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Experiential liminoid consumption: The case of nightclubbing

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Abstract

This study addresses a lack of holistic understanding of experiential consumption by developing and empirically testing a conceptual model that investigates the process of experiential consumption – antecedents, the experience itself, and emotional responses. We explore Victor Turner’s anthropological concept of the liminoid to create an Experiential Liminoid Consumption (ELC) model, examining the relationships between experiential marketing and consumption constructs. The study adopted a quantitative methodology using survey method and a sample of students. The conceptual model was analysed using PLS. Conclusions, implications, future directions and limitations are suggested.

This paper contributes a holistic understanding of experiential consumption, alongside the ‘Experiential Liminoid Consumption’ model. This model is built using a number of previously defined constructs: Motivation; Sociability; Leisure Entitlement; Communitas; Flow, Ecstasy; Involvement; Pleasure and Arousal. By manufacturing a sense of the liminoid in the consumer experience, marketers can encourage hedonic feelings of escapism, social subversion, and group camaraderie, thereby encouraging repeat custom.

Keywords: experiential marketing, liminal, liminoid, PLS, consumption experience
Introduction

The recent shift in focus from the traditional ‘features-and-benefits’ of consumption to an emphasis on customer experience has led to the rise of experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999; Tynan & McKechnie, 2009). Consumers have been shown to seek escape from the reality of everyday life, and play an active role in the consumption of an experience or space (Fine, 2010; Firat & Dholakia, 1998; Taheri & Jafari, 2012). Therefore, marketers seek to engage consumers in a memorable, involved manner, offering extraordinary experiences (Alba & Williams, 2013; Arnould & Price, 1993; Caru & Cova, 2007; Schmitt, 1999; 2003). Experiential consumption is an important component of activities in certain situations, such as the hedonic environment of the nightclub, in which pleasure is “a complex biosocial phenomenon subject to competing sociohistoric discourses” (Goulding, Shankar, Elliott, & Canniford, 2009, p. 760). Consumption experience is thus at the heart of contemporary consumer behaviour, and has a vital impact on what consumers play, enjoy, remember, and learn (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry Jr., 1989; Sherry, Kozinets, & Borghini, 2007).

This paper posits a liminoid framework for considering consumption in an experiential setting, and uses accepted constructs to hypothesise a model of ‘experiential liminoid consumption’ (ELC). Victor Turner (1979) developed his conceptualisation of the liminoid – broadly, the playful experiences sought as an escape from the realities of everyday life – as a post-industrial alternative to the transitory liminal experiences he identified as influential in the ritual processes of pre-industrial societies. The liminoid occurs within leisure settings, away from work and everyday responsibilities. As Turner
writes, “bars, pubs, some cafés, social clubs, etc.” may be seen as “permanent “liminoid” settings” (Turner, 1974, 86). The liminoid is a less structured space than those often experienced in modern life (e.g. those associated with the responsibilities of work and home-life), representing the opportunity for individual movement, expression and social subversion (Caudewell & Rinehart, 2014). The context of the study – nightclub experiences – represents a useful setting for both the analysis of consumption within and of an experiential space, and the application of Turner’s concept of the liminoid. Nightclubs represent a significant part of the UK leisure and entertainment industry (Roberts, 2006), with around 7,000 businesses employing close to 40,000 staff and generating revenue of £2 billion. However, this revenue is decreasing annually at almost five percent, due to legislative changes allowing late night drinking in pubs and bars (not just clubs), and the economic downturn seeing an increase in drinking at home before going out (Hammersley & Ditton, 2005; IBISWorld, 2014; Seaman & Ikegwuono, 2010; Wells, Graham & Purcell, 2009).

Viewing the nightclub experience through the liminoid framework highlights the presence or absence of opportunities for social subversion; escape from social structures; and exercising choice. Recognising these features of the liminoid as key aspects of the nightclub experience grants insights into what may be effectively improved in hedonic spaces. Enhancing the consumer experience of these liminoid aspects may heighten experiential feelings of escapism and play, so encouraging the consumer to more freely consume.
This paper contributes to experiential marketing knowledge by: 1) framing the consumption of experience as a liminoid phenomenon; 2) developing and testing a model of experiential liminoid consumption in order to better understand relationships between the antecedent motivations of, playful interactions and involvement during, and short-term experiential remembered response to the consumption experience; and 3) suggesting managerial implications for the enhancement of experiential consumption, particularly in relation to hedonic spaces such as a nightclub. The paper proceeds as follows: first it introduces the theoretical framework of the liminoid experience and space in relation to experiential consumption; extant marketing and experiential consumption literature is then used to develop our ELC model containing accepted constructs and hypothesizing relationships; the model is then tested using partial least squares (PLS); and, finally, the results are discussed and the contributions of the study, its limitations, and directions for future research are highlighted.

Theoretical framework

Turner's definition of the liminoid stems from the liminal, which originally described the transition from adolescence to adulthood as a rite of passage (Van Gennep, 1960), with its etymological root in the Latin word “limen”, meaning “threshold”. Both van Gennep and Turner developed liminality through the study of pre-industrial societies and the ritual processes within them, with Turner particularly interested in their anti-structural qualities. Scholarship tends to utilise liminality as categorizing transitions from the “known to the unknown” (Nisbet, 1969, p. 4). This metaphorical boundary-crossing, predicated by societal norms, values, expectations and constraints,
facilitates “brief moments of freedom and an escape from the daily grind of social responsibilities” (Preston-Whyte, 2004, p. 350), however, we argue that the concept of the liminoid is much more useful for understanding experiential consumption in a post-industrial hedonic context.

Turner (1974) distinguishes his concept of the liminoid from the liminal through a discussion of socio-historic shifts in the opportunities available for, and values placed upon, notions of leisure and leisure time. Whereas in pre-industrial societies the separation of work and play is limited, industrial and post-industrial societies are much less constrained by this anti-leisure attitude. In order to conceptualize the aspects of leisure or play that predominate post-industrial societies, Turner describes the liminoid as optional and related to freedom from the regularity of life to enjoy leisure time (Turner, 1974). The liminoid (though potentially collective) is often more individualistic than the liminal, incorporating a mass effect often seen in leisure experiences, such as nightclubbing. Liminoid phenomena develop in society’s margins, where plural and experimental activities flourish; this echoes Goulding and Shankar’s assertions of strong links between nightclubs and 1980s illegal rave culture (Goulding & Shankar, 2011). Belk and Costa (1998, p. 233) argue that in the consumer experience literature, liminoid experience is characterised as a “voluntary choice rather than a ritual obligation,” linked to playful and engaging consumption situations that create enjoyable experiential outcomes such as pleasure or arousal.

Central to Turner’s conception of liminal, and therefore also liminoid experience is the transitional space. Pritchard and Morgan (2006) suggest that space is both a product and medium, whilst Cohen (2002, p. 262) states
that space is “brought into being according to how it is used, surveyed and invested with symbolic significance”. So space means different things to different people at different times, and is created rather than passively occupied. Turner (1982) describes people in liminal and liminoid spaces as liberated from the normal structural obligations imposed by society.

Finally, experiential consumption is often motivated by a sense of community, a desire for adventure, being with others, status-seeking, seeking playfulness, and variety-seeking (Alba & Williams, 2013). Nightclubs are a good example of such experiential consumption as they consist of rituals such as mythology, formulism, sacredness, communitas and transformation, where “…the body becomes the locus of the experience” (Goulding & Shankar, 2011, p. 1449). The following section identifies the liminoid concepts seen as central to the nightclubbing experience, and to which we therefore link our constructs.

**Liminoid concepts and related constructs**

In viewing nightclubbing as a liminoid experience, we identify quantifiable constructs relating to the following liminoid characteristics: anti-structure (subversion of social norms); spontaneous communitas (temporary detachment from social structures); optionality (freedom to enter liminoid experience). In order to offer a holistic picture, we link these liminoid characteristics to antecedents of the liminoid experience: motivation to escape; sociability; leisure entitlement. In considering these antecedents, we are able to measure the tendencies that drive the consumer to seek the liminoid experience. These liminoid characteristics are then drawn through
into the liminoid experience, where we find the constructs play, flow, and ecstasy.

**Antecedents of liminoid experience**

*Motivation to escape*

Pine and Gilmore’s (2011) conception of the experience economy is based on several escapist venues, such as nightclubs, casinos, and theme parks. A similar link between escapism and the motivation to participate in experiential consumption is identified in other scholarship (Jafari, Taheri, & vom Lehm, 2013; Lee, Lee, Bernhard, & Yoon, 2006; Slater & Armstrong, 2010). Turner (1979) writes that liminoid phenomena are anti-structural in “subvert[ing] quotidian and prestigious structures and symbols” (Turner, 1979, p. 493), so contributing to a sense of individuals existing in a space relieved from the structural and symbolic restrictions of everyday society. This suggests that a liminoid space may prove attractive (and motivational) to one seeking escape from everyday life, hence we link this motivation to escape with the socially subversive, anti-structural characteristic of the liminoid experience.

Wohlfeil and Whelan (2006, p. 648) define motivation as central to human activity, explaining that one choice is selected at the expense of others due to “the interaction of fundamental activation processes and various cognitive processes”. The level of motivation of participants may have a significant contributory effect on other concepts such as involvement and is explored in our empirical analysis.

*Sociability*
Sociability is the “tendency to affiliate with others and to prefer being with others to remaining alone” (Cheek & Buss, 1981, p. 330). Levels of sociability are strongly linked to character traits; highly sociable people tend to be extroverted and crave excitement, need people to converse and laugh with, and are more prone to engage in social activities (Hills & Argyle, 2001; Spake & Megehee, 2010; Matzler, Pichler, Müller, & Mooradian, 2011, Aroean & Michaelidou, 2014).

In defining “interactive sociality” Jafari, Taheri and vom Lehm (2013, p. 1730) caution against the oversimplification of sociability due to differing levels of willingness to interact, and the importance of subjective characteristics, e.g. motivation. As such it is argued here that sociability is an important construct for consideration in conceptualising a unified model of ELC. We link the liminoid element of spontaneous communitas to sociability.

Turner (1974) defines communitas as a “major variable of the ‘anti-structural’” (Turner, 1974, p. 76), being a type of “non-transactional order or quality of human relationship” (Turner, 1974, p. 77) between individuals beyond “generalized and segmentalized...roles, statuses, classes, cultural sexes, conventional age-divisions, ethnic affiliations, and so on” (Turner, 1974, p. 77). Turner’s (1969) communitas describes the unstructured, or – more applicable in a clubbing study – rudimentarily structured collective of equal individuals, emphasising individual reflection and social subversion (Turner, 1974). During a “moment in and out of time” these individuals share “a generalized social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties” (Turner, 1969, p. 96).
Turner (1974) identifies three forms of communitas: spontaneous, ideological, and normative. The temporary detachment from social structures represented by nightclubbing fits Turner's (1974, p. 79) description of spontaneous communitas as the “moment when compatible people...obtain a flash of lucid mutual understanding on the existential level”, which may “succumb to the dry light of next day’s disjunction.” The desire for spontaneous communitas is thus linked to a measure of sociability.

**Leisure entitlement**

Given the continued conceptual flexibility of ‘leisure’ (Unger & Kernan, 1983; Stebbins, 1992; Stebbins, 1996; Slater & Armstrong, 2010; Taylor & Shank, 2008), it is helpful to make a distinction that does not impinge on the subjectivity of the construct. McGinnis (2002) presents a useful framework – ‘leisure entitlement’ – through which to understand the construct in the context of consumer research, being the extent to which someone believes they have a right to leisure separate from work and obligations to others. The construct measures the centrality of leisure to individual lifestyles. Further studies find leisure entitlement subject to intrapersonal; interpersonal; and structural constraints (McGinnis & Gentry, 2004, 2006; McGinnis, Gentry, & Gao, 2008).

As such, the choice to enter a liminoid space (the optionality distinguishing liminoid from liminal) may be understood as an exercising of the individual's right to leisure time. The constraints on exercising this right to choose leisure may also be understood as driving an urge to subvert the social norms restricting leisure. Again, subversion is central to the liminoid. Turner (1974) describes the liminoid as “like a commodity...which one selects and pays for”, writing that the liminoid is “felt to be freer than the liminal, a matter of choice
not obligation” (Turner, 1974, p. 86). Hence we connect optionality to this sense of leisure entitlement.

**Liminoid experience**

The constructs explored in this stage represent the central moments of liminoid experience (here, time spent in the nightclub). These constructs are widely explored and measured within marketing literature, and the concept of ‘play’ is of central importance to Turner’s exploration of liminoid phenomena. Several studies develop ‘play’ as a marketing concept (McGinnis, 2002; McGinnis & Gentry, 2004, 2006; McGinnis et al., 2008; McGinnis, Gentry, & Gao, 2012), being made up of communitas, flow, and ecstasy. Deegan (1998) describes play as liberation from modern societal structures, and Holt (1995) describes it as autotelic consumption with no ulterior end. Kerr and Apter (1991, p.14) define play as a “state of mind. . . where we create a small and manageable private world. . . in which, temporarily at least nothing outside has any significance and. . . one feels basically secure and unthreatened from the problems of the real world”. The constructs which make up play are explored individually below, along with experiential involvement, a construct which is related to, but not a component of the play concept (Deegan, 1998; Holt, 1995; McGinnis, 2002; McGinnis & Gentry, 2004, 2006; McGinnis et al., 2008, 2012; Gyimóthy & Mykletun, 2004). As with leisure, interpretations of play are multiple, and so we hope to prove the usefulness of our interpretation in this context.
Play (Communitas, Flow, Ecstasy)

Communitas

Communitas plays a central role in the conceptualisation of ‘play’ in ritual experience, leisure activity and hedonistic consumption, where it produces a transcendent group camaraderie (Celsi, Rose, & Leigh, 1993). Communitas is seen as an important construct in marketing studies through its bolstering of hedonic pleasure and personal progression. Klaus and Maklan (2011) highlight the ability of service providers to tailor marketing designs to segmented groups, maximising the impact of short- and long-term communitas. Communitas is seen as a key component of shared recreational experiences, (Cayla, Cova, & Maltese, 2013; Crowther & Donlan, 2011; Fillis & Mackay, 2014), of ‘themed’ pubs and experiences (Brown & Patterson, 2000) and in providing ‘authentic’ experiences (Hede & Thyne, 2010). Again, we identify spontaneous communitas as that form associated with the nightclubbing experience.

Flow

Another element of ‘play’ is ‘flow’, defined by its architect Csikszentmihalyi (1988, 1990) as an autotelic experience involving the harmonious ordering of consciousness, often experienced when one feels they are performing at a high level. According to Belk et al (1989, p. 8), it involves “a centring of attention, a loss of self, a feeling of being in control of self and the environment”. Flow is often described as a loss of self-consciousness and appreciation of ordinary reality during which senses become heightened, serenity increases, and a sense of nothing else mattering prevails.
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Deegan, 1998; McGinnis & Gentry, 2004; Papagiannidis, Pantano, See-To, & Bourlakis, 2013). In contrast to communitas, flow is seen as a more individualistic experience, requiring structure and rules. Flow thus presents an important tool in experiential and hedonic consumption environments. Turner (1974) highlights the importance of Csikszentmihalyi’s flow concept and its affiliation with communitas.

**Ecstasy**

Sacred, ritual-like processes are said to potentially produce ecstatic experiences so strong that individuals feel as though they are standing outside of themselves (Belk et al., 1989; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). As such, ecstasy is one of a number of emotions evoked during a successful consumption experience (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009). Ecstasy relates to the other liminoid components of consumption in that (as with flow and communitas) it requires immersion in an activity. It is momentary and cannot be achieved if alienation precludes these positive, almost transcendental, emotions (Belk et al., 1989; Fillis & Mackay, 2014; McGinnis & Gentry, 2004; McGinnis et al., 2008; Tynan & McKechnie, 2009). We understand this notion of standing outside of oneself (Belk et al., 1989; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982) in terms of the liminoid experience as a potentially anti-structural element, in which individuals feel detached from the self that is governed by everyday social structures. Play also influences consumers’ involvement in an interactive environment (Gyimo’thy & Mykletun, 2004; Kerr & Apler, 1991).

**Experiential involvement**
Research into involvement begins with the work of Sherif and Cantril (1947). Involvement is also characterised as difficult to define due to its multiplicity (Muncy & Hunt, 1984), with no definition agreed. Further, various types of involvement have been studied, and attempts to measure them spurred much debate (Mittal, 1989; O’Cass, 1996; O’Cass & Choy, 2008). It is argued that involvement differs in relation to hedonic consumption, which (in addition to the accepted high and low involvements) provides potential for all-consuming, overwhelming involvement (Alba & Williams, 2013; Hausman, 2011; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Further, involvement is a significant factor in service contexts given the intangibility of the service provision attributes and the changing service expectations of consumers; the part played in the service consumption of the consumer increases the importance of involvement (Gabbott & Hogg, 1994).

This study focuses on the ‘experiential’ form of involvement, in order to explore the construct in a hedonic, experiential context. Based on Hausman (2011), experiential involvement refers to a disengagement from the practical strivings of much of daily life towards a profound engagement with alternate surroundings and objects (Cameron-Wild, Kuiken, & Schopflocher, 1995). Hausman (2011, p. 213) develops a definition for experiential involvement as a “passive state, such as a person who is ‘in a stupor’ at a rock concert or is swept up in religious ‘rapture’”. As such, experiential involvement may here be understood in liminoid terms as anti-structural, in detaching consumers from everyday structures.

*Remembered experiential responses*
The post-consumption stage falls into two types: remembered experience (services) and re-valuation (durables) (Gummerus, 2013; Schou, Muniz & Around, 2009). The constructs explored here represent the emotional reactions provoked by liminoid experience: pleasure and arousal. These were first measured by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). They are seen as important in consumption experiences as a means of fostering recommendations, repeat business, and long-term satisfaction (Bigné et al., 2005); seen to act as mediators between environmental stimuli and consumer behaviour (Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Donovan, Rossiter, Marcoolyn, & Nesdale, 1994; Teller & Dennis, 2012); and as central to the consumer decision to remain in a particular environment (Davies, Kooijman, & Ward, 2003). Studies suggest that pleasure and arousal are interdependent (Koo & Lee, 2011; Ladhari, 2007), and may be understood as the short-term response to a consumption experience such as nightclubbing, rather than the entire post-consumption reaction (Ladhari, 2007; Gummerus, 2013; Bigné et al., 2005).

**Pleasure**

Despite its inherent subjectivity at an individual level, pleasure has generally come to be thought of as an essential emotion, the maximization of which forms a basic human motive. This “complex biosocial phenomenon” (Goulding, Shankar, Elliott, & Canniford, 2009, p. 760) has been expressed more simply as feeling good, joyful, or happy in a situation (Bigné et al., 2005; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Runyan, Kim, & Baker, 2012). Arguably, consumers may not have specific goals in their consumption experience, so feelings of pleasure can be seen as a short-term evaluation of their experience (Koo & Lee, 2011; Ladhari, 2007; Gummerus, 2013; Chebat &
Michon, 2003). The freedom and optionality of the liminoid experience may thus indicate that pleasure is to be expected from this experience.

Arousal

Arousal is defined by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) as a feeling of activation, or energy mobilization, which varies between drowsiness and excitement (Di Muro & Murray, 2012; Donovan & Rossiter, 1982; Fedorikhin & Patrick, 2010). Arousal, activity and activation have been studied in a number of contexts, and arousal is defined by Russell et al (1989) as representing a reported subjective feeling, though involving or based upon physiological activity. Bigné et al (2005) define arousal as representing the degree to which an individual feels stimulated or active. It is possible to differentiate empirically between low (base) and high (elevated) levels of arousal (Fedorikhin & Patrick, 2010). Individuals in a high-arousal state are seen to be more perceptive to peripheral cues. Again, arousal is seen as a short-term evaluation of consumer experience (Koo & Lee, 2011; Ladhari, 2007; Gummerus, 2013; Chebat & Michon, 2003). In terms of the liminoid, we may link arousal to the sensations associated with anti-structure, such as the arousal stimulated by spontaneous communitas.

Conceptual model and hypothesis development

Figure 1 provides a graphical representation of the main hypotheses proposed in this exploratory study. Intrinsically, the ELC model offers the conceptual framework upon which empirical analysis took place. The model shows that the ‘play’ constructs and experiential involvement are affected by
the constructs derived from the liminoid experience (motivation to escape, sociability and leisure entitlement). Emotional responses (arousal and pleasure) are provoked by both the antecedents and the liminoid experience. Similarities occur across the constructs which occupy each stage, though the subtle differences between each play a central role in the relationships produced and the construction of the model.
Motivation to Escape
Sociability
Leisure Entitlement

Communitas
Play
Flow
Ecstasy

Experiential Involvement

Arousal
Pleasure

Antecedents of Liminoid Experience

Liminoid Experience

Remembered Experiential Responses

Figure 1: "Experiential Liminoid Consumption" (ELC) model
Pine and Gilmore (1998) highlight the absorption and immersion that tends to be involved in escapist activities such as consumption of a hedonic or experiential form. This absorption and immersion is something inherent, in slightly contrasting ways, in involvement and the three 'play' constructs (McGinnis & Gentry, 2004). As such, a positive relationship is expected between motivation and the ‘play’ constructs.

The literature shows links between the sociability construct and the desire to enter a variety of relationships and groups (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Hills & Argyle, 2001; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999; Spake & Megehee, 2010). Belk et al (1989) show that, though not essential, group experiences can strengthen ecstasy, therefore a relationship is expected to be found between the sociability construct and ecstasy, in addition to a relationship with communitas. Further, it could be suggested that the sociability-communitas relationship will be more significant than that of sociability-ecstasy. McGinnis et al (2008) highlight that leisure is an intrinsically motivated pursuit, and that flow – through its autotelic capacity – closely represents intrinsically motivated behaviour; as such, a strong relationship is expected. Given the shared characteristics of ecstasy and flow, a positive relationship is also predicted between the leisure entitlement construct and ecstasy. McGinnis et al (2008) highlight that although communitas is enjoyable and highly transcending it is routed more in group interaction than the pursuit of leisure itself. Therefore, it is likely that leisure entitlement’s relationship with communitas will be less powerful than that with flow.
$H_1 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between motivation to escape and a) communitas b) flow, and c) ecstasy.}$

$H_2 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between sociability and a) communitas b) flow, and c) ecstasy.}$

$H_3 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between leisure entitlement and a) communitas b) flow, and c) ecstasy.}$

Flow and experiential involvement have been shown to be linked through the participation of consumers, both sensory and cognitive, in the service or consumption experience (Cameron-Wild et al., 1995; Hausman, 2011). Cameron Wild et al (1995) highlight the links between Maslow’s (1964) ‘peak experience’ concept, which is similar to the ecstasy construct in this study, and experiential involvement. Given the shared characteristics of flow, communitas and ecstasy, similar links between communitas and experiential involvement are expected. As such, strong positive relationships between the play constructs – communitas, flow and ecstasy – and experiential involvement are expected.

$H_4 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between communitas and experiential involvement.}$

$H_5 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between flow and experiential involvement.}$

$H_6 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between ecstasy and experiential involvement.}$

Higie and Feick (1989, p. 690) claim involvement is “an individual difference variable representing an arousal potential of a product or activity
that causes personal relevance”. Similarly Belk et al (1989, p. 31) find that involvement deals with the “arousal associated with personal meaningfulness”, therefore a significant positive relationship is expected between experiential involvement and arousal. The relationship between involvement in an activity or with a product is highlighted by McGinnis et al (2008). This is due to the multi-dimensional nature of the involvement construct and the importance to it of concepts such as self-expression, hedonism, personal relevance and enjoyment, all of which bear resemblance to pleasure, and which are significant factors in experiential consumption. Given these similarities, a positive relationship between experiential involvement and pleasure may be observed in the findings.

$H_7 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between experiential involvement and a) arousal and b) pleasure.}$

Cameron-Wild et al (1995) highlight the importance of motivations (specifically the intrinsically motivated search for stimulating activities) in fostering experiential involvement. The link between motivation to escape and involvement is also supported by the absorption and immersion inherent in both, as discussed above (McGinnis & Gentry, 2004, 2006; McGinnis et al., 2008; Pine & Gilmore, 1998), and seen as particularly important in producing the level of involvement required for strenuous search activities (Rose & Samouel, 2009). As such, we expect to find a positive influence of motivation to escape upon experiential involvement. Unger and Kernan (1983, p. 384) define true leisure as the moments when “we become so involved [in a leisure activity] that we enter a microcosm distinct from daily life” and therefore we hypothesise a link between leisure and experiential involvement. No
relationship has been found between sociability and experiential involvement in the extant literature, however, given the apparent commonalities between the antecedent constructs, we may find one here and therefore hypothesise a relationship.

\[ H_8 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between a) motivation to escape, b) sociability, and c) leisure entitlement and experiential involvement.} \]

McGinnis and Gentry (2004, p. 407) highlight the ‘play’ constructs as combining to contribute to ritual-like behaviours and experiences, which create ongoing pleasure and make “the meaning of an activity more salient and more memorable”. Canniford and Shankar (2013) highlight the influence of nature (over culture) on flow, and describe the sublimity of nature, in that its “kratophanous power” (Belk et al., 1989, p. 6) imparts pleasure and fear. Thus, positive relationships can be expected between all components of ‘play’ and the pleasure construct. Gyimóthy and Mykletun (2004) suggest positive relationships between the play constructs and arousal, so we expect the same here.

\[ H_9 = \text{There will be a positive relationship between a) communitas, b) flow, c) ecstasy and pleasure.} \]

\[ H_{10} = \text{There will be a positive relationship between a) communitas, b) flow, c) ecstasy and arousal.} \]

High motivation is seen to cause an increase in both the pleasure and arousal derived from activities (Dawson, Bloch, & Ridgway, 1990; McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998). Links between the leisure concept and an emotional element of pleasure are identified by Berlyne (1969) and will be tested here. Further,
citing a large array of pertinent literature, Unger and Kernan (1983) highlight the relationship between leisure and arousal, and so we expect to find this here. Again, given the shared features of the antecedent constructs, we hypothesise all will show positive relationships with both pleasure and arousal, and the research explores this.

\( H_{11} = \) There will be a positive relationship between a) motivation to escape, b) sociability, and c) leisure entitlement and pleasure.

\( H_{12} = \) There will be a positive relationship between a) motivation to escape, b) sociability, and c) leisure entitlement and arousal.

Finally, the impact of arousal on pleasure is well-documented in the marketing literature (e.g., Koo & Lee, 2007; Ladhari, 2007; Bigne et al, 2005; Chebat & Michon, 2003). The influence of arousal on pleasure can be either positive or negative (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Bigne et al, 2005). Nonetheless, as it is expected that people typically make a choice to enter into the nightclub based on the anticipation of a positive experience, the impact of arousal on pleasure should be positive.

\( H_{13} = \) Arousal positively influences pleasure.

**Method**

**Methodological considerations**

The authors of this paper acknowledge the challenges of deriving future managerial implications from the quantitative analysis of current consumer behaviours (Turner, 1974). Following Turner's (1974) assertion that “meaning in a social context always has emotional and volatile dimensions” (Turner, 1974, p. 55), we must be careful to delineate the particular contexts in which
data is gathered, and avoid claims to universality. Although we do not wish to derive universal and static truths from the time-bound experiences of our respondents, we do firmly believe that the constructs here used are not entirely contextual, and as such there is a strategic portability to our findings. By this we mean that if statistical measures discern a consumer desire to experience certain definitional characteristics of the liminoid (e.g. social subversion, spontaneous communitas, the freedom to choose leisure) in the nightclub, then this sample grants a general insight into the aspects of nightclub experiences that might best be enriched to enhance experiential consumption.

Whilst we acknowledge the limitations specific to this study in a dedicated section, the authors welcome further study to hone understandings of experiential consumption in this particular area. We construct this theory-building paper in the hope that doing so will prompt response and discussion, alongside re-energised managerial strategies.

**Measures and sample description**

Due to the theory-building nature of this research (Calder, Phillips, & Tybout, 1981) convenience sampling was applied to collect a sample of university students at a major Scottish university. Usage of a student sample is supported for theory-building research due to the homogenous nature of students (their demographic and behavioural characteristics) (Wyllie, Carlson, & Rosenberger III, 2014). Although student sampling is beneficial in this respect it raises other considerations. The sampled students fall inside the
Millennial generation category of those born between 1980 and 2000 (Gurau, 2012). Millennial consumption behaviour is seen to be significantly different from Generation X consumers (those born between 1961 and 1980). Millennials are seen as self-centred, technologically savvy, and environmentally conscious (Greenberg, 2011). Others argue that such categorisation is futile, and the grouping is not homogenous (Foscht et al 2009). However, given the sample contains only students, the homogeneity of the sample is increased and the sample argued to be suitable for theory-building research (Wyllie, Carlson, & Rosenberger III, 2014).

To ensure content validity of our survey, we initially conducted a literature review to identify appropriate measures, employing existing scales for the main constructs. While these scales were suitable for the measurement of the constructs, they had not been formerly and collectively used in the context of hedonic experiential consumption (see Table 1). Constructs were measured using 7 point Likert scales with ‘disagree strongly-agree strongly’ as anchors.

The questionnaire was pilot tested with 50 respondents (who were not included in the actual survey) over a period of 14 days. Following the pilot test some items and questions were modified and restructured to clarify language. Due to the potential violation of face validity, we followed the panel rating approach for each questionnaire item as either ‘very representative’, ‘moderately representative’, or ‘not at all representative’ of the respective constructs. The majority of the items were rated as ‘very representative’ (85%) and the rest as ‘moderately representative,’ therefore all items were retained in the questionnaire. A final sample of 1045 undergraduate students enrolled
in various courses was collected in 2013, with respondents asked to consider recent nightclub experiences and answer a number of questions in relation to these consumption experiences. All completed questionnaires were included in the analysis. Of these, 54.7% were males and 45.3% were females. More than 9 in 10 respondents (94.5%) were aged 18-24 years.

Results

Partial Least Squares (PLS) was selected as the method of analysis because it suits predictive applications, exploratory research and theory-building. PLS is a component-based approach which makes minimal demand on the data, resulting in more reliable estimation of path coefficients and factor loading with comparison to covariance-based approach (Chin, 2010; Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014; Wolk & Theysohn, 2007). It is gaining popularity in marketing research (Wolk & Theysohn, 2007; Wyllie et al., 2014) and is more appropriate “where theoretical knowledge is not as strong as that demanded by covariance-based approaches such as LISREL, AMOS and EQS…, and also can be used to suggest where relationships might or might not exist” (Ashill & Jobber, 2014, p. 277). This is the main purpose of the study. SmartPLS software was used to analyse the data (Ringle, Wende, & Becker, 2005) and 500 sub-samples were randomly generated.

Measurement model

We analysed composite reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity and discriminant validity of all factors following standard procedure from the
literature (Chin, 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010; Hair et al., 2014). In the case of the scales (Table 1), composite reliability (ρcr) scores range from .80 to .91, above the recommended cut off of .7. We used Cronbach’s alpha to measure internal consistency, which indicates more than .7 for scales. Convergent validity was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE) and our factors scored .51 and .67 once again meeting the .5 threshold suggested. Finally, discriminant validity of the scales was measured by comparing the square root of AVE (represented on the diagonal with inter-construct correlations in Table 2). In our research, the square root of AVE was greater than the inter-correlations between scales; this is evidence for discriminant validity. Item cross-loadings were tested and none were higher on another construct than on their own. All appear to support the reliability and validity of the scales.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct items</th>
<th>Loading*</th>
<th>Composite reliability</th>
<th>Internal consistency</th>
<th>Convergent validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to escape (Lee et al, 2007)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To escape from routine life</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To alleviate boredom</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To escape from responsibility</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To release tension</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability (Spake &amp; Megehee, 2010)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to be with other people</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I prefer being with others than being alone</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy social gatherings just to be with people</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I value having relationships with other people</td>
<td>.82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I generally view myself as a person who is interested in establishing relationships with others</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure entitlement (McGinnis, 2002)</td>
<td></td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure takes priority in my life</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure time for me occurs out of accident</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually have several hours for leisure each week</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobody sets restrictions upon my leisure time</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure time is something to which I believe I am entitled</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My leisure time is closely monitored</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I am deserving of my leisure time</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Factor 1</td>
<td>Factor 2</td>
<td>Factor 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communitas (McGinnis et al., 2012)</strong></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I feel a bond with my fellow clubbers that I could not e</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I feel a sense of belonging with others at the club</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I feel a sense of harmony with the others</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I feel a sense of sharing with the people there</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clubbing really allows me to get to know my fellow clubbers</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Flow (McGinnis &amp; Gentry, 2004)</strong></td>
<td>Clubbing is an enjoyable release from the everyday grind</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clubbing is the best way to relieve my stress</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, it receives my total concentration</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I am surprised to find I have lost track of time</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, time seems to rush by quickly</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ecstasy (McGinnis et al., 2012)</strong></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I often experience a joy that is beyond measure</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I go out to nightclubs, I often become spiritually uplifted</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I often lose control when I</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When I go out to nightclubs, I often become elated. .81

When I go out to nightclubs, I often lose my mind in rapture .82

When go out to nightclubs, I get caught in a state of euphoria .79

When I go out to nightclubs, I easily become ecstatic .80

**Pleasure (Bigné et al, 2005; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unhappy-Happy</th>
<th>.76</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annoyed- Pleased</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsatisfied- Satisfied</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melancholic- Contented</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Despairing-hopeful</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bored- Relaxed</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not joyful-joyful</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arousal (Bigné et al, 2005; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974)**

| Calm- Excited     | .80 |
| Slugglish- Frenzied | .82 |
| Relaxed- Stimulated | .75 |
| Dull-jittery      | .70 |

**Experiential Involvement (Hausman, 2011)**

<p>| I was really into the music and dancing, almost as though I went into a trance. | .70 |
| Listening to music and dancing easily affects my emotional state | .70 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When I'm at a club, I tend to forget my everyday concerns and just dance.</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I listen to music and dance to escape from the world.</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm fanatical about music and dancing</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * $t$-values for the item loadings to two-tailed test: $t > 3.29$ at $p < .01$. 
Table 2: Latent variables correlation matrix (discriminate validity).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitas</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Involvement</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.51</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Entitlement</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to escape</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.35</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Diagonal: Square root of AVE.
Analysis of conceptual model

To examine the hypotheses within the conceptual model, the structural model was simultaneously tested within SmartPLS. The explained variance for the model was relatively good. According to Chin (1998) and Hair et al. (2010) the variance explained ($R^2$) values of .67, .33 and .19 can be described as ‘substantial’, ‘moderate’, and ‘weak’ respectively. The constructs explain 20% of the variance in communitas, 38% in flow, 49% in ecstasy, 32% in experiential involvement, 26% in arousal and 45% in pleasure. The traditional approach developed by Baron and Kenny to test for mediation has been considered to have limitations (e.g., Zhao, Lynch and Chen, 2010). In this regard, Zhao et al., (2010, p. 200) argue that “the one and only requirement to demonstrate mediation is a significant indirect effect …”. This approach is also supported by others (e.g., Cheong & MacKinnon, 2012; Little, Card, Bovaird, Preacher, & Crandall, 2007). Therefore, we tested the decomposition of effects (direct, indirect, and total) (Table 3). Donate and Sanchez de Pablo (In Press) classify path coefficients that are below .30 causing moderate effects, from .30 to .60 as strong, and above .60 as very strong. To estimate the magnitude of the indirect effect Klarner, Sarstedt, Hoek and Ringle (2013) use the VAF (Variance Accounted For) value, which shows the ratio of the indirect effect to the total effect. The partial mediation is normed between 0% and 100%. Higher value indicates stronger partial mediations.

The model’s predictive relevance can be tested by means of the Stone-Geisser test criterion $Q^2$ which is part of soft modelling approach of PLS (i.e. blindfolding procedure in SmartPLS) and therefore a good match (Chin, 2010; Geisser, 1975). Table 4 illustrates the blindfolding estimates. We used
omission distances of 7 and 17. The result shows that the estimates are stable. The communality $Q^2$ represents a measure of how well observed values are reconstructed by the model and its parameter estimates (Hair et al., 2014). The rule of thumb is that if $Q^2 > 0$ the model has predictive relevance (Chin, 2010; Hair et al., 2014). The redundancy $Q^2$ for all scales measured with multiple items, indicates positive redundancy $Q^2$ for all scales. This means that the proposed model has good predictive ability. Goodness of fit (GoF) index was also calculated using procedures from Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, and Lauro (2005) and Chin (2010), which is calculating the square root of the product of the variance extracted with all scales and the average $R^2$ value. The index is assessed against the GoF criterion for small (.10), medium (.25) and large (.36) effect sizes and using .50 as a cut-off value for communality according to Cohen (1988). The overall GoF is .44 which indicates a very good model fit.
Table 3: Results of hypothesis testing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>Standardised coefficients (t-values)</th>
<th>Total effects</th>
<th>Direct effects</th>
<th>Indirect effects</th>
<th>VAF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1a Motivation to escape → communitas</td>
<td>.10 (2.05)</td>
<td>.10 (2.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1b Motivation to escape → flow</td>
<td>.20 (8.00)</td>
<td>.20 (8.00)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1c Motivation to escape → ecstasy</td>
<td>.13 (4.83)</td>
<td>.13 (4.83)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2a Sociability → communitas</td>
<td>.05 (1.64)</td>
<td>.05 (1.64)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2b Sociability → flow</td>
<td>.03 (.93)</td>
<td>.03 (.93)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2c Sociability → ecstasy</td>
<td>-.10 (3.79)</td>
<td>-.10 (3.79)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3a Leisure entitlement → communitas</td>
<td>.39 (9.61)</td>
<td>.39 (9.61)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3b Leisure entitlement → flow</td>
<td>.52 (20.57)</td>
<td>.52 (20.57)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3c Leisure entitlement → ecstasy</td>
<td>.68 (43.11)</td>
<td>.68 (43.11)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4 Communitas → experiential</td>
<td>.10 (2.99)</td>
<td>.10 (2.99)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5 Flow → experiential involvement</td>
<td>.26 (8.62)</td>
<td>.26 (8.62)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6 Ecstasy → experiential</td>
<td>.24 (7.19)</td>
<td>.24 (7.19)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7a Experiential involvement → arousal</td>
<td>.20 (6.76)</td>
<td>.20 (6.76)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7b Experiential involvement → pleasure</td>
<td>.12 (6.27)</td>
<td>.12 (6.27)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full mediation (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8a Motivation to escape → experiential involvement</td>
<td>.23 (6.97)</td>
<td>.23 (6.97)</td>
<td>Full mediation (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8b Sociability → experiential</td>
<td>.05 (.79)</td>
<td>.05 (.79)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>involvement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8c Leisure entitlement → experiential involvement</td>
<td>.34 (16.15)</td>
<td>.34 (16.15)</td>
<td>Full mediation (100%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9a Communitas → pleasure</td>
<td>.24 (7.56)</td>
<td>.24 (7.56)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9b Flow → pleasure</td>
<td>.03 (.96)</td>
<td>.03 (.96)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9c Ecstasy → pleasure</td>
<td>.20 (10.30)</td>
<td>.20 (10.30)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Full mediation (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis</td>
<td>Predictor</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Beta</td>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Beta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10a</td>
<td>Communitas</td>
<td>arousal</td>
<td>.16 (5.47)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10b</td>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>arousal</td>
<td>.09 (1.18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10c</td>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>arousal</td>
<td>.35 (11.55)</td>
<td>.26 (3.23)</td>
<td>.05 (4.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11a</td>
<td>Motivation to escape</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
<td>.14 (6.42)</td>
<td>.12 (3.11)</td>
<td>.05 (3.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11b</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
<td>-.07 (1.44)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11c</td>
<td>Leisure entitlement</td>
<td>pleasure</td>
<td>.23 (10.21)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12a</td>
<td>Motivation to escape</td>
<td>arousal</td>
<td>.10 (6.55)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12b</td>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>arousal</td>
<td>.03 (.36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12c</td>
<td>Leisure entitlement</td>
<td>arousal</td>
<td>.33 (16.05)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: t-values for the item loadings to two-tailed test: $t>1.96$ at $p<.05$, $t>2.57$ at $p<.01$, $t>3.29$ at $p<.001$. 
Table 4: Blindfolding results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Omission distance = 7</th>
<th></th>
<th>Omission distance = 17</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>Communality</td>
<td>Redundancy</td>
<td>R²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to escape</td>
<td>n/a .165</td>
<td>n/a .180</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociability</td>
<td>n/a .440</td>
<td>n/a .449</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leisure Entitlement</td>
<td>n/a .260</td>
<td>n/a .274</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow</td>
<td>.38 .265</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.279</td>
<td>.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communitas</td>
<td>.20 .397</td>
<td>.113</td>
<td>.405</td>
<td>.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>.49 .450</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>.458</td>
<td>.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Involvement</td>
<td>.32 .263</td>
<td>.162</td>
<td>.277</td>
<td>.185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arousal</td>
<td>.26 .286</td>
<td>.152</td>
<td>.297</td>
<td>.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasure</td>
<td>.45 .425</td>
<td>.248</td>
<td>.435</td>
<td>.248</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: n/a = not applicable.
Discussion

All three antecedent constructs directly and positively influence communitas (H1a, H2a, H3a), supporting extant literature (McGinnis & Gentry, 2004; Cheek & Buss, 1981; Hills & Argyle, 2001; Reynolds & Beatty, 1999; Spake & Megehee, 2010). Equally supportive of extant literature are the relationships of the motivation to escape and leisure entitlement antecedent constructs with flow (H1b, H3b) and ecstasy (H1c, H3c). Our findings did not produce a significant relationship between sociability and flow (H2b), and a significant negative relationship between sociability and ecstasy (H2c). Flow is a concept rooted in individual feelings of serenity and that one is performing a pursuit or task at a high level, and given the inherent collective nature of the sociability construct it is easy to see why this is the case. The negative relationship between sociability and ecstasy however is in contrast to Belk et al’s (1989) observations regarding the capacity of group experiences to strengthen ecstasy, our empirical analysis finds that in a nightclub context increased sociability impairs ecstasy.

Significant positive relationships between the three constructs which make up the play concept and experiential involvement are supported by the empirical findings as hypothesised and supported by previous literature (Cameron-Wild et al., 1995; Hausman, 2011; McGinnis & Gentry, 2004, 2006; McGinnis et al., 2008). The relationship between experiential involvement and arousal (H7a) is significantly positive, however a significant relationship between experiential involvement and pleasure (H7b) is not found. The positive relationship between experiential involvement and arousal (H7a) supports established literature (Belk et al., 1989; Higie & Feick, 1989).
However the lack of relationship with pleasure (H7b) could be due to the hypothesis regarding pleasure being drawn from a number of studies which focus on golf, an experiential involvement activity of a more enduring nature than the context of this research (McGinnis & Gentry, 2004, 2006; McGinnis et al., 2008).

Relationships were found from motivation to escape indirectly to experiential involvement (H8a), both directly and indirectly to pleasure (H11a) and indirectly to arousal (H12a) in addition to indirect relationships of leisure entitlement with experiential involvement (H8c), pleasure (H11c) and arousal (H12c). These relationships support our hypotheses and a range of existing literature (Dawson, Bloch, & Ridgway, 1990; McGoldrick & Pieros, 1998; Cameron Wild et al, 1995; Unger & Kernan, 1983). Interestingly, of the three antecedent constructs, sociability shares no positive direct or indirect relationships with either experiential involvement (H8b), pleasure (H11b) or arousal (H12b). These relationships are also lacking in the extant literature and so the absence in this study is not particularly surprising.

H9 and H10 produce similar results in that both pleasure and arousal are significantly increased by both communitas (H9a, H10a) and ecstasy (H9c, H10c) whereas flow (H9b, H10b) does not share a significant relationship with either pleasure or arousal. This is similar to the results produced for H1 and H3 in that flow is differentiated from both communitas, given its collective nature, and ecstasy which is unobtainable when in isolation (Belk et al., 1989). This could explain the reduced intensity of the relationship between flow and the emotional responses to below a significant level. The collective, social nature of nightclub experience may explain the lack of impact of the flow construct in
this specific context. Finally, results indicate strong positive relationship between arousal and pleasure (H$_{13}$), which is also supported by previous studies (Chebat & Michon, 2003; Bigne et al, 2005).

**Conclusion**

In this study a framework based on Turner's (1974) concept of the liminoid is used to explain the experiential consumption process, in particular the relationships which link a number of accepted experiential marketing constructs. A theoretically derived structural model is developed that examines the relationships among antecedent factors, constructs central to experiential consumption and short-term responses. Based on data collected from 1045 student night clubbers, we find significant relationships among constructs and consequent theoretical implications.

Relationships between constructs, though suggested by previous literature, have not previously been empirically tested in a holistic manner. Understanding the relationships allows for better understanding of the complete consumption experience and opens up a new area for dialogue between experiential marketing researchers. The framework developed in this study helps to understand how the liminoid concept can be applied to hedonic leisure activities (e.g. nightclub experience). The ELC model offers a way to conceptualise the consumption experience in experiential leisure environments. The ELC model offers a method for understanding the form and processes by which certain assumptions about consumers, and their influential factors, are shaped.
Managerial implications

By manufacturing a greater sense of the liminoid, marketers and managers in the nightclub industry – and in the wider experience economy – can encourage the escapism, leisure, group camaraderie, heightened senses and emotional reactions which characterise both liminoid activities and experiential consumption of nightclubs (and similar hedonic events). To clarify, we mean that the creation of a space by nightclub managers and marketers that encourages an experience characterised by aspects of the liminoid, such as feelings of social subversion, the spark and energy of spontaneous communitas, and the feeling of freedom of choice (optionality), will lead to heightened pleasure and arousal, and to repeat business. Management must bear in mind that consumers will in turn alter and create this space through their engagement with it, and so spaces should be created that facilitate this engagement; this is in accordance with the emphasis upon optionality. Management might consider imposing a rhizome-like structure upon their establishment, with free passage between physically or thematically designated spaces encouraging groups to feel both unrestricted by the social order and part of a spontaneous and selected group. The impact upon consumer behaviour can offer practical benefits to tackle the economic challenges facing nightclubs specifically, and to enhance consumption in other experiential contexts.

Further research

The model outlines the importance of relationships along the stages of experiential liminoid consumption. By establishing a distinct multidimensional approach to measuring experiential consumption in a liminoid space, this
study lays the groundwork for future research examining different established constructs which play an important role in decision-making processes within a hedonic environment. A more thorough understanding of the relationships between the constructs central to experiential consumption allows practitioners and researchers to better explore the impact of constructs. 

Further research into sociability in different contexts is required, as this may produce positive relationships with experiential involvement, pleasure, or arousal. The importance of the antecedents to liminoid consumption highlighted in our model ought to be maximised in order to enhance the consumption of the liminoid space and experience itself. This consumption represents the most easily malleable aspect of the consumption process for practitioners – they can alter the space and the service in order to foster greater engagement with it. In doing so, the impact upon the short emotional reactions of consumers can be maximised, an important outcome given previous research highlighting the importance of the pleasure and arousal constructs (valence and intensity) for fostering recommendations and repeat business (Bigné et al, 2005; Ladhari, 2007; Gumnerus, 2013; Koo & Lee, 2011).

**Limitations**

Several limitations must be noted. First, the use of a survey method to collect data, though shown to be reliable and validated, has limitations; all survey involves measurement error in relation to the degree to which the respondent has the ability to report their level of agreement with questionnaire statements. Second, the contextual setting of nightclubs impairs the generalizability of the model and, as such, we call for further testing in other
experiential consumption settings which may be seen as liminoid such as bars, restaurants, festivals, concerts, galleries, museums and sporting events. The sampling approach and selection of young informants excluded older consumers, something which testing within different contextual sources would alleviate. Further segmenting the samples gathered could also offer insights. For example, our study did not discriminate between occasional and more seasoned night clubbers; the level of consumer ‘expertise’ is something which may have an effect on consumption of liminoid space and experience. Finally, further study of experiential liminoid consumption should also employ qualitative approaches in order to explore concepts further.
References


Donate, M. J., & Sanchez de Pablo, J. D. (In Press). The role of knowledge-oriented leadership in knowledge management practices and innovation. *Journal of Business Research*.


