

Alternative Hedonism: Its Relation to Tattoo Coverage and Community Type

Sarah Frankel¹, Michelle Childs¹ & Youn-Kyung Kim¹

¹Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, United States

Correspondence: Sarah Frankel, Department of Retail, Hospitality, and Tourism Management, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, United States. E-mail: sfrankel@vols.utk.edu

Received: November 30, 2020 Accepted: December 30, 2020 Online Published: January 8, 2021

doi:10.5539/ijms.v13n1p1 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v13n1p1>

Abstract

Alternative hedonism is an unconventional form of consumerism that offers a middle-ground consumption practice between sustainability and hedonism. Based on a review of the literature, we identified three major themes of alternative hedonism: seeking pleasure from consuming differently, civic responsibility, and voluntary simplicity. This study is designed to determine whether tattoo coverage (none, light, or heavy) and community type (urban, suburban, or rural) have main and interaction effects on alternative hedonism practices such as community engagement, green consumption, shopping small, and holistic wellness. We collected data via online survey from 168 lightly tattooed, 213 heavily tattooed, and 185 non-tattooed individuals. We discuss implications of our findings for both scholars and practitioners.

Keywords: alternative hedonism, tattoos, community type, community engagement, green consumption, shopping small, holistic wellness

“The price of anything is the amount of life you exchange for it.” *Walden* (Thoreau, 1854)

1. Introduction

As sustainability concerns continue to grow, many individuals are finding difficulty in satisfying their desires for pleasure while adhering to ethical consumption practices. Moreover, consumers are rarely willing to sacrifice the perceived value of a purchase simply to fulfill the ideals of sustainable consumption. As this dilemma grows, consumer desires for hedonism (pleasure) are undercut by ethical concerns about environmental sustainability and vice versa. This wavering phenomenon adds to the intrigue of how subculture consumers contest environmentally destructive practices such as materialistic consumption and conspicuous consumption in attempts to create a consumption culture more suitable for sustainable practices (Soper, 2012).

Drawing on Soper’s (2008) theory of alternative hedonism, we move beyond the polarized discussion of consumption practices (preservation through sustainability versus overconsumption) to examine a middle-ground solution that resonates with contemporary consumer culture. Alternative consumption cultivates unique practices that are not adopted by mainstream individuals (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007), such as adopting simplistic lifestyles, actively participating in community engagement, and consuming differently by following consumption practices that create enjoyment outside of the marketplace (Soper, 2008).

Research demonstrates that tattooed individuals are directed by values that prompt these consumption practices (Kosut, 2006; Portwood-Stacer, 2012). Research also reveals that tattooed individuals are analogous to “sustainable fashion pioneers,” or individuals who have overcome some of the inherent tensions between their hedonistic desires and sustainability concerns (e.g., by foregoing designer brands for sustainable fashion), and who have employed sustainable consumption behaviors (e.g., purchasing designer brands secondhand) (Bly, Gwozdz, & Reisch, 2015). Furthermore, findings from a recent study on the classification of tattooed persons based on the percentage of the body with tattoos (Frankel, Childs, & Kim, 2018a) and online conversations among tattoo artists (Mac_1au, 2018) reveal that notable lifestyle and consumption differences may exist within this subculture.

Community type (e.g., rural, suburban, urban) also may influence a consumer’s propensity to engage in alternative hedonism. Specifically, studies on rural communities reveal that insular populaces, especially those

with shared religions, foster strong community values that help individuals balance desires for personal acquisition with collective interests (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). These findings align with underlying themes of alternative hedonism and suggests the potential existence of a geographical catalyst. Hence, the purpose of this study is to determine whether tattoo coverage and community type influence alternative hedonism practices such as community engagement, green consumption, shopping small, and holistic wellness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Alternative Hedonism

Despite widespread intent to adhere to sustainable consumption ideals, paradoxes in consumer practices undercut progress (Holt, 2012). For instance, a consumer may buy a secondhand 100% organic cotton dress but drive across town in a pollutive SUV to a discount mega-mart to purchase sweatshop manufactured accessories. Bona fide sustainable consumption requires consumers to meticulously avoid harmful products. Allowing for few middle-ground consumption alternatives, sustainable consumption becomes a dead-end approach because the goal is largely unachievable for consumers (Holt, 2012).

In response, Soper (2008, 2012) introduced alternative hedonism as an avant-garde form of consumerism that offers a middle-ground consumption practice. In addition to altruistic concern for the ecological and social consequences of a consumerist culture, the inspiration to engage in alternative hedonism stems from the gratification derived from *consuming differently* (e.g., going to a friend's clothing swap party versus going to the mall with friends). This alternative form of consumption is suitable for consumers who seek desirable and ethical options without sacrificing comfortable consumption. While reducing consumer environmental impacts, the alternative hedonism paradigm suggests that suitable practices result by engaging in unconventional approaches of day-to-day pleasures (Soper, 2008).

Proponents of alternative hedonism have received backlash for exclusively targeting affluent, socially responsible consumers (Schneider & Miller, 2011; Soper, 2008, 2012) and neglecting lower income or rural Americans. Despite this criticism, rising ethical consumers value consumption alternatives, irrespective of socioeconomic standing or community type (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012; Fullagar, 2012). Scholars have applied alternative hedonism to non-market pleasures of consuming (Jenkins, Molesworth, & Eccles, 2010), anti-consumption (Portwood-Stacer, 2012), and a zero-waste brand community (Polynczuk-Alenius, 2015). We present a comprehensive review of literature related to alternative hedonism in Table 1. Thus far, scholars have adopted the lens of alternative hedonism to explore cultural phenomena using only qualitative methods. In this study, we will adopt a quantitative approach to provide empirically supportive evidence using a larger sample, which can be generalizable to the population of interest.

Table 1. Previous consumer research involving Alternative Hedonism

Author	Methodology	Synopsis
Soper (2007, 2008)	Development of theory	Identified the impact and long-term implications of other emerging forms of self-interested disaffection within affluent consumer culture.
Jenkins, Molesworth, & Eccles (2010)	Conceptual	Explores alternative hedonism in the context of consumer imagination.
Schneider & Miller (2011)	Case study	Demonstrates the limitations of mass appeal of alternative hedonism due to stunt publicization through an examination of Colin Beaven's eco-stunt, "No Impact Man."
Fullagar (2012)	Ethnography	Exhibits how female cyclists consume bicycling as a form of alternative hedonism.
Petronoti (2012)	Ethnography	Examines the practice of braiding hair and references Soper's (2008) idea of consuming differently but does not use alternative hedonism as a framework.
Portwood-Stacer (2012)	Ethnography	Explores material and discursive effects in an anti-consumption and political (anarchist) subculture.
De Solier (2013)	Ethnography	Shows how "foodies" use product selection to negotiate anxiety about the morality of creating the self through consumption.
Wilkinson, Waitt, & Gibbs (2014)	Ethnography	Centers around understanding how people who practice birdwatching may or may not take responsibility for maintaining the environments that support their lives.
Bly, Gwozdz, & Reisch (2015)	Netnography	Identifies <i>sustainable fashion pioneers</i> who shape discourses around the notion of sustainable fashion.
Polynczuk-Alenius (2015)	Netnography	Utilizes a framework of depoliticized alternative hedonism to explore on how creative input from Facebook's zero-waste brand community (Costo) might influence consumers.
Fredriksson (2016)	Ethnography	Identifies craft consumption as an example of a contemporary consumerist practice associated with alternative hedonism.
Zimmerman (2017)	Case Study	Blood, Sweat & T-shirts (BS&T), a BBC docu-reality, cultivates a form of caring for others that is amenable to a liberalized global economy and racial/gendered global hierarchies.

A review of the literature on alternative hedonism reveals several underlying themes: (a) seeking pleasure from practices that are generally undermined by the general public (Soper, 2007, 2008); (b) aligning individual desires with civic and responsible practices (Ray & Anderson, 2000); (c) practicing voluntary simplicity (Soper, 2007, 2008), where the "good life" implies a society with less consumption. Each theme is explained next.

Seeking pleasure from consuming differently. Alternative hedonism seeks to redirect a consumer's materialistic motivations - which could harbor lifelong negative effects on both society and individuals (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002) - to more fulfilling experiences that consumers can savor in the present and in the future (Soper, 2008). To achieve these fulfilling experiences, consumers do not have to completely avoid the harmful by-products of consumption but can embrace the sensual pleasures of consuming differently from traditional methods (Soper, 2008).

Consuming differently may involve engaging in pleasurable but time-consuming activities that many have foregone to maintain the frenzied pace of present-day life (Soper, 2008). They may want to take time to "be with the family, swim in the ocean, make love, or sit outside with a cup of tea" (Alexander, 2011, p. 3). They may also want to learn how to reconstruct old t-shirts into reusable grocery tote bags and attend a sewing workshop to learn how to repurpose old clothing (Levett, 2003). These activities represent unconventional consumption practices as consumers find pleasures outside of the marketplace. The satisfaction that individuals derive from these activities stems from self-interest, rather than from concerns about future generations. Therefore, when these activities provide new skills to individuals, this experience can redefine consumption to reflect self-fulfillment (Soper, 2008). As a more self-interested consumption approach, alternative hedonism is arguably easier to adopt than sustainable consumption in the contemporary culture.

Civic responsibility. Deeply rooted in capitalism, the patriotic consumerist mentality embodies a consumer-citizen that fulfills his or her civic duty by exercising consumer sovereignty in the open market (Alexander, 2011). When a modern economy unleashes a consumer's boundless desires, social order is destabilized (Zukin & Maguire, 2004). Karl Marx framed the desire to consume as a social need instituted by capitalism—a "commodification fetish" (Zukin & Maguire, 2004, p. 174).

Soper (2008) suggested a smaller-scale approach to consumption: the return to a simpler and natural system of need satisfaction. Community engagement such as buying and selling at local craft fairs, buying from community-supported "pick your own" produce operations/roadside stands, and volunteering to cook at a neighborhood firehouse demonstrates a consumer's civic duty to safeguard the environment from destructive consumption practices (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012).

At the Fifth Dimension, a tattoo shop in the UK, local artists have created a liberated space by combining their support for veganism and body art (“Why I started,” 2015). This combination of a political activist agenda (e.g., veganism) that embraces small business and entrepreneurial strategies (e.g., the tattoo shop) exemplifies the crossing boundaries imposed by the expectations of Western societies. This vibrant example in turn supports a community space while validating alternative hedonism and civic responsibility principles, demonstrating that when consumers are civically engaged, they focus on small-scale and geographically localized consumption.

Voluntary simplicity. Over-working and overconsuming - vices of the traditional capitalist system - are repudiated by alternative hedonism. The endless pursuit of money to enable more consumption yields inexhaustible avarice (Alexander, 2011; Ray & Anderson, 2000). However, non-material consumption has been proven to be intense and provide longer lasting pleasure (Alexander, 2011). By limiting consumption of material goods, consumers can establish manageable working hours, enjoy more leisure time, and indulge in more simplistic, enriching activities (e.g., reading a book or self-reflection). This slower-paced lifestyle focuses on strengthening interpersonal connections along with the spiritual and communal aspects of resistance towards materialism (Ray & Anderson, 2000).

In a trend harmful to self-esteem and the environment, many consumers use products to construct idealized façades. When consumer self-identities are synonymous with owned merchandise, products command significant influence over their lives. Among these consumers, sense of belongingness may be measured by the number and prestige of designer products they own. Critics of the fashion industry suggest that this trend fosters “depthless, materialistic outlooks and a perpetual state of dissatisfaction over one’s current lifestyle and physical appearance” (Thompson & Haytko, 1997, p. 16). In addition to inflating societal class gaps, this consumerist lifestyle creates stress, ill health, and pollution (Soper, 2008), and arguably works against human nature (New Philosopher, 2015). From the viewpoint of alternative hedonism, “the good life” entails “the promotion of cultural as well as aesthetic and cultural modes of self-realization rather than the expansion of shopping” (Fredriksson, 2016, p. 155). Consumers can create a sense of “the good life” by focusing on the voluntary adoption of simplicity rather than participating in unfulfilling materialistic consumption activities.

2.2 The Tattoo Subculture

A subculture is defined by Theresa Winge (2009) as “a group smaller in population than the mainstream culture as a whole, and who consciously set themselves apart from the mainstream society with any combination of the following: dress; ideology; music; language; technology; geography; and/or activities” (p. 7). Because subcultures are comprised of individuals who share beliefs and feel a need to separate from mainstream culture (Winge, 2009), commitments to particular subcultures unite members and subvert dominant institutions that inhibit advancement in members’ social statuses (Canniford, 2011; Nikora, Rua, & Te Awakotuku, 2007).

Many subcultures oppose social norms and consumption-centric practices (Portwood-Stacer, 2012), and instead align with non-traditional consumption practices demonstrated by “sustainable fashion pioneers” (Bly et al., 2015). These “sustainable fashion pioneers” exhibit anti-consumption patterns in subcultural shopping attitudes including a distrust of retailers’ sustainability motives (e.g., large retailers moving into small markets may not be perceived as being conducive to local communities) (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012), advocacy for reduced consumption, and rejection of mainstream fashion in favor of idiosyncratic styles (Bly et al., 2015). Acknowledging both abstinence from consumption and alternative genres of consumption as non-conformist practices (Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Venkatesh, Podoshen, Urbaniak, & Wallin, 2015), these anti-consumption practices embrace the concept of alternative hedonism.

The tattooed community qualifies as a subculture because members permanently modify their bodies (e.g., tattooing, piercing), in order to distinguish themselves from mainstream society. Although individual motivations for getting tattoos differ, recurring themes in tattoo decisions include self-expression (Eason, 2007; Mun, Janigo, & Johnson, 2012; Tiggemann & Golder, 2006), uniqueness (Eason, 2007; Tiggemann & Hopkins, 2011), and alternative commodification processes (Kosut, 2006).

Previously, scholars argued that marginalized subcultures such as tattooed individuals tend to develop autonomous, internally focused economies and eschew capitalist engagement (Kosut, 2006; Littler, 2005; Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Venkatesh et al., 2015). Members of these subcultures opt for economic producer-consumer interactions that cultivate ritualistic, economic, and individualistic exchanges (e.g., an artist trading a tattoo for a haircut) (Kosut, 2006). Portwood-Stacer (2012) contends that members in these marginalized subcultures feel they practice “ethical integrity in the face of widespread corporate immorality” (Portwood-Stacer, 2012, p. 96). Despite these findings, few have studied the tattooed subculture’s consumption practices (Frankel, Childs, & Kim, 2018b).

Subcultural groups can use their individual and group identities as alternative markers that enable them to have more egalitarian interactions and member camaraderie (Frankel et al., 2018a; Fullagar, 2012). Therefore, interactions between tattooed individuals can bolster a sense of unified identity and presumably will encourage them to cultivate community (Atik & Yildirim, 2014). Specifically, some tattooed individuals' activities mirror characteristics of alternative hedonism through community engagement (e.g., The Sirens Women's Motorcycle Club in New York that delivers donor's breast milk to families in need) and volunteer work (Sirens Motorcycle Club, 2014). This sense of community is also evident when supporting small businesses and locally owned tattoo parlors (Tysonwest, 2017; "Why I Started", 2015) unify over frustrations with big businesses and global economies (Paul_1979, 2009).

2.3 Community Type

Findings from previous research suggest that community type can be related to alternative hedonism (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). Engagement in rural communities has been linked to strengthening of social networks, consensus on acceptable behaviors, interpersonal trust, and the belief that community is central to pursuing collective goals (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). The nurturing benefits of community engagement can encourage interpersonal activities such as volunteering and may alleviate the materialistic pressure omnipresent in larger communities (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004; Ray & Anderson, 2000). Holding collective values that conflict with individual orientation toward material values (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002), members in these communities exhibit a natural gravitation toward alternative hedonism.

Research on consumption practices of urban and suburban communities is limited. However, demographic composition of these areas provides some indirect information about members' consumption patterns or lifestyles. For instance, urban cities are populated by younger consumers (18–34) who have more convenience store access and tend to make more shopping trips compared to suburban or rural residence (The Neilson Company, 2016; Trulia, 2015). Furthermore, suburban residents are more likely to have higher incomes than urban or rural residents (Krueger, 2016). Combined, these demographic characteristics imply that individuals in urban or suburban communities may have stronger materialistic orientations compared to those in rural communities and thus are less likely to exhibit alternative hedonistic practices. Although limited, these findings suggest that community types may be useful to understand consumption patterns as they relate to alternative hedonism.

3. Hypothesis Development

Based on previous research, it is likely that alternative hedonism resonates with marginalized consumers (Soper, 2008) who may constitute as a subcultural group. Actions such as permanently marking (tattooing) the body reinforce one's membership into a subculture, in much the same way that consumers of a same brand cultivate a sense of community (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Portwood-Stacer, 2012). In this case, tattooed individuals may define themselves in terms of group/community membership (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Greene, 2004; Nikora et al., 2007), which encourages them to participate in activities that support the group or community. For instance, she/he may walk to a small shop to buy a handmade purse instead of ordering it online and have it shipped from Italy to her/his home. These consumers may also participate in green consumption as they attribute it as a civic responsibility; she/he may wear hand-me-down jeans instead of buying new designer pants. Therefore, she/he would not consider green consumption practices or shopping small as a trade-off for conspicuous consumption, but as an act of civil disobedience to the consumer-citizen model.

Additionally, it is likely that tattooed individuals are concerned with their holistic wellness (Ray & Anderson, 2000) through their motivations for authenticity, creativity, and uniqueness (Botz-Bornstein, 2013; Kosut, 2006; Tiggemann & Golder, 2006; Winge, 2009). These motivations suggest that tattooed individuals tend to look inward and have stronger desires to develop intimate relationships with nature, others, and seek new experiences. Moreover, evidence shows that the tattooed subculture includes different hierarchical clusters defined by the extent of tattoo coverage on the body (Frankel et al., 2018a, 2018b; Mac_lau, 2018). This alludes that consumption practices can be constructed around different clusters inside the tattoo subculture (Molteni & Ordanini, 2003). Given this evidence, we posit that tattoo classification is significantly related to the level of participation in alternative hedonism. However, because of limited research on this relationship, we will identify the directionality of this relationship empirically in our study.

H1: Lightly or heavily tattooed individuals participate more in alternative hedonism through community engagement (H1a), green consumption (H1b), shopping small (H1c), and holistic wellness (H1d) than non-tattooed individuals do.

The characteristics of community type (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) are likely to influence individuals' propensity

for alternative hedonism practices. Particularly, rural community members may have strong community engagement due to their collective interests and strong social ties with members (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004). Because generations of individuals have lived in the same community, members know each other and have a strong interest in and commitment to active community participation and support. Research also shows that members in rural communities exhibit more concern about environmental issues (Cutter, 1981) likely due to their agricultural ties (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014), and support local systems of production because it encompasses social relations (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012). Therefore, environmental concerns (i.e., green consumption) have been in the forefront of rural community's interests.

Furthermore, in an emerging movement advocating voluntary simplicity, nonconformist consumers resist being "absorbed by the market in dialectic market-focused fashion" (Holt, 2012, p. 242). Companies like Patagonia and American Apparel have garnered widespread approval for adopting sustainable practices (e.g., offering products made with organic cotton), giving them a competitive advantage over smaller retailers (Holt, 2012). However, rather than fulfilling alternative hedonist principles (e.g., by granting their workers flexible work hours), these companies are simply providing consumers with more ways to spend money. This "utopian scheme" (Holt, 2012, p. 242) has historically brought success to big businesses in certain communities; however, smaller communities may be more willing to deviate from market-focused solutions. Considered to be less-commercial spheres (Herbers, 1986), small communities inspire their oftentimes pious members to consider ethics in consumption and support small-scale and holistic approaches to business and community development (Holt, 2012; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Moreover, in a community tied closely to religious institutions, such as rural communities, there is a prosocial role of intrinsic religiosity that stimulates voluntary simplicity in pursuit of communal and personal well-being along with environmental wellness (Chowdhury, 2016).

In sum, members in rural communities show strong inclination to participate in a variety of community-supported consumption practices, such as producing and buying eco-friendly products (e.g., green consumption), shopping at family-owned or local businesses (e.g., shopping small), and participating in outdoor activities (e.g., holistic wellness), and can serve as hubs for alternative consumption. We posit that the consumption patterns in rural communities, which contradict those of the mainstream mass market in urban or suburban areas, actively encourage participation in alternative hedonism. We will determine the directionality of this proposition in our empirical testing.

H2: Individuals living in rural communities participate more in alternative hedonism through community engagement (H2a), green consumption (H2b), shopping small (H2c), and holistic wellness (H2d) than individuals living in suburban or urban communities do.

Although we propose that tattoo classification and community type have separate effects on alternative hedonism, these two constructs also may interact to impact it. With an increasing number of tattooed individuals working in agriculture and other industries (STAPAW, 2012), these individuals are becoming integrated into more rural communities. Religion is central to rural life (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004), and some tattooed individuals may feel alienated from members of the non-tattooed community who lead incompatible lifestyles. This marginalization within the rural community could cause tattooed individuals to form a strong group identity (Frankel et al., 2018a) centered on the rejection of mainstream consumption. Compared to shared consumption practices, the group's anti-consumption practices (e.g., purchasing hand-dyed Irish wool instead of mass-produced licensed Disney fabric) may even produce greater social cohesion among its group members. Based on the above characteristics, we anticipate a higher level of engagement in alternative hedonistic practices among tattooed consumers than among non-tattooed consumers in rural areas.

Although differences between the consumption behaviors of tattooed and non-tattooed individuals may be evident in rural communities, these discrepancies may not be as prominent in urban or suburban areas. Recently, many cities have augmented sustainability practices through a strenuous process that relies heavily on community engagement to help finance such efforts (Barendregt & Jaffe, 2014). Presumably, engagement among municipal governments, businesses, and local communities help raise awareness of green consumption, regardless of tattoo classification. Therefore, we posit that an interaction exists between community type (i.e., rural, suburban, urban) and tattoo classification, leaving patterns of potential differences to the analysis.

H3: Tattoo classification interacts with community type to influence alternative hedonism through community engagement (H3a), green consumption (H3b), shopping small (H3c), and holistic wellness (H3d) in that among those living in rural communities, lightly, or heavily tattooed individuals participate more in alternative hedonism, while these differences do not exist among those living in suburban or urban communities.

4. Methods

4.1 Sample and Data Collection

We developed an online consumer panel survey through Qualtrics and distributed it to individuals residing in the United States via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). To ensure responses from tattooed people for the survey, we included a screening question in which we asked respondents to select three activities/experiences they had done among the choices of skydiving, rock climbing, body piercing, running a marathon, getting a tattoo, bungee jumping, and none of these. Respondents who did not select “getting a tattoo” were disqualified from participating in the survey. We also included six attention-check questions (e.g., “Have you purchased an Apple iPhone 11 smartphone?” and “Please check somewhat agree from the following”). The 126 respondents who failed to answer these questions correctly were disqualified from participating in the survey.

The final sample consisted of 566 individuals: 185 non-tattooed, 168 lightly tattooed (1–10% of the body), and 213 heavily tattooed (more than 10% of the body). Regarding community type, 165 individuals lived in urban areas, 290 lived in suburban areas, and 111 lived in rural areas. Their ages ranged from 19 to 77, with a median age of 33. There were slightly more females (54.6%) than males (44.5%). The majority of respondents were White-Americans (74.6%), followed by African-Americans (7.8%), Hispanics (6.9%), Asians (7.1%) and American Indians (1.4%). The largest proportion of respondents reported annual incomes of \$20,000–\$39,999 (25.8%), followed by \$40,000–\$59,000 (23.0%), which was the median income bracket.

4.2 Measures

Because an alternative hedonism scale does not exist, we modified items from the literature for this study. Based on three major themes of alternative hedonism (i.e., seeking pleasure from consuming differently, civic responsibility, and voluntary simplicity), along with the existing scales that reflect these themes, we developed four measures of alternative hedonism practices, all of which begin with “I enjoy...” to reflect the nature of hedonism. As illustrated in Table 2, the measures assess four alternative hedonistic practices and are derived from previous studies: community engagement (Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002), green consumption (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2016), shopping small (Cranfield, Henson, & Blandon, 2012), and holistic wellness (Ray & Anderson, 2000). Academic experts in consumer behavior confirmed the face validity of the scale items. Participants responded to all measures using 6-point Likert-type scales (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree).

5. Results

Prior to testing the hypotheses, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis of all alternative hedonism measurement items (Table 2). All construct reliabilities are satisfactory, above the threshold of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Likewise, model fit is satisfactory: $\chi^2(71) = 377.335$, CFI = .993, NNFI = .991, RMSEA = .046 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2009).

Table 2. CFA result: Alternative Hedonism

Factor Item (I enjoy...)	Factor Loading	Construct Reliability
Community engagement		.942
Donating to local charity.	.930	
Serving as a volunteer in my community.	.811	
Forming close ties with others in my community.	.938	
Taking an active role in the community in which I live.	.897	
Green consumption		.937
Purchasing products that do not cause potential damage to the environment.	.949	
Buying environmentally friendly products even if the alternative is cheaper.	.969	
Finding new products that are environmentally friendly.	.813	
Shopping small		.840
Finding high quality products from small businesses.	.792	
Supporting local businesses because they have an impact on our community.	.801	
Buying local because it has a positive impact on the welfare of individuals.	.799	
Holistic wellness		.707
Spending time in nature.	.505	
Being physically active.	.581	
Developing intimate relationship with others.	.682	
Experiencing people, places and things that are different.	.679	

To accomplish our objectives, we performed a two-way ANOVA with two main effects: tattoo coverage based on three levels (none, light, and heavy) and community type with three levels (urban, suburban, and rural), as illustrated in Table 3. We further examined main effects to identify areas with mean differences using Tukey's test (Table 4). Overall, alternative hedonism scores are highest for individuals with light tattoo coverage, followed individuals with no tattoos, and lowest among individuals with heavy tattoo coverage. By community type, alternative hedonism scores are highest among rural dwellers.

Table 3. General Linear model result

Practice of Alternative Hedonism	Tattoo Classification		Community Type		Tattoo Classification x Community Type	
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> -value	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> -value	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i> -value
Community engagement	1.527	.218	.663	.515	2.802	.025*
Green consumption	3.321	.037*	2.951	.053	3.245	.012*
Shopping small	4.564	.011*	3.090	.046*	.977	.420
Holistic wellness	4.701	.009*	1.214	.298	1.673	.155

Note. * < .05.

Table 4. Means: Alternative Hedonism

	No Tattoo (n = 185)				Light Tattoo (n = 168)				Heavy Tattoo (n = 213)				Community Type Total		
	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total	Urban (n=165)	Suburban (n=290)	Rural (n=111)
Community Engagement	4.05	4.24	4.64	4.31	4.35	4.05	4.36	4.26	4.21	4.22	3.92	4.12	4.21	4.17	4.30
Green Consumption	4.31	4.25	4.93	4.5 ^a	4.70	4.20	4.59	4.5 ^a	4.29	4.32	4.07	4.23 ^b	4.43	4.26	4.53
Shopping Small	4.67	4.87	5.19	4.91 ^{a,b}	4.96	4.94	5.13	5.01 ^a	4.63	4.80	4.74	4.73 ^b	4.75 ^a	4.87 ^{a,b}	5.02 ^b
Holistic Wellness	4.67	4.80	5.09	4.85 ^a	5.07	4.92	4.94	4.98 ^b	4.66	4.76	4.78	4.73 ^c	4.80	4.83	4.94

Note. ^{a,b,c} Different characters mean the groups where means scores are significantly different.

ANOVA results (Table 3) show main effects of tattoo coverage on green consumption ($F = 3.321, p < .05$), shopping small ($F = 4.564, p < .01$), and holistic wellness ($F = 4.701, p < .01$). Specifically, regarding green consumption, scores for individuals with no or light tattoo coverage ($M = 4.50$) are higher than scores for individuals with heavy tattoo coverage ($M = 4.23$). For shopping small, scores for individuals with light tattoo coverage ($M = 5.01$) are significantly higher than scores for individuals with heavy tattoo coverage ($M = 4.73$). Thus, H1a, H1b, H1c, and H1d are not supported. On the other hand, a main effect of community type exists only for shopping small ($F = 3.090, p < .05$). For shopping small, scores for individuals living in rural areas ($M = 5.02$) are significantly higher than scores for individuals living in urban areas ($M = 4.75$). Thus, H2c is supported, but H2a, H2b, and H2d are not supported.

Lastly, interaction effects of these two variables exist for community engagement ($F = 2.802, p < .05$) as illustrated in Figure 1, and green consumption ($F = 3.245, p < .05$), as illustrated in Figure 2. For individuals with no tattoos, community engagement scores are highest among those living in rural areas. For individuals with light tattoo coverage, community engagement scores are highest among those living in urban and rural areas, and lowest among those living in suburban areas. On the other hand, for individuals with heavy tattoo coverage, community engagement scores are lowest among individuals living in rural areas and are higher for individuals living in urban and suburban areas. The interaction results for green consumption are similar, with one notable exception: for individuals with light tattoo coverage, the differences in alternative hedonism among the three community types are more apparent than for community engagement. Based on these results, H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d are not supported.

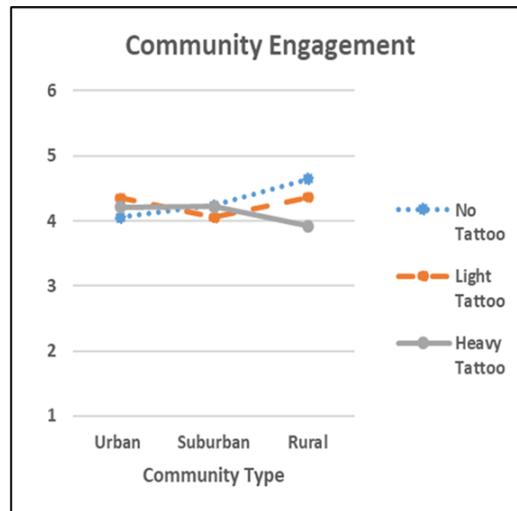


Figure 1. Interaction effect on community engagement

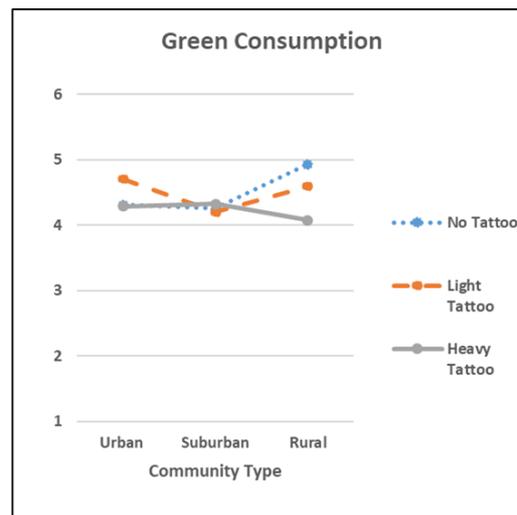


Figure 2. Interaction effect on green consumption

6. Discussion

As an unconventional form of consumerism, alternative hedonism (Soper, 2008) offers a middle-ground approach between materialism and pure sustainable consumption. As one of the first studies that has employed a quantitative approach to study alternative hedonism, this study represents additional insight to understanding modern consumers who increasingly find difficulty in balancing their desire for pleasurable consumption and adhering to ethical consumption behavior. In our investigation, we tested both main and interactive effects of tattoo coverage and community type on alternative hedonist practices (i.e., community engagement, green consumption, shopping small, and holistic wellness).

Main effect results confirm that tattoo coverage (none, light, heavy) influences the extent to which individuals participate in green consumption, shopping small, and holistic wellness.

Specifically, those with no or light tattoo coverage are more likely to engage in green consumption and shopping small than those with heavy tattoo coverage. Individuals with light tattoo coverage may be drawn to shopping small because small retailers typically offer unique styles suitable for self-expression, a predilection among tattooed individuals (Eason, 2007; Kosut 2006). This result supports the possibility that these individuals prefer to purchase environmentally-friendly products regardless of price and are oriented toward purchasing high quality products from small local businesses. To capitalize on this finding, local businesses should consider

selling green-related products and hold community charity events that foster this orientation toward green consumption (e.g., workshops on how to identify non-green cleaning products). Also, green businesses may consider distributing their products via small retailers to reach those with no or light tattoos who are interested in engaging in green consumption practices. By targeting these community members, it is likely that those with no tattoos or light tattoos will be attracted to these products sold in small businesses.

The three tattoo groups are most differentiated for holistic wellness; its scores are highest among individuals with light tattoo coverage, followed by those with no tattoos, and lowest among those with heavy tattoo coverage. Individuals practice holistic wellness by spending time with nature, performing physical activities, and experiencing deeper relationships with others and places (e.g., Ray & Anderson, 2000). Therefore, small businesses and local wellness facilities (e.g., yoga studios) may seek to attract a wider population that includes consumers with light tattoo coverage by using images of such individuals in advertisements and promotional campaigns. These findings support the idea that individuals with light tattoo coverage have shared beliefs that reflect abstinence from mainstream consumption (Portwood-Stacer, 2012).

Surprisingly, individuals with heavy tattoo coverage are associated with the lowest mean scores on all measures of alternative hedonism (community engagement, green consumption, shopping small, holistic wellness). It is possible that those with heavy tattoo coverage do not feel strong connections with their communities. To create cohesion with similar individuals, it is possible that members of marginalized subcultures (e.g., heavily tattooed individuals) may engage within their own subcultures, rather than within the mainstream communities to which they feel they do not belong (Littler, 2005; Portwood-Stacer, 2012). In this sense, even the most extreme members of the tattooed subculture might reject unconventional consumption options such as alternative hedonism (Littler, 2005; Portwood-Stacer, 2012).

Additionally, our results confirm that segmentation by community type (i.e., urban, suburban, rural) helps distinguish alternative hedonism practices, particularly shopping small. Rural community members may be more oriented toward shopping small because the values dominating rural communities tend to focus on rejecting conventional consumption and supporting local communities (Lee & Bartkowski, 2004; Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Rural values derive from generations of families living in the same area, which fosters strong community ties and support for small local businesses. In this sense, rural consumers tend to be active challengers of mainstream mass consumption and early adopters of alternative forms of consumption. To help promote small businesses in rural areas, businesses may consider renting a booth at local agricultural events such as farmers' markets. By doing so, small businesses are among their target consumers, and may direct future purchases to their brick-and-mortar store. Additionally, rural small businesses may consider offering discounts to local consumers based on zip codes to further attract their target audience.

Lastly, interaction effects of tattoo coverage and community type exist for community engagement and green consumption. In urban and suburban areas, engagement in these two practices of alternative hedonism does not differ drastically among individuals with no, light, and heavy tattoo coverage. However, in rural communities, levels of engagement in these two practices differ significantly among members of these three tattoo groups. In rural areas, those without tattoos show the highest tendencies in community engagement and green consumption, while those with heavy tattoo coverage show the lowest tendencies in these practices. That is, those with no tattoos are most likely to donate to charities, volunteer, actively form partnerships within their communities, and advocate the preservation of the environment, while those with heavy tattoo coverage are least likely to do so. This further supports the particular need for rural communities to make significant and directed efforts to include individuals that do not identify with the tattooed community in local events and activities, particularly those that encourage consumption of green-related products or services.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Some limitations of this study present opportunities for future studies on alternative hedonism. Given the lack of empirical research on alternative hedonism, we had to create measurement items based on an extensive literature review. While measures reflect main themes of alternative hedonism, we recommend that researchers continue to refine these measures and dimensions of alternative hedonism to enhance their validity and reliability. Further, our sample consists of respondents residing in the United States. As tattooing is a growing phenomenon globally, researchers can conduct cross-cultural studies to identify whether and where cultural differences or similarities exist in alternative hedonism.

Additionally, to identify community type, we asked respondents to indicate whether they resided in a rural, suburban, or urban location. In the future, researchers can use population size to verify respondents' community types. Lastly, we used "percentage of body tattooed" to determine the tattoo coverage (none, light, and heavy). In

the future, researchers can use respondents' perceptions of their tattoo coverage by asking: "How tattooed are you?" Because respondents' own perceptions may influence their values and behavior related to alternative hedonism, this subjective item may yield responses that differ from the percentages used in this study.

8. Conclusion

While there is growing concern about the environmental damage caused by non-sustainable and overconsumption practices, pure sustainable consumption practices are challenging for consumers to implement in their everyday lives. As consumers increasingly make tradeoffs in their consumption choices by consuming differently, the concept of alternative hedonism is becoming an important practice worthy of investigation. Since tattoo classification significantly influences three practices of alternative hedonism (i.e., green consumption, shopping small, and holistic wellness), it is a more important indicator of alternative hedonism than community type, which influences only one practice (i.e., shopping small). While all of the hypotheses are not supported in our study, the finding that individuals with a light measure of tattoos tend to display the highest level of alternative hedonistic practices seems to be promising for future research. This finding opens the door to further empirical investigation to provide a fresh perspective on sustainable consumption which thus far has been framed as an all-or-nothing set of practices. Ultimately, the findings of this study help to debunk the argument that alternative hedonism is only applicable to affluent and privileged individuals and meaningless to low-income consumers (Schneider & Miller, 2011).

References

- Alexander, S. (2011, March 2). *Alternative hedonism and the pleasures of simplicity*. The Simplicity Collective. Retrieved from <http://simplicitycollective.com/alternative-hedonism-and-the-pleasures-of-simplicity>
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, *14*(1), 20–39. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1989.4278999>
- Atik, D., & Yildirim, C. (2014). Motivations behind acquiring tattoos and feelings of regret: Highlights from an Eastern Mediterranean context. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *13*(3), 212–223.
- Barendregt, B., & Jaffe, R. (Eds.). (2014). *Green consumption: The global rise of eco-chic*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Bly, S., Gwozdz, W., & Reisch, L. A. (2015). Exit from the high street: an exploratory study of sustainable fashion consumption pioneers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *39*(2), 125–135. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12159>
- Burroughs, J. E., & Rindfleisch, A. (2002). Materialism and well-being: A conflicting values perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *29*(3), 348–370. <https://doi.org/10.1086/344429>
- Canniford, R. (2011). A typology of consumption communities. *Research in Consumer Behavior*, 57–75. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0885-2111\(2011\)0000013007](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0885-2111(2011)0000013007)
- Chowdhury, R. M. (2016). Religiosity and voluntary simplicity: The mediating role of spiritual well-being. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-016-3305-5>
- Cranfield, J., Henson, S., & Blandon, J. (2012). The effect of attitudinal and sociodemographic factors on the likelihood of buying locally produced food. *Agribusiness*, *28*(2), 205–221. <https://doi.org/10.1002/agr.21291>
- Cutter, S. C. (1981). Community concern for pollution: Social and environmental influences. *Environment and Behavior*, *13*(1), 105–124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916581131006>
- De Solier, I. (2013). Making the self in a material world: Food and moralities of consumption. *Cultural Studies Review*, *19*(1), 9. <https://doi.org/10.5130/csr.v19i1.3079>
- Eason, K. A. (2007). *Beyond the tattooed lady: Exploring women's experiences in the body modification industry*. Unpublished Dissertation. The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Greensboro, NC.
- Frankel, S. E., Childs, M. L., & Kim, Y.-K. (2018a). Tattoo convention: Seeking and escaping motivations of attendees. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *36*(2), 282–294. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1527275>
- Frankel, S. E., Childs, M. L., & Kim, Y.-K. (2018b). *Coloring the community through tattooed identities*. Poster presented at ITAA 2018, Cleveland, OH.
- Fredriksson, C. (2016). Fashion thinking practice: On crafting confessions and the creative consumer. *Fashion*

- Practice*, 8(1), 149–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17569370.2016.1147694>
- Fullagar, S. (2012). Gendered cultures of slow travel: Women's cycle touring as an alternative hedonism. In A. Editor & B. Editor (Eds.), *Slow tourism: Experiences and mobilities* (pp. 99–112). Bristol, UK: Channel View Publications. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845412821-010>
- Greene, S. (2004). Social identity theory and party identification. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85(1), 136–153. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0038-4941.2004.08501010.x>
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2009). *Multivariate data analysis*. New York: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Herbers, J. (1986). *The new heartland. America's flight beyond the suburbs and how it is changing our future*. New York: Times Books.
- Holt, D. B. (2012). Constructing sustainable consumption: From ethical values to the cultural transformation of unsustainable markets. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 644(1), 236–255. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716212453260>
- Jenkins, R., Molesworth, M., & Eccles, S. (2010). *Alternative hedonism, digital virtual consumption and structures of the imagination*. American Marketing Association 2010 Winter Educator's Conference Proceedings. New Orleans, 19–22 February.
- Kosut, M. (2006). An ironic fad: The commodification and consumption of tattoos. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 39(6), 1035–1048. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2006.00333.x>
- Lee, M. R., & Bartkowski, J. P. (2004). Love thy neighbor? Moral communities, civic engagement, and juvenile homicide in rural areas. *Social Forces*, 82(3), 1001–1035. <https://doi.org/10.1353/sof.2004.0044>
- Levett, R. (2003). *A better choice of choice: Quality of life, consumption and economic growth* (Vol. 58). Fabian Society.
- Littler, J. (2005). Beyond the boycott: Anti-consumerism, cultural change and the limits of reflexivity. *Cultural Studies*, 19(2), 227–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380500077771>
- Mac_1au. (2018, January 31). *Re: Shocked! Woman with 'vegan' face tattoo* [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://forum.ink-trails.com/index.php?/topic/27932-shocked-woman-with-vegan-face-tattoo/>
- Molteni, L., & Ordanini, A. (2003). Consumption patterns, digital technology and music downloading. *Long Range Planning*, 36(4), 389–406. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301\(03\)00073-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0024-6301(03)00073-6)
- Mun, J. M., Janigo, K. A., & Johnson, K. K. (2012). Tattoo and the self. *Clothing and Textiles Research Journal*, 30(2), 134–148. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X12449200>
- Muniz, A. M., & O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(3), 412–432. <https://doi.org/10.1086/319618>
- New Philosopher. (2015, January 23). *Alternative hedonism*. Retrieved from <http://www.newphilosopher.com/articles/alternative-hedonism/>
- Nikora, L. W., Rua, M., & Te Awekotuku, N. (2007). Renewal and resistance: Moko in contemporary New Zealand. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 17(6), 477–489. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.942>
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). *Psychometric theory* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Paul_1979. (2009, May 09). *Re: The Credit Crunch*. [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://forum.ink-trails.com/index.php?/topic/14056-the-credit-crunch/&tab=comments#comment-162165>
- Petronoti, M. (2012). Fascination with difference: A note on power relations and body culture in Greece. *Journal of Mediterranean Studies*, 21(1), 153–174.
- Polynczuk-Alenius, K. (2015). Creativity for sustainable development? *Cultural Science Journal*, 8(1), 55–71. <https://doi.org/10.5334/csci.73>
- Portwood-Stacer, L. (2012). Anti-consumption as tactical resistance: Anarchists, subculture, and activist strategy. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 12(1), 87–105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540512442029>
- Ray, P. H., & Anderson, S. R. (2000). *The cultural creatives*. New York: Harmony Books.
- Schneider, J., & Miller, G. (2011). The impact of “No Impact Man.” Alternative hedonism as environmental appeal. *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, 5(4), 467–484.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2011.611524>
- Sirens Motorcycle Club. (2014). *Sirens MC of NYC*. Retrieved from <http://sirensnyc.com/>
- Soper, K. (2007). Re-thinking the “Good Life”: The citizenship dimension of consumer disaffection with consumerism. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 7(2), 205–229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540507077681>
- Soper, K. (2008). Alternative hedonism, cultural theory and the role of aesthetic revisioning. *Cultural Studies*, 22(5), 567–587. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380802245829>
- Soper, K. (2012). Beyond the scarcities of affluence: An “alternative hedonist” approach. *Architectural Design*, 82(4), 100–101. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.1437>
- STAPAW. (2012). *Tattoos in the workplace statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.stapaw.com/tattoos-in-the-workplace-statistics>
- Sudbury-Riley, L., & Kohlbacher, F. (2016). Ethically minded consumer behavior: Scale review, development, and validation. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(8), 2697–2710. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.11.005>
- Thompson, C. J., & Coskuner-Balli, G. (2007). Countervailing market responses to corporate cooptation and the ideological recruitment of consumption communities. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(2), 135–152. <https://doi.org/10.1086/519143>
- Thompson, C. J., & Haytko, D. L. (1997). Speaking of fashion: Consumers’ uses of fashion discourses and the appropriation of countervailing cultural meanings. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(1), 15–42. <https://doi.org/10.1086/209491>
- Tiggemann, M., & Golder, F. (2006). Tattooing: An expression of uniqueness in the appearance domain. *Body Image*, 3(4), 309–315. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2006.09.002>
- Tiggemann, M., & Hopkins, L. A. (2011). Tattoos and piercings: bodily expressions of uniqueness? *Body Image*, 8(3), 245–250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2011.03.007>
- Tysonwest. (2017, October 30). *Alternative to green soap* [Web log comment]. Retrieved from <http://forum.ink-trails.com/index.php?/topic/27846-alternative-to-green-soap/&tab=comments#comment-297636>
- Venkatesh, V., Podoshen, J. S., Urbaniak, K., & Wallin, J. J. (2015). Eschewing community: Black metal. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 25(1), 66–81. <https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2197>
- Why I Started a Completely Vegan Tattoo Studio. (2015, February 11). Retrieved January 31, 2019, from <https://www.veganlifemag.com/fifth-dimension-vegan-tattoo/>
- Wilkinson, C., Waitt, G., & Gibbs, L. (2014). Understanding place as “home” and “away” through practices of bird-watching. *Australian Geographer*, 45(2), 205–220. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2014.899029>
- Winge, T. M. (2009). *Body style*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
- Zimmerman, H. (2017). Becoming ethical: Mediated pedagogies of global consumer citizenship. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 20(1), 43–60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540517729005>
- Zukin, S., & Maguire, J. S. (2004). Consumers and consumption. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30(1), 173–197. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.30.012703.110553>

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author, with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).