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Despite cultivating symbols and behavior related to freedom and sensuality, Brazilians still hold some strict and conservatory standards of morality which affect their attitudes towards homosexuality and gays. Based on ethnographic observation, this work aims to explore how gay men use consumption to build and manage the relations between the gay and the heterosexual worlds they live in. Preliminary conclusions show that this division of these two worlds lies not only in gay men's imagination, but also in their choices of goods, services, and consumption environments.

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Brazilian culture is often described by sociologists as full of contrasts and dualisms, where opposites concepts cohabitate in soft and constant struggle (Da Matta, 1991, Barbosa 2006, Fry 1982). Despite cultivating symbols and behavior related to freedom and sensuality, Brazilians still hold some strict and conservative standards of morality. An instance where such dispositions arise is on attitudes towards homosexuality and gays. In a recent survey from the Brazilian Institute of Social Social Research, results from interviews with 2,014 citizens from 150 Brazilian cities show a high level of rejection of homosexuality. On this survey, informants said that they would not feel at ease with public displays of affection between homosexual couples (INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE PESQUISA SOCIAL, 2008). Therefore, homosexuality still seems to be a stigmatized behavior in Brazil.

On the other hand, goods, services and marketing activities directed to the gay public—or, using the words of Peñaloza (1996), the dream market—have seen a steep growth in Brazil. Gay pride parades in Brazil have attracted more than three million people, and the São Paulo parade is deemed as the world’s largest (Silva 2006). Such duality, peculiar to the Brazilian culture, is present even inside the gay culture of Rio de Janeiro, where homosexuals describe their reality as built upon two opposite but complimentary worlds: the gay and the heterosexual.

The present work aims to explore how gay men use consumption to build and manage symbolic barriers and bridges between the gay and the heterosexual worlds they live in. We seek not only to observe the way the informants manage to cross the boundaries between these two worlds, but also, and more important, how these two worlds are described in their life history, and how social interactions with goods and consumption environments help to build the barriers and bridges between the two worlds.

This work is based on data from ethnographic observation that has been taking place in the city of Rio de Janeiro since 2005. Data collection is based on field notes prepared by one of the authors, as well as long in-depth interviews with 19 gay men that currently live in this city. Informants are openly gay men, with gender identity fully established, that frequently go to gay venues, shops, bars, nightclubs, and all sorts of and consumption environments. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed along with ethnographic field notes. Data analysis involved careful reading and codification of all data, in a process that has been repeated several times upon the same set of data in order to have a full grasp of the narratives. As suggested by Belk et alii (1988), we adopted techniques for interpretive studies that included member checks, use of photographs, and analysis of secondary data such as magazines and advertising directed to the gay public (Kates 2002, Belk et alii 1988).

Stigma is related to a mark of social inferiority that, apparently or not, a dominant group imposes another. Goffman’s (1986) approach about stigma is strongly related to the question concerning identity. According to him, the stigmatized person carries a “spoiled identity”, since such identity is seen by the dominant group as shameful and depreciative to its bearer (Crocker at. Al., 1998; Hogg, Hilbert e Piancini, 2008). It is important to stress that the stigmatized attributes are culture-context-dependent. What is seen as a stigma in one culture or context may not be seen the same way in another situation. After all, what is stigmatized is, in fact, not the stigma attribute, but what it represents. For instance, markings of the homosexual condition may be seen as a stigma in smaller cities, where social control over the conduct of the citizen is stronger, than on great metropolitan areas, where the social grids are looser (see Douglas & Isherwood, 1979).

Homosexuality, the homosexual subject, and the “gay man”, are inventions dated on the 19th century. Since the second half of the 19th century, the homosexual practice became to define a special kind of person, and consequently, a new social category, namely the homosexual, which came to be marked as a deviant. Persons who, voluntarily or not, were framed in this category, began to live a secret life, marked by segregation (Kates, 1998, Silva, 2006, Trevissan, 2002; Foucault, 1988). Such a “secret life” provided the fertile ground for the development of a whole subculture, the gay culture, with its own behavioral codes, discourse, norms, values, and its own set of social identities. When forming a gay identity, during the process of “getting out of the closet”, individuals in this condition use profusely the social meanings attached to goods and services in order to reach the new homosexual identity (Kates, 1998, 2002).

First conclusions of this study show that gay men’s culture actually involve an active symbolic construction of both a gay and a straight world. What seems to be a simplistic division is, in fact, the representation of two separate and complimentary symbolic domains in which gay men live and, depending on the context, manage their social identities. The division of these two worlds lies not only in gay men’s imagination, but also in their choices of clothing, accessories, and places like clubs, restaurants, or the beach. Nevertheless, it is through ritualistic activities that the gay men symbolically incorporate these goods, services and places in their culture (McCrank, 2002). This way, through consumption, they attribute meaning to the world. Consumption goods and rituals, then, become instruments of the gay culture to build and manage the gay identity throughout the gay and straight worlds.

References
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Emotional Intelligence, Impulse Buying and Self-Esteem: The Predictive Validity of Two Ability Measures of Emotional Intelligence

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Abstract

The present study tests for reliable measurement and criterion validity of two ability measures of emotional intelligence: the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS, 2008) and the Mayer Salovey Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT, 2002). In specific, we examine EI’s influence on impulse buying and self-esteem and how different functional areas of EI uniquely affect these two constructs. The results provide new empirical insights regarding the criterion validity of different measures of EI in the context of consumer research.

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a set of four broad categories of abilities that together enable individuals to perceive, use, understand, and manage emotions in themselves and others to achieve productive and/or positive ends (Mayer, Roberts, & Barsade, 2008; Mayer and Salovey 1997).

Kidwell, Hardesty, and Childers (2008) have developed the Consumer Emotional Intelligence Scale (CEIS) based on the classic measure of emotional intelligence, the Mayer, Salovey, Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test (MSCEIT; Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso, 2002). The CEIS differs from MSCEIT, in that it is shorter (18 items) and domain specific (marketing), whereas the MSCEIT is longer (141 items) and domain-generic.

Kidwell, Hardesty and Childers (2008) empirically showed that the CEIS is a better predictor of consumer decision making than MSCEIT. The present study aims to provide new and additional empirical insights regarding the criterion and predictive validity of CEIS vs. MSCEIT. We select impulsive buying and self-esteem as important consumer behavior constructs in which the ability to reason about emotions could impact decision quality. Additionally, we also included personality to test incremental predictive validity of EI.

Impulse buying and EI

Impulse buying could be described as unplanned and often uncontrolled urge to buy products. Recent research on impulse buying (e.g. Verplanken et al 2005) suggests that people engage in quick buying mostly due to affective reasons. Therefore, it is important to understand the ability of a consumer to: (a) differentiate between emotions; (b) use emotions to guide thoughts and behavior.

The perceiving emotions branch helps individuals to accurately identify the different emotions that could be elicited as a result of a purchase decision. The cognitive facilitation branch helps individuals to prioritize, think, and act in judiciously based on how they feel.

Because impulsive purchases are made quickly and often driven by hedonic or emotional considerations, we hypothesize that each of these branches and the overall EI will negatively influence impulsive buying behavior.

Self-Esteem and EI

Self-esteem is defined as “how much value people place on themselves” (Baumeister et al. 2003). The interaction between the cognitive and affective components that underlies the construct highlights the fact that affective information is being used to form attitudes of oneself over the long term. Therefore, an individual with higher levels of EI-abilities should be able to reason with and modify emotional information so that over the long term, a positive overall self-evaluation is formed.

The understanding emotions-branch helps individuals to understand the complexities of emotions that are felt. The management branch helps individuals modify the possible negative emotions in frustration into positive emotions, thereby potentially producing a