

Consumption: From Commercial Transactions to the Ritualistic Circulation of Meanings

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Abstract

This article seeks to present the theoretical bases and empirical evidence on the profitability of understanding consumption as a ritual. From the anthropological foundations of the study of rituals, we entered into the articulations with semiotics, in the constitution of an anthroposemiotic approach, consisting of ethnographic research and semiotic analysis of brands that enabled the understanding of consumption in its rituals of search, purchase, possession, storage and disposal: reuse, recycling and resignification. In addition to learning about the characteristics of constant adaptation of consumption rituals, repetition, constancy, but also innovations, they are consolidated as peculiar, in addition to expressing values, wants and aspirations that streamline interpersonal and social relationships.

Keywords

Consumption, Consumption Rituals, Circulation of Meanings, Anthroposemiotics

1. Initial Considerations

When we think about consumption, it is inevitable that we think about the etymology of the word itself, which leads us to understand this masculine noun in its origin. Consumption could be understood in its literal sense expense, hence the relationship between consumption and bill, payment, as happens when completing the service in a restaurant. Thus, consumption shifted analogously to spending, spending, and spending. It can also be simply buying and selling, as in the example: on Mother's Day consumption increases—we are referring to purchase-sale transactions based on this promotional date. There is a direct relationship between consumption and exchange of goods, mediated by different means of payment, but also the idea of consumption as wear, that is, erosion of

materials, substances, or even immaterialities as when we refer to the consumption of time or our best energies, for example.

We note that consumption comes with a negative charge of something that runs out, that ends, especially when it is related to “spending, expenditure”, and may even run out entirely. In relation to expenses, it is even more linked to the suggestion of expenses and is not necessarily accompanied by its relation to the offer, which would balance the equation, being able to connect to something without counterpart. Another possible association is with consummation. To bring to an end, to conclude, to finish, to end—these are possible ways of meaning for consummation. The suggestion is of something that was started, reached its end, fulfilled an activity or task, it is the achievement of something in its fullness, which can be something good or bad, therefore consummation carries with it an ambiguity. “Act consummated” is a sufficient expression to explain this potentiality.

At the moment, we are going to focus on consumption as a process of building significant bonds between brands, products, services (material and immaterial) and people, which can happen in different ways, which can occur in various ways, characteristic of contemporary society (Amorim, Silva, Rosa, & Perez, 2018). These processes are stimulated, put into circulation and fed back through what we now call advertising ecology (Perez, 2017), a concept that integrates reflections on media ecology by Santaella (2008, 2010) and meeting points by di Nallo (1999), with the intention of sheltering the diversity of advertising possibilities for building bonds between brands and people, overflowing formats, producing agents, vehicles and multiple languages. Advertising ecology is also a destination because, for more than a decade, Brazilian researchers from the main centers of reference in Advertising and Consumption have been studying the concept and its practices, which has contributed enormously to the advancement of investigations. Thus, concepts such as promotionality (Castro, 2013, 2016), hyper publicity (Perez & Barbosa, 2007), hybrid advertising (Covaleski, 2010), Cyberpublicity (Atem, Oliveira, & Azevedo, 2014), expanded advertising (Machado, Burrowes, & Rett, 2017) or even the advertising ecosystem and advertising ecology (Perez, 2015, 2017, 2018) were fundamental as theoretical efforts that intended to deal with a complex context in deep, comprehensive and fast change. The research field of Advertising and Consumption was formed within Communication studies, mainly in centers where Advertising was already a consolidated area of training and research. Although with interfaces with Anthropology, Economics and, more recently, with Psychoanalysis, the theoretical locus of Consumption is in Communication, even with resistance in the field itself.

In the search for an understanding of what consumption is, the first observation is that it is not limited to commerce or purchases, although they are certainly an important part. Consumption is a process that begins long before the act of acquiring or subscribing to something, an immediate service or a subscription that allows certain access. The search for information, the flaneur through the

streets, the leafing through a magazine, the test drive in dealerships or the sliding of the fingers through the Instagram stories of the brands, all this is consumption. When we use a product or enjoy a service, we are consuming. When we keep a piece of jewelry in a case or a bag in a felt wrapping and deposit it in our closet, we are also consuming, or even when we keep a souvenir packaging or re-signify another one to make it a clip holder, we are consuming.

From this, we extract the first essential characteristic of consumption, it is a process and not just an act, that of buying. It involves all possibilities of approach actions and strategies, search for information, opinion formation, but also seduction, actual purchase, use of products and services in the most varied contexts, storage, disposal in some cases, re-signification in many others. Thus, consumption is a ritual of construction of bonds of meaning through the mediation of (im)material culture that involves multiple heterarchical sign processes of a complex nature, sometimes based on information and objectivity, sometimes in the purest enchantment. This ritual involves the search for information, through the acquisition, use, possession, custody, disposal or re-signification of products and services, all promoted and supported by the advertising ecology of brands (Perez, 2018, 2020).

2. Consumption as Ritual: An Anthroposemiotic Approach

The word rite is of archaic Indo-European origin and means “immanent order of the cosmos”. Of cosmic significance is that it unfolded into religious and was linked to righteousness, truth, necessity, etc. Already in antiquity it acquired the sense of a practice regulated by people and institutions.

Van Gennep (2008), Victor Turner (1974, 1986), DaMatta (1997, 2004), Ries (2020), Peirano (2003) and other theorists claim that rituals lend appropriate conventional and stylized forms to organization certain aspects of social life. But why do we need to formalize certain behaviors and how do we do it? The forms established for the different rituals in most different cultures and times have a common characteristic: the repetition or, in a more elaborate way, the regularity of procedures.

Ries (2020) understands the rituals at the intersection between nature, society, culture and religion that manifests itself in a gesture that carries meanings. Let's see.

The rite is an act or a gesture, individual or collective, carried out with a view to a result that is valid beyond this empirical world. The rite is located at the crossroads between nature, society, culture and religion. It is a symbolic act through which man, within the limits of a reality belonging to this world, establishes contact with a reality that transcends this world. Every rite has a meaning: it is constituted by the association between a gesture and a belief (Ries, 2020: p. 281).

According to Ries (2020), the rituals emerged when man came to understand the sacred no longer on the human scale, but above it “the human represents the

divinity and prays before it...”. This adoration of “something” that is above is found in profusion in art from the V millennium, which according to Cauvin (apud Ries, 2020: p. 283) is the hallmark of the Neolithic period, since until the Upper Paleolithic, the art performed by hunter-gatherers was animistic without traces of rituals.

Rituals, performed and experienced repeatedly, known or at least identifiable by the participating individuals, favor rapprochement between people and provide a certain level of psychic security. Due to our familiarity with the sequences of procedures, we know what will happen, the steps are predictable and, in principle, there should be no surprises. Through rituals we celebrate our solidarity with the group, we share feelings and affections, in short, it is possible to experience a feeling of social cohesion. Through repetition and formality elaborated and determined by social groups, rituals demonstrate the order and promise of perpetuation of these same groups, hence psychic security (Perez, 2018). Rituals can also be performed as a break from a bad or inappropriate condition. Turner (1986: p. 27), in his research on Ndembu rituals, identified the need for ritual when, for example, an individual stopped venerating the shadows of their ancestors and, as a result, was punished (women, for example, with infertility). Thus, the ritual began to function as a “special commitment”, an “obligation” to reconnect that individual with their group (and their ancestors) and everything returned to normal.

In Peirano (2003) we find what the author designates as the “operative definition” of ritual. According to the author, no definition should be taken rigidly: “the definition needs to be ethnographic, that is, learned by the researcher in the field with the group he observes” (Peirano, 2003: p. 7). All social groups have happenings or events that they consider special and unique; however, societies do this in quite different ways. Which leads us to understand the value of ethnographic research as a privileged way to understand rituals, especially when combined with continuous training in sign reading and interpretation, that is, the integration of the ethnographic method with the semiotic method, the arena of semioticians, in an ethnosemiotics. McCracken (2003: p. 114) has the same understanding about the value of ethnographic research “An opportunity to affirm, evoke, point out or revise the conventional symbols and meanings of the cultural order”.

Turner (1974), Da Matta (2011), Peirano (2003) and Ries (2020) point out that rituals can have very different natures, they can be religious, profane, festive, scientific, informal, simple or very elaborate, individual or collective, thus reaffirming the need for an ethnographic concept, which emerges from the field. In Brazil, we are very flexible in terms of understanding and ritualistic practices; we can be ritualistic both at baptisms, at weddings, football matches, thesis defenses or even in housekeeping or in prosaic everyday behaviors.

The important thing in the rituals would not necessarily be the explicit content, naturally diverse, but its characteristics of formality, conventionality and

repetition. The formality, that is, actions considered and understood as special, therefore, non-trivial, the maintenance of rules and repetition gradually build meanings that sediment these actions, crystallizing them as rituals. [Ries \(2020: p. 284\)](#) states that “rituals are part of the human condition, are subject to precise rules and imply continuity”.

Ritual action in its constitutive traits can be seen as “performative” in three aspects, according to [Perez \(2020: p. 51\)](#):

1) In the sense in which to say is also to do something as a conventional act (as when saying “yes” to a priest’s or judge’s question at a wedding);

2) In the sense that the participants intensely experience a performance that uses various means of acting, expression and communication (an emblematic example is the carnival in Brazil).

3) In the sense of values being inferred and recreated by the actors during the performance (as in feminist actions during Carnival, such as the #nãoéñão campaign in Brazil).

We ritualize spaces and moments through the choice of objects, materials, arrangements, words, settings, clothes and accessories, food and drinks, behaviors and actions that envision regularity as a sure guarantee of continuity. With this we want, in some way, to understand them in time/space. Ensure your permanence. That’s why we toast to the good things in life with champagne (a drink in which the following stand out together: flavor, sound, texture, smell and visuality) and we look deeply into the eyes of those who toast us, simply because our desire is for the moment to come to an end. perpetuate. Every ritual is a cultural system of symbolic communication and ritual action in its constitutive characteristic is always performative and, nowadays, widely mediatizable, that is, put into circulation and reproduced exponentially, which encourages not only sharing with a few, but showing it to many. Understanding consumption as a ritual implies integrating cultural dimensions (value systems, beliefs, language, group influence, religious matrices, ethnicities, etc.), materials (advertising, marketing, design, fashion, brand, trends...), and human (anthroposemiotics and psychoanalytic) in order to understand the complexity of these relationships in everyday life, from an interpretive perspective.

Despite some criticism received, mainly from unsuspecting colleagues restricted to their basic training present at conferences in the area, the understanding of consumption as a ritual is consolidated in our research, so much so that our investigations, training of new researchers and publications, including the magazine *Signs of Consumption* (GESC3 ECA USP), edited 13 years ago, were fundamental for the creation in 2014 of a WG—Working Group on Communication and Consumption, at Compós, the Brazilian congress of Graduate Studies in Communication. These tensions seem to have “always” been present in those who decide to “take seriously, as something relevant, an activity that seems to be the world’s favorite object of ridicule, so it’s better that way” ([Miller, 2002: p. 169](#)). Again, in [Miller \(2002\)](#) there is a very interesting perspective on the act of

buying, linking it to sacrifice, but also to love, dimensions that are very present in rituals. Through an ethnographic research in the outskirts of London, the author found that buying for most of the women surveyed involved a voluntary renunciation or even an important deprivation, but on the other hand, the purchase was felt as a genuine manifestation of love. So Miller claims:

The act of buying can be many things within different contexts... The assertion was that the act of buying can also be a ritual practice. Its foundation is a sacrificial logic whose purpose is to constitute subjects who desire. Sacrifice was based on a similar rite that turned consumption into devotion. The act of buying begins with a similar rite, which nullifies mere expenditure in order to obey the higher purposes of the economy. It ends as a work of constituting both the immediacy and the dynamics of specific love relationships (Miller, 2002: p. 169).

The extension of the concept of ritual to consumption practices present in Douglas & Isherwood (2004), Miller (2002) was also proposed by McCracken (2003). In this work, he investigates the processes of transferring cultural meaning in contemporary society through consumption. According to the author, meanings are always in transit, in constant movement. "Meaning is uninterruptedly flowing from and towards its diverse locations in the social world, with the help of individual and collective efforts of designers, producers, advertisers and consumers" (McCracken, 2003: p. 99). In this sense, the purely economic definition of what a consumer is no longer enough, although this issue is not innovative in its methodological proposition, it is extremely important.

The foundation of postmodern consumer theory is that he makes choices not only for utility gains, but also for the symbolic meaning of these choices, their ability to produce meaning effects through transfer mechanisms—from goods to consumers. The meaning transfer model proposed by the author is composed of a world culturally constituted by meanings that are transferred to consumer goods and then passed on to individual consumers through rituals (Figure 1). These rituals can be defined as behaviors established and recognized by society (alignment with the concept of ritual in Van Gennep, Turner, DaMatta, Peirano, Ries, etc.) and that provide a context for the individual to affirm, attribute, evoke or even review meanings. The consumption rituals proposed by the author are exchange, possession, beautification and stripping (McCracken, 2003: p. 175), as can be seen in the following image.

One of the main instruments for transferring meaning through consumption according to McCracken is fashion understood in its complexity as a system, a moment in which the author approaches Barthes (1979) and the other is advertising. With the use of advertising production, brands communicate a certain meaning related to their goods in order to establish bonds with their consumers and create favorable associations, which, in turn, will be able to provide the conditions for the construction of new social values. Advertising is a powerful

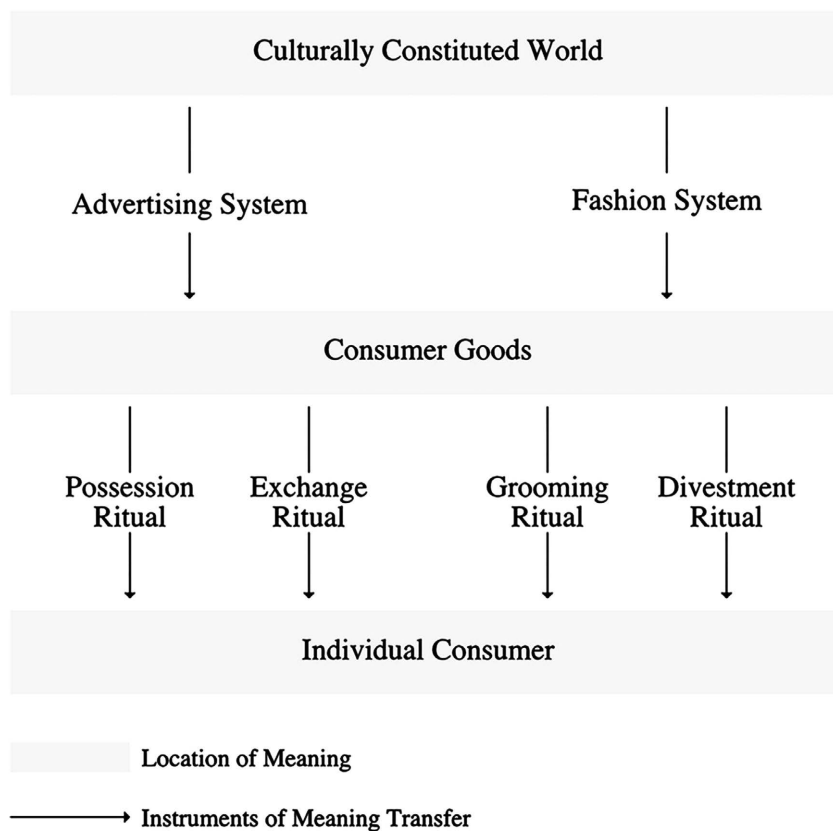


Figure 1. Meaning transfer model (McCracken, 2003: p. 175).

sociocultural expression, used in an increasingly intense way to create symbolic meanings in an environment in which products present less and less tangible differentiation among themselves, given the advancement of technologies and materials, since any technical innovation is quickly copied, losing its differentiation. We understand that these transfer systems vary in culture, and taking into account that the author is Canadian and that a good part of his research was and is carried out in the United States, it is understandable to identify these two systems, although another vector that seems to me to be very significant from American culture, cinema and series, which could be summarized as audiovisual production, should be made explicit; however, this issue is not the focus at this time.

3. Rituals of Consumption: Methodology for Updating the Model

The theoretical reflection on rituals and rituals of consumption, added to the ethnographic research carried out in shopping centers, shopping streets and interviews with consumers, in the period from July 2022 to July 2023, in the cities of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Belo Horizonte, Fortaleza and the semiotic analysis of the brands that stood out in the field, it was possible to propose the updating of the model of transfer of meanings and rituals of consumption proposed by

McCracken (2003: p. 100).

The first reflection on a possible evolution is to establish the necessary possibility of circulation of meanings. In other words, there is not only a transfer of meanings from the culturally constituted world to goods through fashion and advertising systems and from this to people through different consumption rituals, but also from people to goods and from them to the culturally constituted world, in multiple movements of meaning and resignification. Although the author makes explicit the “full understanding of the mobile quality” of cultural meaning in a society, he does not mention the circulation of meanings. Lack of semiotics in your training.

From the cultural foundation of the model, I followed the reflection that the fashion system really was also here a powerful meaning transfer instrument. Advertising in Brazil, on the other hand, has somewhat different configurations and even more, I noticed that a fundamental dimension was missing in the transfer of meanings in the lives of Brazilians: the telenovela. Thus, theory and experience lead me to understand that the telenovela is the third vector (or transfer instrument, to be faithful to McCracken) in this mechanism of multiple meanings: it transfers meaning at the same time as it re-signifies consumption rituals in a process of permanent circulation of meanings. Especially when we take into account that the production of soap operas in the country has evolved a lot, but consumption has also changed significantly with new possibilities for media and cultural consumption, etc., on multiple screens and occasions (Jacks, Menezes, & Piedras, 2008).

Advertising in Brazil also goes beyond an advertisement capable of “fusing a consumer good with a representation of the culturally constituted world” (McCracken, 2003: p. 106). Advertising is now understood as an advertising ecology (Perez, 2016; Perez & Correa, 2018), either because of the technologies available and incorporated in creation and dissemination, or because of the complexity of possibilities and hybridizations of formats, themes, different actors, audacious objectives, aimed at increasingly demanding consumers and clients who have to be served in mind-boggling deadlines and scarce resources.

Mechanisms for transferring meaning from goods to consumers happen through rituals according to McCracken, as we saw earlier. However, Trindade and Perez (2012) reorganize this typology and propose rituals of purchase, possession, use and dispossession, presenting their research in the context of food consumption; later, they expand the model with the introduction of the preparation ritual in a new investigation about consumption (Perez & Trindade, 2014, 2017, 2019b). In these initial propositions, the alterations in the original model were two in particular: 1) McCracken calls the exchange ritual the moments of exchanging gifts, for example, which in our model, is not present due to its exceptional character; 2) we include the use ritual as a possibility of a tidying ritual (McCracken, 2003), but we present it in a much more complex way, as we will see.

Sato (2017) incorporates studies of rituals and anthroposemiotics into the con-

text of mobile telephony. Sato (2015) defended his thesis in 2015 and later published the book *Signs of Mobility* in 2017. In Trindade and Perez (2016a, 2016b) and Perez (2020), the change in relation to the model proposed by McCracken is the introduction of the purchase ritual not contemplated by the author. Characterized by the moment of purchase and the mechanisms involved, from definitions of the means of payment to trial situations, packaging, additional services, etc.

Going a little further in the model, the proposition I present below is the result of the consolidation of reflections in recent years and also of the empirical experience of numerous research projects on consumption, advertising and branding in the last two decades, based on the theoretical intersection between Semiotics, Anthropology and, more recently, Psychoanalysis. Let's see: (Figure 2)

Let's move on to understanding each of these ritualistic processes in everyday life, articulating theory and experience. Thus, the complete model has three transfer vectors from the culturally constituted world to goods: Fashion System, Advertising Ecology and Soap Opera and six consumption rituals: ritual of search, purchase, use, possession, disposal or re-signification (construction of new meanings that can be reused or transformed, which we can also call recycling).

The search ritual involves a series of actions of selection and collection of information, some intentionally and others much less deliberate as when we are leafing through a magazine, strolling through the streets in a nonchalant flaneur or surfing the net without a specific search. Ritualistic search actions take place in the test drive of vehicles and motorcycles made available by the dealerships, typical Google or another search engine about products, brands, production processes or

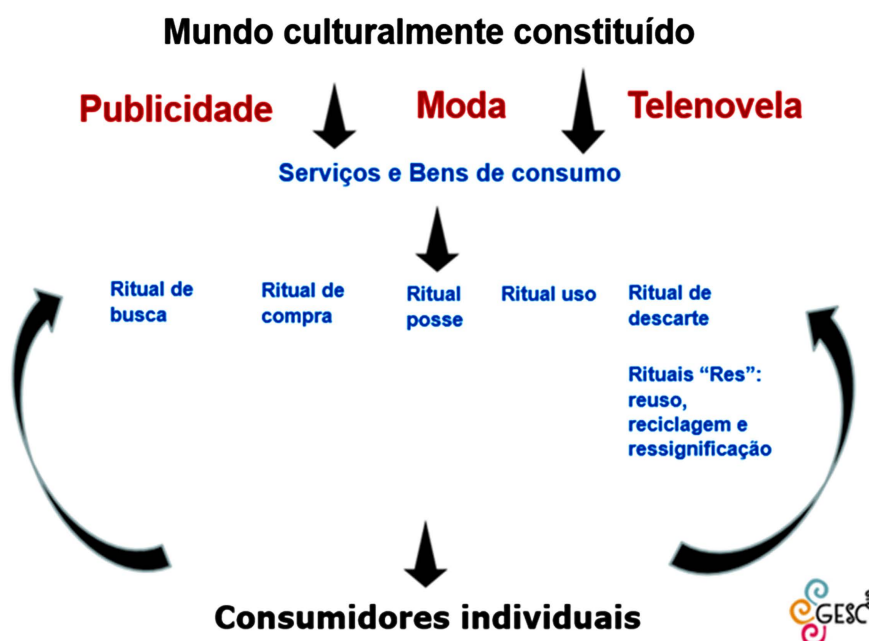


Figure 2. New model of consumption rituals (Perez, 2020: p. 59) based on McCracken (2003).

action in the launch of new models; when we literally search for information on certain ingredients or components of products. When we ask someone about the use of certain equipment or when we go to sector fairs or even look at a shop window or browse the stories of a brand on Instagram.

Objectively we don't buy anything, but we are consuming and a lot. Sampling, a tool for distributing free samples for use or trying out products at points of sale, encourages purchases and is included in this ritual, due to its strong promotional appeal and drive to action. Normally, these situations have always been neglected by companies and marketing because they were simply not included in the scope of concerns of product and brand managers due to pure myopia and a reductionist understanding of consumption, fixed only in the sale-purchase transaction, in fact, the fixation the transaction ended up preventing the understanding that consumption begins long before the act of purchase and that information in many cases and enchantment in many others are the real "decision maker" of the purchase and also of possible repetition and eventual loyalty.

The purchase ritual is characterized by the exchange of product, service or access, as it happens in subscriptions, for example, for a certain means of payment. Purchasing is the foundation of commerce. It is the most studied ritual, even if often not in its procedural complexity. Normally intermediated by means of payment that do not cease to evolve, although for hundreds of years they had been fixed in metal money and, later, in paper money. Now, in addition to credit and debit cards, digital transfers and bitcoins enter the scene, expanding intangible transactions. However, this moment of encounter, of exchanging (im)materiality for something of (im)material value, remains. This ritual has always been central and as such received all investments from marketing managers, from the famous 4 Ps of Jerome McCarthy (1978) popularized by Philip Kotler in his republished Marketing Management manuals, to other frameworks such as BCG matrices, 5Ss, AIDA, 4Cs, 4As, etc., in a fetishistic profusion of acronyms (Perez, 2018).

Purchasing was the objective because it gave meaning to production and had in its mirror the sale, the concrete transaction. Sales received attention from managers through incentives, including specific convincing techniques and, later, through promotions involving remuneration and rewards for sellers and intermediaries. With the development of marketing, new developments emerged such as the detailing of influencers, groups that could encourage purchase, moments, occasions and purchase situations, combined purchases, volume and frequency, substitute goods, but also price elasticity, willingness to pick up, demand surveys, market potential, all studies that raised new possibilities for action in terms of price, promotion, product or even distribution, always with the aim of promoting the transaction, the purchase itself.

What has evolved in this consumption ritual is that the purchase mechanisms are more varied, many based on algorithmic technologies, also digital means of payment, and possibilities of cashbacks that encourage repurchases and scenography that create contexts of shopping experience in digital, but also in physical

shopping spaces, such as flagships, concept stores, popup stores, etc.

Valuing the shopping experience seeks to shift the essence of the transaction to a relational, emotional and, often, playful dimension. Create a sensitive ambiance (colors, shapes, fragrances, textures, etc.) that promotes immersion in the sign universe of the brand/products, favoring seduction and involvement. As Lipovetsky (2019: p. 23) states in his book *Agradar e Tocar* “seduction is a force, an instrument that produces desirability”. And contemporary brands have learned the ways of seduction to appease the hedonistic dimension that we all have with their offers, and the moment of purchase in its own ritualistic way is privileged.

Rituals of use are the most interesting because they reveal creativity and the ways in which material culture is incorporated into people’s daily lives, in the best sense of what Certeau (1994) called “gazetery freedom”. People can be manipulated by the persuasive performance of advertising and brands, however, they are capable of unimaginable appropriations by engineers, designers or advertisers. It is in everyday life that consumer relations are actually established, often outside of what creators and creatives want and communicate and knowing them is the only way to effectively understand the consumer. Every time I hear “consumer behavior” as a discipline in different undergraduate courses and specializations similar to “MBA”, without actually addressing the behavioral dimensions, therefore, anthropological and psychological/psychoanalytic, I am terrified simply because it is impossible to “speak” of behavior only with the precarious resources of marketing.

The study of behavior is not marketing, it is human, therefore, it demands theories and methods of the human sciences and anthropology is the science of excellence with ethnography as the preferred method, especially when used by experienced semioticians, which expands the interpretative capacity, which it is also not exercised in a profound way by inexperienced anthropologists who do not understand consumption as a privileged contemporary expression of social values. Thus, we will only understand why Brazilians buy fabric softeners so that their clothes are scented and not so that they are soft or why they need their stoves to have lids that do not have any objective functionality, but that serve to support the dishcloth and the vase of violets at the end of a day of intense work to leave the kitchen clean, if we penetrate into their daily lives and understand how products and brands are incorporated into everyday life and arrive at the fundamental understanding: “what they mean”. What are worth for? How are they being used? What senses are engendered? What is important to this person? What really motivates you to buy and use this product?

The distances between discourses and practices, in the context of uses and consumption, are drastically reduced when we understand these imaginary and symbolic mechanisms that materialize in behaviors and practical attitudes that are far from predictable and often far from the functionalities foreseen during the development of products and services. In the daily adventure of using and

consuming objects, brands and services, in the singular appropriation that we make of material culture, we build our personality and our social identity, in short, we better understand who we are. Consumption serves to think, proposition of [Canclini \(2010: p. 62\)](#), in his reflections and to consume is “to participate in a scenario of disputes for what society produces and for the ways of using it”; Here, the dimension of use, appropriation, incorporation of the materiality of the goods and the functionality of the services becomes evident as a way of enabling the individual to be in the social scene, in short, to belong.

Thus, rituals of use can become more sophisticated as the different elements of (i)material culture reveal complex mechanisms of concealment and unveiling, strategies of appropriation or joint use of products, very common in the beauty, make-up and fashion segments (the what goes with what, for example), such as in bathing rituals or even in the food consumption ritual with recipes and *mise en place* and drinks with their harmonies and sophisticated information about terroirs, vintages, production and storage conditions, temperature, specific cups and glasses, etc., etc. But also in the use of apps that can trigger the most diverse functionalities, but also amuse, entertain, produce the most diverse contents and put them in circulation.

With the processes of digital mediatization, new phenomena of use and consumption have emerged, comprising dimensions related to the experience of use, surprise and fun. Unboxing, the act of unpacking new products, is an example. A true media phenomenon, especially when the product or brand is highly desired, such as technology products (cell phones, ipads, speakers, headphones...), but there is even black credit card unboxing, these, by the way, have been the target of intense dissemination on the networks. The unboxing is a video recorded and posted on Youtube (or another video platform Tik Tok, IGTV...) with the opening scene of the package being opened, preferably of a newly launched product or some desired access (as in the case of the black card, with all that it “means”). It is believed that the first unboxing video was of a Nokia E61 cell phone on June 12, 2006. Could it be a usage ritual? In fact, it is a pre-use ritual, of expectation and preparation, which marks an inaugural condition, which will not be repeated, but which, when filmed and posted, will multiply exponentially, feeding the so important “movement” of consumption. Of course, in this expression of pre-use ritual, connections of meaning such as exclusivity, differentiation, elitism, and other correlates are at stake, even because there are few who first access a novelty, usually related to the ability to pay and privileged relationships.

The possession ritual is characterized by the guarding, storage and packaging of acquired or received goods. High-value goods, objects from luxury brands, jewelry and works of art stand out, in particular, where these rituals are well marked. In works of art, possession relates to the possibility of exhibiting them, although in many situations, the exhibition is of a replica, while the original rests in a safe or secure warehouse and possession materializes in a certifying docu-

ment. In luxury fashion, such as designer handbags, shoes and accessories, possession has its ritualistic nature confined to closets and closets and the amazement with the power of use, even explored in advertising campaigns. In jewelry, the boxes and cases that contain them begin to receive important attention in marketing, previously restricted to wrappings just to carry the product, today elevated to seductive objects full of meaning, with sophisticated design and perfect functionalities. Many more “democratic” jewelry brands such as the Danish Pandora and the Austrian Swarovski understood the importance of the possession ritual and created charming cases with an exclusive design, building extended identity links with the brand, as they will be highlighted in cabinets, dressers and drawers. of brand consumers, in addition to videos on YouTube, IGTV, TikTok shared, commented and liked.

But it is not just in arts and expensive objects that the ritual of ownership is present and important. In everyday life at home, for example, the choices of locations, containers and storage conditions also indicate values, importance that we attach. The storage of raw pasta in transparent glass jars on kitchen counter-tops highlights the value that product has and what it means to the people in that house. Pasta, in addition to its obvious meaning as food, with the associations to craftsmanship and authorship required in its preparation, takes on aesthetic and symbolic meanings when it is also presented as an object of decoration. The possession of books and, mainly, libraries also point to meanings beyond explicit consumption: reading and potential intellectuality. It incorporates meanings related to intelligence, updating, knowledge, and sophistication of habits, among others. Of course, the sight of a shelf of books in itself does not imply all of this, however, the way in which these books are stored and what the themes are helps a lot in the interpretation.

During a market research project where I worked in partnership with a qualitative research consultancy, the issue of book ownership and exhibition was decisive. During the presentation of the results of the ethnographic research that the consultancy had undertaken, a photo of a consumer in his home caught my attention, who had been selected because he belonged to a group that called itself “deep connoisseur of financial applications”. The photo was of the individual with a book entitled “Financial Application for Beginners”. The question is: who is an expert highlights a book for beginners? Can anyone imagine soccer player Cristiano Ronaldo smiling proudly carrying a book “How to score a goal in 10 lessons”? This is just a small example of how the possession of objects and access to services can be a universe of signs given to the interpretation and understanding of people, and how they want to be seen. By the way, here’s the tip: books lying on the shelves and coffee tables look beautiful, as decoration. Books and libraries belonging to those who actually read, bear marks of use, manipulation and intervention, and storage takes place prioritizing the possibility of quickly accessing them again: vertical storage, according to some criteria (author, theme, etc.), spaces for reading (armchair, sofa, lamp...) and production (computer, for ex-

ample).

In another example, in Brazil, space for garages in buildings was very important, especially on the outskirts. In the recent past, owning the first car was the code of prosperity and with it, the blessings. It was not uncommon for the garage to have more space and aesthetic investment than the living room and certainly the bedrooms. What this means? That car ownership was more important than housing conditions, understandable in conditions where ownership of goods was a sign of insertion and social acceptance. In these examples, we can also distinguish the possibilities of the ritual of possession: possession with concealment, normally of objects of great monetary value (safes, warehouses, etc.); possession for use (books, shoes, food, etc.) and possession for display (decoration objects, for example, and the specific case of the garage for cars and motorcycles, although they are also for use).

4. The Creative Power of the Final Rituals of Consumption

The disposal ritual can simply be reduced to “throwing away” a product or packaging, discarding it in the trash, eliminating what is no longer wanted, without any special care, to involving a series of sequences with specific care for separation, washing, packaging, storage in specific locations and proper disposal. Even so, especially in large centers, there are dynamics of hours, days of the week and appropriate external locations, which imply their own dynamics. In cases of waste separation, the colors intended for each material and prior cleaning must be respected. There are, therefore, procedures that are repeated and that make perfect sense in the context of environmental preservation and citizenship.

In addition to disposal, there are several “re” possibilities. Reassignify, reuse/reuse and recycle. Let’s see each of these possibilities of rituals that are no longer “final”, as they extend the consumption process, creating new possibilities and new meanings, therefore, new consumption rituals.

Reuse: characterized by using a product or packaging again, with the same original purpose. As in the cases of returnable packaging, quite common in glass containers such as drinks and some perfumes that can be refilled from bulk purchases. But reuse can also happen for different but related purposes, such as plastic ice cream pots, used for food storage. The central issue of reuse is practical and functional, storage and storage are the most common uses. They can also be used for completely different purposes, where the central property is the storage of any utensil, such as what we call “stuff holder” and the like, where the ice cream pot is used to store fabric ribbons and the glass of olives is used to store nails and tacks. We can also include repair, restoration and repair/retreading work here. Keeping all the differences, which are many, all these technical procedures extend the use of the products, increasing their vitality over time.

Recycling: is the transformation into “something else” through artisanal and industrial processes, such as what happens with aluminum cans that are collected, pressed and industrially processed and transformed into new products of the

most varied variety. There are numerous production processes involved here, which can be characterized as ritualistic, when in certain situations, in addition to involving repetitions, they are loaded with meaning, often related to social causes and, in these situations, there is a sense of social cohesion, especially when collective action is encouraged in favor of a specific cause.

Recycling takes place in various segments of the economy and is very vital in creative areas such as fashion, design, architecture, and arts, where new possibilities and concepts emerge. Recently, the terms downcycling and upcycling have emerged, let's see their characteristics. Depending on the material to be recycled, in the conversion processes, there may be a loss of quality in the final product, which is conventionally called downcycling. In another sense, upcycling is sought, the complete reuse of all material, without loss of quality, in a creative way and attributing even more value to the final product, hence the concept of up. The idea is that the recycling process adds value to the final product, in addition to being beneficial to the environment. These are concepts that were formed and spread in fashion and design.

Re-signification: in this ritual, the product or packaging is transformed into something else, incorporating new meanings. It can even house new functions completely different from those it originally had: thus, a car wheel, together with the internal grids of a refrigerator and the castors of the feet of a chair, can be transformed into a mobile barbecue. Transformation processes are primarily handcrafted and can incorporate other materials in the search for expanded functionalities and aesthetic contributions. There is resistance to mortality here (Perez & Trindade, 2019a), that is, there is no completion of the ritual of consumption, which would “naturally” tend towards elimination: consumption as consummation, deterioration, degradation, closing the cycle. He finished? Doesn't work anymore? Throw it in the trash. Reframing is creative, inventive, libertarian and authorial. It is the refusal to reject and discard. It is consumption creatively opening up to production, generating new consumption, circulating the senses.

The “re”, recycling, reuse, resignification rituals are in line with the inaugural thought of Appadurai (2008) in *A vida social das coisas*, Perniola (2000) with *The Sex appeal of the inorganic* and Canevacci (2016, 2018) *Visual Fetishisms and Anthropology of Visual Communication*, where the author highlights, in addition to the social life of things, the cultural biography of goods, biological machines and methodological fetishism as contemporary founding mechanisms of a new scientific methodology based on visual fetishism and states “Visual fetishism ‘see’ the new goods always more like subjects, with their own biography, biology and social life” (2018: p. 31). We evolved in this discussion about the “life of objects”, providing a semiotic perspective in Perez and Trindade (2019b), with the text “The biography of things: resistance to the immortality of material culture”, on the occasion of the X Propesq PP—National Meeting of Researchers in Advertising and Propaganda and an unfolding of this reflection presented in 2019, at the Intercom Advertising GP in Natal, entitled “The biography of consumer material culture: from object to subject” (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary table of rituals and their manifestations in everyday life.

Search	Purchase	Use	Possession	Discard
- Flaneur around the city or shopping centers (shop windows)	- Moment of purchase in person or e-commerce			
- Search and price comparison sites	- Context: spatiality, layout, furniture, interior design...	- Preparation and tidying	- Storage location	
- Brand websites, apps and social networks	- Experience	- Unboxing	- Cleanliness and conservation	- Simple stripping
- Brand community	- Shopping club	- Situation and time of use	- Maintenance	- Cleaning
- Stories from Instagram	- Signature	- Special occasions	- Periodic reviews	- Separation
- Brochures	- Merchandising at the POS	- Performance	- Specific packaging: cases, boxes...	- Packaging
- Test drive	- Means and conditions of payment	- Status conferred	- Performance: talk about, customize, photograph, post...	- Erasure of meaning
- Fairs and exhibitions	- Warranty and additional services at the time of purchase	- Related products and services	- collect	- Deposit
- Sampling and experimentation	- Promotions	- Meaning of the product during use	- Mediatize	- Removal in stages
- informal conversations	- Gifts		- Compare with others	
- Other sources of information	- Cashback			
				Reuse
				- Cleaning
				- Erasure of meaning
				- purification
				- Same/new function
				Recycling
				- Cleaning
				- Separation
				- Packaging
				- Collection/Industrial
				- Creation (reframe)
				- Production
				- New uses
				Resignification
				- Cleaning
				- Separation
				- Creation
				- Production: contribution of new meanings
				- New uses

Note. Adaptation from Perez (2020: pp. 72-73).

5. Final Considerations

As we have seen, there is a huge gain in understanding consumption as rituals,

both from a theoretical and methodological perspective and in the empirical developments that help in its procedural and complex understanding.

There are many learnings that come from understanding consumption as a ritual. In summary, we have that the rituals are adaptable, they are adjusted according to the segment of the material culture that we are studying, with the living conditions enjoyed by the social actors involved, with the collateral experience of each one, their aspirations and inspirations and the place that consumption ends up occupying in their lives. In a research project in the first class (2018) of the ECA graduate course at the University of São Paulo “Material Culture and Consumption: semi-psychoanalytical perspectives”, a group of students decided to study the consumption rituals of second-hand clothes, specifically those sold in thrift stores in the city of São Paulo. The field research brought a surprising learning experience by revealing that even in situations where used clothes were purchased in luxury thrift stores, where the pieces were absolutely clean and sanitized, with impermeable and clearly high-quality packaging, consumers, after purchase, washed their clothes (as if they were dirty) and the explanation in all situations followed in the ethnographic research was the same: the need to clean, sanitize and leave it ready for use, not necessarily from an objective perspective (also because the clothes were already clean) but, yes, to free yourself from the possible energies of the unknown previous owners. It wasn't even a question of whether they would be good or bad energies, but energies of unknowns and the unknown presented itself with all the negativity. Thus, the research led to the inclusion of the washing process—“purification” as a new fundamental ritual in the consumption of fashion in thrift stores, a specific characteristic of this material appropriation in people's lives, without gender or social class marks, since the reports were transversal. Evidently, the purification ritual is based on the Brazilian syncretic religious matrix, as well as on the relationship with water, which has always been abundant and even wasteful partly due to the topographical, water and coastal characteristics of the country, partly due to the influence of the different indigenous cultures that form us.

A second lesson learned is that consumption rituals retain characteristics of repetition and constancy, but also incorporate innovations, in a way that they are more moving than traditional rites of passage. Part of these innovations in the incorporation of elements of material culture in the lives of citizens is related to technological advances (new uses, new materials, new functionalities...), but also, due to the desire to be/do with the increase in information and, consequently, expansion of awareness in relation to sustainability issues, mainly in the environmental and social aspects, the latter more evident in Brazil. Thus, the uses that unfold in “res” (reuse, recycling, re-signification...) can be incorporated, generating new ritualistic cycles of consumption or disposal.

Consumption rituals can also manifest themselves in a more performative way than classical rituals, although in many cases these maintain a high scenic and ceremonial level, such as marriage, for example. However, given the contempo-

rary context and the desire to build an identity in consumption, especially in the context of social networks, performance is very present. At the moment, Instagram (and the built-in IGTV) is the most emblematic digital social network of this need for performance, as it favors photography and video, quick comments and encouraging likes and shares. It is also influenced by the strong presence of brands on the platform, including overtly commercial ones (selling) in addition to the ever-present advertising force. Digital platforms that favor photographic and videographic visuality stimulate mimetic consumption and gain momentum in the context of consumption of fashion, makeup, perfumery, mobility, etc., goods with high scenic potential in the context of social performances. Synthesize the peak of mimetic consumption.

Another fundamental lesson is that consumption rituals reveal the subtleties of interpersonal relationships. People, through purchases and uses, express their values, wants and dislikes and, even more, express their idealizations and aspirations, which in many situations they cannot do otherwise, as well presented by Miller:

The act of buying is an active praxis that constitutes relationships, interferes with them and refers back to them. The act of shopping can, for example, become a vicarious expression of relationships, which prevents those involved from having to be more explicit about what is happening. The reason for family fights becomes whether individuals are eating vegetables or “not wearing a skirt” and not the basic incompatibilities between people. The act of shopping can reveal contradictions between self-image and the idealization or devaluation of the self by others (Miller, 2002: p. 161).

In the act of purchase, but throughout the ritualistic process, in the search, use, storage and disposal, we can come across more or less noticeable manifestations of relationships between people. Submissions, influences, determinations, everything can emerge from the analysis of consumption when we broaden the focus from the individual to couples and families and their relationships, for example. Who chooses, who buys, who pays, who influences, who follows... these and many other possibilities of consumption reveal, in essence, much deeper psychological and social relationships related to personality, social roles, desires and affections.

Consumption understood as a ritual is an inexhaustible source of interdisciplinary research, especially in contexts such as Brazil and many other capitalist countries, and even more so in Latin America, where its centrality takes place much more as access than as a numb expression and unbridled of just “having” and “seeming”. As Canclini (2010: p. 59) states “Today we see consumption processes as something more complex than a relationship between manipulative means and docile audiences”. Oi still in the contributions of Han (2016: p. 111) “Goods do not last. They bring expiry inscribed as a constituent element. The cycle of appearance and disappearance of things is increasingly brief” because being in motion is a value and ephemerality imposes this dynamic.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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