orthodox Jewish families take their children to the entertainment area and have lunch at the Kosher McDonalds on site. Large groups of primary school children on school trips visit the Children’s Museum regularly on week days.

It is interesting to see how these diverse groups resolve tensions and preserve identities while interacting a common commercial space (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1997) and how these interactions shape individual and communal the shopping experiences.

PFJ, March 15th, 2010

At one of the baby stores, an orthodox Jewish couple with hassidic attire was buying a stroller. The salesman looked like he had come out of a Judas Priest video clip from the 80’s, with biker attire, one or two sizes too small for him. The rainbow button he was wearing left no doubt that he was a proud member of the emerging gay community in the área.



Photograph 16 - Carlos Gardel statue outside Abasto Shopping anchors the mall in the nostalgic heritage of the Tango scene. Taken by author.



Photograph 17 - Kosher McDonalds. Copyright La Nación.



Photograph 18 - Teenagers on the access stairs to Abasto Shopping. Copyright Clarín.

i. Emerging findings – Shopping Abasto

- a) It is interesting to analyze how diverse minority communities resolve tensions and preserve identities while interacting in a common commercial space (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1997) and how these interactions shape individual and communal the shopping experiences. The different groups interacting at shopping Abasto seem to collaborate in spite of their differences to convert the mall into a harmonical environment, as opposed to the reality of the world outside.
- b) Although significant investment was made to transform the surrounding areas as part of a larger real estate development, urban decay continues and is independent of corporate interests.
- c) The Abasto area has an immigrant connotation and the symbolic associations it carries may also contribute to the slow pace of revitalization.

2.2.4.4. *Unicenter*

PFJ-December 10th, 2010

The size of this place and the lack of natural light make me feel uncomfortable. It is always crowded, though.

Unicenter is huge. And noisy. And diverse. Located next to the main freeway connecting the Northern suburbs of the city to the city center, it is visited by a wide group of people who either live or work in the surrounding areas. As the largest mall in the city, it also attracts tourists – mostly Argentinians from the provinces.



Photograph 19 - Shopping center entrance. Plain and unattractive. Copyright La Nación.

In its aisles society's contrasts are easily visible. Middle class suburban housewives share the space with teenagers from less privileged neighborhoods and businesspeople during lunchtime.

Argentina and its economic instability are notorious. The country has been compared to a roller-coaster ride, alternating periods of severe economic trouble with exponential growth. During hard economic times consumers look for distraction from their everyday problems and Ferreira Freitas (1996) describes shopping centers as post-modern spaces simulating the ideal modern town, one without pollution, traffic jams, crime and parking problems. Coherent with Baudrillard's (1970) argument that western consumer society is one of Hyperreality, Unicenter provides a feeling of stability that the different social groups all search for amidst the turbulence of real life.

Unicenter is the constant in a country where everything changes. Even the décor maintains a sense of stability. Any renovations respect the characteristics of the original themes. Changes are paced and life seems to remain undisturbed within its walls.



Photograph 20 -Although time does pass at Unicenter, the dark aisles are extemporal and devoid of identity. Taken by author.

The only reminder of time is the ugly clock in one of the food courts. Architecture does not help us identify the time period we are in either, it is a mixture of styles with so much bad taste that it must have been on purpose.

Unicenter offers a wide mix, although no luxury brands are present. Visitors recognize the wide range of brands and services offered as an advantage of Unicenter as compared to other malls.

“If I need anything specific, I come here. You can find anything you want here.” – Informant, 35 year old sales representative who works nearby.

During weekends families take the center stage. The aisles are crowded and the noise is intense.

PFJ-June 8th, 2013

I feel claustrophobic here. Lunchtime is chaos any day of the week!



Photograph 21 - Unicenter on a weekend. Copyright Clarín.

The atmosphere of excitement is evident. Children run around everywhere and teenagers wait in line to go the movies. Everyone seems happy. It is interesting to see how visitors at the mall act as if life was easy and inflation was not eating away their salaries. The frequent protests throughout the city, with road blockades that you see every day, seem so far away. No one seems to remember them at Unicenter. Even though, on a busy day you may waste more time inside the mall trying to get around then getting there.



Photograph 22 - Unicenter aisles on a weekday. Argentinian flags on display on a national holiday. Taken by author.



Photograph 23 - One of the Food Courts. Copyright La Nación

i. Emerging Themes - Unicenter

- a) Unicenter seems to act as a constant in a country where nothing is stable. Once of symbol of economic development, the mall was built adjacent to a major expressway linking the city to the suburbs. Today it stands stable; its dated and pompous (although distasteful) architecture contributes to this stability as a memory of what life ought to be like.
- b) Although not nostalgic of the turn of the century and the Tango scene, it certainly reminds us of the last time when Argentinians played for a few years in the big leagues and the US dollar was 1 to 1 with the Argentinian peso.
- c) Unicenter connects the city to the suburbs, both in practical as in symbolical terms.

2.2.4.5. RioSul

PFJ-July 27th, 2011

I feel claustrophobic in this place. Dark, uninteresting. Not many people seem to agree with me, though. The place is full.

A lot has changed since Ferreira Freitas (1996) carried out a comparative study between RioSul in Rio de Janeiro and Forum Les Halles in Paris. The shopping Center industry has evolved in Brazil and several other Shopping Centers have been opened.



Photograph 24 - RioSul Shopping outside view. Copyright RioSul.

In 2000, a group of 130 activists, most living in poor communities on the margins of consumer society, decided to demonstrate that discrimination between social classes was deeply rooted into Brazilian society in spite of

the claims that this imaginary barrier was shrinking. They chose RioSul for this demonstration.⁸²

Men, women and children joined the group. They called the press and sustained that it was a peaceful demonstration. Nevertheless, the police was called and the group was harassed by law enforcement and mall staff. Many stores closed, afraid of theft and violence.

After about four hours promenading through the mall, trying on clothes on the few stores that allowed them to, letting the children play with expensive toys and having homemade sandwiches they had brought along for lunch at the mall's food court, they left as peacefully as they had come in. They had proven their point. They had been discriminated for not complying with the unwritten codes that applied to the community they were entering.

Fourteen years after the "invasion" as this peaceful shopping mall visit was dubbed, similar events have been taking place in various shopping centers throughout the country, particularly in São Paulo. Teenagers from impoverished areas coordinate the action through social networks and visit a shopping center in large groups, with no intention to shop yet generally in a peaceful manner.

In spite of the economic stabilization and the incipient social mobility in the country, these recent "excursions" have been dubbed "rolezinhos" or "little strolls" and have been treated in much the same way as the 2000 demonstration at RioSul, with mall staff and the police harassing the group and mall management attempting to obtain preliminary injunctions prohibiting these events to take place at the mall.

⁸² This event was covered by mainstream press and in 2007 became a documentary "Hiato" by filmmaker Vladimir Seixas.

Law enforcement forces were criticized by a large proportion of the population that sustained that no criminal acts had been committed and thus the police had no reason to use force (rubber bullets and tear gas were used at the first few “rolezinhos”).

The most impressive insight that can be taken from these experiences is that discrimination does not originate only on the part of shop owners and mall management, but also in salespeople and mall staff, many of which are blue collar workers living in slightly better conditions than the demonstrators. It is as if by working in these aspirational public spaces they were participating in a parallel reality where their “real life” situation played no role.



Photograph 25 - More modern section of the mall. Stylistic inconsistencies. Taken by author.

Nevertheless, in spite of the remodeling it has undergone over the years, RioSul has aged, both in terms of equipment and in the eyes of the consumer. Its dark corridors and middle class brands no longer offer the aspirational content to the more prominent social classes that it once did. The air conditioned aisles that once offered a mythical representation of the ways of the “developed world” are now populated by a heterogeneous group of people.

Due to its location, on a main route from the city center to the more prominent neighborhoods of the Zona Sul carioca, it still offers utilitarian value to upper classes: a one-stop shopping place, with easy parking and air conditioning, deemed essential in the summer months.



Photograph 26 - Clients at RioSul. Taken by author.

For a different group of people, from the northern, less affluent neighborhoods, RioSul is also easily accessible and simultaneously offers an entertainment offer that is viewed as more upscale than the shopping centers in some of their neighborhoods. Going shopping or promenading at Zona Sul is still an aspirational goal for these less affluent groups.



Photograph 27 - Visitors at Rio Sul during slow hours of the morning. Taken by author.

- a) Rio Sul has undergone a decay process over the years, both in real and in symbolic terms.
- b) Although it is still operationally profitable, the client base has changed considerably and it no longer represents modernity to the upper and middle classes.
- c) Nevertheless, it still holds significant utilitarian value for people working nearby and the lunchtime public is significantly different from the weekend crowd.
- d) Rio Sul's history preserves its symbolic capital to the less affluent groups, who still have a nostalgic version of the Rio Sul of years ago.
- e) Reality has been partitioned, and every group perceives the mall in a different way. Yet instead of fighting this "identity crisis", Rio Sul management embraces it, dubbing it "O shopping carioca", or Rio's mall. It tries to be all things to all people.

2.2.4.6. *Shopping Leblon*

PFJ-July 20th, 2011

Growing up I spent most of my vacations in this neighborhood and there were so many protests when the mall project was approved, that it is unbelievable to see this place full of people now!

Management makes a strong effort to position the Shopping Leblon as a luxury mall. The décor is modern and non-ostentatious - which is typical of Zona Sul carioca's status consumption (Alcoforado, 2013). In fact several luxury brands are present there (Chanel, Burberry, and Armani, to name a few). However, the sheer size of the place and the diversity of the mall mix attract large crowds and are thus contradictory with this goal. It is unquestionably a traditional format shopping mall, - with a few perks, as the astonishing view of the sea from the food court.

The traditional elite in Rio live in the adjoining areas of the mall, particularly Leblon and Ipanema⁸³. However, this group of consumer prefers shopping in the streets or on international trips rather than at shopping malls. In fact, conspicuous status consumption, while present, is not a well-regarded habit. In fact, these consumers follow a code of conduct that believes "ostentatiousness" is a negative trait.

⁸³ Although neighborhoods like Copacabana, Botafogo and Flamengo are also in the Zona Sul area, they are generally middle class neighborhoods, while Leblon and Ipanema have higher real estate prices (exceptions must be made to seafront properties).



Photograph 28 - The Ferragamo store at Shopping Leblon: Taken by author.



Photograph 29 - Lounges on the lower level of the mall. Taken by author.

According to Alcoforado (2013), this type of consumer is prone to impulse purchases rather than planned shopping activities. Heirlooms are valued and classical or vintage pieces are praised as indicators of an inter-generation transfer of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984), a corroboration of their traditional origins and dedifferentiating factor from the “new rich”.



Photograph 30 - The food court. Taken by author.

Shopping Leblon is visited by this group of people, although it does not carry an evident aspirational value for them. However, for the aspiring middle classes Shopping Leblon represents an elite lifestyle that they would like to mimic. It is the mythical representation of the social mobility that they aspire to.

“It is not a nice place. Too crowded. I sometimes go there because it’s near home or because I want to go to the theater, and it’s practical.” – Informant, 60 year old woman who lives in Leblon.

“I like it here. It’s luxurious. I can see the fashion trends at the global brands stores and it helps me choose what to buy. I can afford the originals, but there are lots of similar clothes in local stores”. - Informant 45 year old woman, resident of Botafogo.



Photograph 31. Flip-flops are viewed as shoes in Rio. Taken by author.

Rather than quantity of items, the residents of the Zona Sul prefer to invest in the quality of items and informality prevails. High price tags are not exclusive of international luxury brands. Some local brand can achieve very high prices as well and an expensive bag can thus be worn with jeans and a T-Shirt, and this is viewed as “chic”.

Shopping Leblon was built adjoining a residential project built by the Catholic Church for underprivileged families and the mall employs many of the residents. When the mall was under construction there were protests in the neighborhood as residents expected traffic to intensify in the area and thus attempted to halt the project.

The tensions appeared to be under control and local residents are an important part of the mall’s client base and the community residents from the project have seen the job creating potential of the mall. These heterogeneous communities appear to be collectively enjoying the mall, although in different roles.

Nevertheless, in light of the recent wave of “rolezinhos”⁸⁴ the mall was chosen for one of these meetings. Teenagers from the suburbs called for a massive present through Facebook and had over 8.000 people confirmed to attend after only five days. The mall remained closed that day and protesters held a “public barbecue” in front of the mall. Ironically, local residents protested against the protesters.

⁸⁴ See section 2.2.4.5 on Rio Sul for an explanation of the term “rolezinho”.

- a) A very subtle equilibrium is seen at Shopping Leblon. Different publics visit the mall yet it plays very different roles in each of the group's identity projects. Although local residents of the more prominent neighborhoods visit the mall and shop there, they resist any type of purposely close association to it. They insist their relationship with it is "circumstantial".
- b) Middle class groups view Shopping Leblon as an iconic representation of the life they want to have. They insist they can afford the originals yet prefer to use the mall for a "crash course in fashion trends". They buy similar items (not originals) claiming that quality is similar and they are "smart shoppers".
- c) Residents of the project see the mall as a representation of social mobility. They are part of the game, even if in a subaltern position.

2.2.4.7. *BarraShopping*

All Multiplan⁸⁵ shopping malls tend to share a similar architectural structure, a visual identity easily identifiable. It is a mixture of a neo-classical kitsch, with some more modern touches making one feel like they are entering a Las Vegas casino. BarraShopping is no exception.



Photograph 32 - Aerial view of BarraShopping. Copyright Globo.com.

⁸⁵ Multiplan is BarraShopping's operator, one of the key players in Brazil's shopping center industry.



Photograph 33 - Outside view. Copyright: Multiplan.



Photograph 34 - BarraShopping aisles. Copyright: Multiplan.

BarraShopping is however part of a complex of three shopping centers and the architectural styles between the three are completely different. While BarraShopping follows the traditional Multiplan décor, adjoining New York City Center extrapolates the kitsch heritage with a Statue of Liberty replica, as can be seen in the picture below:



Photograph 35 Statue of Liberty in front of New York City Center at the BarraShopping complex. Copyright Multiplan.

PFJ-July 23rd, 2011
This feels like Miami, not Rio!

On the other hand, VillageMall, a new addition to the complex, attempts to be more modern and "chic", though as a part of the whole complex there is a spillover effect that complements the idea of being in a fake hyperreal world.



Photograph 36 - VillageMall. Copyright Multiplan.

With the growth of the surrounding area as a business pole, a valet service was implemented and more recently a system that informs visitors if and where parking is available. Even so, it's over 3.300 parking spots are not enough for the demand during peak hours in a city where public transportation is chaotic and the middle classes, particularly in the area where BarraShopping is located, do everything by car.

PFJ-July 27th, 2011

I met with the shopping center's Superintendent. We talked largely about the differences in style between São Paulo and Rio and how this reflected in the mall's positioning. My experience growing up between the two cities helped me understand how the Carioca was easy going, less concerned about appearances than the Paulista. Still the crowd at Barrashopping looked a lot more like the São Paulo crowd than at other Rio de Janeiro Shopping Centers. Cariocas are usually much more informal in the way they dress and act.



Photograph 37 - Busy lunch hour. Taken by author.

BarraShopping has resourced to promotional marketing more often than brand building advertising over the years. They often use celebrities; although not often very high profile ones. The websites for BarraShopping and New York City Center are unified and follow the same line of design. Even the store search is global and will give your results in either site, independently of which web address was accessed. There is no mobile application and no Wi-Fi connection.

VillageMall was launched with its own website with a slightly different visual identity. There is no mobile application, although there is an online magazine and Wi-Fi connection is available. Store search is independent from BarraShopping and New York City Center.



Photograph 38 - Advertising piece for the "Red Pencil Sale, 2013". Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 39 Christmas Promotion using a local celebrity (former Big Brother Brazil Competitor and current soap opera actress). Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 40 - Mother's day campaign offering a Range Rover as a sweepstake prize. Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 41 - Valentine's day campaign offering a trip to New York as a sweepstake prize (2012). Copyright Multiplan.

It is interesting to analyze how status consumption mechanisms work in this environment. The population of Barra da Tijuca, where the shopping center is located, has boomed since the 1980's (IBGE 2012) and is mostly composed from emerging middle classes from suburban areas in Rio or young couples who cannot afford the high real estate prices of the more prominent "Zona Sul", where the traditional elite lives. The suburban area of Rio, contrary to what can be observed in US cities for instance, is composed of lower middle classes, blue collar workers and a vast majority of the population living in extremely stressful conditions in or around the poverty line.

With the stabilization of the economy and the intensification of social mobility mechanisms, the emerging middle classes migrated to Barra da Tijuca attracted by the intensive real estate developments, the proximity to the beach and the lower relative prices of the properties. Soon traditional schools from the Zona Sul area opened branches at Barra da Tijuca and a parallel society was formed (Alcoforado 2013).

According to Alcoforado (2013), the upper and middle classes from Rio are split into groups, the traditional elite, living in the Zona Sul area, and the emerging middle classes and the "new rich", living in the Barra da Tijuca zone. Both groups have very different consumption lifestyles and the visitors at BarraShopping seem to be performing the myth of the "global elite" membership in much the same way as the richer Latinos in the Miami area. The mall's hyperreal scenario and the references made to these lifestyle clichés (i.e. the statue of liberty, the Land Rover and the Brooklyn Bridge) contribute to this performance.

The visitor pool at BarraShopping and the adjoining malls is a mix between these emerging middle classes, “new rich” and business people from different backgrounds who work in the adjoining business centers. The visual effect is very important in these environments (Urry 1995) and the “new rich” crowd seems to prefer the turbulence of the main mall than the quiet corridors of the “Village”. The main mall is crowded while the Village’s corridors are empty.

In fact, according to Alcoforado (2013), they think the minimalist décor of the “Village” make it seem unfinished and the artistic choices made do not correspond to their tastes. The stores are conceptually decorated, making them hard to understand and the consumers believe it does not respond to their preferences.

During lunch hour these various different groups meet. Business people from the offices have to fight for service at the local restaurants with mothers with children who just left school. Spending the afternoon at the mall is a common entertainment activity for these families.

BarraShopping offers entertainment options for all, including a Gaming Zone for teenagers and a daycare center for younger children so that their mothers can go shopping while their children are entertained by the mall staff, acting as G.O.’s⁸⁶ like in a Club Med.

PFJ-July 27th, 2011 So much noise!.
--

⁸⁶ G.O. – Gentile Organizateur , are the staff memebtrs who organize the entertainment activities at Club Med.



Photograph 42 Gaming Zone. Taken by author.



Photograph 43 Kid's Place. Taken by author.

i. Emerging Themes: BarraShopping

- a) It is interesting to see how the iconography successfully used at the more luxurious Shopping Leblon was applied at the VillageMall with poor results.
- b) Within the same city the different elite groups behave as if they belonged to two different cultures. The Zona Sul and Barra populations are extremely different and it is not necessarily a question of income.
- c) Patrons at BarraShopping are more interested on ostentatious luxury than on “chic minimalism”. BarraShopping does not feel like Rio, but rather São Paulo or even Miami.
- d) It is also interesting to see that while at Shopping Leblon people complained about the noise, at BarraShopping the noisy areas where the most sought after.

2.2.4.8. *São Conrado Fashion Mall*

PFJ-July 22nd, 2011

You can tell me all you want that this is an upscale shopping center, but it doesn't fit the pattern! It's not what you expect.

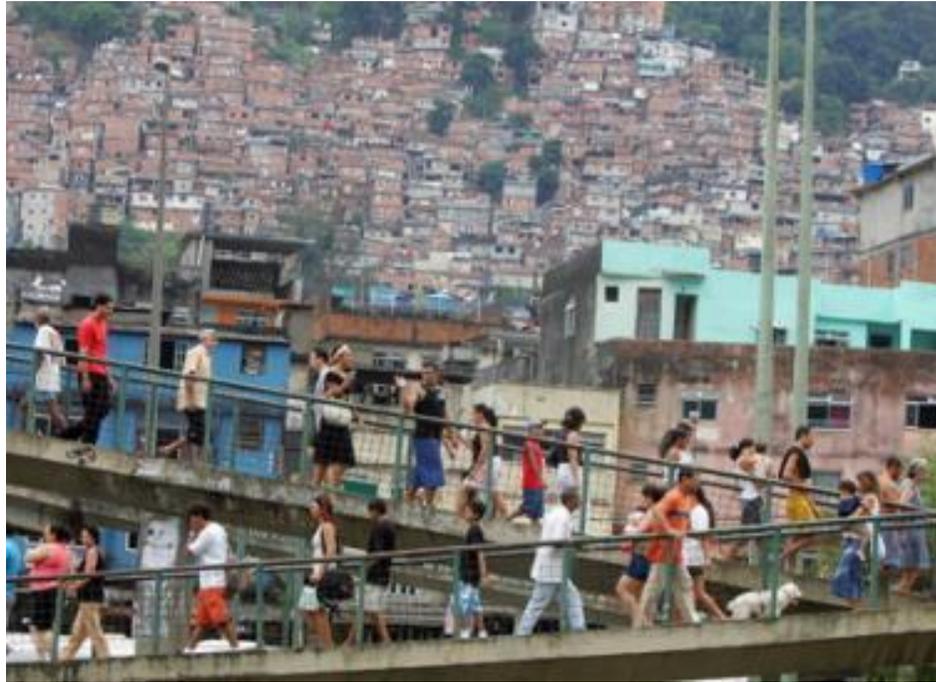
São Conrado Fashion Mall is located in between the Zona Sul and the Barra da Tijuca areas. Not only geographically, symbolically it also stands between the traditional elite and the “new rich” and by facing the largest “community”, as the Rio slums are now known, it allegorically tells you the story about Rio’s society.



Photograph 44 External view of São Conrado Fashion Mall. Copyright Webluxo.

Across the street from it is the Rocinha “community”, now “pacified” as the government calls the police operation installed to control violent and drug trafficking and portrays the difficult reality a large proportion of the population faces every day. This scenery including the beach, the mall and the community is a representation of Rio’s contrasts. The proximity of these

heterogeneous communities has caused tension in several occasions in the past, especially in periods of unstable economic scenario.



Photograph 45 - Rocinha, across the street from Fashion Mall. Copyright Antonio Scorza / Getty Images.

Since its launch in 1982, Fashion Mall stood alone as the iconic representation of Rio's luxury. At that time, the city was not viewed as a potentially lucrative market for international luxury brands. In fact, in the 1990's, with the stabilization of the economy, the first luxury brands that decided to invest in Brazil chose to do so in São Paulo.



Photograph 46 - One of the aisles at São Conrado Fashion Mall. Taken by author.

For years Fashion Mall held the bar for the local brands who aspired to a luxury positioning in the country. Many of those brands have now left the market, such as Andrea Saletto, which was the quintessential luxury brand prior to the “flooding” of the market with international brands. São Conrado Fashion Mall offered a non-ostentatious luxury, which the rustic-modern décor surrounding a garden and inviting for an unpretentious afternoon in paradise.

As is typical of Rio's traditional elite, a promenade at the mall does not presuppose a shopping spree. More often than not, the motive is a lunch with friends, a play at the theater or a movie in the evening. The shopping is almost a side effect of the promenade, at least in the surface.

"I come here often to go to the restaurants. They are very good".- Informant, 56 year old woman, resident of the Zona Sul, having lunch with friends.

"I love this place. Every salesperson knows me. I sometimes call when I have a party or an event to attend and they ship clothes to my place so I can choose and return what I don't want to keep". – Informant, 45 year old woman, resident of a São Conrado luxury residential complex.

In fact, restaurants at Fashion Mall are not the typical type you find at a mall food court. Prized chefs have opened restaurants there. In any case, it is hard to believe that the restaurant alone is enough reason to come all the way from Zona Sul.

In many aspects it is similar to Shopping Cidade Jardim in São Paulo – the garden, the non-ostentatious décor, the attitude of the salespeople, who know many clients by name and preference – yet it has unquestionable carioca flair to it. Its informality clashes with the idea of luxury that is prejudicially carved in my mind. It's "chic" in its simplicity.



Photograph 47 - Aisles surrounding a garden. Taken by author.

Once the launching place for luxury brands in Rio, most of those have now migrated to Shopping Leblon or the Village Mall at BarraShopping. Yet it is still ranked as a luxury mall by the visitors. It does house the only Ferrari Store in Rio; however, the mall mix offers a blend of typical carioca stores like Farm, a festive inexpensive, colorful brand, and several upscale local and international brands.

i. Emerging Themes – São Conrado Fashion Mall

- a) It is interesting to see that although it cannot be defined as a luxury mall any longer, it retains this mythological position and visitors opt to acknowledge (or at least claim) that they shop here rather than at other shopping centers where a variety of actual luxury brands are present.
- b) The cultural meaning that São Conrado Fashion Mall has acquired over the years exceeds its actual brand mix. It is viewed as more upscale than traditional criteria would account for. It represents the tradition of luxury in Rio.
- c) The role of the garden in this mythical construction is key: it sets Fashion Mall apart from other “box-like” shopping centers built at around the same period and this nostalgic “rebellion” against ostentation is possibly at the heart of its success.

2.2.4.9. *Shopping Iguatemi*

PFJ-February 3rd, 2011

I forgot my shopping bag with a dress on a chair at near the staircases. Realized it three hours later, when I arrived home. Called security and they had it. Amazing!

My first visit to Shopping Iguatemi was as a baby on a stroller. It was one of my first afternoons out with my mom. At that time shopping centers were an innovation in the country and Iguatemi was the pioneer.

Some years later, after spending a couple of years in Rio, I moved three blocks away from Iguatemi and it became part of my routine. My first “solo” excursions were to Iguatemi, as my parents thought it was safer to let me go to the movies with my friends there than at a movie theater on the streets.

As the first Shopping Center in Brazil, it was conceived under the traditional paradigm of shopping centers prominent in the 1960’s all over the world (Badot and Ochs 2008) and I unconsciously observed how it slowly migrated to an upscale positioning over the years.

Progressively, as upscale brands started to invest in the country in the 1990’s, first entering through multi-brand stores and then opening individual stores, many chose Shopping Iguatemi. The soar in violence rates was one of the factors inspiring this choice as shopping centers were viewed as safer than the streets.

And with the stores came the clients. A large proportion of the traditional elite in São Paulo lives relatively close to Iguatemi – exception made maybe to the Higienópolis neighborhood - and the convenient parking, including valet parking, played a key role in a society where everyone who is someone does everything by car.



**Photograph 48 - A branded cold water bottle placed in the car on a hot day by the valet service.
Taken by author.**

After spending some years away, I was surprised at the transformation Iguatemi had undergone in terms of mall mix and brand significance since my undergrad years. Although it had always capitalized on the pioneer heritage, it had successfully attracted a large number of luxury brands to the mall, many with exclusivity and had transformed itself into the most valuable retail space in the Americas outside of the USA and the fifth in the world (Cushman and Wakefield 2011).

Nevertheless, the mall presents severe inconsistencies as several remodeling efforts paired by contractual negotiations with retailers have not been able to completely wipe out its origins. A kitsch décor reminiscent from the 80's in some areas co-habits with a more recent minimalistic modern décor in others, while certain spaces have no clear style.

Mall mix is also inconsistent at times, as contractual restrictions have not allowed for all luxury brands to be placed together in one section of the mall and situations like having Tiffany & Co. face C&A are common at Iguatemi in spite of management's efforts to reduce these conflicts by stimulating massive brands to leave the mall or at least relocated within it. In fact, some of these stores have converted into flagship stores, such as the C&A that underwent a severe remodeling and now resembles more an upscale department store than any of their other regular outlets.



Photograph 49 C&A Shopping Iguatemi. Copyright Iguatemi.



Photograph 50 - One of the aisles at Iguatemi. Taken by author.



Photograph 51 The main food court. Taken by author.



Photograph 52 - The main hall. Copyright Iguatemi.

Located in a major business area in the city, Iguatemi is surrounded by office buildings. Although this favors attendance, and in fact during lunch time the mall is crowded, it is inconsistent with a luxury strategy.

Luxury is associated with exclusivity, and crowded aisles compromise the effort to portray this attribute. Also, the proximity to the offices transforms the mall into a heterogeneous community, with low level clerks and top executives alike visiting the mall.

Those heterogeneous groups have different desires and the sheer number of visitors makes different types of stores profitable. Iguatemi works with this heterogeneity by attempting to appeal to an aspirational component that is universal in its essence, although it is represented by different consumption objects and patterns for each of those groups.

“Coming here is part of my routine. I come two or three times a week to have lunch with a friend or in I need to buy anything.” – Informant 35 year old housewife with nannie and young child.

“I work across the street and have lunch here very often. It’s much nicer here than eating at other places. I can look at the windows and it’s practical if you need to buy something”. – Informant, 27 year old bank teller.

Contrary to what you might see in other shopping malls, people dress up to go to Iguatemi. They want to look their “best”, even when the concept of “best” is not homogeneous between the groups: it may mean jeans from an upscale local brand and expensive sneakers or a Luis Vuitton mannequin copied to the last detail. And the Vuitton store offers those items in installments.

Competition from Shopping Cidade Jardim inspired a wider offer of additional services, some to match what is offered at Cidade Jardim and others as differentiating aspects. For instance, Iguatemi now offers personal shoppers in an effort to appeal to the “new rich” who aspire to follow the cultural of the “traditional elite” yet need assistance in merging personal tastes and fashion conventions. Additionally, it offers a daycare service that is superior to anything I have seen in any of the various shopping centers I have visited throughout my life.

One particularly interesting thing about the daycare facility is that although children can be left there at the care of the staff under a heavy security system, most of them are accompanied by nannies. Having a nanny –dressed in white - is a portrayal of status for a particular group of people in Brazilian society, and bringing her along helps construct this identity.



Photograph 53 The daycare facility decorated for Halloween. Taken by author.

Additional activities for older children are also offered during vacation periods, usually themed after blockbuster Hollywood movies. And the Christmas décor is certainly comparable to Macy's or any other department store in New York City. Everything is excessive and spectacular at Iguatemi.



Photograph 54 My children at the Ice Age exhibit. Taken by author.



Photograph 55 The Christmas décor. Taken by author.

This is a servicescape that has certainly evolved throughout the years. It has acquired different meanings and the message, rather than being consistent over time, has mutated while building on pillars that remain from the origins of the mall (Holt 2005). Iguatemi is a pioneer, and innovative mall, that caters to a heterogeneous community by appealing to a consumption filled lifestyle that is fuelled by the incipient social mobility in the country.

i. Emerging findings - Shopping Iguatemi

- a) The heterogeneous community formed at Shopping Iguatemi, especially at lunch time, is an interesting phenomenon and can aid significantly in the study of status consumption and how object meanings are manipulated in identity construction processes (McCracken 1986; Arnould and Thompson 2005). This heterogeneous community and the overlap of leisure and corporate activities within the mall contributes to multiple identities being managed at a single location, much like what happens online, on a Facebook or twitter account (Belk 2013). For Maffesoli (1991, 1997, and 2004) each individual may belong to various tribes, in which he may play different roles⁸⁷.
- b) Subcultures of consumption provide gratifying leisure activities while allowing members to factor in their subcultural membership into their self-definition (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Arthur and Sherman, 2010). It is interesting to see how management at Shopping Iguatemi operates the transformation process by which the mall is being repositioned in spite of difficulties and how place attachment and nostalgic feelings are a component in this strategy. Although Iguatemi is no longer the only mall offering luxury products in São Paulo, an in spite of its inconsistencies it remains linked to luxury consumption in consumer imaginary and seeing and being seen at Shopping Iguatemi continues to be one indicator status in São Paulo society.

⁸⁷ The concept of "tribe" is different from the concept of "social class" commonly used in business literature, since the latter usually refers to a socio-economic class, which is one way to segment society, based on economic factors, while tribes are based on beliefs and values, which are not necessarily linked to socio-economic factors, although a correlation can be sometimes found (Bourdieu, 1985; Maffesoli, 1998).

2.2.4.10. *Shopping Cidade Jardim*

I took a cab to go to Shopping Cidade Jardim for the first time, the only available form of public transportation to get there. There is no pedestrian entrance and cabs access the mall through the parking lot. Once I arrived it felt like I was entering a rabbit hole leading into an alternate reality. It is like a parallel world within the city.

The city of São Paulo is nothing like one would expect in a “tropical country”. The rapidly growing economic center for the country was described by Levi-Strauss as having “faded colors that heightened the shadows” and “too-narrow streets where the air could not circulate” (Levi-Strauss 1956).

The contrast between the ugly grey outside and Shopping Cidade Jardim’s architecture is impressive. It is built surrounding indoors and outdoors suspended gardens and planters. There are no closed corridors and all aisles at Shopping Cidade Jardim surround an open air garden and are naturally lit. According to Maria Joao Del Rey, the project’s landscape architect:

“Our goal was to offer a green area to offset the city’s ubiquitous concrete”⁸⁸

Consumption spaces are vehicles for emotional experiences and the visual element bears crucial significance (Urry, 1995). Gardens have had central functions in society, both practical and symbolic, since ancient times (Ross, 1998).

⁸⁸ JHSF Press Release (2008).

At Shopping Cidade Jardim the garden contributes to the construction of a Garden of Eden myth. Consumers perceive the mall as the closest substitute to an ideal town, where they would be safe, comfortable and among equals.

*“Shopping Cidade Jardim was conceived to be the icon of non-ostentatious luxury in São Paulo”.*⁸⁹



Photograph 56 - Main aisle; Copyright Shopping Cidade Jardim. Taken by author.

This argument supports the movement towards common spaces where differences are minimized and a sense of convergence emerges. Shopping Cidade Jardim has transformed its common space into a personal space by capitalizing on individual and group anxieties and providing a mythical solution to everyday inconsistencies (Holt, 2005). Conversely, once a solution –albeit artificial and hyperreal- is found, the deterioration of the

⁸⁹ Interview with informant - Management

“outside world” becomes a lesser concern, as proposed by Levi-Strauss (1955).

In fact, when Shopping Cidade Jardim was launched, protests aroused in the neighborhood as home owners expected the calm and tranquility of this residential area to be upset by traffic directed towards the shopping center. Mall management conceded to close one of the planned entrances to avoid hostility with their potential clients. However, once the shopping mall was effectively positioned as a “luxury icon”, its proximity became a positive attribute for the neighborhood.



Photograph 57 - Shopping Cidade Jardim indoors garden; Copyright JHSF.



Photograph 58 - Indoors landscaping at Shopping Cidade Jardim- Copyright JHSF.

In the mornings the corridors and gardens are filled with nannies with children, waiting for their mothers who are shopping, exercising at the gym or at the spa. At the Zara store, the large proportion of white clothes on display was noticeable. Supposedly they are sold as uniforms for the nannies.

Services offered to clients at shopping Cidade Jardim include the delivery of clients' purchases and a "free hands" service that takes care of purchases while the clients engage in other activities. These practices would be coherent with the idea of a society with newly found social mobility, but is still operating under codes of conduct "inherited" from the "traditional elite" dating from colonial times.



Photograph 59 - Young pregnant mother, with child off at a coffee shop. Taken by author.

Shopping Cidade Jardim's mall mix goes beyond the sales of apparel, exceeding what is generally expected of shopping malls. It offers a very wide choice of luxury products and brands.

There is a Petrossian caviar store and even helicopters and yachts can be bought at a store named – interestingly enough – Tools and Toys. These types of goods have a symbolic connection to a mythical interpretation of the lifestyles of the “rich and famous”, as portrayed in Hollywood movies and local soap operas alike.

Other services offered at Shopping Cidade Jardim range from a concierge who offers free advice on events occurring not only at the mall but in the city of São Paulo in general, a personal shopper, a personal chef, a personal DJ (customizes recordings on your iPod, iPad, iPhone for special occasions), a personal wedding assistant (helps clients prepare for a weddings), a “personal marchand” (offers advice on art purchases, although the mall does

not have an on-site art gallery) and housekeeping services (Shopping Cidade Jardim Investor Report, 2010).

Through its marketing activities Shopping Cidade Jardim generates affiliation and caters to a consumer who is attracted by exclusivity. High prices are actually a desired attribute (proxy for quality) as consumers demonstrate to themselves and others that they belong to a group that values exclusivity and quality.

In fact, shopkeepers on the second floor - the one with the more massive brands - complain about low traffic while sales on the first floor - where most of the upscale local brands are located⁹⁰, appear to be satisfactory, and sales in the ground floor, where the global luxury brands are generally located are booming⁹¹, although traffic is not intense.

“Having a store here is like having a flagship store, it is a positioning investment, but it is not worth it for the franchisees...”⁹²

“I enjoy working here more than at the Oscar Freire⁹³ store. Here I have fewer clients, but the clients that I do have make larger purchases. I work less and make about the same money on commissions.”⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Which could be considered midrange between the luxury brands on the ground and the more massive ones on the second floor

⁹¹ There was a 51% increase in sales from 2009 to 2010 and a 20% increase from 2010 to 2011. Average sales per sq. meter for Hermès, Luis Vuitton, Chanel and Rolex range from US\$ 6.000 to US\$ 8.000 (Shopping Cidade Jardim Investor Report, 2010; 2011), and the average ticket price for the mall is US\$ 1,700.

⁹² Store owner on the second floor, 2011.

⁹³ Oscar Freire is a main commercial Street with upscale stores in São Paulo. It used to be the top location for shopping in the city before the launch of Shopping Cidade Jardim and the repositioning of Shopping Iguatemi.

⁹⁴ Salesperson, 2011

Not being able or willing to perform these rituals or myths automatically excludes consumers from group membership. This explain why certain social groups are auto-excluded from Shopping Cidade Jardim, as they value large group interaction and abide by a different set of communal rules. While certain consumers believe that the relatively empty corridors indicated exclusivity, consumers who do not regularly attend the mall considered the same relatively empty corridors as demotivating:

“I’m only here to exchange a gift. I never come here. My friends don’t usually come here either, it is too expensive, and the food court only has expensive restaurants”⁹⁵

Nevertheless, although some luxury brands were added in the 2011 expansion, such as Gucci, Fendi, Cartier, Balmain, Dior and Valentino, many of the new additions were more massive, local brands, widening the mall mix. Management justifies the move arguing that not all luxury consumers in the São Paulo society have unlimited disposable income, in fact most have experienced considerable increases in income over the last few years, and therefore are not in the habit of consuming exclusively luxury products and the mall should cater to all of their needs⁹⁶.

PFJ-January 18th, 2011

I met with the Marketing Director; she told me one store had sold five fur coats since the beginning of the year (18 days). It’s 33 Celsius degrees outside! So if they need it now, it is because they are going on vacation to the northern hemisphere. But it is more expensive to buy it here, so why would they prefer to buy it here (and not use it) instead of buying at their destination?

⁹⁵ Events coordinator, female, married, 40, upper-middle class income

⁹⁶ Interview with informant – Management, 2011

In fact, brands like Hermès and Chanel offer luxury products in installments - one can buy a Chanel bag in 6 installments, for instance. This is coherent with management's argument that not all luxury consumers in the São Paulo society have unlimited disposable income but are interested in consuming these types of products, however, appealing to a wider audience may generate tensions between the two groups: the "traditional elite" and the "new rich".

Shopping Cidade Jardim uses well-known luxury celebrities to carry on their message, but they don't follow standard marketing techniques, but rather recur to uncommon resources, such as using a Circus Crew to launch a Hermès Store or doing a runway show in the mall's aisles during business hours with high-end models such as Gisele Bündchen. The Reebok gym also offers trapeze classes and other circus activities for children, as a non-traditional form of exercise. This is also a strategy used by Bal Harbor Shops⁹⁷ in South Florida, a shopping Mall with which Shopping Cidade Jardim shares more than just designer goods retailers.

The resemblance between the two shopping centers in terms of architecture and marketing efforts is significant and reinforces the notion that this "society" is as prosperous as the US society. They understand the same references; therefore they must belong to the same community. These contribute to the creation a "mis-an-scene" favoring the notion that consumers are not only buying a product, they are undergoing a much more complete experience.

⁹⁷ <http://balharbourshops.com/>



Photograph 60 Ball Harbor Shops Courtyard. Copyright: Bal Harbor Shops.

The pre-launch campaign for Shopping Cidade Jardim had three TV spots, also posted on YOUTUBE by management and featured the landscape architect who talked about the gardens and how the mall was conceived to be a “heaven” inside the city’s concrete jungle, the personal shoppers, who explained how they were available to assist you in being fashionable and “maximize the power of happiness that a purchase can provide” and a social columnist who recommended the mall by saying it is a “non-ostentatious luxury”.

The launch campaign itself featured Sarah Jessica Parker, capitalizing on the success of the *Sex and the City* movie, launched that year. The following campaign featured photos of supposedly regular Shopping Cidade Jardim consumers, taken by Scott Schuman from “The Sartorialist” iconic fashion blog, known for taking photos of common people with a sense of fashion in the streets.

The 2010 campaign featured Kate Moss in various extravagant haute couture dresses, while the 2011 campaign featured Heidi Klum, and in 2012 Leighton Meester, from *Gossip Girl* was used in an attempt to appeal to the younger fashion conscious crowd. In 2013 the campaign featured fashion expert Taylor Tomasi Hill.

Shopping Cidade Jardim is currently a "home" space, where "persons" belonging to certain "tribes" share experiences and feel at ease (DaMatta, 1984; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig 2002; Maffesoli, 2004). Nevertheless, its successive expansions have amplified the target audience and although social mobility is a reality in the country, the "traditional elite" and the new members of the "tribe" still view each other as adversaries, competing for political and economic power in the country.

The fact that government is now run by the labor party, besides its obvious political and economic implications, also symbolizes the "traditional elite" loss of prominence. Under this scenario, there is a very clear risk of alienating one group by attracting the other.

Although sometimes not economically profitable, aspiring brands nowadays choose to be present at Shopping Cidade Jardim as a form of aligning themselves with the myth. As Holt (2005) suggests, the most effective brands are parasitical in nature, appropriating myths and capitalizing on them. The more aligned with the myth, the more effective the upscale brand positioning will be. If the "traditional elite" is alienated, it is questionable whether the mall will remain aspirational for the larger group both brands and consumers.



Photograph 61 Runway show during business hours; Copyright JHSF.



Photograph 62 - Hermés Launch; Copyright JHSF.



Photograph 63 - Launch Campaign (2008); Copyright JHSF.



Photograph 64 The Sartorialist Campaign (real customers pictured, 2009) Copyright JHSF.



Photograph 67 - Leighton Meester Campaign (2012); Copyright JHSF.

i. Emerging Findings – Shopping Cidade Jardim

- a) While a lasting democracy has been established, Brazil still struggles to provide equal access to opportunities across all sectors of society and transforming the Brazilian society into a more effective meritocracy. Under this scenario, consumption may act as a proxy to social advancement for the emerging “new rich”, possessing low cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984).
- b) The “new rich” might not immediately recognize the elite’s codes of conduct and thus the help of professionals would be a desired service in order to expedite the process of immersion.
- c) This would be partially contradictory to Bauman’s (2002) beliefs that life structured around consumption would be free of norms and regulations. In fact these “judgments of taste” (Bourdieu, 1984) would represent rules and regulation that the aspiring members would have to follow to be accepted into the group.

- d) Under the economic paradigm of “social class”, shoppers at Shopping Cidade Jardim would likely already be members of the “A class” in socio-economic terms⁹⁸, however, they must adopt consumption patterns that could be easily recognized by the “traditional elite” in order to be perceived as part of the tribe. This is achieved through the performance of a collective interpretation of what is believed to be “the way of the global elite”.

⁹⁸ According to the ABRASCE (2013) “Censo Brasileiro de Shopping Centers”, 100% of shoppers at Shopping Cidade Jardim would meet the criteria of “A” class, the highest economic classification in the country.

2.2.4.11. *Morumbi Shopping*

If I had to describe Morumbi Shopping using one differentiating trait, I could not do so. It is heterogeneous in the sense that during the day different groups of people visit the mall, especially due to its location on the edge of a major business area, yet this heterogeneity is more of an occupation and income type and differences in group culture are not self-evident.

It is part of a complex involving various office buildings. Next to it (literally across a small side street) there is a smaller Shopping Center, Shopping Market Place, managed by a major player in the market, Iguatemi.



Photograph 68 - Aerial view of Morumbi Shopping. Copyright: Multiplan.

Morumbi Shopping tends to follow Multiplan's characteristic visual identity: a blend of a neo-classical kitsch, with some more modern touches resembling a Las Vegas casino. It is aesthetically very similar to BarraShopping in Rio.



Photograph 69 - Outside view. Copyright: Multiplan.

The Shopping Center opened in 1982 and in spite of several renovations it is still completely enclosed, with three levels and very scarce natural lighting. The main aisles have fake marble floors and the more modern additions have hard wood floors or carpets. Ceilings are not very high, and that, paired with the scarce lighting does not give visitors a pleasant feeling. Neither do the crowds, which contribute to the claustrophobic sensation.

PFJ-February 10th, 2011

While interviewing the Superintendent, I felt she had a hard time describing the positioning. "Fashion is key to us" and "we are a shopping center for everyone" seemed a bit out of focus. Maybe it has to do with the considerable changes in positioning through the years. She then talked about convenience, how the location is optimal for repeat business visits. That many people go there to solve their everyday problems during lunchtime or right after work, and it finally understood the positioning as "conveniently located".



Photograph 70 - Dark aisles. Copyright: Multiplan.



Photograph 71 - Morumbi Shopping aisle. Taken by author.



Photograph 72 - The Atrium is one of the few areas with natural lighting. Copyright: Multiplan.

PFJ-December 22nd, 2010
This place is so 80's!.

Although valet service was added several years ago, its parking spots are not enough for the demand during peak hours in a city where public transportation is chaotic and the middle classes do everything by car. Particularly not in an area of the city where walking the streets is believed to be a dangerous operation.

PFJ-December 22nd, 2010
I used to come here a lot when I lived in São Paulo. It had a wide offer of stores, but parking has always been crazy, especially this time of year.



Photograph 73 A completely full parking lot is a routine. Taken by author.

Morumbi Shopping offers a wide variety of products and brands ranging from a C&A to an Armani Exchange Store are other more upscale brands, both local and international. It has four cinema screening rooms, a full blown upscale gym, a very complete gastronomic offer and a gaming area for teenagers, as well as a kid's area where you can leave your children while shopping on site, as many other Brazilian malls.

It attempts to be is a full service shopping center, although it currently does not have a supermarket. Originally there was a fresh produce market, complete upscale fish and meat stores on the ground floor, offering high quality products but that was removed a few years ago to give way to more stores.



Photograph 74 - Cia. Athletica Gym. Copyright: Cia. Athletica.

The branding strategy pursued has changed significantly over time which had consequences on the mall mix. Originally it focused on a family target, and presented the shopping center as a leisure option, offering many activities, even an ice skating ring, the first one in São Paulo. Eventually this positioning was abandoned and the new focus was fashion, so the ice skating ring was removed and a new “fashion” section was built in its place.

This change took place during the 1990’s and most luxury brands were not available in the country. At that time, local high end brands were concentrated in the lower floor of the center and the Morumbi Fashion Week, the precursor of the São Paulo Fashion Week was held there. At this point the idea was to position the mall as high end.

Eventually that positioning too was slowly phased out, especially when luxury brands started entering the country and giving preference to other locations, namely Shopping Iguatemi and more recently Shopping Cidade Jardim and Iguatemi JK, although management continues to attempt to maintain the center’s image connected to fashion. New campaigns started to

focus on variety and wide offer in fashion, thus the removal of the fresh food marked to include more stores.

With the high-end strategy no longer credible, management decided on a new approach: Morumbi Shopping, as complete as São Paulo. This claim is not completely accurate either, as the center does not have a supermarket, but has been effective in the last few years and image studies carried out by Multiplan reaffirm the success of this approach as consumers refer to the Morumbi Shopping as a fashion trend setter (due to the variety of the mall mix) and "the most democratic place in São Paulo, it has something for everyone" (Multiplan, 2009).

The several renovations and expansions have clearly contributed to the expansion of the mall mix. However, these expansions followed the architectural trend of the moment and created stylistic inconsistencies in the décor.



Photograph 75 - Mall aisle at the new addition. Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 76 - New addition at lunchtime on a weekday. Complete incoherence in architectural styles. Copyright Multiplan.

All Multiplan shopping centers share a common promotion at the end of each season, *Liquidação do Lápis Vermelho* (or "Red Pencil Sale"). They also do promotions with giveaways during traditional high sales times, such as mother's day and Christmas. The fashion component is always present in the advertising pieces.

Although many of the campaign concepts are the same across all Multiplan properties, execution is allowed to be different in order to cater to the city's cultural specificities and regional campaigns are encouraged when justified, as for instance in the case of the anniversary of the city.



Photograph 77 - Advertising piece for the "Red Pencil Sale, 2013". Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 78 - Christmas Promotion. Copyright Multiplan.

All marketing materials work to reinforce the fashion link that the shopping center has achieved over the years, without attempting to position it as upscale. It is more of a young middle class "cool" approach, not normally using local celebrities. The models used are reflections of their target group, late twenties, early thirties, "cool" looking young professionals.



Photograph 79 - 2009 São Paulo's anniversary campaign. Copyright Multiplan.

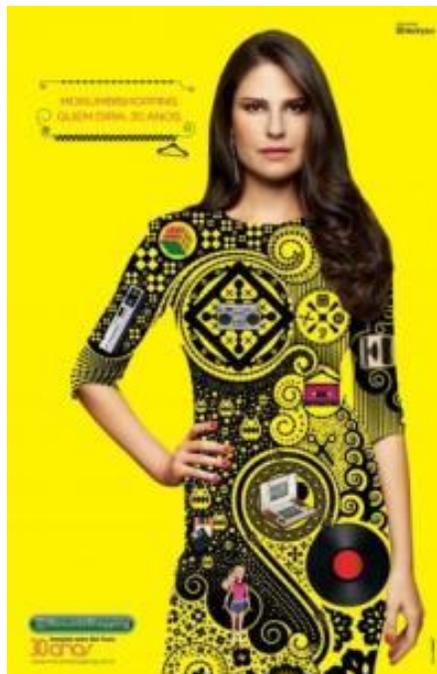


Photograph 80 - Autumn – Winter Campaign 2010. Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 81 - 2011 São Paulo's anniversary campaign. Copyright Multiplan.

In 2012 the Shopping Center celebrated its 30th anniversary with a specific campaign and a series of events. They used models appearing to be 30 years old yet maintaining their attractiveness. They also held concerts with local 80's stars that were still active and popular, appealing to a 30+ age group and reinforcing their 80's look.



Photograph 82 - MorumbiShopping 30th Anniversary Campaign (2012). Copyright Multiplan.

Shopping Morumbi holds events in its Atrium to increase traffic. Themes are selected in order to have a general appeal but can vary from pop culture to historic exhibits. They are usually held at the Atrium, but sometimes extend to the aisles as well.



Photograph 83 - Dinosaurs exhibit (2011). Copyright Multiplan.



Photograph 84 - Banner for the exhibit "Treasures, Myths and Mysteries of the Americas" (2013). Copyright Multiplan.

i. Emerging Findings – Shopping Morumbi

- a) Shopping Morumbi could be called a non-place (Aubert-Gamet and Cova, 1999). It is as if it was an amorphous packaging where unimportant, routine life happens. Even its most recent campaign tagline reinforces this notion: “the most democratic shopping center in Brazil”.
- b) In an attempt to be all things to all people, Morumbi Shopping appears to have lost its identity. Even so, MorumbiShopping sustains a healthy rentability and tenants appear to be satisfied with the returns on their investments. Although sometimes attracted by events and exhibitions, consumers have mostly a utilitarian relationship with this mall, which seems to operate under a paradigm of shopping center management where the experience is less important.

2.2.4.12. *Center Norte*

Shopping center Norte is built on one level, except for the cinema screening rooms, which are on the second floor. The corridors were originally conceived to mimic a neighborhood commercial street and neighborhood shops were given preference at launch. Nowadays most stores are chain brands.

PFJ-February 2nd, 2013

I had not been here in a long time and I felt I had to go back and re-visit it after the controversy about safety late in 2011. I never liked it much, but this time the place seemed really run down. If felt claustrophobic at the site, it could be psychological after the events over a year before.



Photograph 85 - Center Norte on a busy weekend. Copyright Veja SP.

It is an enclosed mall and its traditional architecture with low ceilings does not allow for the entrance of natural light. The shopping center offers very little service, but there is a location where parents can leave their children while shopping. It is surprisingly located in the middle of the shopping center, with no privacy.



Photograph 86 Kid's Area. Taken by author.

The founding family still participates in management and invests in promotional actions and social responsibility programs, majorly through the Instituto Center Norte, an ONG aiming at improving quality of life in the north side of São Paulo. Advertising budget is conservative, there is no mobile application yet a magazine is distributed to visitors.

In 2011 the Shopping Center was involved in a controversy concerning its safety. It was found that it was built on a former garbage disposal area and that methane gas was building up in its foundations. The public health department closed the site and it fined the property owners for not following safety recommendations. It was disclosed that the town hall was aware of the

situation and that the public health department had informed management of the situation several times over the years.

Eventually, according to government official, the methane buildup became hazardous and life threatening. It remained closed for two days, escape pipes were installed to avoid methane buildup and the site was cleared to reopen to the public.

This is extremely incoherent with the position that Center Norte management had claimed over the years. It is difficult to understand how an organization that declares concerns for the area population can build a shopping mall over a landfill and allow methane to build up risking an explosion. Discourse is clearly inconsistent with reality.

Instead of taking measures to solve the environmental issue, that year, an exceptional investment in advertising was made in November, right after the site had been closed for two days and a record R\$5 Million was invested in order to counter-balance negative media before Christmas season. The move seems to have been successful as sales in 2011, in spite of the health issue, were said to have increased 18% over the previous year (Veja SP, 2011).

In 2012 the mall started a renovation project that is expected to be concluded in 2015. The difficulties faced in 2011 appear to have been left behind and the mall continues to be the first one in São Paulo in the ranking of sales per square meter. It capitalizes on its history and tradition in the area to build its client base.

*“I like it here. The mall helped develop the area, now we don’t need to go to other areas of the city to go shopping or to a restaurant” – Informant 53
year old bank manager.*



Photograph 87 Family outing a few days after the mall was reopened in 2011. Taken by author.



Photograph 88 - Parking lot on a weekend. Copyright Center Norte.



Photograph 89 - Friday afternoon at Center Norte. Taken by author.



Photograph 90 - Valentine's day campaign 2010. Copyright Center Norte.



Photograph 91 - Center Norte Magazine. Copyright Center Norte.

i. Emerging Findings – Center Norte

- a) Although the mall is not luxurious, it is now investing in building a fashion tradition and promoting fashion shows and a magazine. This activity is paired with the renovation project. Rather than copying the strategies of other malls in the city, it indigenizes (Ustuner and Holt, 2010) the fashion content and uses local celebrities to carry on this message.
- b) The population of Zona Norte has changed and a once immigrant zone has become a more cosmopolitan area with access to information and given that the economic stabilization has allowed for international travel for the middle classes. Although retaining its traditional heritage, Center Norte is evolving.

2.2.4.13. *Parly 2*

The cultural difference between the area where the mall is located and central Paris was incredible. The city of Paris prides itself for having one of the best public transportation systems in large metropolitan areas, yet getting to Parly 2 by public transportation is a nightmare. Trains and buses are not coordinated and options are limited. Yet no one seems to care. The mall offers comfortable parking – including valet parking – and most people come by car.

Parly 2 has undergone significant alterations during the last few years. Several additions to the original floor plan, implemented over the last decades had caused the mall to lose its identity. A renovation project updated the décor while preserving its heritage. The theme for the “facelift” was 60’s chic referencing the period when the mall was launched.

In fact a radical transformation would not be advisable considering the traditional clientele that it services. The area around Versailles is populated by very traditional middle and upper classes.

The results were impressive. From an unattractive identity lacking place, the mall has been converted into a pleasant environment making reference to a time – the 60’s - that revolutionized fashion, with Paris at the eye of the storm.

As proposed by Holt (2005), Parly 2 is attempting to capitalize on the Parisian tradition of being the fashion capital of the world. Although no luxury brands per se are present, the presence of upscale fashionable brands such as Zadig and Voltaire - present also at Le Bon Marché and other exclusive shopping areas in Paris – contributes to this positioning.



Photograph 92 - Parly 2 before renovations. Taken by author.



Photograph 93 - Parly 2 after renovations. Copyright Unibail-Rodamco.



Photograph 94 - A contemporary décor with a 60's flair.



Photograph 95 - Lounges simulate a living-room. Copyright Unibail-Rodamco.



Photograph 96 The new décor. Copyright Unibail-Rodamco.

PFJ-October 5th, 2011

After a few frustrated attempts to reach the mall by bus I decided to take a taxi from the nearest train station

“I like to come here on Wednesdays⁹⁹ after school with the children. Sometimes there are activities for them. If we go home, it’s like each one concentrates on their things and we never do anything together anymore.” – Informant with two young children.

As unimaginable as it might seem people at Parly 2 appeared to lead very similar lives as their counterparts in the US. Stay-at-home mothers, private schools and car dependence were a common trait amongst visitors. The mall appeared to play a role in a “forced” family interaction.

Maybe going shopping in the city would highlight these differences and this might be one of the reasons why suburban families enjoy shopping at Parly 2 while very few people living in central Paris would come here. It is not attractive enough to be seen as a leisure destination, so that people would come here from the city, as for instance can be seen in the case of Bluewater

⁹⁹ Primary school children do not have classes on Wednesdays in France.

in the London and surroundings area where there are bus services leaving from downtown London to go the mall.

Parly 2 is not built under this paradigm. It is designed to serve the people of the surrounding area and is focused on giving these groups a “taste” of the Parisian fashion, not the icons of fashion that luxury malls are built to provide.

It is interesting to consider that the economic power of the region might award a positive outcome for a luxury mall, as sustained by Ochs and Badot (2006). Conspicuous status consumption is not a characteristic of this privileged elite population and luxury malls have proved unsuccessful in France.

i. Emerging Findings – Parly 2

- a) Going shopping at Parly 2 serves a ritualistic identity construction practice. These suburban families living a comfortable life, based on private schooling and car mobility in France seem to have much more in common with suburban middle classes in the United States than with the typical image of a Parisian family living in a small apartment in the center of Paris.
- b) Times are changing and practices need to be negotiated on a daily basis. “Forced” family interaction on Wednesdays at the mall is one of the copying mechanisms that families have encountered to resolve a mythical contradiction in their lives. Stay at home mothers need to keep busy and dedicate themselves to the children, but at home it is hard to compete with iPods, iPads and PlayStation. In this sense the 1960’s décor aids in transporting the consumers to a time where parents talked with children over the dinner table, not on Facebook.

2.2.4.14. *Le Quatre Temps*

Almost 15 years ago I took a job at a firm located in Courbevoie, next to La Défense. During that time there were not many places to eat in the area outside of the La Défense compound and I spent many lunch breaks at Le Quatre Temps. Back then, although I was still a long way from choosing the academic path in my career, I already wondered why people deliberately would choose to eat in a noisy and crowded shopping mall when they could buy a baguette and sit on the Esplanade de La Défense enjoying the view of Paris.



Photograph 97 Esplanade de la Défense. Taken by author.

Thinking back, my experiences at Le Quatre Temps might have been at the root of my interest in understanding the symbolic meaning of shopping centers. I had grown up hearing that Shopping Centers were the beach of the

Paulistas¹⁰⁰, who chose to go there for lack of other viable leisure activities in São Paulo. Yet Paris was full of leisure activities and people still chose to spend their entire lunch breaks inside the mall.



Photograph 98 - Busy aisles. Taken by author.

It is true that people take for granted the beauty of their own cities. Maybe the view of Paris was not as exciting for Parisians as for me, just as the view from the Cristo Redentor in my childhood Rio, although obviously beautiful, didn't seem to be worth the ride up there unless I was serving as a tour guide to a friend.

Peer pressure could also be another factor. In my own experience my frequent visits to the mall had a lot to do with joining the group from the

¹⁰⁰ Natives of São Paulo.

office and being accepted in this small community. As a foreigner I felt like I had to adapt to the local codes, and that included dress codes, food choices and leisure activities. In fact I struggled at first with my own personal – and maybe ethnic preferences - and made efforts to be seen as one more of the gang.

A lot has changed since my first visits to Le Quatre Temps. An ambitious renovation modernized the compound and created different decors at each one of the areas of the mall. The goal was supposedly to attract different public to each one of the areas. In fact, it felt like different shopping malls depending on the area you were at, with different style décor and even different ambient music.

Some areas affectively felt more pleasant, especially the Kiwi Zone with the nature inspired décor. The excessive use of pink and violet in other parts seemed a bit over the top for my preferences.

The Dome was planned to be the center of the mall, and it was in fact crowded. I felt sorry for the pianist; no one was listening, partially because they could not here him from the noise.

Some many years have passed and still most of the lunchtime options in the business area are concentrated at Le Quatre Temps. It is also practical, connected directly to the office buildings and the subway.

Lunchtime was chaos. I felt compelled to buy my baguette and eat outside like in the good old days. I resisted in my effort to understand why people would willingly choose this chaos.

PFJ-October 3rdth, 2011

The different architecture between the wings and the bright colors in the décor of some areas was surprising. Yet nowhere was pleasant during lunch hour. It was crazy. So many people! The noise made me feel dizzy and I had to wait until 3 p-m. to have lunch.

*“I like to come here for lunch because I can do some shopping as well –
Informant, 28 year old secretary.*

Do you have enough time to eat and shop? – Researcher.

Not always, the lines are long. -Informant”



Photograph 99 Lunchtime at Le 4 Temps. Taken by author.

Seeing the large groups of people coming in and leaving at the same time during the week reminded me of a fire drill, the required practice coordinated by the fire brigade to prepare people for the event of a fire. Everyone knows what to do; they do not think much about it and just follow the crowd.

In a fire drill, people know it is just a practice and as there is no real risk involved, there is no emotion either. This is the feeling I had from looking at the people at le Quatre Temps. It was their ritual (Rook 1985). They came in for lunch, and if they had time they would do some window shopping afterwards. No one thought much of it, yet everyone performed the same ritual.



Photograph 100 Visitors at Le 4 Temps. Taken by author.



Photograph 101 – Entering the mall from the subway. Taken by author.

On weekends the situation is different. Most people come in from the subway, and thus in large groups every time a train stops, yet these groups are more heterogeneous. Many families could be seen on weekends and virtually no children were spotted during the week, except for a few on Wednesday afternoon¹⁰¹, participating in the workshops offered at the mall.

During the weekend the place is in fact livelier and people do not have the robotic aura of weekdays. Still, on my last tour of the mall I could not resist to buy my baguette and enjoy the sunset from the Esplanade, like in the good old days.

¹⁰¹ Primary schools do not have classes on Wednesdays in France, thus the higher attendance of families with children on that specific weekday.

i. Emerging Findings – Les Quatre Temps

- a) Although Poupard's (2007) work was based on Créteil Soleil, the behavior of consumers at Les Quatre Temps still reflected the same pattern of "flux". The enormous quantities of anonymous people circulating seemed to follow a specific ritual, except the purpose of the ritual seemed to be the ritual itself.
- b) Lunchtime at Les Quatre Temps, in spite of the more modern and pleasant architecture, felt much like lunch at Créteil Soleil and Center Norte. People effectively seemed to be "alone in the crowd" as proposed by Bauman (2000) and social interaction at this mall seemed very similar to what is described by Poupard (2007).
- c) An underlying motive for this type of behavior might have been to socialize with peers from the office, but the key question is whether it is really socializing when you cannot hear each other talk. Is the mere physical proximity enough to characterize a social bonding ritual? Or is this physical proximity reminiscent of postmodern apathy and lack of engagement as proposed by Bauman (2000)? The sheer size of the mall and the enormous quantities of people at any given time seem to override any efforts to position the mall as upscale.

2.4.15 Créteil Soleil

PFJ-October 4th, 2011

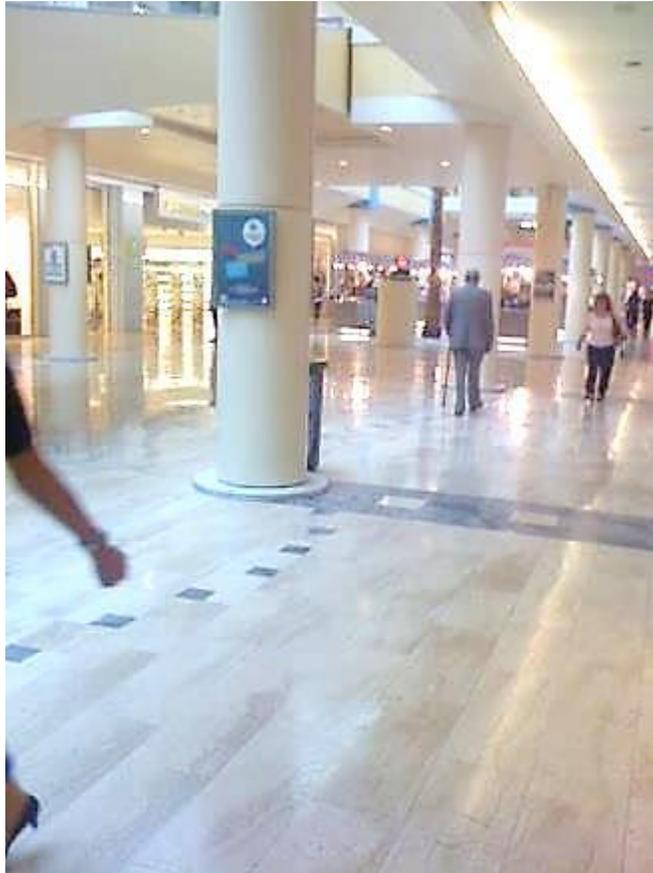
It feels like I am at Center Norte in São Paulo. Same architecture, same target.

I arrived at Créteil Soleil with a lot of expectations. It was the first shopping center in a less privileged area that I visited outside of Latin America. Until then I had not spent much time in the peripheral areas in Paris, except for La Défense. Also, having seen the work of Jean-Marc Poupard (2007) involving Créteil Soleil, I pictured an intense and exciting experience.



Photograph 102 - Main entrance. Copyright Klepierre.

However, as I arrived I felt like I was entering Shopping Center Norte, in São Paulo. The aesthetics of the two places were astonishingly similar. Both are also the leaders in sales by square meter in each of their cities and Créteil Soleil felt strangely familiar.



Photograph 103 - Corridors at Créteil Soleil. Taken by author.

The visitor pool at Créteil Soleil was very diverse, as is Center Norte's. It ranged from groups of teenagers to blue collar workers, middle class families and retired couples , depending on the times and dates. Afternoons were crowded with young people while weekends were filled with family outings.

Despite the similarity in the décor with other malls in other cities, the large groups of young people in line to subscribe to the governmental program promoting jobs in the area drew my attention. It struck me as odd since this type of public acknowledgement of government assistance would very rarely be seen at other Shopping Centers with similar characteristics, particularly in Brazil. Also, the ethnic configuration of the people in line, mostly dark skinned, called my attention.

The contrast from the inner Parisian neighborhoods I was used to visiting was impressive. Although ethnic and economic diversity is typical an expected of any cosmopolitan city, for the first time I was having contact with the social issues that I had read about.



Photograph 104 – Looking for jobs. Taken by author.

The history of teenage violence within the mall's walls contradicts Ferreira Freitas's (1996) arguments that people at shopping malls are looking for an ideal and nostalgic version of a utopian village. In fact, as in Belk's (1988; 2013) work about the extended self; life within Créteil Soleil seemed to be complementary to life outside of it.



Photograph 105 - The food court. Taken by author.

Rather than being in a different world, people acted as if at the mall they were looking for what they could not have outside, yet without losing track of “real life”. They were looking for distraction for the outside world, however they were applying for a government program that would – hopefully – make their “real life” better. Nevertheless, their prejudices and values are carried in with them.

i. Emerging findings – Créteil Soleil

- a) Ferreira Freitas (1996) suggested that shopping malls could be viewed as "neogoras" in the daily life of the cities. Life happens in its aisles and rituals seem identical in any region of the world. In fact, Créteil Soleil did not "feel" different to me as any other peripheral malls I had visited in other countries.
- b) This feeling is superficial and based on macro analysis about the environment and on the collective socialization going on at the mall. Nevertheless, another level of analysis seems necessary, the micro level of individual behaviors and how these behaviors reflect in the group experience.
- c) The government program line and ethnic violence episodes at the mall, for instance, made evident a type of behavior that is opposite to what could be seen at other places. Instead of "leaving the problems outside", people remained anchored to their everyday "profane" activities (Belk and Wallendorf, 1989).

2.2.4.16. *Le Millenaire*

Although access to the mall has been significantly improved with the expansion of public transportation in Paris, getting there still involves a significant amount of effort. That might not have been a problem if the mall provided enough attractive features for people to see it as a leisure destination. This is not the case.

PFJ- September 29th, 2012

I followed the website instructions to get to the mall, but getting there was unbelievably difficult. When I arrived to Porte de la Chapelle Metro Station, there were signs saying that buses were not running due to construction. Still, there were people at the bus stop, confused because the police had told them buses were running. After waiting for twenty minutes, I saw a taxi and decided to take it. The driver had never been to the mall and could not find it on his GPS – the street names had been changed, apparently.

Although there is natural light coming in and on the surface the shopping center appears to fulfill many of the architectural guidelines of successful shopping centers, with high ceiling and wide corridors, it lacks personality. It feels like a giant artificial place – a ghost town or a movie reconstruction of a shopping center - where nothing feels cozy or special.



Photograph 106 – Boat ride arriving at Le Millenaire. Copyright Klepierre.

In spite of the colorful, techy décor, it reminded me of the 1991 movies “Scenes from a mall” with Woody Allen and Bette Midler. I could clearly picture a remake of the movie being set there without even having to close the mall to the public. The empty corridors did not seem attractive at all, exactly like the background effect in character movies.



Photograph 107 View from the upper level. Taken by author.

In spite of having been promoted as a novelty, with exclusive shops, the mall mix is not very different from what you would find at other peripheral malls in Paris, like Créteil Soleil for instance. Nevertheless, in this case everything looks artificial and even the riverside restaurants seem uninteresting, distant and detached. In fact, reaching the restaurants once you are inside the mall

requires effort. You need to leave the mall either through the main entrances or by going through a passageway that feels like a fire escape.



Photograph 108 - Grocery carts used as strollers. Taken by author.

It is hard to think of a place in Paris that is not prepared for tourists. This was one of these cases. My credit card was rejected at many places because it did not have a chip and I had difficulty finding a place to eat every time, being forced to pay cash.

PFJ- September 29th, 2012
I felt embarrassed and was mistreated by personnel for not having a “proper card”.

The place is usually empty on weekdays, with few cashiers open even at the Carrefour. Saturdays are a little less desolated, as a few families can be seen. Very few tourists take the time to visit Le Millenaire.

The mall has also had recurring difficulties with opening hours and has not been able to open on Sundays regularly due to a battle with the unions. Without Sunday opening the mall lacks attractiveness even on the sole day when stores are not open in central Paris.

On my first visit to Le Millenaire, I looked forward to the short boat trip from Le Millenaire Pier, connecting to the Parisian subway system. Even after so much time spent in the city, the tourist in me still enjoys these little nostalgic and idealized clichés of the city that maybe never really existed, except in the collective imaginary of citizens from faraway lands.

Reality was far from the bucolic trip I was expecting. I had to endure long lines as in a subway at rush hour.

“Even when the mall is not full, there are always lines here on weekends and peak hours on weekdays. The service is free and some people take it even if they do not want to visit the mall” – Informant – Boat operator.

Guidelines were no clear to users and this created delays and discontent.

“No one said anything when I boarded to come here. Now I’m not allowed to go back on the boat. I don’t get it.” - Informant, teenage being told unaccompanied teenagers were not allowed on the boat, although there was no mention of the rule on the platform signs.

At the other side of the trip, nothing interesting was to be found. We arrived at a semi-industrial zone near La Villete, with nothing interesting to see, and relatively far from the subway station. No one could tell us whether to go right or left to reach the subway.

“Where do we go from here?” – Informant, tourist from England. (At the end of the line there were no signs directing people to the nearest subway station)



Photograph 109 Waiting for the “Navette Fluvial”. Taken by author.

The trip itself was short and we had been delivered to a stop which seemed to be in the middle of nowhere. A perfectly coherent ending to a disappointing adventure.

i. Emerging findings – Le Millenaire

- a) Le Millenaire lacks identity. It is a Shopping Center that fulfills utilitarian desires of goods and services yet devoid of the experiential and mythical experience that consumers are also aspiring for. It is consistent with Augé's (1995) notion of non-place where no bonding is formed. Not with the mall, and not with fellow visitors.
- b) Le Millenaire seems to operate under a utilitarian paradigm. But with anchor stores fighting to end contracts and leave the mall, not much seems to be left there to attract the public. And as the image of "failed" mall solidifies; it is ever more difficult to attract people. The empty isles transmit a feeling of desolation.
- c) Le Millenaire seems to fail also in terms of zoning, as proposed by Ochs (2008). There does not seem to be any logic in terms of store placement in the mall (or at least not an intuitive one) and this clearly affects mall positioning. It lacks identity at every level of analysis.

2.2.4.17. *Westfield London*

Although I had been in London before, Westfield London was my first contact with a shopping center in the UK. It is ideally located a few subway stations away from trendy neighborhoods like Notting Hill and next to three of London's expressways.

Access was easy and fast. The décor is classical and minimalistic in general, and more elegant in the Village area, where the luxury retailers are located. The caviar and Champagne bar at the center completed the scenery. The Grand piano was a nice touch.



Photograph 110 The caviar and Champagne bar. Taken by author.

Nevertheless, it felt strange to enter the mall from the subway into the Village area. The large groups of people coming in seemed to disturb the quiet atmosphere of the premium part of the mall.

PFJ-October 8th, 2011

This clearly feels like a more upscale mall. It seems odd, though, that The Village, with all the luxury boutiques, was located right at the subway entrance, generating a lot of traffic off target.

Connected through a platform, the outside restaurants had an air of a small village of the seashore, although there was no water in sight. Many were relatively upscale, although not luxurious per se. Jamie Oliver's pasta place was crowded with people, most in business attire at lunchtime on a weekday.

A variety of services were offered for clients at a fee. A long list of personal stylists is offered, with varying price tags. Hands-free shopping and home delivery are also available. A concierge service is offered throughout the mall, yet they most act as customer assistance desks, giving out information, although restaurant reservations and other tasks can be performed for a fee. The Wi-Fi connection worked amazingly fast even with the mall filled with people using their smartphones.

"I enjoy having lunch here with clients, it is central and the restaurants are good. Sometimes I even stay for a while in between client visits. The Wi-Fi service is free and works very well. I can stay connected and save time not going back to the office". – Informant, 32 year old sales representative for a tech company waiting for a client at a restaurant.

Although the aisles in the main area of the mall were never empty, they were absolutely crowded on weekends. It was surprised to see the variety of services offered at kiosks on the aisles.

At Westfield London one can find not only massage stations (as in most airports), but a full array of services ranging from trimming your eyebrows to teeth whitening, offered in kiosks in the aisles. The latter seeming the most strange to me, both for personal and hygienic reasons. For me this was a service you needed to go to a dentist office, with an appointment, and make sure the place was clear of bacteria.



Photograph 111 - Teeth whitening service, performed on the aisles. Taken by author.



Photograph 112 – Alley at Westfield London. Taken by Author.



Photograph 113 A family outing. Taken by author.

It is interesting to see how people would walk past the Village coming from the subway, yet not stay there. It was as if an imaginary wall separated these two different worlds. Instead a creating a community “that sees no differences” (Bauman, 2000), Westfield London has created two communities under one roof.



Photograph 114 - The entrance to The Village from the main mall. Taken by author.

There does not seem to be any animosity between the groups, but the fact that the Village acts as a mere passageway for the majority of the visitors, who do not even stop to see the widows at those stores may indicate that they feel as if they did not belong there.

For a different group of people, majorly young executives with successful careers, shopping at the Village represents the lifestyle that they seek to achieve and the services offered by the personal stylists perform a rite of passage (Turner, 1969; Schouten, 1991) welcoming them into a new phase of their lives.

“To be successful you need to look the part. I can’t walk into a client’s office wearing a cheap suit” – Informant, 27 year old arguing with his girlfriend over a purchase.

i. Emerging Findings – Westfield London

- a) Laburthe-Tolra and Warnier’s (1993) argue that the human being uses objects and signals to define themselves, which means that what we consume reflects what we are. Participating in activities in a public setting, such as trimming eyebrows and whitening teeth is part of the construction of cultural meaning. While advertising transfers meaning from the culturally constituted world to goods, rituals transfer meaning from goods to consumers (see McCracken, 1986; Holt, 2005).
- b) It seems clear that different communities inhabit the same physical space at Westfield London. Nevertheless, this seems to be done without major inconveniences. One possible explanation is that although the different groups have different income levels and other socio-economic differences, status consumption and the construction of a “more successful self” seems to have been a shared goal between the groups.

2.2.4.18. *Bluewater Kent*

Since the 1980's, there have been two simultaneous and opposing forces shaping the population distribution in the London and surroundings area. Certain suburbs have been populated by young childless couples who work in the city, while middle class families with young children have moved to rural suburbs where real estate prices are lower. Nevertheless, living conditions in some London and surroundings suburban zones have deteriorated considerably with the economic crisis and the city is now surrounded by a "poverty belt".

In a society where teenage violence is soaring, Bluewater puts on a great show. With a leasable area of approximately 150.000 m² over two levels, over 7.000 employees, with 7 lakes on the property and an architecture resembling a boat from the inside and a spaceship much like the Death Star from the outside, it is positioned as a leisure destination to the point that the people working at the information desks are called "concierges", and visitors are "guests", as in a hotel. It is currently the second largest shopping center in England. Nearly 30.000.000 "guests" spend on average over £130 on each visit, generating over £1.0900.000.000 in sales revenues.

PFJ Oct. 6th, 2011

Travelling through London's suburbs was a shock to me. Even though I had seen the riots on TV and new of the poor conditions part of the population lived in around London, I had clearly credited some of the reports to the idea of "journalists exaggerate in order to sell more papers". Coming from an emerging economy, one believes these things only happen in the "underdeveloped world, as we call ourselves.



Photograph 115 - Aerial view of Bluewater Shopping Centre-Copyright Lend Lease.

As sustained by Bauman (2000), consumers in temples of consumption, such as shopping malls feel like being “somewhere else”, away from everyday situations and “the dangers” of reality and that “the crowds filling the corridors of shopping malls come as close as conceivable to the imagined ideal “community” that shows no differences”. He claims that the feeling that consumers have inside a shopping center is “a near-perfect balance between freedom and security: a comfortable feeling of belonging.” (pages 91-102).

In May 2005, Bluewater announced a “code of conduct” to ban swearing, clothing that obscures the face (especially hoods and baseball caps that interfere with security cameras), and “groups of more than five without the intention to shop”. The policy generated divided opinions, although Tony Blair expressed support, and mall management claims that the action increased traffic significantly.¹⁰²

¹⁰² <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1490357/Bluewater-profits-from-hoodies-ban.html>

In fact, while Bluewater has shown growing revenues in spite of the economic crisis, the London high streets have announced declining sales. Many factors have contributed to this scenario. For families living in rural suburbs, going shopping in the city means crossing the “poverty belt” and being forced to acknowledge the reality of things. With soaring violence rates, one can only be safe if among equals and Bluewater provided this feeling of safeness. A mythical construction of the criminal youth, well explored in Hollywood movies, is performed by the suburban middle class families to solve a key contradiction of affecting their lives.

During hard economic times as consumers look for distraction from their everyday problems. Ferreira Freitas (1996) describes shopping centers as post-modern spaces that try to simulate the ideal modern town, one without pollution, traffic jams, and crime and parking problems. This consistent with Baudrillard’s (1970) view that western consumer society is one of Hyperreality, where experiences generated from consumption are more intense and involving than everyday life, and are therefore more “real” than reality itself.

“I come here on birthdays or to go to the cinema. Parking is easy and free, and there are lots of things to do.”. Informant- a 40 year old housewife from the London and surroundings area.

In fact, visitor’s opinions can be summarized in two phrases, repeated frequently:

“It is much nicer than Lakeside” and “Parking is easy and free”.

Although overwhelmingly satisfied with Bluewater in general, some consumers acknowledged that some low cost brands that they usually bought from were not present at the mall. However, this did not seem to be an inconvenience for them:

‘There is no Primark and many shops are a bit expensive. But there are quite a few high street brands. I like it this way’. Informant, Thirty five year old clerk from the rural suburbs.

Although in terms of income the public is blue collar and middle class, many of the brands are slightly more upscale (yet still accessible on a smaller scale). The mall mix is deliberately managed to stimulate the transferring the symbolic meaning from these objects of consumption to consumers’ perception of their own situation (McCracken, 1986).

Consumers may be using consumption patterns and objects to convince themselves and others to demonstrate a financial solvency that they may not have in reality.

In the picture below, families can be seen at a sushi bar during lunchtime. Although now significantly more accessible than it used to be, sushi remains positioned as a more “upscale option of fast-food” than other options. By offering an option to pay “by the piece”, consumers are tempted by the relatively low unitary price into choosing sushi over other more inexpensive options. There were no “traditional” sushi restaurants at the mall, only self-serve, by the piece options.



Photograph 116 - Families eating sushi. Taken by Author.

PFJ-October 6th, 2011

This reminds me of a spaceship. Seems like a kaleidoscopic effect. Outside a spaceship, inside a spaceship...It reminded me that I was inside of Bluewater.

Belk et al. (1989) argue that religion is not the only arena where the concept of sacredness is at play as many contemporary consumers fear, admire and treat with the extreme respect certain elements of everyday life, thus transforming them into icons and rendering them a “sacred” connotation.

The sacralization of objects, the ritualization of the shopping experiences and the performance of myths can be observed in the consumers at Bluewater.

The number of half eaten apples, flowers and pictures on display at the Bluewater Apple Store a few days after Steve Jobs died was disturbing. The store looked like a shrine.



Photograph 117 - The Apple a few days after Steve Job's death. Taken by author.

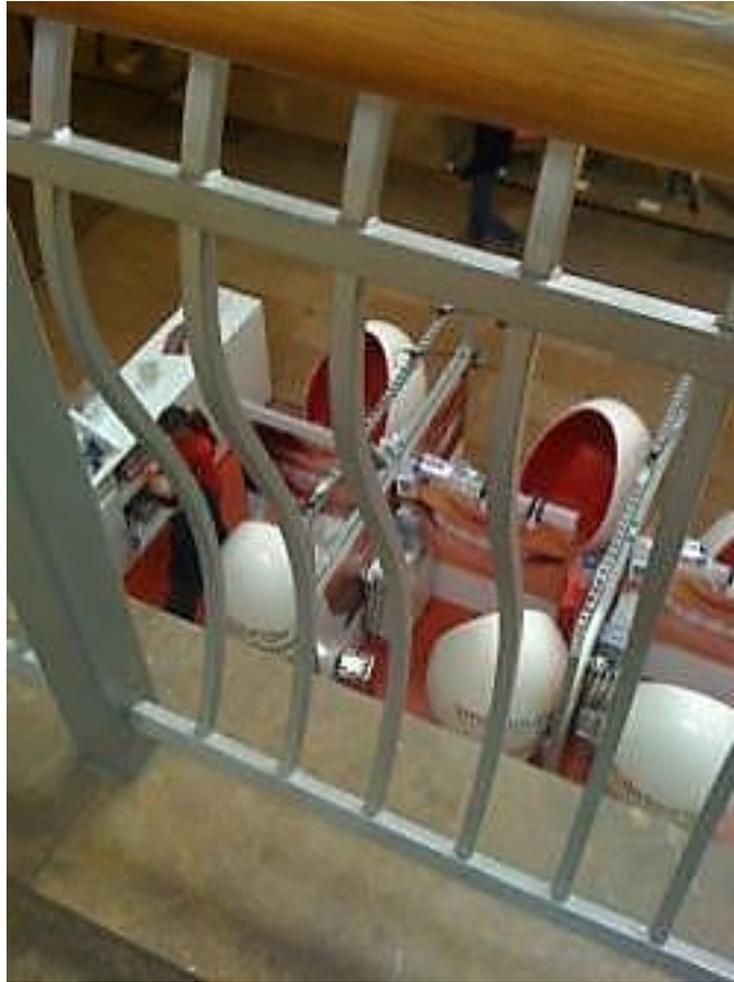
Sales were booming and later that day entire families would be opening the boxes of their new iPads, iPhones, iMacs, while they ate cheap food. Could they afford those and not the food? Or was the shopping experience more exciting that way? Would these consumers be trying to convince themselves and their community that everything was OK by consuming these goods, even if this was done at the expense of other items? Maybe the devotion to Apple products and its iconic leader could be interpreted as a symbol of the better times yet to come.

By drawing on an iconic mythical journey from their teenage years, parents engage in a nostalgic journey (Cohen and Taylor, 1976; Baudrillard, 1988; 1996; Foster, 1989; Jameson, 1989; Brown, 1999; Goulding, 2000) that contributed to the festive “mis-en -scene”.

“During winter we usually go to the movies as a family and in the summer months miniature golf and other activities are very good options. There is no need to go all the way into London to have quality family time. I’m not used to the city any more, it is too chaotic”. - Informant, mother with two young children.

People filling the aisles at the mall seem in fact to be there in search of not only products, but socialization – a search for engagement. This may explain the apparent conformity on the part of consumers to learn to drive or do beauty treatments in public: it’s not enough for people to buy the product, they need to be seen doing it, making passers-by part of the experience.

“There is something for everyone here. Everyone in the family wants to come”. –Informant, teenager waiting in line for a driving lesson.



Photograph 118 - Teeth Whitening Service on an aisle at Bluewater. Taken by Author.

*PFJ- October 8th, 2011
Hygienic considerations aside, I would never feel comfortable doing that in
front of an audience, let alone a full soccer stadium of people.*

i. Emerging findings - Bluewater

- a) The Greater London area has been severely affected by the economic crisis and there are reminders of this fact all along the way from London to Bluewater Shopping Centre. The already existing social differences appear to have been intensified over the last few years. Although controversial, measures like the Bluewater Code of Conduct have apparently attracted families who feel safe in the interior of the mall.
- b) This “code of conduct” creates a perception of safety by forcing certain groups to either conform to the rules -annihilation of the “other’s otherness”- or refrain from visiting the mall -annihilation of the “others”. (Lend Lease “Code of Conduct”, 2012). Nevertheless, this measure causes merely a perception of safeness as there is no is no proof that individuals wearing those particular pieces of clothing were violent or criminal.

2.2.4.19. *Westfield Stratford City*

Arriving at the mall from the subway was an interesting experience. Although the Olympics were over, as I saw the outline of the Olympics Stadium from a distance, I felt unexpectedly emotional for someone who is not a great fan of sports.

PFJ-September 24th, 2012

As I reached the platform at Westfield Stratford City, it reminded me of the experience I had had when I felt obliged to attend at least one College Football game during my years as a student in the US. It had been a particularly emotional Homecoming Game between Purdue and Notre Dame and marked the 30 year anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing. Twenty three astronauts, all graduates from Purdue, were present of the field and Neil Armstrong started the game. I felt like crying, as I was a part of this story just by being there as a fellow student. Yet at the same time I questioned myself why I felt that way, I was not America, not a sports fan, I never understood the rules of the game, and was never really interested in the space race. I felt the same way as I saw the London Olympic Stadium from a distance.

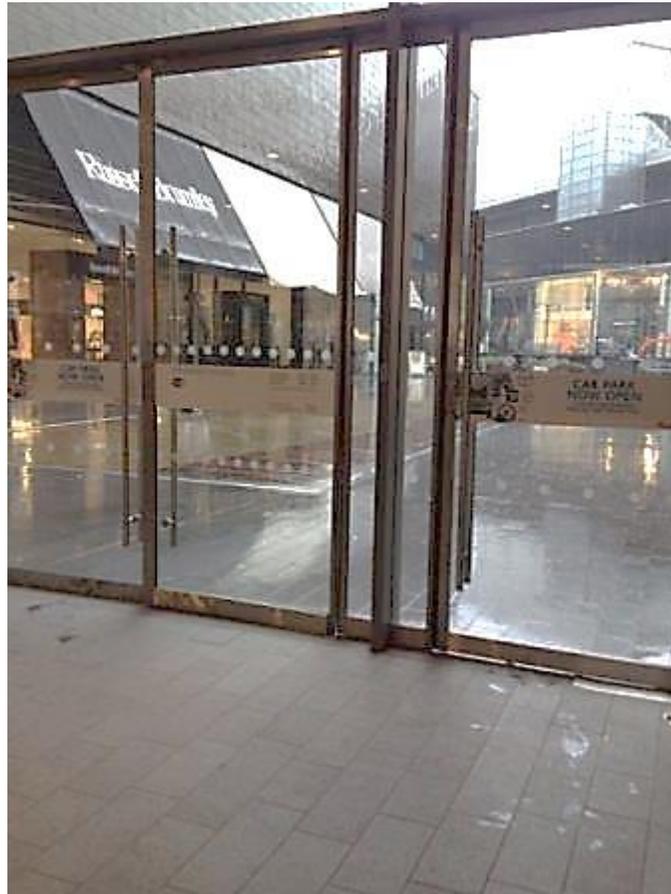


Photograph 119 - Westfield Stratford City from the train platform. Taken by author.

The Olympics were over, yet the structures stayed. The gigantic LED panels both outside and inside alternated directions ads. The reinforced the link between the mall and the games.

Entering through “The Street” the concept seemed very interesting. An outside lane, mimicking a village commercial street, with stores on both sides. Still, as I ran inside under heavy rain, I wondered how this works in the winter months.

“Miserable weather outside. Welcome to London. This is our winter, fall, summer and spring.” – Informant at the Starbucks line at the site of s soaking wet version of me.



Photograph 120 - View of “The Street” under bad weather. Taken by author.

Inside the shopping center I was surprised to see large groups of people speaking different languages, yet they did not look or act as tourists. Shopping for groceries and having haircuts were not typical touristy activities. In fact, mall management later confirmed that outside of the games' timeframe, general public is composed of mostly locals.¹⁰³. The number of veiled women also drew attention, although common in all London areas, the proportion seemed to be significantly higher here.



Photograph 121 - Middle class and blue collar visitors.

¹⁰³ Informant- Management.

Nevertheless, it felt as if the mall mix had been planned for the tourists. The mostly middle class and blue-collar crowd did not seem attracted by the upscale retailers at the mall and preferred Primark and other low budget stores, leaving the more expensive stores virtually empty.

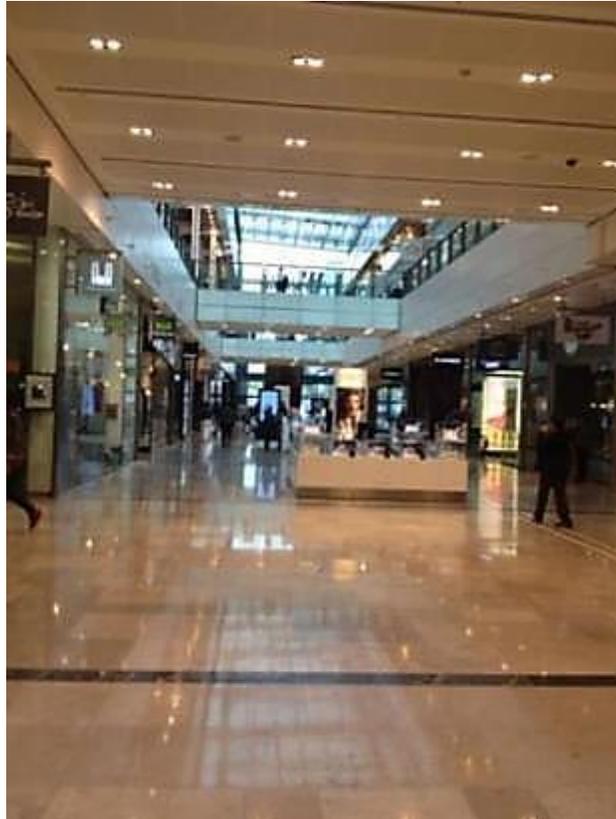
PFJ-September 24th, 2012

Some of these retailers seem off target with the public. The mall is full but no one is at the champagne bar...or at the Noshers Salmon Store...or at the multibrand luxury store for kids...No one here seems willing to buy a 200 pounds Burberry Coat for a kid...This is clearly a blue collar, maybe middle class mall...completely different from Westfield London, although architecture is not that different.



Photograph 122 - The empty champagne bar on a day of full traffic.

In fact, Management acknowledged that the mix needed to be adjusted and by 2013, some of the upscale retailers had left the mall. The mix is slowly adapting itself to the long term reality of the location. Away from the city center, yet easily connected to it, the area is being developed to attract a middle class young group of residents who prefer to stay in the city rather than move away to the suburbs.



Photograph 123 - Aisles at Westfield on a quiet morning. Taken by author.

The hotels connected to the mall are also betting on a type of tourist or business traveler who prefers to stay at standardized 3 or 4 stars chain hotel at a non-central area for the same budget as they would pay for a lower quality option more centrally located.

The services offered follow the same line as the ones available at Westfield London, yet with lesser complexity and exclusivity. There is no personal stylist, although home delivery and hands-free shopping are available.



Photograph 124 - H& M at Westfield Stratford City.

The activities for children are similar, and the Wi-Fi service is very good. In fact, at the coffee stores you can see many people working on their computers, although it seems hard to concentrate during peak hours, especially lunch time.

During weekends you see many families enjoying the day together. Under heavy rain or cold weather this trend is intensified. The frequent bad weather conditions certainly contribute to this habit of strolling the mall rather than the streets with the family.

i. Emerging Findings – Westfield London

- a) During hard economic times as consumers look for distraction from their everyday problems. Ferreira Freitas (1996) describes shopping centers as postmodern spaces that try to simulate the ideal modern town.
- b) This consistent with Baudrillard's (1970) view that western consumer society is one of Hyperreality, where experiences generated from consumption are more intense and involving than everyday life, and are therefore more "real" than reality itself. The success of "The Street" at Westfield Stratford City, in spite of the London bad weather is a good example of this.
- c) All in all Westfield Stratford City seems to be on the right track. The heterogeneous crowds filling the corridors, although not categorizing a community per se, seem to enjoy the company of each other, a sense of belonging has emerged. They seem to have a connection to the place; maybe the Olympic heritage will leave more than a memory behind.

2.2.4.20. *Brent Cross*

Until I visited Brent Cross, I had never really thought much of my condition as an “outsider” in these spaces. I had always felt like a consumer in a retail space, even if the particular shopping center I was studying would have not been one I would have chosen to visit had it not been selected for my research.

PFJ-September 25th, 2012

Got lost getting here, took the bus in the wrong direction. That allowed me to experience the neighboring Orthodox Jewish neighborhoods. I felt completely out of place while waiting to change buses at a bus stop in the Orthodox neighborhood. My tight animal print jeans felt out of place. I felt like people were looking at me, judging me. I was the “minority” there. I gave me a taste of what discriminations feels like. It later drew my attention to the fact that although there were many Arabs at the mall, not many orthodox Jews were spotted. No Kosher businesses at the mall, not even food related. I remembered Abasto Shopping in Buenos Aires and its Kosher McDonalds...

At Brent Cross I felt excluded for the first time. It was not a question of social class; rather it was the cultural codes that I did not recognize. The dress codes were different from what I could appreciate in Central London and I guess I had not come prepared for that.

I assumed I would be going to one more blue-collar / middle class mall where people would be socializing in much the same way as at other malls with similar visitor profile in terms of social-economic variables.

Instead, this was the place where the superficiality of these segmentation variables was more evident. There were many Islamic veiled women, although to as many as at Stratford City. Nevertheless, these women at Brent Cross seemed less “cosmopolitan” than the ones at Stratford City, in the sense that they interacted virtually with themselves and amongst group members.

PFJ-September 25th, 2012

Today I had a very intriguing experience at Brent Cross. As I sat down at Starbucks to organize my notes, a couple were sitting next to me. Something about their behavior seemed off, so I paid attention. It felt like a job interview. The man asked the woman personal questions and she answered visibly uncomfortable. He took notes. He then talked for a while about his job, how wonderful it was, allowing him to interact with many people, and the wonderful prospects it had. It then became clear that it was a "job interview" for a position as his wife. Eventually she left, he organized his notes and left a few minutes later.

When I was done I resumed my activities and by chance I crossed paths with the man once again. He was working at a quiosk at the mall: "Buy gold, pay cash".



Photograph 125 - Cars at the parking lot. Taken by author.

Mall mix was not significantly different than Bluewater, for instance, yet décor was a lot simpler. The malls age is evident from its architecture. Behaviors and shopping rituals were did not seem to show as much a concern with status consumption, although there was an Apple Store and it was full of people. Maybe it was just that the actions were more subtle, not explicitly demonstrating a desire to use consumption patterns as differentiating traits.

It felt like people took their time to select their purchases. Some seemed to be just promenading, although you could see shopping bags. At other places people would come in knowing what to buy and if the purchase itself was prolonged, it was simply to extend the pleasure of consumption. At Brent Cross it felt as if the people were actually making decisions at the point of sale, like old times, like before the internet.



Photograph 126 - The Apple store at Brent Cross. Taken by author.

I had a hard time finding a place to eat. Most of the choices were junk food and I ended up eating at Yo Sushi, which seemed a little healthier than other options. Thinking back, it probably was the one choice that resembled something I would have chosen voluntarily, something that had a vague resemblance to my own identity construction.



Photograph 127 - One of the corridors at Brent Cross. Taken by author.

I did not feel comfortable at all at Brent Cross. People were polite, yet this did not seem natural. It felt as if they were doing me a favor by servicing me. Most people did not seem to be enjoying themselves; rather they were engaged in a routine and did not seem to think about it much. It was like a ritual, a process that they had to get through to achieve a certain expected outcome. The large crowds at Brent Cross were in fact “alone in the crowd”, as proposed by Bauman (2000).

“I used to be a construction worker. Now I’m too old for that. I chose to work at the mall because I live near here. I can read in between clients. I never used to read before. My job is ok. I don’t make a lot of money but it’s enough, and I get to talk to people a lot. Most people here are like me, we have a lot to talk about.” – Informant, cab driver working at Brent Cross’s cab station.

i. Emerging Findings – Brent Cross

- a) Brent Cross was the place where the difference between the concepts of buying and shopping was most evident. People at Brent Cross seem to be buying what they needed, which involved a series of operations. Yet they did not seem to be looking for additional experiential benefits, as would be expected in a trip to malls like Bluewater, for instance.
- b) The mall seemed to be operating under a utilitarian paradigm of shopping, and the mall was managed under the one-stop-shopping model proposed by Central Place Theory (Eppli and Benjamin, 1994). It felt like entering a time machine and going back to the late 1970’s.

“It is not enough for theory to describe and analyze, it must itself be an event in the universe it describes. In order to do this theory must partake of and become the acceleration of this logic. It must tear itself from all referents and take pride only in the future. Theory must operate on time at the cost of a deliberate distortion of present reality.”

Jean Baudrillard

2.3 Inter-case analysis and interpretation process

Considering that the CCT tradition in consumer research has originated in calls for researchers to explore the often overlooked experiential, social, and cultural dimensions of consumption in context (Belk 1987a, 1987b; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982 cited by Arnould and Thompson, 2005), this work takes into account the contextual factors which may be influencing shopping and consuming experiences at shopping centers in each location and the role of these shopping and consuming experiences in the processes of consumer identity construction. Each of the proposed research questions is therefore addressed in the following sections.

After each case was analyzed, a list of emerging findings for each case was prepared. The case by case narratives were then revised and complemented in light of new emerging constructs before the cross-case analysis phase would begin.

Once the case by case analysis was finished, a continuous coding system organized findings so that similarities and differences across cases could emerge. Similar ideas and concepts were then organized around macro themes that were somehow relevant across cases and related to the original research questions.

As has been previously mentioned, although a lot goes on at each of the selected shopping centers covered by this work, themes were selected with the goals of this research in mind: analyzing similarities and differences in the shopping experiences produced and undergone at shopping centers in the Greater Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Paris and London areas. This analysis was carried out considering the agentic roles by the different players that interact at these commercial spaces on a daily basis (consumers, mall operators, retailers, brands, etc.) so as to provide insights for managers operating in these markets.

Although it examines experiences produced by consumers and by managers independently, its main focus is co-produced experiences, where both managers and consumers intervene. This analysis therefore privileges the framework proposed by Carù and Cova (2007) where experiences are analyzed “on continuum”.

As is typical of inductive research, the initial research questions are broad in spectrum and therefore the researcher must “follow the data” and develop constructs through pattern recognition. Theory emerges as themes develop within and across cases as the researcher searches for their underlying logical arguments (Eisenhardt 1989b; Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007).

The idea of the following section is to discuss the emerging themes that have been observed to arise in more than one case. This process aims at looking for similarities and differences across cases, without any necessary attachment to geographical regions. However, although some themes were clearly relevant in more than one city, others seemed to have a strong connection to geographical areas.

During this process nine themes were developed: (1) the role of commercial spaces in heterogeneous group socialization; (2) mythical constructions and the ritualistic performances in conspicuous status consumption; (3) a non-place or a medium for community building; (4) the role of servicescapes during hard economic times; (5) the co-construction of consuming and shopping experiences through mythical and ritualistic performances; (6) Conformity / disconformity with codes of conduct (written and unwritten); (7) transformation of servicescapes with changes in society; (8) place attachment in retail environments; (9) shopping malls as public goods.

Themes were then organized in the following table. It was observed that themes (4); (7); (8) and (9) were recurrent at all malls, while other themes emerged at some, but not all studied sites. The degree to which these themes were relevant varied across cases, and the next sections explore these similarities and differences in detail. Based on a continuous coding system, the nine emerging themes were then regrouped into three macro themes that could better address the research questions proposed at the beginning of this research project.

	Emerging Findings																			
	Greater Buenos Aires				Greater Rio de Janeiro				Greater São Paulo				Greater Paris				Greater London			
	Patio Bullrich	Alto Palermo	Abasto	Unicenter	Rio Sul	Leblon	Barra Shopping	São Conrado	Iguatemi SP	Cidade Jardim	Morumbi Shopping	Center Norte	Parly 2	Les Quatre Temps	Créteil Soleil	Le Millenaire	Westfield London	Bluewater	Westfield Stratford City	Brent Cross
The role of commercial spaces in heterogeneous group socialization	★		★	★	★	★	★		★	★	★	★		★	★		★	★	★	
Mythical constructions and ritualistic performances in conspicuous status consumption	★				★	★	★	★	★	★	★		★				★	★	★	
A non-place or a medium for community building		★	★	★	★		★	★			★	★		★	★	★			★	★
The role of servicescapes under hard economic times			★	★	★						★		★	★			★	★	★	★
The co-construction of consuming and shopping experiences through mythical and ritualistic performances	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Conformity / disconformity with codes of conduct (written and unwritten)	★		★	★	★	★				★	★	★	★	★	★		★	★	★	★
Transformation of servicescapes with changes in society	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Place attachment in retail environments	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Shopping malls as public goods	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★

Figure 21 – Emerging Findings



2.4. Theoretical discussion of emerging findings across cases

The following sections provide a theoretical discussion of each of the macro themes developed and the cross-cultural implications of these findings. Three macro themes emerged across cases: (1) The servicescapes meaning in current times; (2) Heterogeneous community collaboration and the co-construction of shopping experiences; (3) Conspicuous status consumption and social mobility in a liquid contemporary world.

2.4.1. The servicescapes meaning in current times

Several aspects of the role of servicescapes in current times have emerged from the findings. This theme was recurrent across all cases, although to different degrees and sometimes with different implications for different cases. The different facets of the theme are closely interconnected and are discussed in detail in the following sub-sections.

2.4.1.1. *Are shopping centers places or spaces?*

Shopping centers have been at the center of the discussion on the symbolic meaning of commercial spaces. Goulding et al. 2009 and Cova et al. 2007, cited in Canniford 2011) propose that shopping malls are places for tribal socialization. Since tribes rarely dominate the everyday life of the consumers and instead partition the working week, tribal members may thus display multiple group memberships and temporary affiliations as they engage in active play with marketplace resources.

Arguably, the shopping mall represents contemporary palaces although some authors believe they are in fact “placeless”, rather than places (Woodruff-Burton et al.; 2002). In fact, Visconti et al. (2010) sustain that the notion of space traditionally refers to something anonymous (Augé, 1995), whereas place typically refers to the meaningful experience conveyed by a given site, a “consumed space” (Sherry 1998; Tuan 1977 in Visconti et al. 2010).

Places are therefore more than spaces, they are seen as a result of the interaction of various agents, and become the “significant centers of our immediate experiences of the world” (Relph 1976 in Visconti et al. 2010). This attribution of meaning, and thus conversion of a space into a place, operates through a process of space appropriation involving behaviors and emotions leading to the creation of a “sense of belonging” permeated with symbolic meaning (Aubert-Gamet 1997; Fisher 1992; Lefebvre 1974; Low 1992 in Visconti et al. 2010).

This analysis implies that those shopping centers which have successfully managed to become treasured places can be viewed as “spaces for tribal socialization” while those who have not managed to sustain a more durable and symbolic relationship with its consumers can be seen as “placeless”. Nevertheless, success and failure of shopping malls cannot be explained

solely by this dichotomy as some of the shopping centers studied seemed operational successful in spite of their “placeless” status.

In fact, Shopping Alto Palermo in Buenos Aires and Shopping Morumbi in Sao Paulo, for instance, are both extremely profitable although they can be categorized as “placeless”. Both of those malls successfully operate under an utilitarian paradigm.

On the other end of the spectrum we have Le Millenaire in Paris. It is true that it in Paris has shown sustained difficulties since its opening, but this failure cannot be solely explained by its “placeless” status. Operational difficulties have also impaired its ability to successfully function under a utilitarian paradigm.

2.4.1.2. Place attachment and homeyness

Debenedetti et al. (2014) propose that commercial places can become treasured, special places when they create a sense of homeyness (McCracken 1989) by providing an experience that goes beyond what consumers believe that the market usually offers. This experience encompasses a blend of familiarity, authenticity, and security that is interpreted as an experience of homeyness characterized by the way people engage with the place and its inhabitants: familiar individuals - rather than anonymous staff - and a personalized service setting.

According to the authors, treasured commercial places are seen as authentic, meaning that they are genuine; irreplaceable and not limited to commercial intent (see Holt, 2002; Grayson and Martinec, 2004; Beverland and Farrelly 2010). Authenticity is in fact perceived and constructed, rather than being an objective characteristic of goods or experiences (Grayson and Martinec 2004 in Debenedetti et al. 2014).

This is consistent with findings from Bardhi, Eckhardt and Arnould (2012) that had shown that global nomads develop a sense of “home” through situational - and therefore mutable - attachment to possessions and practices. They argue that people can in fact develop (or construct) a feeling of homeyness from building relationships and temporary attachments. Treasuring a place can thus be achieved through an acquired meaning that relates to a particular liminal situation in a person’s life.

Treasured places offer a physical, social, and symbolic protection from the outside world through social interaction and mythical connotations (Holt 2002). Visitors feel secure in a place where they believe they are among equals. However, such environments protect but also partially expose the intimacy of individuals (Aubert-Gamet and Cova 1999).

These places provide a space where conventional rules of supply and demand are seen as more flexible and as a result, the commercial and transaction-related characteristics and benefits become peripheral to the homey and non-market characteristics of the setting. Practices as Shopping Cidade Jardim giving away free passes to valet parking; and Shopping Fashion Mall sending clothes home to “special clients” to try out without necessary committing to purchase are clear examples of these flexibilization practices. Sharing (Belk, 2010) and gift giving (Sherry, 1983) become the lenses through which the consumer interprets the place experience and convert anonymous spaces into treasured places (Debenedetti et. al. 2014).

These practices can also aid in explaining price insensitivity in some contexts. For instance, at all of the more upscale shopping malls in Latin America consumers were willing to buy luxury products at a premium price if compared to what these same products would cost overseas.

For these consumers the price premiums charged were no secret. Although many of those consumers were frequent travelers, they were often willing to pay extra to acquire them at those malls. Being recognized and “treated as special” were some of the more frequent reason given by consumers for this behavior. They chose to view high prices as proxy for high quality¹⁰⁴.

Nevertheless, this process can also be subliminal at times. Community building practices can also culminate in place attachment. For instance, the “code of conduct” at Bluewater also contributes to the feeling of homeyness as a certain type of consumer perceives the place as “safe”. The exclusion of one group can create a sense of homeyness for another group: being among equals.

Other aspects of management of the servicescape can have similar effects. The renovated décor at Parly 2, for instance, makes reference to familiar aspects of French culture and to a time when Paris was at the center of the fashion revolution. It resorts to a symbolic, nostalgic notion of Paris as a means to constructing perceived authenticity in fashion retailing.

As in conventional gift-giving practices, the “gift” of access to a homey place in a market setting leads to reciprocating behaviors toward the gift giver. Attached consumers demonstrate an enthusiasm and sense of commitment toward the place, as well as an engagement that goes beyond exchange norms. This engagement can happen online and offline and relate to the concept of the extended self as proposed by Belk (1988; 2013; Debenedetti et al. 2014).

The authors further argue that consumers make themselves at home by getting involved in exclusive activities and in turn support the place through “over-reciprocation” or ambassadorship: actively recruiting selected

¹⁰⁴ Quality is understood here a a combination of product and service superiority.

members of the consumer's personal network to the place, thus responding to domestic cues in the treasured commercial setting. However, although sharing similar aesthetic values as the other customers, they otherwise remain unconnected.

Treasured places serves as a "gravity pull" for groups of loyal consumers who share admiration for the same object, place, or brand and engage in "a chain of tripartite gift giving", without necessarily forming a community per se. This is similar to Bauman's (2000) concept of the individual being "alone in the crowd" in commercial spaces and is again coherent with the feeling of security awarded by simply being "among equals".

Consumers at shopping malls share their experiences with "complete strangers" who have the same interests and thus no longer expect only immediate individual rewards, but rather enjoy the collective benefits of the experience. This is further enhanced by the creation of a digital memory (Belk 2013), which would explain the postings on social networks of visits to shopping malls.

Managers collaborate in this process by providing ways for customers to proactively engage with the place, through "exclusive services" offered to loyal consumers or through other means of interaction, promoting a sense of belonging and thus awarding a feeling of border crossing, while keeping control of the space and service. This is a process of interagency and co-production of consumer experiences in which consumers and producers successively take control (Kozinets et al. 2004; Sherry, Kozinets, and Borghini 2007).

Several of the shopping centers studied have been successfully converted from spaces to places though this process and were transformed into treasured places. Nevertheless, some have subsequently lost this status over

the years due to several factors among which are constant changes in strategy and trying to be “all things to all people”.

This would be the case for instance of RioSul and Shopping Morumbi in Brazil. This demonstrates that this process of co-production of shopping and consuming experiences is in fact a liquid relationship. It can mutate over time and is in fact constructed through active participation of all stakeholders over time.

Other Shopping malls consistently operate under a more utilitarian paradigm and do not seem seek the status of treasured place. This would be the case for instance of Alto Palermo in Buenos Aires. Yet another group of shopping malls cannot go beyond the status of non-place in spite of attempts to do so. This is for instance the case of Le Millenaire in Paris. Although failure to acquire the intended status may be correlated with operational servicescape factors such as zoning, opening hours, décor and other infra-structure questions, it also seems to be affected by external symbolic factors, or in other words how consumers perceive that seeing and being seen at specific places will affect their identity construction processes.

2.4.1.3. Consumption myths and rituals in a public place

Co-created experiences in retail spaces are often based on consumption myths, often promoted by management through various marketing strategies including advertising. Lévi-Strauss (1958) describes myths as binary oppositions, or tools which provide a logical model to resolve a contradiction in a person's belief system.

This means that when faced with a contradiction, people search for an explanation which will allow them to resolve the situation. He sustains that the essence of myths (mytheme) is similar across cultures, but the different stories are a result of language differences (Lévi-Strauss 1958).

Along the same lines, Holt (2003) and Cordiner (2011) argue that society needs myths and simple stories to help them cope with the tensions and contradictions of everyday life, and that the most successful brands are the ones who manage to do that effectively.

Mythical constructions of certain social economic groups are expressed in the opinions of many of the informants in various malls and regulate the choice of “where to shop”. Many of these associations are supported by branding efforts and as a result mall visits are often seen as a “doorway” to a desired group membership.

These visits are frequently constructed through the “ritualization” of the client experience (Rook 1985; Stanfield Tetreault and Kleine III 1990; Schouten 1991 a and b; Holt 1992; Arnould 2001; Cochoy 2005; Ochs 2006; Sherry and Fischer 2009; Lemoine and Badot 2008; Badot and Lemoine, 2009).

Official rituals punctuate the life of a society by regulating the relationship between profane and sacred (Van Gennep 2004) and the reactivation of traditions in order to guide on these occasions (Belk 1990). Rook (1985), sustains that “rituals are expressive and symbolic activities that can be made from a multitude of behaviors that occur in a fixed sequence, and tending to recur over time “with formality, seriousness and intensity”.

Rituals are often accompanied by the consumption or the use of objects that are related to the conduct forming the basis of the ritual. In fact, according to Cova (1995), many products marketed by companies are in essence “ritualistic artifacts” playing a role in contemporary consumption rituals. In this sense, sales promotions anchored by sweepstakes offering luxury cars or trips to Europe and the United States are an effective way to reach consumers in emerging economies aspiring to move up the social ladder.

Additionally, consumers' repetitive behavior and frequent visits to the same mall, for instance at lunch time, may be seen as a ritualistic performance. Even though these visits are many times justified by limited options outside the mall and the opportunity to go shopping, the fact is that the long lines and time constraints severely limit both the choice and the shopping opportunities.

Lunch time at the mall is thus in fact a sharing ritual, where experiences are shared with colleagues from the office rather than a shopping opportunity. Meals and time are shared and help build a sense of community and to strengthen social bonding and group membership. This is consistent with the analysis carried out by Altman and Baruch (2010) of the corporate lunch. Going to a specific shopping mall for lunch is both a bonding ritual and an identity construction process. The presence of a GYM as many of the Brazilian malls can in fact contribute to this ritualistic behavior as it promotes more frequent visits to the mall.

Some of these rituals can be categorized as "rites of passage". Yet Altman and Holmes (2005) suggest care when applying the concept of "rites of passage" developed by Van Gennep (2004) in contemporary management research.

They argue that in Van Gennep's (2004) framework, rites of passage were ceremonial and irreversible while not all applications of the concept in management literature are coherent with this condition. In fact, according to Van Gennep (2004), incomplete rites of passage create a state of liminality, in which the individual is unable to advance or to go backward. In today's liquid social structures (Bauman, 2000), the authors suggest that this lingering state of liminality is in fact rarely evoked.

Nevertheless, Altman and Baruch (2010) further propose that the evolution of structures, both physical and symbolic, may characterize a rite of passage¹⁰⁵. Under this line of thought, the ritualistic re-launch of a brand may be a rite of passage marking the evolution of management thought at corporate headquarters. Once the central ideals surrounding the brand evolve; it is difficult to go back to the previous state. This type of management process is therefore more in line with Van Gennep's (2004) idea of rites of passage.

On the side of the consumer in this ritualistic equation, we can however acknowledge that once a certain type of status and social class membership is acquired through consumption, returning to a previous standing is possible yet it is both avoided at all costs and arguably the return to the previous condition is never complete. One key example is tourism: once a different place is visited, memories are retained and a return to a previous state of unawareness is not possible (Lash and Urry 1994). An analogy can be made to the branding process in a company: once a personal brand is successfully constructed, going back to the previous state is not possible since the process entailed an evolution in the person's mindset.

At many of the shopping malls studied, social class membership is publicly acquired through ritualistic consumption and sustained by a public display, both online and offline of this status. This would be the case for instance of Bluewater, Westfield London, Parly 2, Patio Bullrich, Iguatemi SP, Shopping Cidade Jardim and Fashion Mall.

¹⁰⁵ Altman and Baruch (2010) study the lunch break in organizations and describe the farewell party marking the remodeling of an executive restaurant with formal seating arrangements into a informal self-service cafeteria with looser structures as a rite of passage representing the changes in organization dynamics.

In all of those cases, even though socio-economic conditions may have varied in recent years, the mall symbolically represents an acquired state that consumers fight to maintain. Continuing to visit the mall and purchasing certain types of products represents this membership. Posts in social networks aid in preserving the memories and contribute to the liminality of this process as the posts are preserved in time.

2.4.1.4. *Searching for a mythical paradise?*

Belk et al. (1989) sustain that all human beings need to believe in something more "powerful and extraordinary". The sacred is defined as "more significant, powerful and extraordinary than the self" and is hence differentiated from what is considered simply "special". According to Van Gennep (2004), the sacred quality is not absolute, but rather created by a particular situation, based on the importance of the relevant event.

The sacred is thus characterized in part by its antagonism to profane. The profane would be the ordinary, the routine, everyday life. The sacred has kratophanous power, an ability to simultaneously provoke strong positive feelings, as in devotion and strong negative feelings, as in fear (Belk et al. 1989; Belk and Wallendorf, 1990; Pimentel and Reynolds 2004). Sacredness is therefore a result of a collective process by which the use of certain things is restricted and is given an extraordinary meaning for a community. (Durkheim, 1975, cited by Belk et al., 1989).

The authors suggest that while contemporary Western religions characterize as sacred "certain gods, shrines, clothing, days, relics, and songs" non-Western religions sacralize natural objects with the same purpose. According to them, whereas in some societies the sacred consists of magic, shamanism, animism, and totemism, in contemporary Western religion, the distinction between what is deemed sacred and what is considered profane is also important, even if the foundation of what is judged sacred vary.

They also maintain that religion is not the only arena where the concept of sacredness is at play and suggest that consumption involves more than the processes by which individuals and societies fulfill their routine demands. Consumption may become the means through which people experience the divine and thus consumer behavior presents certain aspects of the sacred.

Contemporary consumers fear, admire and treat with the extreme respect certain elements of everyday life, thus transforming them into icons and rendering them a sacred connotation. The devotion to national flags and sporting teams can be viewed as a form of sacralization of otherwise profane objects. Money would thus possess kratophanous power (Fernandez, Veer and Lastovicka 2007).

According to Baudrillard (1988; 1996), in the contemporary world everything has been done and nothing else can be created. Since aesthetic innovation is no longer possible, society is forced into a stage of nostalgia, mimicking dead styles and remaining imprisoned in the past (Jameson 1989).

Cohen and Taylor (1976) maintain that one way to cope with the contemporary world may be to revert to the utopian sanctuary of the past, which is thought to be less challenging than the present (Foster, 1989). This would explain, for instance, consumer obsession for retro products and the success of heritage attractions (Brown, 1999; Goulding 2000). This is consistent for instance with the strategy applied in the new décor at Parly 2, referencing a nostalgic period of the past with strong symbolic roots to the fashion world.

The symbolic role of landscaping in contemporary shopping centers

Some of the Shopping Centers visited had gardens embedded in the décor and particularly Shopping Cidade Jardim and Shopping Fashion Mall were built surrounding tropical gardens while Bluewater has seven landscaped lakes in the property. It has been argued that gardens have political functions (Mukerji, 1997). They are viewed as a necessary break and contrast to the rigidity of city life, "escape attempts" from the uncertainty of contemporary living, a cure to the harms of contemporary consumer culture.

Gardens may even be credited religious or spiritual connotations (Cohen and Taylor, 1976; Hamilton, 1997; Dunnett and Qasim, 2000). A garden space recreates a sanctuary or paradise through a simulacrum (Baudrillard, 1984; Hower, 2003). Cooper-Marcus (1993) suggests that the rebirth in the popularity of gardening could be a response to modern technology through a barely conscious search for the mythical Garden of Eden or the oasis of Shambhala, a "quiet garden enclosed on all sides and symbolizing protection from the outside world" (Hamilton, 1997: 15).

Both Shopping Cidade Jardim and Shopping Fashion Mall are built in areas of the city where socio-economic contrasts are evident. The areas located between London and Bluewater are also full of contrasts. These regions house both ends of the social pyramid: the extremely rich and the extremely underprivileged. Quiet gardens may cater to consumers desire to ignore – even if only for a short period – these contrasts and the tensions that inevitably emerge from them.

Although additional contributions from the postmodern optic to CCT have been called into question (Cova et al., 2013), amidst social and economic instability, the magical and hyperreal servicescape offered by places such as Bluewater – which does not have gardens per se, but its seven lakes are accordingly landscaped- Shopping Cidade Jardim, Fashion Mall and even Parly 2 may in fact be operating under a postmodern logic.

The case of Bluewater is exemplar. Its hyperreal environment may provide the consumers with the ideal settings to aspire for better times, as sustained by Arnould et al. (1999), “In postmodernity, magic may reemerge from the margins of modern thought to ritualize hope and optimism and to reinscribe us in a meaningful cultural milieu...”. Jameson (1989) pointed out this need for a ‘nostalgic return’ and the resemblance of the Bluewater’s architecture to the Death Star is particularly relevant.

Conversely, in the case of Shopping Cidade Jardim, the same principle applies although with a different outcome. The incipient social mobility in the country can also be seen as a form of social instability as it has awarded to a larger group of consumers access to a lifestyle that was previously a privilege of the traditional elite.

This emerging middle classes and the “new rich” do not always share the same codes of conduct of the traditional elite and are often seen as a threat in the power struggle within the country’s society. The services offered try to alleviate these power struggles by offering a form for the emerging elites to comply with these codes. Landscaping can therefore be viewed as an effort by management to produce a “peaceful and pleasant” environment, where everyday tensions are minimized and social differences can be blurred into the background.

2.4.1.5. *Are shopping centers public goods?*

It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish private from public spaces as multiple actors are involved in the process of appropriation (Dowding and Dunleavy, 1996 in Clarke and Bradford, 1998). Collective goods involve claims from various stakeholders and thus incite multiple agentic behaviors, sometimes opposing (see Visconti et al., 2010 for an extensive review).

Recent outbreaks of social movements in different parts of the world have opened a debate over the property of public and commercial goods. Large scale demonstrations in various parts of the world, flash mobs at shopping centers in the US, “rolezinhos”¹⁰⁶ in Brazil, riots in London and Paris accompanied of the destruction of commercial spaces, looting in Buenos Aires; all have opened the debate on what are the legally correct and ethically acceptable measures to take under these circumstances. These discussions are closely related to the collective notion of property of public goods.

According to Visconti et al (2010), goods become public when a collectivity of citizens attributes itself a shared ownership over them”. Recent events have shown a public desire to claim shared ownership over public and commercial spaces. This debate has moved the discussion of a topic – sharing property ownership - traditionally connected to a personal context “the interior world of the home” to the arena of consumer culture (Belk, 2010).

In fact, Belk (2013) argues that “sharing versus proprietary ownership has entered a new and important era of context (page 730). Consumer researchers (Belk, 2007, 2008, 2010; Epp and Price, 2008; Ozanne and Ozanne, 2008 in Visconti et al., 2010) have studied sharing practices

¹⁰⁶ See section 2.2.4.5 on RioSul for a discusión on this issue.

involving “joint ownership, voluntary lending and borrowing, pooling and allocation of resources, and authorized use of public property” (Belk 2008: 2).

Belk (2010) has proposed the application of some of the private practices of sharing – commonly used and accepted in family settings- in the realm of public goods. He claims that within the family, shared things are de facto joint possessions and “their use requires no invitation, generates no debt, and may entail responsibilities as well as rights.” However, he sustains that responsibilities over shared properties may comprise “taking care not to damage shared possessions, not overusing these things to the detriment of other family members, and cleaning up so that others will find these resources in a similar state of readiness for their own use” (page 716).

According to him, such responsibilities underscore a difference between shared possession and sole ownerships, as sole ownership of something implies more freedom at will. This suggests that permission needs to be granted to borrow personal (i.e. private) possessions while joint possessions can be used without previous consent.

This notion would be coherent with an understanding of shopping centers and other commercial spaces as shared public goods. In fact, these commercial settings, although legally a private possession, can only remain operant as long as they are open to the general public, no invitation is needed and no debt is created through the use. Nevertheless, care for the integrity of the property is expected.

Shopping center visitors are therefore stakeholders in the transformation of commercial settings from spaces with no identity into places with symbolic meanings. Under this scenario, shopping center visitors would be bound by the codes of conduct applied to shared possessions: they award rights (i.e.

right of access) but demand responsibility (i.e. preservation) of the shared good.

A differentiation must therefore be made between the legal property of real estate and business assets and the communal property of the symbolic place. Under the real estate paradigm (Ochs and Badot, 2008) according to which the first modern shopping centers were conceived, ownership was clearly assigned to the legal business owners. Under the experiential paradigm of shopping centers, this division becomes blurred and shared ownership results from the various agentic players' interactions.

This view would therefore support the claim by mall operators in various countries – and particularly in Brazil over the last year - that in order to guarantee the preservation of the shared property and the integrity of its users, access may be subject to control. Thus, massive social movements exceeding the capacity of the property and the safety rules dictated by law - and sometimes with violent expected outcomes- might in fact warrant the issuing of injunctions to ban entry. This approach would not be inconsistent with the concept of shared property, as entry is denied in favor of the communal good.

On the other hand, banning the entry of a handful of peaceful protesters or individual visitors on the basis of racial or social profiling goes against the same code of conduct as it treats the shared good as if it were a private property. Managers cannot “pick and choose” who to give access the mall as the same constitution that allows for injunctions to be awarded in order to prevent property destruction and safety risks, guarantees equal treatment to all persons indistinct of ethnic origin and socio-economic standing. This is a fine line that mall operators need to learn to navigate.

This is a theme that is evident across cases, although in Brazil it is now a well discussed issue both in legal courts and in mass media and social media. Nevertheless, although shopping malls were not “in the eye of the storm” during social unrest in Paris, London and Buenos Aires recently, this discussion is relevant in all of the cities studied.

It is also interesting to highlight that social unrest in Buenos Aires lately has often been connected with the destruction of government managed public property yet rarely has it involved private property. This is significantly different from what has been the case in all other cities studied. One possible explanation for this is that anger with the current socio-economic conditions in Argentina has been strongly connected with government policies and individual government officials and not at the “system”. Argentina has only one strong political party and the opposition is poorly articulated, which is not the case in the other three countries.

Exclusion mechanisms in retail spaces

Clarke and Bradford (1998) complement the interpretation of public space and place by introducing the distorting effect applied by the market on people’s experience of urban settings. They argue that collective activity is largely confined to commercial “playgrounds” - such as shopping centers - that inevitably exclude some social groups: “The ideological power of the term ‘private’ serves to occlude the presence of those for whom the market fails” (Clarke and Bradford 1998, 884–85).

Nevertheless, this vision of exclusion mechanisms seems to leave out groups which are not necessarily “failed by the market”. In light of globalization processes and social mobility in the contemporary, liquid world, the same principle of rejection can be applied to emerging middle classes and the “new rich” as compared to the traditional elites - the keepers of the “cultural

capital” (Bourdieu 1984) that supposedly differentiates the “best” from the “rest”.

Baudrillard (1970) considers that in a society of simulation, identities are created through the seizure of images and signs and this new social order regulates how individuals perceive themselves and interact with others. Unwritten rules and codes of conduct organize the communities built in commercial places such as shopping centers. Management co-produces these experiences by adjustments in the servicescape, as proposed by Bitner (1992), some of which are executed through the implementation of codes of conduct, written and unwritten.

Levi-Strauss (1955) explains that personal differences between individuals in a society have been treated throughout history by two methods, the annihilation of the “others” or the annihilation of the other’s “otherness”. He calls the first strategy “anthropoemic”, and contemporary forms of this process are visible for instance in the toughening of immigration laws and the formation of urban ghettos. The second strategy, which he calls “anthropophagic”, involves the absorption of minority groups and consequent forced acculturation process. Bauman (2000) correlates these two strategies with categories of public spaces, suggesting a strong connection between commercial spaces and Levi-Strauss’s (1955) anthropophagic strategy.

Practices employed by shopping centers banning the entry of certain groups are explicit and purposely exclusive and depict an effort to “annihilate the others”. The code of conduct at Bluewater purposely alienates certain groups in favor of middle class and blue collar suburban families.

Nevertheless, this measure causes merely a perception of safeness as there is no proof that individuals dressed in stereotyped ways or with certain ethnic characteristics were either violent or criminal. In fact, by applying these

tactics, mall management may simply be alienating significant groups of youth subculture who differentiate themselves from their peers by the way they dress, among other things.

Baseball caps are, for instance, typical of hip-hop culture and skater groups, and there is no proven empirical correlation between those groups and youth violence. Actually, there is growing middle class membership in both those groups and several authors sustain that more important than the types of goods consumed is the way in which these goods are consumed (see for instance Hennion, 2001; Holt, 1997; Savage and Prieur, 2012; Lizardo, 2012).

A mythical construction of the criminal youth, well explored in Hollywood movies, is performed by middle class families to solve a key contradiction of affecting their lives. They credit these measures for making the mall “safe” by excluding the “threats” and respond with longer and more frequent visits. This process in fact creates a counter-cyclical effect in sales: as the adverse social-economic scenario and the economic crisis persist, sales increase at certain malls the expense of sales in high streets.

On the other hand, practices engaged by upscale and luxury malls - particularly at Shopping Cidade Jardim and London Westfield - such as offering personal stylists and holding fashion shows on their aisles are more covert and act as a catalyzer in a process of “annihilation of others’ otherness” By minimizing differences in cultural capital, management attempts to increase the visitor pool with members of one group without alienating different groups. Whether explicit or covert, these practices create a perception of safety by forcing certain groups to either conform to the rules -annihilation of the “other’s otherness”- or refrain from visiting the mall -annihilation of the “others”.

Community is built and affected by its members and influenced by the context in which it is inserted. Therefore, not only shop owners and mall management are concerned with the outcome of these actions, but also visitors, employees, the general public, the press - and even the government - are all stakeholders in this market system. Although exclusion processes have always been part of any society's structure, in the liquid contemporary world where structures are more permeable, it seems that practices of the first type – alienation of others – are no longer viewed by a large proportion of the population as ethically acceptable, thus the negative response of certain society groups to the closing of malls after the “rolezinhos” in Brazil.

2.4.2. Heterogeneous community collaboration and the co-construction of shopping experiences

Although the concentration of diverse minority groups in urban areas is becoming rather frequent (i.e. Orthodox Jews and Gays at the Parisian Marais; Immigrants from different origins at certain New York City hoods), the phenomenon of heterogeneous community has been given relatively little attention in consumer culture research. For the most part, research on community has privileged the homogeneity of groups (Thomas et al. 2013).

However, recent studies on heterogeneous communities have found that these groups question the validity of this prevailing framework and demonstrate how resource co-dependency favors collaboration in heterogeneous communities in spite of tensions (see Arnould et al. 2006; Beverland et al. 2010; DeLanda 2006; Latour 2005; Schouten et al. 2010 and Thompson et al. 2013) Nevertheless, previous studies are based primarily on inter-group heterogeneity in a mainstream consumption community and do not assess the applicability of these concepts to heterogeneous retail environments where multiple groups interact.

If we consider that shopping malls are in fact shared goods between the “legal property owners” and the sometimes heterogeneous groups who visit the mall, as proposed earlier on in this work, this study provides a unique opportunity to analyze how these groups resolve tensions and contribute to the co-construction of shopping experiences.

At many of the studied malls, majority consumer groups interact with various minority consumer groups on a daily basis (i.e. Shopping Abasto, Patio Bullrich, Créteil Soleil; Center Norte, Westfield Stratford City; Brent Cross) while at others power struggles are embedded in the daily lives of visitors (BarraShopping, RioSul, Shopping Cidade Jardim, Fashion Mall, Shopping Iguatemi, Unicenter, Alto Palermo).

Management is also a group of stakeholders that in many cases have opposing goals to those of both majority and minority consumer groups. For instance, shopping mall management goes to great lengths to avoid the massive presence of underprivileged youth groups at the malls for fear that their conduct and dress codes may exclude other groups (i.e. “rolezinhos” and Bluewater Code of Conduct).

Consumer’s agentic roles in community building

Consumers play various roles in the marketplace that go beyond being “targets of practitioners’ strategies”. They take on agentic roles, which include acts of resistance; social movements; labor and political consumerism.

The consumer culture theory research tradition demonstrates that consumers’ identity work aims at transforming marketplace structures in ways that serve their collective interests (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Giesler 2008; Holt 2002; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Varman and Belk 2009). These

marketplace transformations condemn aspects of the marketplace that defy their goals of recognition and legitimacy or praise those aligned with their collective identity project (Thompson, 2014).

Thompson (2014) discusses how minority consumer groups constitute, legitimate, and promote a cultural identity that is immune to the influences of Western consumerism that affect the majority groups within society (see for instance Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Sandikci and Ger, 2010, Ustuner and Thompson 2012). According to him, in so doing, these consumers also seek to alter the societally dominant status system that favors middle-class consumers who are fluent in the symbolic code of Westernized consumption.

Nevertheless this model cannot be viewed as universal. Youth groups organizing flash mobs and “rolezinhos” at shopping malls all over the world are in fact attempting to “constitute, legitimate, and promote a cultural identity”, yet this identity is not immune to the prevailing mainstream values, rather it is an “indignation” of those values (Holt and Ustuner 2007), or in other words, their version of the “western lifestyle myth”. These youth groups are thus attempting to legitimize their identity construction through sharing practices.

Sometimes the act of making extended self-boundaries permeable to others is ritualistically enacted. Other people no longer cause fears of boundary invasion when they are incorporated within the aggregate extended self. Moreover, the ritual of doing so initiates and celebrates this self-extension via an act of communion. Both cultural processes and individual psychology are involved in these processes (Belk, 2010: 726).

These sharing rituals can be observed both in these collective visits to shopping malls and in the interaction generated online following or preceding visits. Sharing practices thus process both a physical and a virtual component.

Although sharing is not the only way in which we may connect with others, it is potentially powerful since it creates feelings of solidarity and bonding. Yet not everyone desires such bonding (Belk, 2010) and thus tensions emerge, particularly when there is a power struggle between heterogeneous groups interacting in a shared space.

“Rolezinhos” and flash mobs are ritualistic forms of communion. The problem arises as the heterogeneous community present at the stages of these ritualizations is not willing to “commune” with these codes of conduct. Finding a pattern to attempt to explain when and how heterogeneous groups interact positively to promote a consumptionscape (Ger and Belk, 1996) that is attractive to the various groups rather than exacerbate the tensions was not straightforward.

Answering the question as to why some heterogeneous communities “commune” while others “clash” demanded a considerable amount of effort. Nevertheless, it appears that two central factors intervene in this process: (1) whether the heterogeneous groups share similar power statuses in society (i.e. diverse minority groups, yet all suffering from majority group discrimination as in Shopping Abasto) or whether there is a variation in heterogeneous groups centrality to the maintenance society’s status quo (i.e. middle class traditional families versus youth subcultures as can be seen at Bluewater); (2) Whether the diverse groups are all struggling to avoid downward mobility under socio-economic distress.

It appears that when groups are diverse yet share a common goal, resource co-dependency favors collaboration in heterogeneous communities in spite of tensions (Thompson et al. 2013). Although those groups may not necessarily interact on a daily basis, they are accepting of each other and can collaborate in the construction of an attractive consumptionscape. On the other hand, when different groups are facing socio-economic stress, the presence of heterogeneous groups under a shared retail space seems to affect their identity construction processes and tensions arise. The mere appearance of non-conformity to the majority code of conduct in a shared space may affect the way consumers view themselves (i.e. middle class families and teenager groups at Bluewater).

2.4.3. Conspicuous status consumption and social mobility in a liquid contemporary world

This work begins with the premise that culture is not a static concept and it is in fact more clearly appreciated as a "organized network of systematic diversity of principles of action and understanding" (Askegaard et al. in Nakata 2009: 112) However, since emerging theories on identity construction processes developed in other contextual settings are assumed to be universal (Holt and Ustuner, 2010), little has been done to understand the particularities of consumer society in Less Industrialized Countries.

2.4.3.1. *Questioning the universality of the theory on status consumption*

This research works towards contributing to the literature by questioning this universality. It includes an often neglected region in consumer culture research – Latin America – and compares findings with those from the more developed markets of France and England.

This is relevant considering that Europe is frequently referred to as being the birth mother of Latin American culture and similarity in patterns of behavior is often assumed to be a fact. To that effect, Garcia Canclini (2001) asserts that although Latin America was in fact “invented” by Europe, first through Spanish and Portuguese colonization and later by interventions by France, England and other western European nations, this strong linkage was later succeeded by subordination to the United States.

He claims, however, that this process is not merely one of replacing one master by another, since processes of social and economic development, paired by an upsurge in demographic flows, have created a hybrid consumer culture and limited the implications of the dualistic, schematic opposition between what’s own and what’s foreign.

In fact, post-colonial theorists working in Latin America claim that it is “methodologically impossible and empirically misguided” to analyze the social and political construction of collective identities in Latin America using the North American binary race model, which is often assumed to be applicable considering the colonial past of both regions. These authors sustain that the concepts of race, ethnicity and nation are “inextricably intertwined” in Latin America (Bortolucci and Jansen 2013: 216; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1999) and cannot therefore be simplified by the mainstream North American binary model.

This is coherent with the views on ethnicity expressed by Stayman and Deshpande (1989 cited in in Dion et al ‘2011) in which ethnic affiliation and behaviors are situationally determined, meaning that it is more related to how one feels than who one is (page 311). Dion et al (2011) further suggest that “through day to-day experiences, individuals come into contact with different environments, situations, and people and develop specific patterns of behavior.” (page 325)

According to the authors, this continuous process is what allows us to develop a set of ethnic patterns. Ethnicity has therefore an experiential foundation, based on embodied practices which are transmitted, learned, and solidified through interactions with the world. This analysis expands the role of the individual who goes beyond the inertia proposed by the Bourdieuan notion of habitus and is no longer helplessly tied to external structures but seizes them through experience (Ustuner and Hold 2007; Dion et al. 2011: page 325). This is a much more complete analysis considering today's liquid social structures.

This work expands on the line of research proposed by Ustuner and Holt (2010), who question the universality of the Bourdieuan model of status consumption. These authors suggested a model of how status consumption operates among the middle classes in LICs by expanding and complementing the Bourdieuan model with the global-tickle-down model – which places consumption patterns on a global scale – and cultural globalization theory, which supports that (1) the western lifestyle is performed as a locally constructed myth; (2) local consumption patterns evolve according to the country's dialectical position in the sociopolitical system (3) Global commodities are constantly reinterpreted to attain local meaning.

They sustain that as cultural capital is deterritorialized, it is acquired through distant textbook-like learning rather than via the habitus – as sustained by Bourdieu (1984) – and therefore acquiring cultural capital is an arduous task. Furthermore, they argue that the class faction with lower cultural capital (LCC) in fact adapts consumption practices and processes to the local context to sustain a national social hierarchy (compete only in the local level) while the classes with higher cultural capital (HCC) perform a “by-the-book” approach to the myth (page 39).

This in fact translates into a favorable position for LCCs as this group does not seek to emulate “the global elite”. However, they advised that expanding the framework to other LICs and to other class factions would greatly benefit the body of research on status consumption in LICs.

This work analyzes group based status consumption practices at shopping centers in different parts of the world and sustains that they are similar in many ways. It is complementary to what Ustuner and Holt (2010) proposed in the sense that it studies the role of status consumption not only in the middle and upper classes of LICs, but also its central position in coping mechanisms of blue-collar and middle classes in developed economies under social and economic instability.

As for the upper and middle classes in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, comparable with what Ustuner and Holt (2010) observed in the Turkish middle classes, this large set of consumers can also be divided into two groups, those originating from middle class families and who had had access to high level educational standards (High Cultural Capital -HCCs) and the ones originating from less privileged families (Low Cultural Capital – LCCs) who have achieved a better educational level than their ancestors given the evolutionary changes taking place, yet sometimes still lack “high cultural capital” both in the embodied state and in the institutional form, even if they are economically categorized as members of the same class.

However, contrary to the observations from Ustuner and Holt (2010) in this case both groups aspire to play the “global elite game”. Still, this aspiration is dependent on their mythical interpretation of what the “global elite game” means.

For LCC in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, the ways of local celebrities represent an indigenation of the myth (Ustuner and Holt, 2010), a reinterpretation applied to local standards with local celebrities representing

the maximum authority in terms of status consumption: they aspire to do what the local soap opera stars and talk show hosts do. This differs from what had been observed in the Turkish middle classes as there is no rejection of the orthodox practice of the western lifestyle myth (Ustuner and Holt 2010 page 46) but rather there is a reinterpretation of codes, an adaptation to the local reality without an overt rejection.

2.4.3.2 The Brazilian society emerges as being the most materialistic

As this research set out to look for similarities and differences across cities, one major contribution of this work is to point out that the Brazilian society, and particularly São Paulo, emerges as being more materialistic than other cities studied. In this session we analyze these findings and attempt to understand the underlying causes of this difference.

Brazilian democracy and economic stability have allowed social mobility through consumption in spite of the still lacking educational standards in the country. This social mobility is personified by a former Nation's President not only representing the less privileged, but having risen to power from outside the boundaries of the "traditional elite's" circle of power and being able to elect his successor.

Although this could be attributed to the emerging economic status that the country has attained in recent years, it cannot be fully explained by it. Even if some aspects of the findings in this work are consistent with what Ustuner and Holt (2010) found in the Turkish society (which is undergoing many of the same processes as Brazil), differences could still be found.

It is also significantly different from what could be observed in Argentina, and while the last two years have in many ways interrupted the process of social evolution in the country, this research project started in 2009, while Argentinian economy was still ranked as one of the "next seven" emerging

economies” and had not yet started to suffer significantly from its current difficulties.

Looking at the roots of Brazilian society may help explain this phenomenon. Classic Brazilian authors have described the progression of Brazilian society and can aid in shedding light on the movements that have transformed it over the years and may help explain status consumption patterns and behaviors, particularly in LCC groups.

LCC status consumption and the cultural roots of Brazilian society

Gilberto Freyre (1936: 1957, 1969) attempted to understand the changes undergone by Brazilian society since the 18th century. In accordance with Garcia Canclini’s (2001) views, he believed Brazil underwent a process of “Europeanization” after the end of slavery, which included both purely imitative elements, with no profound effect on society, but also had important components of real cultural learning and assimilation.

He argued that this process marked a fundamental change in Brazilian society, as from then on society was divided into two groups, the “elite”, who followed a “western logic” (which could be paralleled to the HCC’s in Ustuner and Holt’s work) and the “inferior” sectors of society (or LCC’s), which followed codes he calls “oriental”, drawing references from African and Native American beliefs and values.

According to Freyre (1936, 1957, 1969), the logic of assimilation/imitation of individualistic western values somehow replaced the hierarchical principles of colonial civilization in the emerging Brazilian urban society. He argued that the opposition between owner/slave was replaced by the need for individual or group membership to new “westernizing” values, especially individualism, as they represented a clear new possibility of reaching social projection, the “bourgeois way” by definition.

Similarly, Darcy Ribeiro (1995) described the Brazilian society and culture as variants of the Portuguese version of the Western European civilization tradition, distinguished by colorful beliefs and values inherited from the Native Americans and black Africans. He believed Brazil emerges as a mutant society, destined to renew its own characteristics, but linked genetically to the Portuguese. According to him, the confluence of so many different cultures could have resulted in a multi-ethnic society, torn apart by its differences, but sustained that exactly the opposite had occurred, which supports the claims of an indigenization of European cultural codes by adapting them to local reality.

He maintained that although racial discrimination existed in the country, the high levels of racial mixing had minimized its effect and while the different ancestries were acknowledged, there had not been a development of antagonistic minorities, loyal to a specific ethnicity, but rather a sense of "nation" had emerged. He claimed that by the 1990's the flagrant class differences in Brazil were supported primarily by social differences and limited class mobility, rather than solely by ethnic origins. This again highlights the importance of mimicking cultural codes as a "passport" to class mobility.

Along the same lines, Florestan Fernandes (Ianni, 1996) believed the difficulties Brazil had in establishing a long lasting democratic tradition were due to an imbalance in the social structure because of the different rhythms by which transformations occurred society's various spheres. Fernandes said that in Brazil the institutional apparatus drove the process of modernization in accordance with the prevailing models in developed countries, while the Brazilian man's beliefs and their everyday actions were guided by traditionalistic values.

As did Ribeiro (1995), Fernandes believed that the access to education would accelerate the democratic process. Today, over 50 years later, although significant advances have been achieved in the field of education and a lasting democracy has been established, Brazil still struggles with the question of providing equal access to opportunities across all sectors of society and transforming itself into a more effective meritocracy, although the economic stabilization has, in fact, granted more social mobility.

In a way we can observe that although formal education is still lacking for some of the LCC's who have acquired social mobility in the country, services offered by Shopping Centers such as personal shoppers are another type of education that can be more easily accessed by the emerging social groups experiencing social mobility.

Victor Turner (1969, 1973, 1974) suggested an analytical dichotomy between structure - or the organization of society - and antistructure, which would be represented by extraordinary events affecting life. Roberto DaMatta's (1981; 1984; 1991; 2007) work builds on Turner's concepts yet differentiates itself from it in the sense that he studies dualities in ordinary social life, without necessarily referencing extraordinary events.

He attempts to analyze the Brazilian society through a study of everyday life and its rituals. Although sometimes questioned for its simplification of factors affecting personal values and beliefs, DaMatta's model is recognized for its contribution to Brazilian social sciences.

DaMatta (1981; 1984; 1991; 2007), while recognizing the European influence in the construction of Brazilian society, concentrates his work on the subsequent period of subordination to the United States. He is thus in accordance with Garcia Canclini's views. He compares the mechanisms by which the Brazilian society operates with those of the United States. According to him, while the US model is defined by social groups being

"equal but separate", in Brazil he sustains they are "different but together" (DaMatta, 1981, p. 16), which would be coherent with Ribeiro's (1995) view of a mutant society.

According to DaMatta, unlike in the United States, Brazil's society has a "dual" and not a unitary system. In this sense, Brazilians differentiating characteristic would be their duality and the notions of "individual" and "person", meaning that Brazilians possess at least two "selves".

He sustains that in Brazil the "individual" would not be a universal category -as in the United States- but rather it would be a formless and powerless member of the masses, dependent on a structural definition of the world and subject to impersonal laws. Conversely, the "person" would be the relational being, connected to a social system where family ties, friendships, common interests and favors are a fundamental development.

He also specifies other dualities that are, according to him, inherent to the Brazilian society. He makes a distinction between what he calls the "casa" (house) and the "rua" (street) dimensions, as arising from the opposition between the "individual" and the "person" to the extent that indicate privileged "arenas" where each of these forms of social relations take place.

From the opposition between the "house" and the "street" would emerge "social roles, ideologies and values, actions and specific objects, some invented specially for that arena in the social world" (Da Matta 1981, pp. 74-75). In this sense, Brazil's rituals are analyzed and understood from this opposition house/street creating a specific way of dealing with this antagonism.

In DaMatta's view, the "house" is the arena where the "person" interacts and feels safe, while the "street" is the inhuman environment of hostile competition where the "individual" has no power. The work environment is seen as hostile, part of the "street" arena, contrary to the Anglo-Saxon view, which is based on the Calvinistic ideals of "salvation" through work. Hence, "Carnival" would be perfect inversion of the Brazilian reality: "it is a party without an owner in a country where all is hierarchical" (Da Matta, 1981, p. 116).

Several decades after Freyre's seminal works (1936, 1957, 1969) proposed that the logic of assimilation/imitation of individualistic western values was represented by the need for individual or group membership as they represented a clear new possibility of reaching social projection, O'Dougherty (2002) found that even under severe economic instability, consumption still played a significant role in social stratification.

In fact, education (as in private schooling), was one of the key signs of class standing for the self-defined Brazilian middle-class, just as the trip to Disney World was viewed as a rite of passage confirming middle class membership for the entire family. More recently, Brazilian democracy and economic stability have allowed social mobility through consumption in spite of the still lacking formal educational standards in the country and thus "informal" educational services play a significant role in group membership for LCC's in the country.

Part 3 Conclusions and Marketing Insights

3.1. Synthesis of the research

This work set out to build on the existing CCT related literature on servicescapes, shopping and consumption experiences and on literature on shopping centers and address current gaps in this body of work, as well as to provide marketing insights based on research findings. It innovated by comparing similarities and differences between shopping and consumer experiences in five different cities in four different countries. It takes into account the contextual factors which may be influencing shopping and consuming experiences at shopping centers in each location and the role of these shopping and consuming experiences at shopping centers in the processes of consumer identity construction.

As most of the research on shopping malls concentrated on the hyperreal and postmodern aspects of malls without focusing on the co-produced experiences occurring within these spaces, this work innovated by comparing on "continuum" (Carù & Cova 2007; Roederer 2008) the full array of shopping experiences: produced, undergone and co-driven at the 20 shopping malls and by developing a comprehensive research design to accommodate all of these goals.

A case selection process that would allow for this goal to be achieved needed to be developed as previous works had not analyzed shopping centers from a multicultural perspective. This work established a process of case selection to provide *a priori* variability of cases, an original contribution to the body of work on shopping malls, as most of the previous work concentrated on one or two sites and thus such a protocol was not deemed necessary.

This work has also effectively contributed by studying the phenomenon of shopping centers in Latin America, a largely unexplored domain. It has succeeded at adding a multicultural perspective to the body of research on consumer and shopping experiences at shopping centers.

In order to do so, it proved necessary to take into account the researcher's own cultural biases as interpretive research relies heavily on subjective notions and perceptions. Another original contribution of this work was to apply introspection as part of the research protocol, by combining it with ethnographic participant observation and visual ethnographic methods.

One more step towards fulfilling these research goals was to question the universality of the theoretical frameworks developed in shopping center research by contrasting research findings with these theoretical models. An iterative process between fieldwork and analysis was crucial in accomplishing these objectives as developing constructs were tested when the second round of fieldwork was carried out.

Similar patterns of behavior could in fact be found across many of the cases and these practices were not always linked to geographical boundaries. It was found that across all cities, minority and underprivileged groups attempted to construct their identity through the ritualized consumption of spaces and status consumption practices, rather than the mere consumption of products and services.

In fact, it was found that more than an architectural conception, mall mix and location, the positioning of the mall is embedded in the local context of class structure and social mobility attempts. This implies for instance that zoning efforts should take into account more than demographic criteria and include other cultural factors into the analysis before making site decisions.

In the quest to fulfill these objectives it became clear that as society's rules seem to be changing, there may come a shift in consumer culture that needs to be addressed in further research. The first change in research that needs to be addressed is a semantic one.

As this work has demonstrated, values are not always universal and it is thus risky (not to say “incorrect”) to address Western European countries and the United States collectively as bearers of “Western Values”. Geographically speaking, Central and South America are also part of the Western hemisphere and as the rules of the game are not always the same, contrasting the so-called “western values” with those social norms and rules applied in these marketspaces is analogous to assuming that nations can still be used as proxies for cultures with no acknowledgment of subcultures, as would be the case in a Hofstedeian approach.

Conversely, it is also not semantically correct to use “western” as a proxy for “economically developed” country. As this research shows, there are several aspects of the consumption patterns observed in developing economies that are similar to those observed in the more developed countries portrayed in this work.

Additionally, regional differences within the same country may account for differences in behavior that cannot be simply categorized as “western”. As this work studied cities, rather than countries, it shows clearly that within the same country (i.e. Brazil) cultural differences are extremely visible and relevant and thus once more the dichotomy “western” versus “non-western” seems over-simplistic.

Finally, as Cova et al. (2013) suggest, this new era of consumer culture would be intrinsically different from previous ones in its search for enthusiasm, engagement and sincerity. In this work I do not seek to enter into a discussion as to what CCT researchers should pursue after the paradigm shift (Askegaard and Scott, 2013), but instead to acknowledge the change and reflect it into the analysis.

3.1.1. Similarities in consumption patterns and behaviors across cases

Although based on several concepts originating from a postmodernistic approach, the analysis carried out in this work remains coherent under the view of a global society that would involve an evolution of certain aspects of consumer behavior. One of the key differentiating aspects of this new consumer era would be that, although individuals may still not always physically interact with others during their visits to shopping centers (Bauman, 2000), they do interact with other consumers online, on social networks, through the dematerialization and re-embodiment of the self, as sustained by Belk (2013) and in a global scale, originating a hybridity of cultures as sustained by Garcia Canclini (2001).

As consumers share their experiences with “complete strangers” who have the same interests, they no longer expect only immediate individual rewards, but rather enjoy the collective benefits of the experience and the creation of a digital memory (Belk, 2013). This process makes this virtual interaction often more profound and lasting than the physical interaction they engage in during mall visits.

This could be observed in all cases, even when the mall did not provide an attractive brand community managed by the mall operators. When such a community did not exist, consumers interacted in “public” networks, such as review sites (i.e. Trip Advisor) or posted these interactions on their social network accounts (i.e. Facebook).

While facing socio-economic instability, this online interaction prolongs the effect of the physical visits. A “selfie”¹⁰⁷, taken with the new iPad at the mall and posted on social networks to go around the world a few times is thus the quintessential ending for the consuming experience.

Similarities in the way status consumption is practiced in developed and emerging countries can be observed as globalization practices clearly work both ways. Immigrant fluxes blur cultural identities and globalize products and fads.

Havaianas flip-flops, a typical inexpensive Brazilian product, could be seen on sale at all of the shopping centers visited for instance. These extremely inexpensive Brazilian traditional sandals became a fashion fad through the hands of top models travelling the world both physically and virtually and were adopted by Hollywood stars. Instantly they were transformed into status conveying goods.

In order to be able to understand and follow these fashion trends, LCC consumers can use the services offered particularly at Shopping Cidade Jardim and London Westfield to be reassured that they are complying with the unwritten codes of the global elite. In fact, shopping at Shopping Cidade Jardim is more effective for LCCs than shopping in the “Meca’s” of luxury consumption such as Paris or New York City.

By shopping at specific locations on a regular basis, often with the help of professionals, these aspiring consumers are recognized by salespeople, receive special attention and guidance and can shop in their mother tongue. Higher prices due to taxes (as in the case of Brazil) do not seem to be a concern as they are seen as proxies for quality.

¹⁰⁷ The Oxford Dictionary added the term in 2013 and define it as a self-portrait, usually taken with a handheld device.

As for London's aspiring professionals competing in a savage market with diminishing opportunities, appearances are crucial and mistakes are costly. This could be clearly seen at Westfield London through the use of personal shoppers.

Status consumption practices would also be consistent with a strategy of reconstruction of a previous identity, as proposed by Ulvner-Sneistrup and Ostberg (2011), in which consumers who have descended in the social ladder attempt to preserve their old selves through consumption (Schouten 1991). This can be observed in all of the cities studied and in blue-collar and middle class groups alike. Understanding this concept has been a key factor in the success of Bluewater over the last few years.

In fact, in Newman's (1988) work on middle class groups affected by downward mobility in the United States, she found that her informants interpreted their situation as compared to others whom they considered to be their "peers" largely in terms closely linked with material possessions. Their downward mobility was represented by the conversion of the "American Dream", filled with home and consumer product ownership, into an "American Nightmare" where the acquisition of these goods was limited.

Similarly, O'Dougherty's (2002) study of the Brazilian middle classes under economic and social distress in the late 1980's and early 1990's found that the consumption of certain goods functioned both as a rite of passage (Van Gennep 1960) into the group's collective construction of what "being middle class" meant and as a "tournament of power" (Appadurai 1996), differentiating "those who can from those who cannot". She found that her informants would go through great sacrifices to be able to afford those goods, some of which were clearly emotional rather than rational choices.

The possession (and display thereof) of Apple products seen for instance at Bluewater seems to be working in much the same way as these previous studies suggested for emerging economies. Owning an iPad would symbolize middle class membership, opening the box in the middle of the crowded mall at lunchtime would add to the experience and posting it online is the “frosting on the cake”.

While other shopping centers were coping with falling revenues, Bluewater was expanding its entertainment component. By positioning itself as an upscale leisure destination, Bluewater aims at transferring the symbolic meaning of its brand positioning to consumers’ perception of their own situation (McCracken, 1986).

These findings demonstrate that understanding conspicuous status consumption in developing economies can in fact aid in understanding similar behaviors in developed economies. This is particularly useful under current unstable market conditions in developing economies.

The role of the transference of cultural meaning from consumption practices to consumers (McCracken, 1986) in the coping mechanisms in middle class and blue collar groups facing socio-economic instability, sometimes for the first time, is particularly relevant during hard economic times. This is similar to the notion of democratization of luxury consumption seen in LICs, as Bluewater democratizes the access to leisure under social and economic instability at the cost of adherence to the code of conduct imposed.

On the other hand, consumption behavior in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, as well as Paris is similar in that ostentatiousness is ill regarded by the traditional elite and most of the neo-classical constructions date from the beginning of the 20th century whereas in São Paulo neo-classical buildings are symbols of economic power up to today.

As the forces of globalization and the permeable frontiers of the digital world have diminished barriers, these processes have blurred ethnic identities thus generate similar responses in terms of produced experiences in different parts of the world. In all of the cases studies, shopping malls provide the arenas for identity construction projects to be enacted. It is true, however, that not all of these commercial spaces were equally relevant in these processes.

3.1.2. Differences in consumption patterns and behaviors across cases

In some of the cases, shopping malls were merely background scenarios where life took place - non-places as proposed by Augé (1995), while others were viewed as treasured places and had more relevance in the identity construction projects of its clients (Debenedetti et al 2013). Nevertheless, this notion could again not be linked to geographical locations, rather it was site specific and in fact a result of the co-produced experiences between consumers and mall management. The status of “treasured place” was also not “fixed”, it was found to be mutable and the context in which it is inserted and management’s efforts to revert this process are dependent on the consumers’ willingness to participate in these processes.

Yet, although there seems to be some form of correlation between a being a “treasured place” and the shopping centers profitability, some shopping centers seem to have managed to sustain profits without this status, probably based on more utilitarian aspects of its management such as zoning and mall mix (Ochs, 2006), typical of a marketing paradigm of shopping center management, as sustained by Ochs and Badot (2008).

Also, possibly a delay in the acceptance of changing consumer desires has led many shopping mall operators to react violently to the possibility of consumer movements taking place at what they consider private property. However, this work suggests that under the experiential paradigm of

shopping mall management, property is shared between the different stakeholders and thus no decision can be made unilaterally.

This work also suggests that the struggle to avoid downward mobility, although pro-consumption rather than anti-consumption, shares a few traits with consumer resistance acts, as defined by Kozinets and Handelman (2004) where individual or collective action affect consumption behaviors with both financial and emotional costs (Cherrier and Murray, 2007). Consumers under socio-economic stress seem to engage in consumption activities to avoid market dynamics which affect their identity construction processes. This again, although different across cases, was not geographically linked, but rather connected to socio-economic instability, and the more unstable the context, the more visible these practices were.

According to Martin and Schouten (2014), markets are the result of interlinked communities of practice, created through processes of multiple translations in which consumers mobilize human and nonhuman actors to co-constitute products, practices, and infrastructures. However, they acknowledge that emotions such as desire and fear are possibly as potent actors upon the human subject as external social and material actors and thus they conceptualize consumer identity as an actor-network (Latour, 2005) in which the individual problematizes the self and manages the human and nonhuman resources of identity construction (page 868).

Shopping malls in every one of the five cities are part of this actor-network system yet within each mall an ecosystem of translations is formed which may or may not comply with the totality of the rules that apply to the market system that it is part of. A parallel can be made to the federalist system of government in the United States, which is permissive of different market rules in each state, although compliant at the maximum level of the central government.

However, even in the case of shopping centers within the same geographic region, each shopping mall seemed to operate under a different set of rules and codes of conduct, both written and unwritten. For instance, the code of conduct at Bluewater is a form of subdue discrimination, aiming at the exclusion of the undesired, and a practice that in theory is not coherent with the equality rules expected of more developed markets. The same could be observed in the closing of shopping malls in Brazil due to the “rolezinhos”. Yet those practices were not homogeneous even across cases in the same city.

Paris differentiates itself from all other cities in that shopping malls are largely a suburban than an inner city phenomenon. In all other cities there are successful shopping malls in inner city neighborhoods, and those are visited by locals and tourists alike. As for Paris, in spite of the existence of inner city malls, such as Forum Les Halles, visiting shopping malls seems to be a largely preferred option for suburban families.

As for Buenos Aires, the city exhales a sense of decay and corrosion and so does its elite. Argentina in general and Buenos Aires in particular have seen better times. The fact that many of the Shopping malls in the city were installed in historical buildings with luxurious architecture and a heritage that is preserved in its marketing strategies is also relevant. Nostalgia for the “good old days” is visible in these practices.

Status consumption in Buenos Aires is currently more connected with the consumption of spaces (Urry, 1996; Benjamin, 2002) than of consumer goods. With the ban of imports and the distrust of banking institutions, Argentinians are travelling and spending abroad in spite of unfavorable exchange rates and bureaucracy to acquire foreign currency. While in the city, being seen at specific places represents a sense of belonging, thus the groups of elder ladies and teenagers alike consuming coffee or ice-cream and not much more at Patio Bullrich.

Although Brazilian society emerges as being more materialistic than other cities studied, the way traditional elite groups in Rio and São Paulo deal with this incipient social mobility vary considerably. The traditional elite in São Paulo are more ostentatious than their counterparts from Rio de Janeiro.

Local upscale brands in Rio de Janeiro are still valued at a high standard while in São Paulo they are regarded as “second best” to international brands. For instance, for the traditional elite in Rio de Janeiro, Shopping Fashion Mall is still regarded as a luxury mall by visitors in spite of the fact that virtually no international brands are present there. Similarly, a Chanel purse is often publicized and an heirloom and displayed mostly at very special occasions by “Cariocas” and used primarily at special occasions while in São Paulo the same Chanel purse is worn with jeans and a t-shirt to go to Iguatemi or Shopping Cidade Jardim by the traditional elite.

As for the emerging middle classes and the new rich in both cities in Brazil, they act strikingly similar. Top to bottom Luis Vuitton outfits are acceptable for an afternoon stroll at the mall. Following this reasoning, the mall seems to “democratize” the idea of luxury consumption as products that could only be acquired by members of the “traditional elite” with access to private boutiques or through inheritance are now readily available at a mall store, can be bought in their mother language and in installments.

Differences in identity construction practices can also be seen at the architectural choices in both Brazilian cities. Neo-classical buildings in São Paulo's more prominent neighborhoods are common, a mythical representation of the "developed world", of which Europe is the model. In Rio de Janeiro's exclusive neighborhoods of the Zona Sul, these building designs are rare and even where small buildings from the 50's are demolished; a cool and modern design is preferred to replace it. Nevertheless, a few neoclassical structures have started to appear in the Barra da Tijuca zone, where the "emergents" live.

Rio de Janeiro was the capital of Brazil until 1960, and possessed institutionalized power for centuries, while São Paulo has held economic power for over a century. Once the capital was transferred to Brasília, Rio de Janeiro still represented a political power in the form of mass media control. Rio-based TV Globo held near control over the mass media for decades, even after the capital was transferred to Brasília. Nevertheless, although its power is still significant, the power of mass media has been severely affected by the digital revolution and social network capabilities.

The media has lost control over the masses and now new elite is emerging in Rio de Janeiro, the new rich with consumption patterns similar to those of the Paulistas and ostentatious status consumption patterns. This power struggle can be seen in the identity construction processes of consumers.

As for the similarities and differences in terms of orchestrated experiences (management driven, servicescapes: design, shopping center mix, zoning, positioning, etc.¹⁰⁸) between locations, although Ochs and Badot (2008) proposed that the four paradigms in shopping mall management were consecutive and largely reproduced in similar fashion at all shopping malls,

¹⁰⁸ By reconciling practitioner terms and tactics with a deeper cultural understanding of Consumer experiences

the findings in this study complement this view by adding that different shopping centers may in fact go back and forth along these stages depending on organizational culture and industry evolution.

For instance, Shopping Morumbi in Sao Paulo and Alto Palermo in Buenos Aires were launched with a high content of entertainment yet have changed their management style and now attempt to appeal to the general public by being a one-stop shopping option, a strategy more coherent with the marketing paradigm.

This implies that, although the paradigms are in fact subsequent, shopping center models and positioning evolve at different paces and in different direction and malls operating under each of these phases may in fact co-exist. Although the pace of market evolution was to some extent linked to geographic positions, this was not always the case. In fact, different shopping centers were seen to be operating under different paradigms in the same cities.

3.2. Marketing Insights

As proposed by Badot and Lemoine (2008), this work aims at providing managerial recommendations to managers operating shopping centers. These recommendations have been divided into two types: marketing and operational recommendations.

3.2.1. Strategic implications

As previously mentioned, although there seems to be a correlation between being a “treasured place” and the shopping centers profitability, some shopping centers seem to have managed to sustain profits without this status, probably based on more utilitarian aspects of its management such as zoning and mall mix (Ochs 2006), typical of a marketing paradigm of shopping center management, as sustained by Ochs and Badot (2008). This implies that a more modern shopping center model is not necessarily the only option for shopping center profitability.

Consumers often visit more than one mall depending on the purpose of their visit. Management should therefore seek a positioning strategy that would differentiate their shopping mall from other malls in its zone of influence, yet this does not necessarily mean to operate under a more “current” paradigm, as would be the case for a shopping center focused on entertainment. In many cases it seems to be more effective to compete with experiential malls by becoming a utilitarian one-stop shopping destination.

Another key issue emerging from findings is that shopping mall positioning can and in fact should mutate. More important than strategic coherence over time seems to be adherence to consumer perceived image of the mall and coherence of the operational aspects of the mall to this image. This can be illustrated by the changing in positioning a model undergone by many

shopping malls which seems to be effective when it accompanies the changing social structures of influence.

An inconsistency in positioning and offer may explain for instance the difficulties facing Le Millenaire in Paris. It is apparently built under a utilitarian paradigm, aiming at serving the nearby community. Yet its access and opening hours are not coherent with this positioning, and neither is its advertising strategy, which attempts to position it as a leisure destination.

Additionally, given its limited entertainment offer, it is not attractive for a family outing, especially considering it is closed on Sundays. If it were to open on Sundays, it might, at least on that day of the week, be a viable option, considering that on that day shops are closed in Paris.

It is also hurt by the symbolic meaning of its location. It is not seen by Parisians as an attractive area so its gravity pull is limited. Tourists have no particular interest in the area and the nearby community seems to prefer to shop “in Paris”. Additionally, considering that many of the people in the adjoining community work in the city, shopping in Paris is both practical and contributes to an aspired group membership.

Under the opposite side of the equation is Bluewater. Creating an atmosphere of excitement and fun has aided Bluewater in sustaining revenues during the economic crisis at the expense of sales in London’s high streets, in spite of access difficulties. It capitalizes on consumer’s strategy of reconstruction of a previous identity, as proposed by Ulvner-Sneistrup and Ostberg (2011), in which consumers who have descended in the social ladder attempt to preserve their old selves through consumption (Belk, 1988; 2013; Newman, 1988; Schouten, 1991). Its location is also ideal for consumers living in the suburb and who want to avoid crossing the “poverty belt”.

Understanding this concept has been a key factor in the success of Bluewater over the last few years. While other shopping centers were coping with falling revenues, Bluewater was expanding its entertainment component and capitalizing on its architectural design with nostalgic components. Additionally, by positioning itself as an upscale leisure destination, Bluewater aims at transferring the symbolic meaning of its brand positioning to consumers' perception of their own situation (McCracken, 1986), thus significantly contributing as a coping mechanism during a period of economic and social instability.

3.2.2. Operational implications

This research has demonstrated that consistency between shopping center model and consumer expectations is key in any evolving market, and particularly in shopping center management under the threat of online shopping. Nevertheless, although utilitarian shopping mall models had been deemed to fail in the long run, this research has shown cases where economically successful malls have been operating under a utilitarian paradigm.

In fact, as middle class consumers are faced with time and budget restrictions, especially under hard economic times, it is to be expected that certain types of purchases be related to price-performance relationships while others may play a more central role in the consumer's lives. There is therefore room for different models of shopping malls, connected to mall mix and zoning aspects (internal factors) yet subjected to macro issues such as gentrification of neighborhoods; ethnic and religious composition of areas as well as other socioeconomic issues on a local, regional and global scale.

Additionally, this research shows that consumers are both willing and eager to connect with communities both in online and offline environments and that in this search for engagement lays a great opportunity for shopping mall operators. These findings are in fact coherent with general retail literature claiming that the market today has demonstrated that the integration of on and offline resources is more effective than pure on or offline models and that the consuming experience is viewed by the consumer as a whole and not separately.

Nevertheless, although all of the shopping malls studied have websites and most have mobile apps, none of these resources seem sufficiently engaging to be effective in enhancing the experience. The fact that these apps were rarely mentioned in the over 350 pages of text of this work is no coincidence.

As a consumer they did not seem relevant at all. As a researcher, I struggled to include whenever possible a reference to their existence. This is evident of their near irrelevance to the consumer experience at this stage of the digital evolution.

In fact, community is built more often around social network sites unrelated to the mall than on mall-sponsored mediums. For instance, Tripadvisor has created long threads of discussion around some of the shopping malls studied and Youtube videos are posted in other places more often than on the mall-sponsored channel, even when one such channel is available.

In a world where the multiplicity of selves is a reality, and where engagement is becoming key, the development of resources to extend the physical and online experiences and integrate them is a critical necessity. Shopping malls in every one of the cities visited seem to be wasting an opportunity to develop a more engaging online medium that could potentiate

the experiences lived physically on the mall. Another wasted opportunity is online shopping.

Similarly, although many of the brands present at every one of the malls have their own online shops, these are not affiliated with the mall itself. In the same way that shopping at Luis Vuitton at Shopping Cidade Jardim physically seems to be more enriching an experience than shopping at Luis Vuitton in New York for some consumers, maybe shopping at the online store connected to Shopping Cidade Jardim could create added value to consumers.

Finally, this research has shown evidence that zoning practices should involve symbolic factors as well as demographic ones in the process of determining the location of future malls. The often neglected socio-cultural aspects of consumption have a definite effect on the success versus the failure of retail developments.

3.3. Research limitations

Interpretive research is an extremely valuable tool for exploring underlying causes of consumer behavior and their relationship with socio-cultural factors affecting consumers in different markets, issues that are key to the success of businesses and are often overlooked in mainstream marketing research. Nevertheless, this work's greatest strength comes paired with the risk of interpretation bias. In fact, as proposed by Levi-Strauss (1955), it is impossible to analyze on culture without participating, and participation implies interference and cross-fertilization.

Several steps were taken to avoid bias, including the presence of an introspective phase, which is an original contribution of this research. Extended participant-observation and the use of Netnography to test emerging constructs were other measures taken to warrant objectivity.

In addition to that, it is important to highlight that, as previously mentioned, a lot goes on at each of the selected shopping malls. Although this work has effectively fulfilled each of its proposed goals, many issues were left unexplored, particularly due to time and budget restrictions.

3.4. Suggested topics for further research

During the course of this research several issues that emerged from the findings were not directly connected with the research questions proposed. For this reason, these interesting topics were overlooked in this work and may be explored in future projects. For instance:

- It did not include a series of malls in each of the five cities city that could provide interesting insights to this research. It would have been interesting for example to study the phenomenon of tourism and the interaction of tourists with locals at shopping malls such as Galerias Pacifico in Buenos Aires and Le Carrousel du Louvre in Paris.
- It did not investigate in detail the zoning and mall mix decisions that may or may not have favored the economic success of certain malls operating under a utilitarian paradigm. This could provide very useful insight for malls operating under this model.
- This work did not explore the emergence of malls directed at a portion of the population in and around the poverty line in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

Additionally, although this work has provided for a very interesting meso-level analysis of the shopping and consuming experiences at these 20 shopping malls. An interesting follow up for this project would be to develop some of these cases onto stand-alone research projects, including in-depth interviews with consumers and management and thus develop and micro-level analysis that would be complementary to the findings in this research project.

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List of Acronyms

- CCT Consumer Culture Theory
- SDL Service Dominant Logic
- ANT Actor Network Theory
- LIC Less Industrialized Countries

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