



Revista de Administração de Empresas

ISSN: 0034-7590

ISSN: 2178-938X

Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Escola de Administração de Empresas de S.Paulo

SANTOS, NATÁLIA CONTESINI DOS; PEREIRA, SEVERINO JOAQUIM NUNES
BARBA, CABELO E BIGODE: CONSUMO E MASCULINIDADES EM BARBEARIAS
Revista de Administração de Empresas, vol. 59, núm. 3, 2019, Maio-Junho, pp. 183-194
Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Escola de Administração de Empresas de S.Paulo

DOI: 10.1590/S0034-759020190304

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Submitted 02.27.2019. Approved 02.11.2019

Evaluated through a double-blind review system. Guest Scientific Editor: Andres Veloso

Translated version

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020190304>

BEARD, HAIR, AND MUSTACHE: CONSUMPTION AND MASCULINITIES IN BARBERSHOPS

Barba, cabelo e bigode: Consumo e masculinidades em barbearias

Barba, pelo y bigote: Consumo y masculinidades en barberías

ABSTRACT

Men have been questioning gender stereotypes that establish what they should or should not consume. One example is the increase in the offer of services for the audience at new barbershops. This study aims to analyze how masculinities are constructed, administrated, and negotiated in barbershops. Participant observations were conducted in barbershops as the method and 17 consumers and market agents were interviewed. The study's findings suggest that the symbolic meanings of what it is to be masculine emerge in a dialectic process among consumers, market agents, and barbershops. These symbolic meanings are used to actively build and negotiate their masculinities. This process takes place in three ways: i) differentiation from the female world; ii) a space for relaxation and wellbeing; and iii) a space for men to socialize. The study also presents the academic and managerial implications of the findings.

KEYWORDS | Consumption, barbershops, masculinities, identity, gender.

RESUMO

Os homens vêm questionando estereótipos de gênero que instituíam o que deveriam ou não consumir. Um exemplo disso é o crescimento do mercado de serviços para esse público, como as novas barbearias. Assim, o objetivo deste trabalho é analisar de que modo as identidades masculinas são construídas, administradas e negociadas em espaços de barbearias. Como métodos, foram realizadas observação participante em barbearias e 17 entrevistas com consumidores e prestadores de serviços. Os resultados sugerem que os significados simbólicos sobre o que é ser masculino emergem em um processo dialético entre os clientes, prestadores de serviços e os espaços das barbearias, sendo utilizados ativamente para a construção e negociação de suas masculinidades. Esse processo acontece de três formas: i) distinção do universo feminino; ii) espaço de relaxamento e bem-estar, e iii) espaço de sociabilidade entre homens. O estudo é concluído apresentando as implicações acadêmicas e gerenciais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | Consumo, barbearias, masculinidades, identidade, gênero.

RESUMEN

Los hombres están cuestionando los estereotipos de género que instituyeron lo que deberían o no consumir. Un ejemplo es el crecimiento del mercado de servicios para ese público, como las nuevas barberías. El objetivo de este estudio es analizar de qué modo las identidades masculinas se construyen, administran y negocian en espacios como las barberías. Como métodos, se realizaron observación participante en barberías y diecisiete entrevistas con consumidores y prestadores de servicios. Los resultados sugieren que los significados simbólicos sobre lo que es ser masculino emergen en un proceso dialéctico entre los clientes, los profesionales prestadores de servicios y los espacios de las barberías, utilizados activamente para la construcción y negociación de sus masculinidades. Ese proceso ocurre de tres formas: i) distinción del universo femenino; ii) espacio de relajación y bienestar, y iii) espacio de sociabilidad entre hombres. El estudio se concluye presentando las implicaciones académicas y gerenciales.

PALABRAS CLAVE | Consumo, barberías, masculinidades, identidad, género.

NATÁLIA CONTESINI DOS SANTOS¹

netycontesini@hotmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0003-2616-0777

SEVERINO JOAQUIM NUNES PEREIRA²

bill.pereira4@gmail.com

ORCID: 0000-0001-8830-6423

¹Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Escola de Negócios, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

²Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Departamento de Administração e Turismo, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

INTRODUCTION

Among several influences in the constitution of masculinities, the increasing participation and diversification of men in the consumption area have been some of the most significant. According to Ourahmoune (2016), men are currently consuming products and services that, until only a few years ago, would have been denied them because they were deemed feminine, such as cosmetics, lingerie, and accessories items.

According to a survey conducted by the Brazilian Association of the Industry of Personal Care, Toiletries and Cosmetics (ABIHPEC, 2016), Brazilians have increasingly questioned social and gender stereotypes that establish what they should consume because they are “male.” In the Brazilian market of personal care and beauty that is oriented toward male consumers, products and services associated with the personal care of beards and hair have stood out due to an increase in their consumption over the last few years (ABIHPEC, 2016; Datamonitor Consumer, 2015).

In Brazil, one main retail channel that stimulates the consumption of beauty products and services among men are the new barbershops, a type of barbershop that combines the retro look of old barbershops with modern treatments and additional services, such as offers of alcoholic drinks and entertainment (ABIHPEC, 2017). From 2008 to 2014, there was a 100% increase in the number of barbershops in the Brazilian consumer market, and this number is expected to continue growing in 2019 (ABIHPEC, 2016).

Given that they are environments where only men go, we can consider barbershops as spaces in which masculinities are projected and negotiated. In Brazil, similar to other Latin American societies, we observe a preestablished order of masculinity, but understanding such an order is no easy task (Gutmann, 2003). This is mainly because gender is mistakenly taken as something that is given to an individual, intimately tied to and determined by his or her biological characteristics (Connell, 2006).

Therefore, social rules regarding what it is to be a man or how a man should behave, once firmly entrenched in society, are responsible for consolidating certain patterns of conduct deemed masculine, thus establishing a hegemonic model of gender. In the Brazilian context, the hegemonic masculinity model consistently required that men exercise vigilance over their emotions, gestures, and the body itself. Moreover, in this society, “to be a man” not only means having a man’s body, but also signifies showing oneself as “masculine” and “male” at all times (DaMatta, 2010).

The relationship between consumption and masculinity has been the object of some studies related to marketing, particularly those based on Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), which is more focused on cultural influence in consumption processes, such as that by Holt and Thompson (2004) on North-American masculinity types and ideologies; Moisio and Berusdashvili (2016) on consumption of masculine spaces in the North-American domestic area; Fontes, Borelli and Casotti (2012) on the male consumption of beauty products and services in Brazil; and Pereira and Ayrosa (2012) on the construction and expression of masculinity among gay male consumers in Rio de Janeiro.

However, few studies have examined the influence of public spaces of consumption considered masculine in the construction, expression, and administration of consumers’ gender identities. Thus, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining a consumption environment in which men traditionally participate and the identity tensions and negotiations that take place there. Further, there are also gaps in the literature related to the re-signification and symbolic appropriation of public consumption spaces based on the configuration and re-configuration of the meaning and signification for apparently dual relations, such as masculine and feminine or public and private.

This article analyzes how masculine gender identities are constructed, administered, and negotiated at barbershops. To this end, this paper comprises four parts. First, the theoretical bases supporting the study are presented. Second, the methodology used to carry out this research is discussed. Third, the analysis and interpretation of the findings are discussed. Finally, the conclusions of the study are presented jointly with their managerial implications and suggestions for future researches.

THEORETICAL BASE

This section has been organized into three parts: the first presents the concept of identity and its construction and expression based on consumption; the second references the relation between consumption and gender identity, specifically the masculine identity, and, finally, reflections on masculine spaces of and materiality in consumption are presented.

Consumption and identity

Identity is understood as “a set of criteria defining an individual and an inner sentiment composed of different sensations, such as

sense of unity, coherence, belonging, value, autonomy and trust” (Medeiros, 2008, p. 34). Once it is elaborated in social contexts, the sense of defining oneself expresses representations, guides choices, and determines the social status of a given individual. The importance of the social context in identity construction is also seen in the creation of interrelated differences and oppositions to the symbolic other because the definition of oneself also involves the definition of the other (Medeiros, 2008). Thus, the concept of identity assumes the function of identification, belonging, and differentiation in a constant process of exchange and negotiation between oneself and the other.

Gender identity is one among several that an individual may possess and is the way in which he or she identifies or self-determines him or herself as masculine or feminine, both, none, or a combination of those (UN Children’s Fund, 2014). It is worth realizing that gender identity may or may not agree with the sexual identity of individuals, i.e., with their biological characteristics. Similarly, it may or may not agree with the gender representations established by social norms. In their identity project, individuals evolve from a socially-attributed identity to one that is constructed, and are no longer passive recipients of identities imposed upon them, but are instead the creators of their own identities (Medeiros, 2008).

In this sense, it is important to observe that individuals and groups may identify and differentiate themselves through their possessions and consumption patterns. According to Belk (1998), the identity construction of individuals through consumption is similar to the narratives with which they identify themselves as individuals, members of groups, and as part of a society. That which people consume helps to construct their identity, classifying and enabling them to interact in certain social groups. Some studies reveal this effect of consumption/identity relations, such as that of Kozinets (2001), who investigated how fans of the “Star Trek” series construct their own identity to differentiate themselves socially by stressing their interests and values based on the consumption of texts, images and objects of that series. Similarly, Scaraboto and Fisher (2013) studied how North-American plus-size female consumers and bloggers who are marginalized by the market construct a collective identity and call themselves “fashionists” in order to demand more options of “plus-size” fashionable clothing from the dominant market supply.

In other words, the consumer culture acts as source of mythical and symbolic resources which consumers use to construct their identity narratives (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). That is, individuals use the symbolic and cultural aspects of what they consume to support their intentions regarding the

expression and representation of “self” (Slater, 2002). Choosing to consume certain symbolic and cultural elements among the many that circulate prominently in a society in consonance with one’s personal narratives help a given consumer to construct and express his or her identity. In this sense, authors such as Holt and Thompson (2004) and Pereira and Ayrosa (2012) advocate that consumption highlights the preferences and priorities of certain elements and values over others, which, within a cultural context, help design and communicate masculine gender identities.

Consumption and masculinity

As a gender identity, “masculinity is the way men behave; it is the way men think and feel about themselves” (Murray, 1993, p. 65). These sociocultural constructions occur according to non-feminine symbols (Alsop, Fitzsimmons, & Lennon, 2002); as such, they are contextual, multiple, and hierarchical.

Connell (2006) emphasizes that social rules about what is to be a man or how a man should behave, once firmly entrenched in society, are responsible for consolidating a certain pattern of masculine conduct. Thus, in all societies, there is a conception of ideal or hegemonic masculinity, i.e., a model that is used as a reference for what it is to be masculine, which dictates the “most honorable way of being a man,” and thus establishes the masculine condition as dominant and superior to others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2013, p. 245).

Within the Brazilian context, DaMatta (2010) advocates that society sets and demands that those born as men should behave as such, with manliness, consistence, poise, and a certain hardness, systematically advocating certain gestures, habits, tastes, and attitudes. Additionally, that which those individuals consume determines the absence or deficiency of their masculinity when, for instance, it deviates from “which should be the shirt, trousers, socks, tie, watch or shown of a man” [italics are the author’s] (DaMatta, 2010, p. 141). This hegemonic model ensures that representations of masculinity are contained within particular types of conduct. However, most men and boys do not abide by those ideas (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2013).

In industrialized society, which has collaborated on the loss of jobs, female competition, and crises in the world economy, men have experienced their masculinity in different ways (Connell, 2006). Whereas, given the varied forms of experiences lived by men and women and the new social intersections characterized by variable ethnicities, social classes, national identities,

subjectivities, genders, and sexualities, there is no room to discuss masculinity in its singular form, and discussion must instead center on masculinities in the plural. Thus, different presuppositions regarding the representation of the masculine identity are possible and, generally speaking, will always be “more than a configuration for any order of gender in a society” (Connell, 2006, p. 188); thus, no one version of masculinity is absolute or true.

For the last several decades, one of the most significant influences over masculinities has been the increasing participation of men in consumption and the diversification of what they consume (Ourahmoune, 2016). Although men have historically been little studied as consumers (Östberg, 2012), researches today seek to demonstrate the process of construction, expression, and reinforcement of masculinities through consumption. For instance, in the Brazilian context, Fontes et al. (2012) found that men use elements that are culturally associated with the feminine world to set thresholds and references that determine which beauty practices and types of vanity they are allowed. By studying gay men in Rio de Janeiro, Pereira and Ayrosa (2012) concluded that the men use the symbolic meanings of consumption to differentiate themselves from hetero-normative patterns, thus helping to communicate or signal their gender identity to their peers, hide their homosexuality, or even confront stereotypes of abnormality and the stigma associated with that identity.

In the North-American context, Holt and Thompson (2004) discuss the ways the consumption of North-American men constructs three different models of masculinity: the family man, the rebel, and the hero. They explain that because the family man's masculinity emphasizes the respectability and organized realization of civic virtues, it is determined by his consumption, which prioritizes family and collective values. Conversely, an individual who does not limit his consumption under social pressure emphasizes rebellion and prioritizes self-affirmation, thereby emerging as the owner of a rebel masculinity. The third masculinity, the hero, is an idealized model of masculinity which resolves the weaknesses that are inherent to the two previous models (Holt & Thompson, 2004).

In this area, spaces traditionally considered masculine have been studied in both domestic and public environments. One example is an article from Moisio and Beruchashvili (2016), which demonstrates how consumption in mancaves, the masculine spaces in domestic environments, such as basements, workshops, garages, and barbecue grills, serve as refuges for North-American men, helping them revitalize and strengthen their identities related to work, family, and other men. Östberg (2012) reinforces those findings by highlighting

the involvement of North-American men in domestic DIY activities or in restructuring mancaves in an attempt to express a perfect project of masculinity that enables taking control of the feminine space and simultaneously producing objects and spaces for themselves instead of simply consuming that offered by the consumer society. Finally, Jardim (1992) adds to that discussion by examining men's appropriation of public spaces that are socially attributed to the male gender, such as bars and barbershops, to construct their private territories of masculinity.

Masculine consumption spaces

Fukelman and Lima (2012) explain that barbershops have characteristically been spaces attended by men because they offer services involving, specifically and exclusively, hair cutting and beard trimming. Thus, we can say that the barbershops have always reinforced notions of masculine social spaces, given that they are places in which men meet and interact. In other words, analyzing the consumption in barbershops involves not only the exclusive observation of the services rendered, but also an analysis of the set of relationships and interactions among subjects-subjects and subjects-objects occurring therein.

Woodward (2011) says that in the subject-object interaction, some logic governs the transfers of symbols, meanings, values, imagination, emotions, and desires. Conversely, people project particular meanings, fantasies, and desires onto objects and alternatively, the objects are taken, used, elaborated, touched, and eventually worn out by the users. To explain this active exchange of meanings in consumption, Miller (2013) proposes the concept of objectivation to describe the dialectic process through which consumers and objects are co-constitutive as a result of their interaction, such that the barriers between subjects and objects progress beyond the point of diffusing to become inexistent. In the end, the results of the subject-object interaction, if aligned and consistent with an individual's personal narratives, are materialized and incorporated into the projects of a consumer's identity, and the cultural forms are substantialized and materialized by those objects (Ferreira & Scaraboto, 2016).

The space of interaction between subject-object emerges as a “temporary space of cultural possibility and fantasies” through which consumers can make sense of and tie emotions to the goods and consumption practices (Woodward, 2011, p. 375). Following this line of thought, the space of a barbershop can be one of fantasy in which masculinities are projected and negotiated.

METHODOLOGY

To understand the social interaction among individuals in consumption environments analyzed herein, the ethnography method was chosen because it is characteristically both descriptive and interpretative. It is descriptive, in that it describes the phenomena to be analyzed in detail, and it is interpretative because it seeks to understand the process whereby meaning is constructed by a given group. As stated by [Hopkinson and Hogg \(2006\)](#): “an interpretivist is dedicated to understanding the reality under the perspective of the subjects studied within a specific context, and to exploring the meaning with which they construct the world where they live” (p. 157). Thus, data were collected through non-participatory observation for nine months at barbershops in the cities of Rio de Janeiro and Volta Redonda, in addition to in-depth interviews ([McCracken, 1988](#)) with consumers, barbers, and barbershop owners.

Six barbershops were chosen in different districts in these two cities, which met the concept of “barbershops,” i.e., those which combined the retro aesthetic of old barbershops with the offers of services, in addition to hair cutting and beard trimming, and with options of entertainment for male consumers ([ABIHPEC, 2017](#)). During the observations in the field, the accompaniment and acquaintance established between one of the researchers and male consumers in those spaces were recorded in field notes, pictures, and formal and informal interviews. The barbershops’ material culture and interactions with consumers, barbers, and elements present in those spaces were also recorded.

Additionally, 12 consumers from those establishments, three barbers, and two barbershop owners were interviewed. Exhibit 1 summarizes the consumers’ profiles. The profiles of barbers and entrepreneurs as market agents are summarized in Exhibit 2. Any information that may be used to identify the interviewees was substituted without modifying the contents or their meaning.

Exhibit 1. Profile of the consumers interviewed

Name	Age	Marital status	Race declared	Education
Otávio	28	Single	Caucasian	Graduate
Igor	31	Single	Caucasian	Master’s Degree
Valter	32	Single	Caucasian	Graduate
Chico	33	Divorced	Black	Post-Graduate
João	33	Single	Mixed	Graduate
Ricardo	36	Married	Caucasian	PhD
Diogo	37	Married	Caucasian	Graduate
Anderson	39	Married	Mixed	Post-Graduate
Iuri	39	Widower	Mixed	Master’s Degree
Pedro	41	Married	Caucasian	Graduate
Paulo	44	Married	Black	Master’s Degree
Roberto	45	Single	Caucasian	Post-Graduate

Exhibit 2. Profile of market agents interviewed

Name	Age	Marital status	Occupation
Augusto	28	Single	Barber
Garcia	31	Single	Barber
Léo	32	Married	Barber
Tiago	32	Single	Entrepreneur
Henrique	37	Married	Entrepreneur

The interviews lasted 70 minutes on average and were recorded and later fully transcribed without corrections for language or additional comments. The transcription and field notes were then subjected to the content analysis technique, a tool used to identify regularities conditioned by a certain social context (Bardin, 2011). The activity of systematically comparing the theoretical concepts and “corpus” of the analysis resulted in a codification referential using record units, which enabled the gathering of groups of elements with common characteristics. Those record units were then organized based on their similarities and separated into categories, which represent the meaning of the consumption barbershop spaces for interviewees.

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION

The data analyzed suggest that, for the research subjects, the symbolic and cultural meanings of what it is to be masculine emerge in a dialectic process among interviewees, market agents, and the active use of barbershop spaces to construct, administer, and negotiate their masculinities. Thus, this section has been split into two parts. The first presents the meanings that consumption in barbershops spaces possess for interviewees, while the second presents the dialectic process of construction, administration, and negotiation of their masculine identities.

Consumption at barbershop spaces

The analysis of the data resulting from the interviews and field notes highlighted that consumption in barbershops is associated with the following meanings: (i) differentiation from the feminine world; (ii) a space for relaxation and wellbeing, and (iii) a space for sociability among men. In the data analyzed, these meanings were not altogether different from each other and one could often be taken for the other; that is, they entwined and merged into each other.

Differentiation from the feminine world

The data analysis indicates that the interviewees go to a barbershop to seek and maintain a positive aesthetic, to care for their appearance, and to exercise their vanity. However, for these particular consumers, this exercise of vanity should take place privately, discretely, and carefully, because excessive vanity may reveal traces of femininity in men, which could pose a threat to their masculinity. It is worth stressing that, for both clients and barbers, or entrepreneurs in that field, the negotiation of the masculine emerges in the data analysis. That fact is illustrated in the lines spoken below by one of the barbers interviewed, who stated that male clients would not feel comfortable in unisex consumption environments, such as beauty salons.

Here a man is not interested in hair treatment. He [the client] wants to have beer, talk about football and have his hair cut. Sometimes he doesn't even want to know whether his haircut will be fine. He wants to drink his beer and leave the barbershop feeling fine. [...] I see many differences. I would feel that they were not feeling very well there [at a unisex salon]. Usually they seemed uneasy [...] They would not want to sit right at the entrance of the salon, where everybody would pass and see them there. They would always go to the back of the. [...] At a barbershop, on the other hand, they want to be right at the entrance, they want everyone to see them there, kind of a window, drinking beer, flipping through a magazine, watching football. (Augusto, barber, 28, single)

In the statement above, it is clear that while masculine vanity has to be hidden and disguised at unisex salons, it can be freely exposed at barbershops. In addition, the effort to distinguish an adequate environment for men is based on the dichotomous division between two worlds, as demonstrated by the interviewees through characteristics that are oppositional, different, and independent: the “no frills” approach that is typical of barbershops and generally deemed more masculine, and the “with frills” characteristic of unisex salons and, consequently, that which pertains to the feminine world. The definition of an environment “with no nail polish smell, no chat about soap operas” is stated in a beer coaster from one of the barbershops analyzed, and instead claims male themes and distances itself from feminizing practices or references. Similarly, colors and materials in these spaces, such as the magazines, the offer of beer,

and the predominant presence of men, are used by interviewees to establish the differences between the masculine and feminine genders, thus communicating who is allowed in barbershops:

I think that it's because everything is brown and black. This is something very masculine, no blue or green. The magazines available there. "Play-boy," car magazines, newspapers, news magazines too. Those things refer to men. The unpainted bricks on the wall is something raw, they remind us of men. You can see the electric tubes, which also refers to electricians, to bricklayers, which are male occupations. Similarly, the wood reminds us of cabinetmakers, also a male occupation. There are also artisanal beers, imported ones, the beer they serve for free when you go there to have some service done. (João, 33, single)

The above statement on this topic aligns with the findings of [Fontes et al. \(2012\)](#), in that the feminine consumption of beauty is used as a point of reference to define the threshold between what is "allowed or "forbidden" in masculine vanity. That transfer, which is duly re-signified, of the goods and rituals of the feminine culture into the masculine world, re-defines symbolic gender meanings and endorses a message based on masculine vanity and aesthetic personal care. It helps users feel less concern that their identities will become infected by traces of femininity. Thus, a barbershop environment is a place of contrasts, in which the differences between masculine and feminine are marked, as the lines below illustrate:

In addition to the fact that there are only men there (at the barbershop), this is also a stimulus to attract more man, not to attract women, the things are very simple. It's fully masculine. There, the environment is so masculine that women are even forbidden. You have beer and also magazines with naked women available together with the newspapers for the guys to stare at. No women can enter there, no way. (Roberto, 45, single)

The cultural meanings attributed to the services rendered and the objects analyzed at the barbershops help communicate the target of the services or who is allowed into this environment. Thus, these spaces of consumption are labeled "guys' places," with "no frills" and "no feminine" treatments, and represent

and support ([Arnould & Thompson, 2005](#)) the identity of the interviewees as male individuals.

Relaxation and wellbeing

The interviewees also describe barbershops in therapeutic terms as spaces where, in the midst of the chaos of urban life, they have a chance to relax, to "de-stress," and "switch off." For them, the contemporary man's search for relaxation should be natural and unpretentious, since the circumstance in which going to the barbershop raised issues of vanity, if excessive, would represent a threat to their masculinities.

It isn't so much for aesthetic reasons, because I could shave at home, I could have my hair cut at any beauty salon. I don't have frills about hair and stuff. It's because of the way we are treated. It's like I was going there to have a massage, like I went there for a moment of relaxation. I go there, have some beer, he sits me down on that comfortable, big black-leather chair. I lie down, almost fall asleep. That person shaves me. There is that leather smell in the air. You feel like you are entering a place in the past, see?! It's a super-relaxing moment and, at the same time, it is something masculine, virile, something more natural, more virile. (Valter, 32, single)

The hedonistic meaning of pleasure and wellbeing associated with consumption is justified by interviewees based on the material and sensorial aspects of the shop's decoration. Material elements, such as leather armchairs and wooden walls, as well as its sensorial aspects, such as indirect lighting and neutral colors, are used to objectify ([Miller, 2013](#)) the informality, unpretentiousness, and naturalness of those frequenting the barbershop.

As pointed out by Moisiu and Beruchashvili (2016), in a study on consumption in masculine spaces in a domestic environment, the space of barbershops enables a revitalizing process of masculinities in places deemed safe by interviewees. These meanings are associated with the notion of privacy that is materialized in those spaces, which helps provide relief, albeit temporarily, from the social pressures and obligations faced by those individuals as men. Correlatively, [Östberg \(2012, p. 129\)](#) advocates the idea that men need to have a haven where they can be "real" "complete men," especially now, when their role of

family providers seems to be increasingly threatened by women's access to the workplace.

There you're freer to talk about some subjects, to curse, to talk about women (laughs). You can be single for a while. (Pedro, 41, married)

[...] And sometimes you just feel like being alone, relaxing, thinking about life, talking bullshit, pornography, talking shit at will without your wife criticizing you, pouting next to you (Paulo, 44, married)

The hedonistic space created during the consumption of and in the spaces of the barbershops analyzed enables the temporary relaxation of the interviewees' masculinities. Like the figure of the hero man provided by Holt and Thompson (2004), the interviewees forge masculine identities based on an ideal of freedom and independence from meeting societal requirements. This illustrates how consumption enables experiencing fantasies, invoking desires, aesthetics, and an identity game, which frequently differ dramatically from consumers' daily realities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Space of sociability among men

The interviewees differentiate the barbershops' spaces due to an active relation among their functional characteristics (hair cutting and beard trimming), and their symbolic and cultural aspects. Consumption of and within barbershops' spaces helps interviewees construct and maintain relations with those considered desirable and on track in terms of their gender identity projects. Thus, interviewees' involvement and participation in a network of social relations with other men serve as strategies for constructing and reinforcing their masculinities.

The historical use of barbershops to render solely masculine services, the way those services are rendered, and the behaviors required in those places seem to enable interviewees to perceive and be perceived as masculine individuals. Statements such as, "I go there because it's male stuff, kind of "manly" really, it's just like me" (Luri, 39, widower), "and I'm already used to it, just men, that's my place, my moment" (Pedro, 41, married), are evidence that the construction of the interviewees' masculine identity is directly bound to interaction with other men and identification with those spaces (Belk, 1998). Thus, constructing the spaces as masculine places emerges in the analysis of the data due

to consumers' possession of those environments and their relations with the market agents, such as barbers and managers. Consumers' feeling of belonging in those spaces occurs not only in relation to the objects and elements available there, but also because of the type of experience and involvement with other consumers and service providers (Pereira & Ayrosa, 2012).

Precisely due to the subject of identification with those spaces, the consumers and other market agents presented therein seem to build a certain type of masculine fraternity. Interviewees often reference the barbershop they frequent with an abbreviated name or the barber's nickname, showing proximity, familiarity, or even intimacy with the space of consumption. Ties of friendship that extrapolate the limits of that environment and the masculine fraternal, as well as the familiar charge of those spaces, are equally perceivable in the speech of the barbers interviewed.

Sometimes we go out of the barbershop to have some beer, there is this closeness, friendship. [...] There [a unisex salon he had worked], no, it was different, I would do the job, silently, and that was it! (Léo, barber, 32, married)

I see many of my clients on the street and I see that their behavior is fully different then. When they come here it seems that they are entering their living room, they are among friends. We are no longer the client's professional and we become friends, part of the family. [...] and then there is this family environment inside here. It's much more than a salon [unisex]. Here we are family. (Augusto, barber, 28, single)

[...] many of our clients come here for the environment, how they are received, the conversation, because they identify themselves with us, they trust the professional. I think that's cool. Because it's like this: when they identify themselves with a professional, they won't have their hair cut by another professional. They can't trust. They'll wait for me, if I can't work with them that day, they'll come another day, they'll schedule it via WhatsApp (Garcia, barber, 31, married)

The data analysis suggests that barbers seek to demonstrate and establish the differences among the fraternal ties that occur at barbershops, thus solidifying the feeling of collectivity ("we" of the barbershop) and, concomitantly, to establish distance from

“the other” (“them,” at the unisex salon). This feeling of fraternity also highlights the stability and perpetuation of the relationship of trust between client and barber.

These practices of sociability occurring in the spaces of the barbershops are responsible for configuring and re-configuring meanings and significations through the relations and differences between masculine and feminine environments, home and street, private and public, us and them, and leisure and work.

The idea of recreating a space of sociability around a masculine theme emerged as the main inspiration of an entrepreneur interviewed about the creation of his barbershop space. In his view, the masculine theme attracts consumers who share points of view about the roles and relations of the masculine gender, thus helping to design their masculinities.

We surveyed how barbershops were in the past and found out that the main purpose of a barbershop was to be a meeting point. Men would meet at the barbershop to negotiate, to socialize. That ended as time went by, didn't it?! Our main inspiration was to re-create that environment: the environment where men with common interests would go to meet and interact. [...] We have here, for instance, many doctors, and it is very common they come on Wednesday, I don't know why, but they usually come on Wednesday, and they soon start talking a lot about medicine, a doctor who sits on a chair talks to another who is sitting on the next chair (laughs). But there is also a small group of lawyers, they root for Flamengo, of poker players [...] It's very nice to see how men make friends easily. (Tiago, entrepreneur, 32, single)

Thus, when we contemplate spaces of male sociability, barbershops evidence the sharing of one representation of common hegemonic masculinity (DaMatta, 2010). The line “here things men like are gathered: drinking, be with friends, chat, have their hair cut, shave” (Augusto, barber, 28, single) evidences the perception that barbershops make the tastes and preferences available for their consumers that a certain type of man “should” have, laying claim to ideas and beliefs, and gathering elements that can summarize and materialize a model of masculinity. Thus, from the interviewees' point of view, the construction and negotiation of gender identity are related to their interaction with other men, as well as their symbolic identification with the

barbershop space, which enables them to position themselves socially as men.

Construction, administration, and negotiation of masculine identities

Based on the material elements and social interactions, the analysis of the data highlighted that the interviewees choose spaces they consider representative of their social beliefs and attitudes about what it is to be masculine, thus creating a strong sense of identification and personification with the space and others who frequent it. The reports presented hereinafter suggest the contamination of interviewees' gender identities through their participation in the barbershop spaces: “If you go to a place where only men go, you end up by also turning yourself into a man” (Iuri, 39, widower), “A place where only men go ends up by looking like a man” (Diogo, 37, married). Therefore, a co-construction relation exists between the subject and the space he frequents (Miller, 2013). If, on one hand, the interviewees state that they feel more masculine when going to barbershops, on the other hand, those environments begin to have an increasingly masculine meaning because those who frequent them are men.

Thus, the cultural ideals about what it is “to be masculine” emerge in a dialectic process between the subjects and the elements of and within the spaces of the barbershops, which are actively used by the interviewees to construct, administer, and negotiate their masculinities. We suggest that those spaces, in the words of Arnould and Thompson (2005), “provide consumers with an expansive and heterogeneous palette with which they construct their individual and collective identities” (p. 871).

Those masculinities are strongly bound to and justified by social prescriptions, that is, society is an institution that defines what it is to be a “man” and, consequently, it elicits certain behaviors and stances from individuals. The narratives of socialization – stories and expectations around which individuals are socialized that mirror their social statuses (Shankar, Elliot, & Fitchett, 2009) – emerge in the data analysis as aspects that have been internalized by the interviewees; they influence their consumption and gender identity projects as follows: “To be masculine is to dress like a man, to walk like a man, to talk like a man, to have men's attitudes, to use man's things, to like what men like: women” (Pedro, 41, married).

The idea that masculinity is tied to sex evidences the process whereby social norms and practices related to the body are absorbed, thus establishing it as the main arena of incidence and expression of one's gender. In a study by Pereira and Ayrosa

(2012), the interviewees consider the body, and its consumption and use in addition to all outward symbols covering it, such as clothes and accessories, as essential in the construction of their masculinities. This social norm regarding the body creates a script that dictates how to act by setting specific behaviors that emerge in interviewees' speech and are labeled as specific to what it means to be "of man."

Although these men's masculinities emerge as an aspect of their persona that is already constituted by social norms, the consumption of objects, places, ideas, and experiences is broadly used to administer those masculinities in the contexts wherein those individuals have been inserted. Moreover, the interviewees evidence the construction and administration of their masculinities through denial, minimization, or statements regarding the inferiority of elements deemed feminine. These symbolic meanings associated with opposition to the feminine are difficult to negotiate, or are even non-negotiable: "A man has no 'frills.' He can even take care of his appearance, it is important, but without excess. When a guy takes too much care of his appearance, excessively, he becomes kind of effeminate" (Anderson, 39, married).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to understand how masculine identities are constructed, administered, and negotiated in barbershops. The analysis of the data highlights that in these spaces, men must share rules, meanings, beliefs, and stereotypes about how a man should be, behave, and consume, if they are willing to be seen and recognized as a masculine man. The material culture and social interactions occurring in these spaces represent that which is culturally considered masculine, thus resulting in the materialization of the tastes, interests, and desires of those who are or want to be seen as fully masculine individuals. Within the context of the analysis, this topic helps naturalize the ways one may experience masculinity, which renders it impossible for the interviewees to experience and construct a masculine gender identity.

Through consumption, subjects represent themselves and support their masculinities in the same way that they personalize ideas that align their gender identities with the hegemonic ideals of masculinity established in those spaces and society as a whole. Thus, an analysis of the data emphasizes that the masculinities characterizing the spaces of consumption are constructed, administered, and negotiated around three categories: (i) meeting socialization pressures and narratives about what it is "to be

a man"; (ii) a system of representations that strongly denies the feminine; and (iii) patterns of consumption of goods and experiences associated with the masculine or, as the interviewees might say, "men's" consumption.

This research illustrates the consumption within and of barbershop spaces as a process of the construction, negotiation, and administration of gender identity, mainly based on the appropriation and use of public spaces of consumption as if they were private. These public spaces (barbershops) are appropriated by consumers and barbers through configuring and re-configuring the meanings and significations governing the relations between masculine and feminine, home and street, private and public, us and them, and leisure and work.

Therefore, this article reinforces the idea of barbershops as spaces of circulation, socialization, and negotiation of individuals' masculinities. Consumers also see these spaces as therapeutic, as places in which they can meet their peers, and as mancaves. In this sense, this study's findings contribute to those found by Moio and Beruchashvili (2016), as they also propose the notion of mancaves as public spaces of consumption.

Thus, this study contributes to strengthening studies on gender and service consumption from the perspective of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), illustrating the influence of the symbolic and cultural dimensions in consumers' consumption and gender identity projects within the Brazilian context. Moreover, subjects cited by Pinto, Freitas, Resende, and Joaquim (2015) as emerging from a confrontation between the CCT and the field of services consumption are approached in this study as follows: how the processes of choice and behavior in the services are shaped by gender issues and how the system of belief and practices linked to social and institutional structures shapes the experiences of service consumption.

This research offers important managerial contributions by focusing on the behaviors of masculine consumption and the ways entrepreneurs and marketing professionals may efficiently use themes of masculine gender in spaces of consumption or in marketing communications. It also contributes by evidencing the influence of material culture in spaces of consumption on identity projects and the creation of feelings of belonging and self-expression in consumers. Moreover, it offers subsidies to more effectively use the subjects pertaining to sociability in consumption spaces, the symbolic transformation of public spaces into private ones, and understanding Brazilian consumers as individuals with multiple identities and cultural wealth. Finally, the need of those analyzed in this study to maintain gender thresholds through consumption suggests important implications for the market, such as the way products, services, and other

marketing strategies can help establish borders between genders – particularly when aspects of masculine consumption approximate what is socially established as feminine, as demonstrated in this study, and to minimize or even resolve possible gender identity tensions.

Based on the findings of this paper, we can suggest topics for future studies, such as exploring speech and gender representations in consumption spaces beyond barbershops, and selecting interviewees different from those interviewed in this research, mainly in terms of sexual orientation or transgender topics. In contrast to that suggested by this research, when facing idealized representations of masculinities, consumers may experience situations characterized by tension, including feelings of inadequacy and vulnerability. These scenarios are equally important for future studies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank the Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (FAPERJ) for granting a Master's degree to the first author.

RAE's NOTE

This article was presented at the VIII Encontro de Marketing promoted by the Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Administração (Brazil) in 2018.

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