



## Journal of Consumer Marketing

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### Article information:

To cite this document:

Amalia Triantafyllidou George Siomkos, (2014), "Consumption experience outcomes: satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, word-of-mouth communication and behavioural intentions", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 31 Iss 6/7 pp. 526 - 540

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# Consumption experience outcomes: satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, word-of-mouth communication and behavioural intentions

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of the present study is to investigate the impact of the different aspects of consumption experience on various post-consumption variables (i.e. satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, word-of-mouth (WOM) communication and behavioural intentions).

**Design/methodology/approach** – A quantitative study using a self-administered questionnaire was conducted. The sample comprised of 645 respondents and the snowball sampling technique was used. Consumption experience was measured using a seven-dimensional scale (dimensions: hedonic, flow, escapism, socialisation, personal challenge, learning and *communitas*).

**Findings** – Not all experience dimensions affect consumers equally in the post-consumption stage. Hedonism was an important experiential dimension affecting positively most of the post-consumption variables. Other boosters of consumers' nostalgia, WOM communication and behavioural intentions were the feelings of escapism, knowledge and *communitas*. On the contrary, flow and personal challenge were negative predictors of consumers' evaluations.

**Practical implications** – Marketers should co-create the experience with consumers by carefully managing their experiential offering. Companies should focus on designing pleasurable, social, educational and fantasy experiences while minimizing the feelings of immersion and risk that arise from intense activities.

**Originality/value** – A holistic conceptual model on the consequences of the different consumption experience dimensions is tested. Until now, most of the relevant studies on experiences have treated experience as a higher order construct without taking into consideration the different effects of the various experience dimensions. Hence, the present study contributes to research by identifying the most pertinent experience dimensions on post-consumption evaluations, behaviour and intentions of consumers.

**Keywords** Satisfaction, Behavioural intentions, Consumption experiences, Nostalgia intensity, WOM communication

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

For almost 30 years, research on consumer behaviour has rejected the notion of the logical consumer and has acknowledged the dominant role of emotion on consumer acts. Besides the cognitive mechanisms that are triggered during shopping decisions, consumers engage in a number of sub-conscious and internal processes (Kim, 2012) which are related to the feelings, senses, dreams and fantasies that they want to satisfy through consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Modern consumers do not seek satisfaction only from the functional characteristics of a product/service but they also seek extraordinary experiences (McCole, 2004) which are pleasant,

creative, social (Schmitt, 1999) and absorbing (Holbrook, 2000). In other words, they seek memorable experiences that they can later share with their significant others. Exceptional consumer experiences can create value for companies (Gentile *et al.*, 2007) because they can affect consumers' memories (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), satisfaction (Mascarenhas *et al.*, 2006) and future behavioural intentions (Lacher and Mizerski, 1994). Nonetheless, delivering unique and engaging experiences to consumers is a key factor for the development of a competitive advantage (Tsaour *et al.*, 2007). Thus, the investigation of the ways in which experiences can influence consumers at the post-consumption stage is critical.

Recently, researchers have been interested on delineating the impact of experiences on post-consumption variables such as satisfaction and behavioural intentions. However, most of these studies have treated experience as a higher-order construct

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Journal of Consumer Marketing  
31/6/7 (2014) 526–540  
© Emerald Group Publishing Limited [ISSN 0736-3761]  
[DOI 10.1108/JCM-05-2014-0982]

This research has been co-financed by the European Union (European Social Fund – ESF) and Greek national funds through the Operational Program “Education and Lifelong Learning” of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) – Research Funding Program: Heracleitus II. Investing in knowledge society through the European Social Fund.

(Brakus *et al.*, 2009; Chen and Chen, 2010; Triantafyllidou and Siomkos, 2013; Ayob *et al.*, 2013; Loureiro, 2014), implying that the different dimensions that comprise consumption experience have the same effect on the dependent variables. However, consumption experience is a complex construct that comprises different dimensions (Schmitt, 1999; Gentile *et al.*, 2007). Thus, by treating experience as a higher-order construct, researchers can only assess the overall effect of experience without being able to determine what is the relative impact and importance of each consumption experience dimension on post-consumption outcomes. This way, only generalised conclusions might be drawn about the role of experience on consumer behaviour without taking into consideration the multiple ways in which experience can influence consumers' post-consumption evaluations, intentions and behaviour.

On the other hand, the few studies on the effects of experiences – at the dimensional level – have revealed that the different components of the experience have different effects on consumers' post-consumption responses. For instance, Hosany and Witham (2010), within the context of cruising experiences, found that only the dimension of hedonism has an impact on satisfaction, while other factors such as learning and escapism had no significant effects. Investigating the impact of the experiential dimensions on the memory of festival attendees, Manthiou *et al.* (2014) found that vividness of memory was affected in a positive way by dimensions such as hedonism, escapism and learning, with hedonism to have the stronger effect. Hence, it can be argued that the different dimensions that comprise consumption experience might have different degrees of influence on consumers. However, the relative importance of the experience dimensions during the post-consumption stage has received less rigorous attention in the literature. Thus, more research is needed to develop an in depth understanding of the outcomes of the various experience dimensions.

Towards this end, the present study aims at decomposing the effects of consumption experience by distinguishing the impact of each experience dimension on consumers during the post-consumption stage. More specifically, the study's objectives are as follows:

- To ascertain the effect of each of the various experience dimensions on post-consumption variables [i.e. satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, re-experience intentions, word-of-mouth (WOM) behaviour and intentions].
- To assess the relative impact of the different experience dimensions and identify the pertinent consumption experience factors affecting post-consumption variables.
- To propose marketing strategies for the effective management of consumption experiences.

Hence, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on consumers' experience. The contributions of this study are threefold. First, this study is the first one to test simultaneously in a model the effects of consumption experience on variables such as satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, re-experience intentions, WOM behaviour and intentions. Second, it identifies the relative importance of each consumption experience dimension on consumers' evaluations and behavioural intentions, an issue largely ignored in the experience research. As a consequence, the different ways in which consumption experience can affect consumers may be better understood. Understanding the relative impacts of experience dimensions helps clarify the general

conclusions found in prior research results and provides experiential marketers with insights into how they can create satisfactory, memorable, long-lasting and talkable experiences. Therefore, the third contribution of the present study is that it provides marketers with a more precise guidance on how to orchestrate in a sophisticated manner the various components of the experiences they provide to gain a competitive advantage.

## Literature review

### Dimensions of consumer experience

Most experiences enhance consumers' feelings of pleasure, trigger their senses and increase their knowledge. Moreover, experiences are highly involving and personal because consumers feel relaxed, escape from their daily problems, revitalise and transform their inner selves. During experiences, consumers feel members of a team, create strong bonds with other participants and socialise. Nonetheless, although senses and emotions are primarily aspects of experiences, it should be noted that consumer thoughts and cognitive evaluations are also important experiential facets. A review of scholarly literature on experience suggests that experiences in different consumption settings share certain elements. These common dimensions include:

- Hedonism that is related to positive feelings of pleasure, fun, excitement and enjoyment.
- Flow which reflects the feelings of total immersion and absorption in the experience.
- Escapism where consumers fantasise that they live in a different world and play different roles.
- Learning. This dimension responds to the educational outcomes of experiences when consumers acquire new knowledge through consumption activities.
- Challenge where feelings of risk, adventure and adrenaline rush are elicited.
- Socialisation, which is associated with the new social relationships that consumers create through consumption.
- Communitas that accounts for the feelings of camaraderie and belonging that are triggered by consumption experiences.

### Hedonism

In their highly cited work, Pine and Gilmore (1998) introduced the "entertainment realm" of experiences, acknowledging the hedonic nature of consumption experiences. Hedonism refers to the fun, fantasies and feelings (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) that accompany consumption experiences. This element of hedonism was evident in a number of consumption settings. For example, the hedonic factor was a critical component of the service experience scale used by Otto and Ritchie (1996). This factor evaluated the feelings of excitement, enjoyment, thrill and fun experienced by consumers of three tourist services (i.e. airlines, hotels and tours). The hedonic content of consumption experiences was also revealed by Loroz (2004) who studied experiences of gamblers in a casino. Loroz found that gambling activities are regarded by casino visitors as highly entertaining and pleasurable experiences. Hiking experiences contained hedonic aspects as well, as most of participants characterised the activity as highly stimulating, pleasing, relaxing and exciting (Chhetri *et al.*, 2004).

Nevertheless, hedonic feelings of pleasure and arousal were produced by more extraordinary and risky experiences. Schouten *et al.* (2007) investigating Camp Jeep experiences found that participants perceived the activity as ideal and enjoyable. In a similar vein, Celsi *et al.* (1993) demonstrated that high-risk consumption experiences like skydiving trigger intense feelings of pleasure, thrill and excitement.

#### Flow

Another critical element of consumption experiences is the feeling of flow and total absorption that is evoked to consumers. Flow is defined as “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1977, p. 39). In Hirschman’s (1985) early study, absorption was a core dimension of consumption experience and this study evaluated whether consumers felt deeply and carried off by the experience. River rafting (Wu and Liang, 2011), mountaineering (Pomfret, 2006) and chocolate consumption (Zarantonello and Luomala, 2011) are several consumption activities that are characterised by high levels of flow. During such experiences, consumers get absorbed and lose the sense of time. Moreover, feelings of total involvement, focus and attention were also reported by participants of the aforementioned experiences.

#### Escapism

Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) argued that consumption experiences carry fantasy and escapist meanings for consumers. Woodruff (1985, p. 25) defines escapism as “a tendency to escape from reality, the responsibilities and routines of real life, especially by unrealistic imaginative activity”. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), escapist experiences require the active participation of consumers who “diverge to a new self” (Hosany and Witham, 2010) by imagining being in a different time and place or play a different role. Escapism can take different forms according to the type of consumption activity. For instance, during a casino experience, consumers disconnect from the real world, escape from their routine and fantasise that they won (Loro, 2004). Another articulation of escapism was suggested by Hirschman (1985), who argued that escapist consumption experiences help consumers to temporarily break away from their problems and unpleasant situations. Modern mountain men in a rendezvous in the Rocky Mountains through the use of rituals broke away from their daily routines and imagined being in another and different world (Belk and Costa, 1998). Consumption of chocolate also triggers feelings of escapism that articulate as daydreams where consumers disconnect from reality (Zarantonello and Luomala, 2011).

#### Learning

Although senses and emotions are primarily aspects of experiences, it should be noted that consumption activities are rich in cognitive and intellectual properties. Intense experiences should educate consumers (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), offer them opportunities to learn something new and make them more knowledgeable (Hosany and Witham, 2010). Alternatively, experiences can engage consumers in creative thinking, thus enhancing their intellectual functioning and problem-solving skills (Schmitt, 1999). The educational aspect of consumption manifests mainly on experiences that are unique, novel and are regarded by consumers as

“once-in-a-lifetime” events. Leisure and tourism experiences are also considered as educational consumption activities. Memorable tourism experiences *per se* involve the development of knowledge and skills on consumers’ behalf (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Arnould and Price (1993) found that river rafting enhances participants’ knowledge because they develop skills and learn new things about rafting and nature. Skydiving is another experience in which consumers are motivated to acquire new knowledge in their effort to master their skills in skydiving (Celsi *et al.*, 1993). In addition, a number of studies which explore and measure experiences have incorporated the aspect of learning in their measurement models (Kim *et al.*, 2012; Oh *et al.*, 2007; Jeong *et al.*, 2009; Ayob *et al.*, 2013; Manthiou *et al.*, 2014; Loureiro, 2014).

#### Challenge

Quite often, consumption experiences are considered as personally challenging, risky and adrenaline inducing pursuits through which consumers test their limits. According to Arnould and Price (1993), challenge refers to the feelings of adrenaline rush, adventure and risk elicited to river rafters as they are personally challenged and push their capabilities to the limit. Similarly, Hopkinson and Pujari (1999) use the term “danger” to refer to the challenge dimension of kayaking experience. This danger factor captures the feelings of thrill, danger and fear induced by the activity. Mountaineering is also considered as a challenging activity associated with high levels of risk, lack of control and personal testing of capabilities (Pomfret, 2006). In addition, the feeling of challenge is found in the retail shopping and online purchasing activities. For instance, Wang and Hsiao (2012) highlighted that challenge is a critical part of shopping experiences which involve high levels of task complexity and risk. Similarly, in the context of online consumer behaviour, Mathwick and Rigdon (2004, p. 331) suggested that online experiences can challenge consumers by “testing their skills, and pushing them to perform the best of their abilities”.

#### Socialisation and *communitas*

When analysing consumption experiences, one cannot ignore the social context within which experiences are shaped and lived. Schmitt (1999) argues that experiences should relate consumers with their social environment. Herein, we argue that the social nature of experience has two distinct facets: socialization and *communitas*. Huang and Hsu (2010) have drawn a similar distinction, dividing social experiences in the *people* and the *family relations* factor. The factor of people evaluates whether experiences induced consumers to meet and talk to new people with similar interests, while the factor of family relations explores how experience cultivates the relationships of consumers with their families and significant others. This factor of family relations is in accordance with what Turner (1969) calls “*communitas*”. The sense of “*communitas*” is seen in a number of everyday and extraordinary experiences (McGinnis *et al.*, 2008) such as sports tourism (Morgan, 2007), camping (Triantafyllidou and Siomkos, 2013), river rafting (Arnould and Price, 1993) and skydiving (Celsi *et al.*, 1993). According to Arnould and Price (1993), “*communitas*” is a sense of camaraderie felt by participants who experience together the consumption activity. It seems that the experience acts as a “bond” between



consumers who share the experience (Celsi *et al.*, 1993). Hence, as consumers interact with others during the consumption experience, they derive social value by enhancing their relationships with their friends and family, as well as with other consumers. As mentioned before, social value results not only from getting closer with friends but also through socialising and meeting other consumers. Indeed, the desire to socialise with others is a major driver of shopping (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003), festival (Crompton and McKay, 1997) and cruising experiences (Hung and Petrick, 2011).

### Conceptual framework: consequences of experience

Experience is not another marketing concept but constitutes an important aspect of consumer behaviour. Consumer experience can create value not only for consumers but also for companies (Gentile *et al.*, 2007). Moreover, experience extends beyond the core-consumption stage as consumers feel nostalgia about their satisfactory experience and engage in discussions about their personal experiences with significant others (Arnould *et al.*, 2002; Nicosia, 1966). Hence, it can be argued that consumption experiences carry symbolic and interpersonal meanings for consumers.

An important outcome of experiences is satisfaction (Oh *et al.*, 2007). Herein, satisfaction is a summative concept that describes the total consumption experience (Johnson and Fornell, 1991). Moreover, satisfaction is the total evaluation of the consumption experience (Johnson *et al.*, 1995). Empirical evidence has shown that the emotional outcome of consumption experiences is a positive antecedent of consumers' satisfaction (Mano and Oliver, 1993). Especially for pleasure-oriented consumption activities, the hedonic value derived by consumers exerts a stronger power on satisfaction compared to the other types of values (i.e. functional) (Jones *et al.*, 2006). Verhagen *et al.* (2011), investigating users of the Second Life virtual world, found that they were more satisfied with the entertaining aspects of their experiences compared to other aspects (e.g. escapism). Similar findings have been reported from Hosany and Witham (2010), who tested the impact of experiential dimensions such as hedonism, escapism and learning on cruisers' satisfaction. Although, they did not find any strong association between satisfaction and the dimensions of learning and escapism, they demonstrated a significant relationship between hedonism and satisfaction. Given that, it can be argued that consumers' satisfaction is primarily influenced by the hedonic qualities of consumption activity.

Based on the above analysis, the following hypothesis was developed:

*H1:* The experience dimension of hedonism of consumption activity is positively related to satisfaction.

Intense consumption experiences are unique events that carry nostalgic meanings for consumers. According to Holak and Havlena (1998), nostalgia is a positively valenced emotion caused by experiences related to the past. Hence, experiences are capable of producing strong nostalgic memories (Baumgartner *et al.*, 1992). The connection between consumption experience dimensions and nostalgia is evident in a number of tourism and leisure studies (Tung and Ritchie,

2011). In the context of festival experiences, Manthiou *et al.* (2014) found that the entertainment, escapist and learning dimensions of the experience were positively related to the vividness of memories re-collected in the minds of attendees. Nonetheless, it should be noted that the hedonic dimension exerted the strongest influence on memories compared to the other two dimensions. The educational aspect of experience was also found to be related with fond memories of consumers during cruising (Hosany and Witham, 2010) and wine experiences (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012). Nonetheless, it can also be argued that nostalgia intensity is a direct function of flow, as flow experiences can increase consumers' concentration and attention to the activity. Kazakova *et al.* (2012), investigating online games, revealed that when participants experienced the feelings of flow, they formed strong memories about the experience. Hence, the following hypotheses were formulated:

*H2:* The experience dimensions of hedonism, escapism, flow and learning of a consumption activity are positively related to nostalgia intensity.

Several researchers have pointed out the impact of customer experiences on WOM communication between consumers (Terblanche, 2009; Grewal *et al.*, 2009). It is generally known that consumers love to share stories about their consumption experiences with their friends and family (Bramwell, 1998; Oppermann, 2000). Williams and Soutar's (2009) study revealed that WOM intentions of adventure tourists are affected by the hedonic and the learning qualities of the experience. Specifically, positive recommendations from tourists will increase as long as an adventure experience provides them with entertaining value and enhances their curiosity to learn new things. The significant association between the hedonic dimension of cruising experiences and intentions to recommend was also highlighted by Hosany and Witham (2010). Regarding travel experiences, Yoon and Uysal (2005) demonstrated that intentions of tourists to recommend a travel experience were positively associated with their desires to engage with a pleasurable and social experience that would enhance their bonds with friends and family. Moreover, positive WOM intentions were also associated with risk-free tourism experiences. This finding postulates that high levels of risk and adventure felt by consumers during an experience might result in negative reactions. According to Taylor (1974), uncertainty caused by risky consumption experiences increases the feeling of anxiety felt by consumers, who in turn develop risk reduction strategies to overcome the negative tension. Besides risk, personally challenging experiences for consumers who lack the necessary skills might also lead to cognitive dissonance that consumers will try to relief through negative WOM communication.

Thus, the following hypotheses were developed:

*H3:* The experiential dimensions of hedonism, learning, communitas and socialisation of a consumption activity are positively related to WOM behaviour.

- H4. The experiential dimension of challenge of a consumption activity is negatively related to WOM behaviour.
- H5. The experiential dimensions of hedonism, learning, communitas and socialisation of a consumption activity are positively related to WOM intentions.
- H6. The experiential dimension of challenge of a consumption activity is negatively related to WOM intentions.

Prior studies have shown that consumers' behavioural intentions are significantly related to the hedonic and flow qualities of several consumption activities. For example, in the context of online gaming experiences, intentions to re-experience the activity were affected in a positive way by consumers' feelings of flow and enjoyment (Hsu and Lu, 2004; Lee, 2009). More importantly, in Lee's (2009) study, enjoyment proved to be a stronger antecedent of re-experience intentions compared to flow. Other studies have also suggested that hedonism can drive consumers' intention to repeat experiences associated with cruises (Duman and Mattila, 2005), online game communities (Hsu and Lu, 2007), as well as festivals (Cole and Chancellor, 2009; Manthiou *et al.*, 2014). Thus, it can be suggested that consumers will want to re-experience consumption activities as long as these activities trigger positive emotions of joy and absorb them. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

- H7. The experiential dimensions of hedonism and flow of a consumption activity are positively related to re-experience intentions.

According to Snyder (1991), nostalgia by definition results from experiences which elicit positive feelings such as satisfaction and joy. Driven from the expectancy/disconfirmation paradigm, a satisfactory experience is the one that exceed consumers' expectations (Churchill and Surprenant, 1982) about the benefits derived from a consumption activity. This positive disconfirmation is an important trigger of memorable experiences (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). The link between satisfaction and nostalgia is more evident in the tourism sector. Ritchie *et al.* (2011), defining memorable tourist experiences, suggested that an unforgettable event outperforms tourists' expectations. Hence, the following hypothesis was developed:

- H8. Consumer's satisfaction is positively related to nostalgia intensity.

Unforgettable consumption experiences can lead consumers' repurchase intentions. In the context, of service experiences, Kolesar and Galbraith (2000) found that consumers' intentions to re-experience the service will increase as their remembrances increase as well. Regarding tourist experiences, Martin (2010) showed that tourists' intentions to revisit and recommend a destination were influenced by their memories. Investigating extraordinary camping experiences, Triantafyllidou and Siomkos (2013) unfolded the positive impact of the nostalgic intensity of an experience on WOM

communication and re-experience intentions. Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H9. Consumer's nostalgia intensity is positively related to WOM behaviour.
- H10. Consumer's nostalgia intensity is positively related to WOM intentions.
- H11. Consumer's nostalgia intensity is positively related to re-experience intentions.

According to Armitage (2005), an individual's past behaviour could be an indicator of his/her future intentions. Much is known about the antecedents of WOM behaviour and intentions in the short term. However, research on the link between WOM behaviour and future WOM intentions of consumers is scarce. Exceptional experience will lead positive WOM behaviour soon after the consumption stage. However, experience enthusiasts maybe willing to spread positive WOM in the long term. It is herein suggested that WOM behaviour after the consumption experience will positively influence future WOM intentions. Hence, the following hypothesis was derived:

- H12. Consumer's WOM behaviour is positively related to WOM intentions.

## Method and measures

A paper-and-pencil survey was conducted using the snowballing sampling technique. The initial "seed" sampling units were university students of several large Greek cities (i.e. Athens, Thessaloniki, etc). Snowball sampling is a "chain referral approach" where subjects recruit their friends, family members and acquaintances by using their social network contacts (Noy, 2008). Since the present study explores various social aspects of consumer behaviour such as feelings of socialisation and communitas and WOM communication, the use of snowball sampling is a welcome addition. Using a sample that consists of friends, family members and colleagues helps the easy retrieval of information regarding the social experiences of respondents and their interpersonal communications.

In total, 645 complete questionnaires were returned. The sample consisted of 61.2 per cent females and 38.8 per cent males. Moreover, the majority of the respondents were university students between the ages of 18 to 25 years (62.2 per cent).

To measure the experience felt by participants, the 31-item generic consumption experience scale developed by Triantafyllidou and Siomkos (2013) was used. This scale is comprised of seven dimensions, namely: hedonics, flow, escapism, socialising, challenge, learning and communitas, and was deemed as appropriate for the purposes of the present study because it can capture and measure experience in different consumption contexts. Thus, respondents were prompt to remember a recent intense experience they had from a list of 16 consumption activities such as novel, vacationing, extreme sports, etc. Responses to the items were reported on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "5 = strongly agree" to "1 = strongly disagree".

Satisfaction was measured using the Oliver's (1980) three-item scale. The nostalgia intensity scale proposed by Holak and Havlena (1998) was used to measure the nostalgia intensity felt after the experience. Positive WOM behaviour was measured using the Carroll and Ahuvia's (2006) four-item scale. All items of the aforementioned scales were evaluated on five-point Likert scales ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The WOM intention scale was taken from Kim *et al.* (2001) and included two items. Finally, intentions to re-experience the consumption activity were measured using the two-item scale by Grewal *et al.* (1999). These intention scales were evaluated using a five-point scale ranging from "very low" to "very high".

## Results

Confirmatory factor analysis, using Amos 8.0, was performed to verify the seven-factor structure of the consumption experience scale. The goodness-of-fit (GFI) measures of the 31-item scale suggested a reasonably good model fit [ $p = 0.000$ ,  $\chi^2 = 1.770.42$ , GFI = 0.91, comparative-fit index (CFI) = 0.93, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.92] because the values of the above indices exceeded the 0.90 criterion. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) value was smaller than the 0.07 threshold (RMSEA = 0.056). Table I shows the mean values and the standard deviations of the items that comprised the consumption experience scale. All

**Table I** Descriptive statistics, validity and reliability measures, and standardised regression weights of consumption experience factors

Factors/items	Mean	SD	Standard loadings
<i>Hedonics (AVE: 0.580, CR: 0.87, a: 0.870)</i>			
I experienced joy	4.331	0.763	0.759
The experience was fun	4.224	0.855	0.769
The experience gave me good feeling	4.184	0.847	0.749
I felt cheerful during the experience	4.214	0.890	0.682
I felt I was having the ideal experience	3.969	0.825	0.620
It was pleasant just being there	4.044	0.924	0.702
I enjoyed the experience for its own sake	4.025	0.883	0.650
<i>Flow (AVE: 0.589, CR: 0.876, a: 0.883)</i>			
I was totally immersed in the experience	3.826	0.966	0.746
I was totally absorbed in the experience	3.819	1.013	0.868
My total focus and attention was on the experience	3.759	1.004	0.787
I felt deeply all that happened	3.850	0.993	0.775
I was thinking of nothing but what was happening at that moment	3.694	1.052	0.645
<i>Escapism (AVE: 0.707, CR: 0.876, a: 0.860)</i>			
I felt that I was living in a different time and place	3.252	1.190	0.894
I felt that I was in a different world	3.115	1.232	0.935
The experience let me imagine being someone else	2.711	1.236	0.641
<i>Socialising (AVE: 0.727, CR: 0.914, a: 0.912)</i>			
I met new people	3.232	1.299	0.846
I met people with similar interests	3.201	1.262	0.856
I made new friends	2.875	1.258	0.794
I talked to new and varied people	3.231	1.299	0.911
<i>Challenge (AVE: 0.596, CR: 0.880, a: 0.888)</i>			
I felt a sense of adventure and risk	2.920	1.331	0.709
I felt personally challenged	3.013	1.305	0.823
I felt an adrenalin rush	3.346	1.297	0.690
I felt that my skills were appreciated by others	2.852	1.280	0.822
During the experience I tested my limits	2.886	1.336	0.806
<i>Learning (AVE: 0.669, CR: 0.858, a: 0.815)</i>			
The experience was highly educational to me	2.972	1.303	0.754
The experience had made me more knowledgeable	3.225	1.246	0.833
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	3.323	1.231	0.863
<i>Communitas (AVE: 0.588, CR: 0.810, a: 0.855)</i>			
I was satisfied with being part of a team	3.267	1.271	0.718
I felt closer to friends and family	3.506	1.275	0.808
I felt in harmony with others	3.239	1.184	0.773

Notes: AVE – average variance extracted; CR – composite reliability; a – Cronbach's alpha

the standardised coefficients of the 31 indicators were significant (critical ratios  $> 1.96$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). However, one item from the escapism factor (“I felt I played a different character here”) was eliminated because it had a standardized loading below the critical value of 0.60 (Chin, 1998). The revised experience scale also showed a satisfactory model fit ( $p = 0.000$ ,  $\chi^2 = 1.642.37$ , GFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.056).

Moreover, the revised 30-item model showed adequate internal reliability, as Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the seven experience factors ranged from 0.815 to 0.912, exceeding the 0.70 criterion. The average variance extracted (AVE) for the seven factors ranged from 0.580 to 0.727, exceeding the critical value of 0.50. Furthermore, composite reliabilities of all experience factors exceeded the 0.70 accepted value criterion. Hence, it can be argued that the experience scale showed acceptable levels of convergent validity. Table I shows the descriptive statistics, the validity and reliability measures, as well as the standardised regression weights of the seven factors.

Based on the findings, results indicate that most of the respondents felt intense hedonic experience and flow. In contrast, feelings of escapism were felt less compared to the other consumption experience dimensions. To compare the experiential characteristics across the 16 activities, analysis of variance was utilised, which was based on the summative scores of the seven experience dimensions. Table II shows the mean scores of the experience dimensions for the 16 consumption activities. Significant differences were observed across the 16 activities in regards to the seven experiential dimensions, namely, hedonism ( $F = 5.63$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), flow ( $F = 3.16$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), escapism ( $F = 2.83$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), socialisation ( $F = 11.14$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), challenge ( $F = 8.37$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), knowledge ( $F = 8.23$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ) and communitas ( $F = 7.84$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

Almost all consumption activities that were investigated exhibited high levels of hedonism and immersion. Intense hedonist and absorbing consumption experiences are related

to performing arts, sports events, movies, extreme sports, vacations, museums, music, books and car driving. Cultural consumption (i.e. museums) is also characterised by strong escapism feelings. Notably, activities such as extreme sports and car driving are challenging experiences for consumers during which feelings of adventure, risk and adrenalin rush arise. Educational experiences which increased consumers’ knowledge resulted from attendance of performing arts, novel reading, museum visits and extreme sports. Attending sports events and vacationing proved to be intense social experiences which helped consumers strengthen their bonds with friends, family and other consumers. Taking the analysis one step further, it can be argued that extraordinary experiences (i.e. peak and flow experiences) were those related to extreme sports and museums. Consumers rated these two activities high in four of the seven experiential dimensions. On the other hand, television viewing and food and wine consumption were portrayed by respondents as ordinary experiences with low experiential characteristics.

Discriminant validity of the experience scale was established since the AVE of each factor was larger than the square of the correlation between the examined factor and the rest of the factors. Table III shows the mean values, standard deviations, validity and reliability measures of the post-consumption experience variables (satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, WOM behaviour, WOM intention and re-experience intention).

All post-consumption constructs (i.e. WOM activity, WOM praise and revisit intention) had good reliability and validity as Table III indicates. A structural equation analysis was conducted for testing the hypothesised relationships of the proposed framework. Structural equation modelling analyses and examines simultaneously more than one relationships among multiple dependent and independent latent and/or observable variables (Jöreskog *et al.*, 1999).

It should be noted that the measurement model tested the relationships between (a) all experience dimensions with satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, re-experience intentions, and

Table II Differences in experience dimensions across consumption activities

Type of consumption activity	Hedonic	Flow	Escapism	Socialisation	Challenge	Knowledge	Communitas
Concert	4.34	3.84	3.04	3.14	2.73	2.91	3.62
Ballet	4.36	4.08	3.21	3.35	3.15	3.96	3.63
Theatre	4.07	3.86	3.13	3.13	2.46	3.72	3.42
TV program	3.64	3.40	2.89	2.60	2.52	3.00	2.41
Movie	3.84	3.89	3.15	2.34	2.79	3.15	2.92
Sports event	4.03	3.89	2.89	3.30	3.14	2.91	3.73
Night club	4.11	3.45	2.64	3.49	2.90	2.52	3.52
Food and wine	3.97	3.26	2.51	2.71	2.60	2.61	3.10
Extreme sports	4.49	4.15	3.54	3.66	4.48	3.97	3.38
Vacations	4.39	3.74	3.10	3.63	3.06	3.42	3.74
Museum	4.09	3.93	3.54	3.25	2.80	4.21	3.55
Music	4.25	3.77	3.19	2.85	3.00	3.31	3.06
Novel	3.97	4.16	3.20	1.59	2.37	3.94	2.17
Car driving	3.95	3.93	2.58	2.38	3.92	3.38	2.51
Dinner	4.25	3.61	2.60	2.48	2.63	2.76	3.24
F-value	5.63*	3.16*	2.83*	11.14*	8.37*	8.23*	7.84*

Note: \*Significant at  $p < 0.05$



Table III Descriptive statistics, validity and reliability measures and standardised regression weights of post-consumption experience constructs

Constructs/items	Mean	SD	Standard loadings
<b>Satisfaction (AVE:0.733, CR: 0.891, a: 0.888)</b>			
I am satisfied with my decision to experience this activity	4.155	0.764	0.790
I think that I did the right thing by deciding to experience this activity	4.132	0.789	0.953
My choice to experience this activity was a wise one	4.121	0.811	0.817
<b>Nostalgia intensity (AVE: 0.618, C: 0.865, a: 0.845)</b>			
I felt a longing for the past experience	3.862	0.965	0.768
The experience is highly nostalgic	3.582	1.065	0.751
The experience is a very gratifying one for me	4.076	0.786	0.702
I have a little desire to re-experience the past	4.033	0.900	0.910
<b>WOM behaviour (AVE: 0.660, CR: 0.884, a: 0.886)</b>			
I have recommended this consumption experience to lots of people	3.865	0.984	0.676
I "talk up" this consumption experience to my friends	4.035	0.903	0.845
I try to spread the good-word about this consumption experience	4.064	0.874	0.905
I give this consumption experience tons of positive word-of-mouth advertising	3.774	1.002	0.807
<b>Re-experience intention (AVE: 0.703, CR: 0.826, a: 0.826)</b>			
The likelihood that I would consider experiencing the activity again is [zelb]	4.163	0.975	0.834
If I were to visit a campsite, the probability that I would experience this activity is [zelb]	4.247	0.963	0.844
<b>WOM Intention (AVE: 0.839, CR: 0.911, a: 0.905)</b>			
I am willing to tell other people about the good aspects of this consumption experience	4.053	1.007	0.993
I am willing to recommend this consumption experience to others	4.085	0.978	0.832

Notes: AVE – average variance extracted; CR – composite reliability; a – Cronbach's alpha

WOM behaviour; (b) satisfaction with nostalgia intensity, re-experience intentions, WOM behaviour and intentions; (c) nostalgia intensity with re-experience intentions, WOM behaviour and intentions; and (d)WOM behaviour with WOM intentions.

The overall chi-square statistic of the measurement model was significant [ $\chi^2(879) = 2.540.72, p = 0.000$ ], which is accepted for large samples (Byrne, 2010). The values GFI indices of the model exceeded the 0.90 criterion (CFI = 0.916, incremental-fit index = 0.916, TLI = 0.906). Moreover, the RMSEA value was smaller than the 0.07 threshold proposed by Bentler (1992) (RMSEA = 0.054). Based on the above results, it can be suggested that the hypothesised model showed a reasonably good fit to the data. To further assess the robustness of the proposed model, we compared its measurement properties and fit criteria against three alternative models:

- 1 a model with direct effects only;
- 2 a model with indirect effects only; and
- 3 a model with satisfaction and nostalgia as mediators.

Table IV shows the GFI measures for the different models. Comparison between the models suggests that the three alternative models fitted worse than the measurement model.

Support for the hypotheses was examined based on the significance of the standardised estimates of the path coefficients which are shown in Table V.

The hypothesis testing concluded that the hedonic dimension is a significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) positive predictor of satisfaction ( $\beta = 0.536$ ), whereas no other dimension exerts a significant impact on satisfaction. Thus, *H1* is accepted only. Regarding *H2*, it can be argued that nostalgia intensity is significantly affected ( $p < 0.05$ ) by the feelings of escapism ( $\beta = 0.134$ ), flow ( $\beta =$

0.110) and hedonism ( $\beta = 0.280$ ) of respondents. The dimensions of communitas, learning, challenge and socialisation did not influence significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) nostalgia intensity. Hence, *H2a–H2c* were accepted, while *H2d* was not supported.

WOM behaviour of respondents is positively and significantly affected ( $p < 0.05$ ) by the feelings of communitas ( $\beta = 0.116$ ) and the learning dimension of the activity ( $\beta = 0.122$ ). Interestingly, WOM behaviour is significantly affected ( $p < 0.05$ ), but negatively, by the feelings of personal challenge ( $\beta = -0.122$ ) which arise during the experience. On the contrary, hedonism, flow, escapism and socialisation did not influence significantly WOM behaviour. Thus, *H3b*, *H3c* and *H4* were accepted, whereas *H3a* and *H3d* were not accepted.

Referring to the fifth and sixth hypotheses, WOM intentions of respondents are significantly related ( $p < 0.05$ ) in a positive way with the learning ( $\beta = 0.091$ ) and hedonic ( $\beta = 0.122$ ) dimensions of the experience and in a negative way with the challenge dimension ( $\beta = -0.149$ ). No other dimension influenced significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) WOM intentions. Thus, *H5a*, *H5b* and *H6* were accepted. On the contrary, *H5c* and *H5d* were not accepted.

Intention to re-experience the activity is positively and significantly related to the hedonic dimension of the experience ( $\beta = 0.330$ ). Contrary to our expectations, the feelings of flow affect significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) but in a negative manner re-experience intention ( $\beta = -0.149$ ). No other dimension was found to significantly influence re-experience intentions. Therefore, *H7a* was accepted, whereas *H7b* was not accepted.

Satisfaction with the experience impacts significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) and in a positive manner nostalgia intensity ( $\beta = 0.532$ ),

Table IV Comparison of alternative models

Models	$\chi^2$	df	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA
Measurement model	2,540.72	879	0.916	0.916	0.905	0.054
Direct effects only	2,910.83	887	0.898	0.898	0.886	0.060
Indirect effects only	2,598.93	893	0.914	0.914	0.904	0.054
Satisfaction and nostalgia as mediators	2,615.10	900	0.913	0.914	0.904	0.054

Table V Main effects of consumption experience

Path	Standard direct effects	Critical ratios	Significance
Communitas → Satisfaction	0.049	0.878	0.380
Learning → Satisfaction	0.063	1.308	0.191
Challenge → Satisfaction	-0.039	-0.729	0.466
Socialising → Satisfaction	-0.063	-1.191	0.234
Escapism → Satisfaction	0.008	0.187	0.852
Flow → Satisfaction	0.043	0.791	0.429
Hedonics → Satisfaction	0.536	8.958	0.000*
Communitas → Nostalgia	0.006	0.136	0.892
Learning → Nostalgia	0.032	0.827	0.408
Challenge → Nostalgia	0.045	1.056	0.291
Socialising → Nostalgia	0.020	0.459	0.646
Escapism → Nostalgia	0.134	3.595	0.000*
Flow → Nostalgia	0.111	2.508	0.012*
Hedonics → Nostalgia	0.280	5.402	0.000*
Communitas → WOM Behaviour	0.116	2.146	0.032*
Learning → WOM Behaviour	0.122	2.615	0.009*
Challenge → WOM Behaviour	-0.121	-2.348	0.019*
Socialising → WOM Behaviour	-0.023	-0.448	0.654
Escapism → WOM Behaviour	0.017	0.375	0.708
Flow → WOM Behaviour	0.017	0.323	0.746
Hedonics → WOM Behaviour	0.029	0.458	0.647
Communitas → Re-experience Intention	0.106	1.941	0.052
Learning → Re-experience Intention	0.056	1.201	0.230
Challenge → Re-experience Intention	-0.050	-0.969	0.332
Socialising → Re-experience Intention	-0.090	-1.756	0.079
Escapism → Re-experience Intention	-0.007	-0.167	0.867
Flow → Re-experience Intention	-0.149	-2.793	0.005*
Hedonics → Re-experience Intention	0.330	5.071	0.000*
Communitas → WOM Intention	0.033	0.665	0.506
Learning → WOM Intention	0.091	2.079	0.038*
Challenge → WOM Intention	-0.114	-2.356	0.018*
Socialising → WOM Intention	0.033	0.698	0.485
Escapism → WOM Intention	0.024	0.576	0.565
Flow → WOM Intention	0.021	0.425	0.671
Hedonics → WOM Intention	0.122	2.093	0.036*
Satisfaction → Nostalgia	0.532	11.963	0.000*
Satisfaction → WOM Behaviour	0.335	5.447	0.000*
Satisfaction → WOM Intention	0.066	1.147	0.251
Satisfaction → Re-experience Intention	0.194	3.186	0.001*
Nostalgia → WOM Behaviour	0.236	3.335	0.000*
Nostalgia → WOM Intention	0.129	1.965	0.050
Nostalgia → Re-experience Intention	0.284	3.982	0.000*
WOM Behaviour → WOM Intention	0.459	10.796	0.000*

Note: \*Significant at  $p < 0.05$

WOM behaviour ( $\beta = 0.335$ ) and re-experience intentions ( $\beta = 0.194$ ). Thus, *H8* was accepted. On the contrary, satisfaction did not seem to impact WOM intentions significantly ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Nostalgia intensity significantly ( $p < 0.05$ ) and positively affects WOM behaviour ( $\beta = 0.236$ ) and intention to re-experience the activity ( $\beta = 0.284$ ). Therefore, *H9* and *H11* are accepted. However, nostalgia was not significantly related ( $p < 0.05$ ) to WOM intentions. Thus, *H10* was rejected. *H12* was accepted since results indicated that WOM behaviour is a significant positive predictor ( $p < 0.05$ ) of WOM intentions ( $\beta = 0.459$ ).

## Discussion

Consumption experiences are created in the minds of consumers, who in turn evaluate, engage in actions and form future intentions about the consumption activity. Delving inside the subjective nature of consumption experience and mapping the outcomes of such experiences is a critical task for researchers and marketers wishing to delight customers through the delivery of extraordinary and memorable experiences. The purpose of the present study was to investigate the consequences of the different consumption experience dimensions on consumers' satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, re-experience intentions and WOM communication. By doing so, the current research enhances the understanding of the complex experience mechanisms that drive consumer behaviour since it was found that not all consumption experience dimensions affect consumers in the same way at the post-consumption stage.

More specifically, the hedonic dimension of experience was the only important antecedent of consumer satisfaction. Thus, it can be argued that consumers have "standards of pleasure" (Oliver, 1999). When these standards are exceeded by a consumption experience then satisfaction is derived. In other words, satisfaction arises from pleasurable experiences that exceed consumers' expectations. In contrast, the other experience dimensions were not pertinent to consumers' satisfaction and evaluation of the experience.

In addition, the present study revealed that consumers' memory is triggered to take snapshots of consumption experiences by specific feelings such as hedonism, escapism and flow. In particular, pleasurable experiences can create "reward memories" to consumers. This finding supports the notion that nostalgia is a "positively toned evocation of a lived past" (Davis, 1979, p. 18). Moreover, nostalgia is triggered by experiences which spur consumers' fantasies and imaginations. This finding corroborates the argument of Holak and Havlena (1998 p. 218) that nostalgia "may involve memories of the past of fantasies about a remote time or place". Thus, consumers tend to remember experiences that help them escape from reality and imagine that they live in a different world. Nonetheless, the dimension of flow was also found to be related to nostalgia intensity suggesting that flow "is a state long cherished that becomes a landmark in memory" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Therefore, it can be argued that total involvement and focus associated with a flow experience increase consumers' attention to the consumption task resulting in memory storage and recall. Although nostalgia is a function of pleasure, imagination and attention,

positive remembrances of the past are in most cases hedonistic in nature. Moreover, the present study revealed that memorable experiences are not associated with the social and the learning aspects of the consumption activity while consumption events that evoke feelings of challenge and risk are not stored in consumers' mind.

The present study confirmed the positive relationship between the dimension of *communitas* and WOM behaviour. Experiences which increase the feelings of team belonging and bolster consumers' relationships with their companions and other consumers can heighten WOM activity immediately after the consumption of the experience. Studies in WOM communication have shown that consumers' motives to engage in WOM communication are related to their needs for self-enhancement (Sundaram *et al.*, 1998). It seems that consumers who experience feelings of togetherness and belongingness by being part of a team during a consumption experience derive a sense of self-worth. Consequently, these consumers will be motivated to spread positive WOM to satisfy their desire for self-enhancement through their *communitas* experience.

Consumers' WOM behaviour and their future intentions to recommend was also related to the learning dimension of experience. This finding is in consistency with WOM literature which suggests that consumers are motivated to engage in WOM behaviour to share their expertise about the consumption experience with others. This motive seems to drive immediate and long-term WOM communication through intentions. In addition, the present study shed light on the negative effects of the dimension of challenge on WOM communication. When consumers engage with a high-risk experience then the feelings of challenge will lead to negative WOM immediately after the experience and in the future. Negative WOM acts as a mechanism for anxiety reduction and relief on behalf of consumers. Moreover, consumers might engage in negative WOM to help and warn others about the risky experience. Whereas hedonism was not found to influence immediate WOM behaviour, it affected significantly future WOM intentions. Again, self-enhancement mechanisms motivate consumers to talk about their pleasurable experiences to others. Put another way, consumers will spread positive WOM to enhance their status and self-worth because they had lived a pleasurable and fun experience. Similar results were also reported by Babin *et al.* (2005) who found that consumers' intention to recommend were affected by the hedonic value of restaurant experiences.

Nonetheless, hedonism proved to be the most pertinent experience dimension affecting WOM intentions whereas the social aspects of experiences such as socialisation did not influence consumers' intention to recommend. This finding could be attributed to the fact that experiences which help consumers socialise and meet new people with similar interests do not provide a means for self-enhancement that consumers want to communicate through WOM. This desire for self-projection is satisfied mainly via the pleasure that stems for consumption experience.

Once again, hedonism was found to be the most important dimension that affects consumers' re-experience intentions. According to Shiv and Huber (2000), experiences which have

a hedonic advantage over others tend to be more preferred by consumers. Therefore, the emotional worth and gratification inherent in a pleasurable consumption experience drives future decisions of consumers to re-experience the consumption activity. On the contrary, the flow dimension was negative predictor of future re-experience intentions. A possible explanation for the negative association found between flow and re-experience intentions may be that consumers negatively evaluate the feelings of immersion, absorption and intense involvement generated by experiences. This negative tension of dissonance evolves to an avoidance strategy by consumers through their reluctance to re-engage with the consumption activity. The negative feelings produced by immersion were also reported in the study of Jennett *et al.* (2008) where users of games experienced discomfort and anxiety after being immersed.

Hence, this study has made a significant contribution by identifying the most pertinent experience dimensions on post-consumption evaluations, behaviour and intentions of consumers. Accordingly, specific experience dimensions were found to be boosters of positive consumers' behaviour and intentions after the experience. This study revealed that promoters of consumers' satisfaction, nostalgia intensity, WOM activity and behavioural intentions are the dimensions of hedonism, escapism, communitas, and learning. However, one should bear in mind that hedonism is the primary need that consumers try to satisfy through consumption experiences (Bigné *et al.*, 2008) because the dimension of hedonism influenced four of the five post-consumption variables and had the greatest impact compared to the other dimensions.

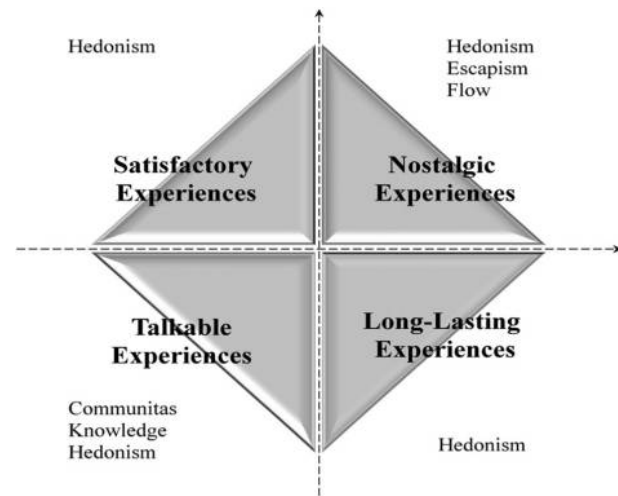
Besides the aforementioned experience, stimulants during the post-consumption stage, specific experience dimensions were found to be "saboteurs" of the aftermath of a consumption experience. Yet, the current research contributes to the limited knowledge about the negative side of consumption experience by identifying those dimensions that have a negative impact on consumer behaviour. Specifically, the experience factors of flow and personal challenge were negatively related to WOM activity and behavioural intentions of consumers.

Figure 1 summarises the results of the present study by presenting the experiential dimensions that impact positively on post-consumption consumer decisions.

Satisfactory experiences result from consumption activities that produce positive emotions of joy and pleasure. Nostalgic and memorable experiences are positive events that help consumers escape from routine and lose a sense of presence. Talkable experiences which consumers love to share with their significant others are those that give consumers something new to talk about. New knowledge derived from pleasurable activities which enhance teamwork can transform consumers to experience evangelists. Critically, long-lasting experiences are gratifying experiences that consumers prefer to repeat in the future.

Deciphering the association between WOM behaviour and WOM intentions, the present study adds to the limited knowledge on the impact of consumers' behaviour on their future intentions. Findings support the fact that when consumers engage in WOM behaviour in the present, the

Figure 1 Characteristics of different experiential outcomes



probability to spread positive WOM in the future increases as well. Additionally, expert consumers with high levels of prior experience are better ambassadors of experiences, willing to recommend the activity in the present and in the future.

### Managerial implications

From a managerial standpoint, the present study contributes to the experiential marketing by providing an effective framework for the management of consumer experiences. Until now, most experiential marketing frameworks suggest that marketers should try to enhance all aspects and dimensions of experiences to gain a competitive advantage. For example, Pine and Gilmore (1998) highlighted the need for marketers to create entertaining, escapist, educational and aesthetic experiences to attract and win customers. However, the present study found that the key for positively influencing the post-consumption evaluations and decisions of consumers lies in the specific elements of experiences. Herein, an alternative approach to experiential marketing is proposed by focusing on particular aspects of experiences. Specifically, marketers should be aware of the consequences of the different experience factors on consumers and accordingly design their experiences so as to benefit from dimensions which exert positive influence (i.e. hedonism, learning, communitas and escapism), while simultaneously try to eliminate the effects of dimensions with negative impact on consumers (i.e. flow and challenge).

First, marketers wishing to gain competitive advantage should begin with evaluating their experiential offering and according to the evaluation results, enhance or reduce certain aspects of their experience. Hence, companies should place emphasis on designing hedonic experiences based on specific clues (Haeckel *et al.*, 2003) that impact on consumers' positive emotions and entertainment. Moreover, marketers should focus on creating social experiences which help consumers strengthen their bonds with others and feel members of a team with other consumers. To that end, companies could offer complementary services based on team-building games and activities. Enhancing the social dimension of the experience offering could benefit especially companies related to sports



events and vacations. Besides enhancing the entertainment facets of the experience, marketers should emphasise the educational clues derived from their offering. Consumers do not desire only simple pleasurable events but they want to acquire new knowledge from their experiences. Giving customers new facts and valuable information about their consumption activities and combining experiences with stories are important endeavours aiming at increasing the knowledge of consumers. Services like performing arts, extreme sports and museums are positively affected by the educational elements of consumers' experiences.

Consumer imagination is another important basis for experiential marketing. Creating fantasy experiences aims at designing activities that help consumers escape in a different world away from their daily routines. A possible tactic is the thematisation of the experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). According to Carù and Cova (2007), thematising an experience offers symbolic means to consumers and is related to activities, seasons, geographic regions, populations, etc. It should be noted that museum marketers could take advantage of the thematisation tactic because consumers reported intense feelings of escapism during their visits in museums.

But marketers should take care as to not enhance consumers' feelings of immersion and risk. Therefore, avoidance of risky and absorbing experiences is proposed for companies wishing to deliver exceptional experiences. Companies should design a safe experiential environment that ensures a safe consumption activity. However, one should bear in mind that building an environment that totally absorbs consumers is not an appropriate tactic due to the negative consequences on consumer loyalty and WOM communication. Hence, adjusting the levels of consumers' engagement with the experience is a critical task for experiential marketers.

In addition, managers should remember that different types of consumption activities are characterized by different degrees of experience elements. Thus, the above proposed framework should be adapted to the "experiential mix" of a specific consumption activity. For example, extreme sports experiences were found to produce intense feelings of hedonism, escapism, flow and challenge. On the contrary, such experiences scored low on the learning dimensions and feelings of communitas. Hence, marketers of such experiences should try to reinforce the educational outcomes of their offering by helping consumers develop their skills, while on the same time enhancing their sense of belonging to a team through specific group tasks. This way, consumers could engage in positive WOM after the experience. Furthermore, marketers of extreme sports need to eliminate the negative aspects of their experiential offering by reducing the feelings of flow and personal challenge that arise. Towards this end, emphasis should be placed on safety matters and skills requirements for the extreme sports. If consumers' perceived risk is reduced and the skills required for performing the challenging activities match participants' capabilities then consumers will be willing to re-experience the activity and recommend it to others.

Television programme viewing is yet another example of a consumption activity that requires experience uplift because it was found to lack in several critical dimensions such as

hedonism, escapism, knowledge and communitas. Thus, television marketers need to augment their "products" by satisfying both the cognitive and the emotional needs of their viewers. To that end, consumers should be provided with TV programmes that are entertaining, interesting, help them relieve the tension of their everyday lives and gather in weekends with their friends and families. Moreover, novel TV programmes can be designed so viewers will learn and acquire new information that can share with their significant others later.

## Limitations and future research suggestions

The first limitation of the present study relates to the measurement of consumption experience. The study used a structured questionnaire in which participants rated their experience. Since consumer experience is highly subjective and personal in nature, other qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews could provide fruitful insights regarding other emotional aspects of experiences that were not addressed herein.

Another limitation stems from the survey design based on which participants were asked to remember a recent consumption experience that they had during the past six months. Hence, the bias resulting from reliance on consumers' memory affects the implications of the present study. To overcome this limitation, future research could focus on obtaining information about experiences by asking consumers during or right after their consumption activity. In addition, this study focused on positive experiences without taking into consideration negative consumption events, their content and consequences. Investigation of the dimensions that comprise intense consumption experiences is a welcome addition in the limited empirical research.

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