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## **The Second Annual ACR Film Festival**

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## THE SECOND ANNUAL ACR FILM FESTIVAL

Russell Belk, University of Utah  
Robert Kozinets, Northwestern University

The 2003 ACR Film Festival accepted 13 films by a variety of producers ranging from first time academic filmmakers to film school trained professionals. The films presented considerable diversity in their approaches to subject matter, ranging from abstract impressionistic films to talking head documentaries to travelogues. We were also pleased that three of these films were from Europe, two were from Asia, and eight were from North America. Besides the diversity of affiliations and geography, the films addressed an interesting variety of topics as the abstracts below attest.

This year we forsook the popcorn and moved the Film Festival to a daytime format running all-day Friday and Saturday. The daytime format was successful and we were also pleased to hear a number of references to the films during the paper sessions of the Conference. Each initial showing was followed by 15 minutes of question and answer with the filmmakers. We were delighted to see many lively and stimulating discussions during these periods. A second showing of each film took place on Saturday without the filmmaker interaction. We were assisted in running these sessions by a number of the filmmakers from this year's and last year's Festival and we greatly appreciate their help and involvement.

Prizes this year were to have gone to Gold, Silver, and Bronze award-winners based on People's Choice ballots submitted by film audiences. However, we had a pair of two-way ties and therefore awarded two Gold and two Silver awards as follows.

Gold Award: Christina Monnier and Charles Gulas, "American Odyssey"

Gold Award: David Toumajian and Gülnur Tumbat, "Toward a Meaningful Identity: The (F)Utility of Lifestyle Research"

Silver Award: Anders Bengtsson, Jacob Östberg, and Dannie Kjeldgaard, "The Embodied Brand"

Silver Award: Alain DeCrop, Olivier Cabossart, and Christian Derbaix, "Colors and Scarves: Symbolic Consumption By Soccer Fans"

Congratulations to the winners.

The first two years of the ACR Film Festival have been a very rewarding experience for us as organizers and we are gratified to see a variety of approaches being used. As a relatively new medium, film has tremendous possibilities to enlighten, expose, analyze, entertain, stimulate, and critique more effectively than other types of conference presentations. We encourage experimentation with a variety of approaches and techniques for the next Film Festival and are also in the process of issuing a call for entries in a special DVD issue of the journal *Consumption, Markets & Culture*. Leading consumer behavior texts have also picked up some of the films from the Festivals as supplements. And the *Journal of Consumer Research* has begun to include some streaming video as well as color photos with some of the articles on its web site. Such signs all suggest the growing interest in the potential of visual media and the lessening cost and growing accessibility of visual production technology.

### EXTENDED ABSTRACTS OF FILMS

#### *American Odyssey*

*Christina G. Monnier, Mansfield, Ohio*  
*Charles S. Gulas, Wright State University*

*American Odyssey* is an examination of the unique brand community that revolves around the bullet-shaped, recreational trailers manufactured by Airstream, Inc. The film is the culmination of approximately eighteen months of research. The background research took place in five states. Visits were made to trailer parks, RV rallies, the Airstream factory, and the archives of the Wally Byam Caravan Club International (WBCCI).

The primary data collection took place in two segments. In the first segment, interviews were conducted at two Airstream parks in Florida. Over the course of eight days, fifteen hours of interviews and verite footage were videotaped. In the second segment, an additional twenty-five hours of videotape were shot over a period of seventeen days while accompanying twenty-six Airstream owners on a caravan from Ohio to a week-long rally in Massachusetts. The forty hours of raw footage were ultimately edited to the thirty-four minutes presented in the finished film.

#### **Brand Community**

*American Odyssey* is the story of consumers who have chosen Airstream as a lifestyle. This lifestyle extends beyond the individual relationship with the brand and includes a brand community, the importance of which may supercede the relationship with the brand.

As the film shows, the WBCCI is Middle America on wheels. It is a mobile community, with shared consciousness and rituals, based on a particular brand and to some extent, models within the brand. Although all models of Airstream are welcome in WBCCI, this fact is not without controversy.

"That new motor home that we pointed out, the Land Yacht, which is a fiberglass, square-sided motor home is probably one of the great sources of controversy within the Wally Byam Caravan Club. For many members that is a sacrilege. That's not a product that Wally developed and it therefore ought not to be in the Wally Byam Caravan Club." Doug Pederson

“It used to be that an Airstream was an Airstream trailer. But now we’ve got all kinds of square boxes and vans and motor homes and everything else they call Airstreams.” George James.

The begrudging acceptance of the “boxes” may be due in part to a survival mentality. Some WBCCI members voice concern that dying members are not being adequately replaced. Also, since the self contained motor home is relatively easy to operate, compared to a large trailer, some look at these vehicles a method of extending their years of caravanning, when they can no longer cope with a trailer.

### **Product as Life Saver**

For some, the Airstream represents a tool for staying vital. The product, and the brand community formed around it, is perceived as not only enhancing the lives of owners but also extending them.

“If you couldn’t tow an Airstream you’d probably move into town and deteriorate quicker.” Ted Covington.

“There’s people that have gone, lived, ten-fifteen years longer because of these vehicles.” George James.

### **Conclusion**

Airstream owners are committed to the brand, and more importantly, to the brand community it represents. *American Odyssey* adds to the growing understanding of these brand communities as an important aspect of consumer behavior.

#### ***Colors and Scarves: Symbolic Consumption by Soccer Fans***

*Alain Decrop, University of Namur (FUNDP), Belgium*

*Olivier Cabossart, Catholic University of Mons (FUCAM), Belgium*

*Christian Derbaix, University of Mons (FUCAM), Belgium*

Football (soccer) is the most popular sport in the world. In European countries, professional football is a big business, with clubs generating large turnovers and substantial profits. Merchandising today represents a substantial part of those incomes. In this paper, we investigate the reasons why merchandising is becoming so successful: why supporters are increasingly buying and consuming shirts, scarves or hats of their preferred colors. The focus is on football fans, i.e. supporters who are highly involved in their team, who support it intensively by attending most of its matches.

The general interest in sport consumption is recent in consumer research. More than any other, Holt’s (1995) study on the consumption behavior of baseball supporters is the seminal work in this field. Based on an interpretive in-depth investigation of baseball supporters of Chicago, he developed a typology of four streams of consumption: consumption as experience, consumption as integration, consumption as classification and consumption as play. Other papers have been written on more specific aspects of sport behavior (Branscombe & Wann, 1992; Wann & Schrader, 2000). However, the thrust of this literature has focused on a sociological interpretation of sport consumption (e.g. Guttman, 1978; King, 1997).

This video results from an effort to consider all possible sources in understanding the consumption of material possessions by soccer fans in a naturalistic interpretive perspective. We immersed ourselves in the football fan subculture in order to gain a better insight into the reasons and motives why people buy and consume football-related tangibles within and outside stadiums on game days and on other occasions. How and why fans come to buy those items? Where, when and how do they consume them? What are the motives for such a consumption? What are the values conferred to those items? This broad and deep understanding of the consumption of the material possessions by football fans extends our 2001 ACR paper (Derbaix, Decrop & Cabossart, 2001).

In the last four years, we interviewed more than 30 fans of the most popular Belgian, French and Spanish teams. In addition, we observed them on some game days and during other football-related activities such as bus journeys to the stadium, meetings, dinners or visits to their fan club. To know more about the context of fan behavior within and outside football stadiums, we attended about 50 matches of the Belgian, French and Spanish national competitions. Finally, we interviewed experts and fan shop managers and we collected secondary documents such as brochures, press articles, and web sites. All these data were analyzed through inductive thematic analysis in order to bring order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. The use of different settings, methods, data sources, and researchers in a triangulation process contributes to the trustworthiness of the findings presented in this videography.

Clips show that action and possession are strongly connected as far as football consumption is concerned. Football fans conspicuously show a lot of support to their teams by such overt behavior as singing, shouting and cheering but also through a lot of material merchandise: scarves, hats, shirts... These two elements are present in informants’ definition of the “good” football fan, which is characterized both by his/her material possessions, in which colors play a major role, and his/her actions: s/he is faithful and supports his/her team even in bad circumstances.

The consumption of football entails a lot of symbolism, which is often connected with colors and to the football-related items that are paraded by the fans. The good supporter’s paraphernalia involves an identification, integration, socialization, expression and sacralization process. To summarize the major emerging findings of this study in one sentence, we could say that football fans express their identification with one team as an integrated community during sacred sport moments. This is not far from Belk et al.’s (1991) pioneering work on sacred consumption: “Sports fanaticism can be seen to promote community identification and spirit, but also to separate family members with differing tastes. Just as sports fans see themselves as a unified community during sacred sports moments, so do gift exchangers, heirloom-passing generations, and collectors” (p.92). Moreover, propositions of this videography are in line with Guttman’s (1978) ideas of players as heroes, stadiums as temples and artifacts as sacred relics.

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### *Coyote Came: Spirituality and the American Desert*

*Xin Zhao, University of Utah*

*Janeen Arnold Costa, University of Utah*

If the desert is holy, it is because it is a forgotten place that allows us to remember the sacred. Perhaps that is why every pilgrimage to the desert is a pilgrimage to the self. There is no place to hide, and so we are found.

Williams 1992

Throughout the American Southwest, consumers seek sacred experiences in the desert. A journey to the self, escape from the city, their jobs and everyday lives—these consumers cultivate a sense of place in the vast arid surroundings. Emotional bonding, rituals and invocations, the making and use of sacred objects, and the development of camaraderie or *communitas* all characterize their endeavors. This video explores the ways in which certain consumers approach and experience the desert of the American Southwest—a place they understand to be sacred.

The literature that informs our analysis is vast and multi-disciplinary, ranging from Durkheim's (1912/1965) sociological characterizations of the sacred and profane, to anthropology and cultural geography, where scholars have sought to understand the sense of place. Tuan's (1976) concept of geo-piety, and [van] Gennep's (1960) and Turner's (1969) explorations of rites of passage, *communitas*, and liminality or the liminoid, are all relevant. Finally, we are informed by Durkheim's (1897/1951) delineation of "anomie," by issues of identity as elaborated by such theorists as Giddens (1992), and especially by Foucault's (1976) concept of discourse. In our analysis, Western societal discourses of urban discontent, of the sacred and its various dimensions, and of the individual seeking escape, identity and empowerment, are all significant.

A century ago, Durkheim (1897/1951) first coined the term "anomie" to refer to feelings of marginalization and meaninglessness; today, *anomie* more broadly conveys a sense of alienation, conflict, disruption, and social absurdity. The feelings and motivations of the consumers we interviewed, read about and observed suggest they often feel a sense of *anomie* in the urban secular context. They seek and/or have found the meaningful opposite of these feelings in their sacred consumption experiences in the desert. Thus, displacement and powerlessness, along with a very real awareness of social constraints, hierarchy, and constricting obligations, precipitate this pursuit of the sacred.

The discourse of negative secularity is therefore opposed and complemented by the discourse of the sacred, within which our consumers encounter feelings of power, positive meaning, and spirituality. In this way, a third relevant societal discourse—that of Western individuality and freedom—comes to bear. It is through their own initiative, referred to in this context as "choosing a path," that the consumers in this study bring together and resolve the dialectically opposed discourses of the secular and the sacred. Through shared ceremonies and behaviors, our informants find others who are in search of the same spiritual feelings and experiences. and they develop a sense of communion with other participants, with nature, and with the spirits of the Earth and of objects and living things around them.

Native American spirituality is a very significant part of the sacred Other that our consumers construct and experience. Information, ritual, and the use of sacred objects are drawn from Native American peoples of the Southwest, such as the Navajo, Hopi, Zuni, and Acoma. But the beliefs and sacred ways of the Lakota Sioux, Cherokee, Cheyenne and other Native American Indian groups are also brought into play. The consumers purchase and use Hopi Kachinas, Zuni Fetishes, Navajo blankets and baskets, Acoma pottery, and Native American beads, crystals, dream-catchers and rattles. They buy books that describe and analyze Native American spiritual beliefs in great detail. In sweat lodges or *kivas*, they undergo rituals of purification using smoking sage and heat. Sometimes, it is Native Americans themselves who serve as role models, explaining how they and others have found spiritual fulfillment by bonding with their ancestral lands and contacting spirits through dreams and visions.

However, an individual is also free to choose from, and combine, other spiritual traditions, and guidance is provided by philosophies from Buddhism and Hinduism, to Christianity, from the vanished civilizations of the Toltec, Maya, and Aztecs, to Eastern practices of yoga and Ayurveda, and from European-based wizardry and witchcraft, to eclectic combinations involving astrology, shapeshifting, soul retrieval, and shamanism.

Clearly, the experiences of those who seek the sacred, and find it in the desert, are profound. Confronted with powerlessness, confusion, illness, or a sense of *anomie*, sacralization of the desert seems to provide many of these consumers with power, a sense of purpose and direction, and meaning in their lives. We believe that the emotional bonds they form with other participants, and with the desert itself, allow for escape from daily responsibilities and marginalization. In the course of their desert rituals and experiences, they enter a

liminal or liminoid phase, which serves to rejuvenate and empower them in preparation for return to their jobs and home life. Through on-going consumption of sacred objects, books about spiritual beliefs, seminars or lectures, and regular re-engagement with the desert itself and with co-participants, these consumers may even transform their daily lives into journeys of continual renewal and self-awareness.

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### ***Empowerment and Exploitation: Gendered Production and Consumption in Rural Greece***

*Janeen Arnold Costa, University of Utah*

Globalization alters socio-cultural patterns in many developing societies; men and women work in new ways, sometimes to fulfill changing consumption desires. Women in developing societies who bring money or valued purchases into the home may also experience improved status. This may be particularly true in a globalizing economy, where increased income enables the family to purchase new consumer goods. However, as suggested in this video, women in developing societies often find themselves still fulfilling traditional roles in both production and consumption.

Tourism is the most important economic development engine in Greece, driving both production and consumption. For the town of Sami on the island of Cephalonia, whose people and way of life are the primary subject of this video, tourism was just beginning to develop in the late 1970s. Most economic and social life in Sami followed “traditional” patterns. Men who remained on the island mainly worked in the fields, and fished or hunted; some worked in or owned one of the few stores, restaurants, coffeeshops, or other businesses. People consumed their own olive oil and sold any excess to others. Many men left to earn money abroad or in Greek cities. Considered to be an island of seafarers, Cephalonia produced sailors and ship captains, many of whom were gone for months or years at a time. Those who remained behind sometimes took on multiple job, as day laborers in construction, on local ferry boats, as waiters in restaurants, or in the fields of those who owned larger tracts of land.

Women labored at home, cooking, cleaning and caring for children. In a few cases, families would make a room or two available for rent to summer tourists, and women cared for these visitors as well, cleaned their rooms, laundered towels and sheets, and provided directions and information. Rarely, poor Cephalonian women worked alongside their husbands or female in the fields, a family-owned store or office. The presence of others was a safeguard against suggestions of impropriety, since women were seen as a source of danger to the family’s reputation. At all times, a woman was expected to act with humility and piety, not looking at or returning the gaze of men, dressing modestly.

Thus, the villages of Cephalonia in the late 1970s largely conformed to a world of gendered divisions, including property, production and consumption. Agricultural land, pasture animals and associated tools and machines, the coffeeshop, the church sanctuary and courtyard, and the public square were male spaces and objects. The home and its surrounding courtyard, household goods and the tools and implements for maintaining it were female.

In the nearly 25 years since this research began, Sami and Cephalonia have undergone remarkable change. Flights originating in other European countries now fly non-stop to Cephalonia, and the island is popular with Athenians. Sami’s quiet waterfront is now crowded with restaurants and shops. Tourists, visitors and residents lounge by the waterside, dine at restaurants, and frequent bars or discotheques. New stores have opened. Beautiful homes line the streets where sheds and run-down homes once stood. The beach, originally rocks and a dirt road, now sports pavement, trees, benches and white sand brought in by local businesses. New seaside hotels are equipped with swimming pools, tennis courts, bars, restaurants and gift shops.

New businesses employ both men and women in increasing numbers. Tourists serve as culture change agents by demanding consumer goods/services, and their possessions and apparent wealth often spur Cephalonians to open shops, bars and restaurants, to rent out apartments and rooms, and to find other tourist-related employment. The false separation of production and consumption is abandoned here. Tourists’ consumption spurs production, producers consume goods as they engage in production, and some local production supports expanded consumption.

At a deeper level, however, traditional gendered production and consumption responsibilities remain unchanged, with the notable exception that women are often called upon to work outside the home, in addition to continuing tasks within the home. Moreover, the jobs women undertake are in many ways an extension of their domestic roles. Working mostly in hotels, women serve breakfast and clean tables, change beds, wash bathrooms and gather laundry, sweep sidewalks and the terrazzo floors of halls and rented rooms.

The man is usually the proprietor of a family business, while women are absent or sit nearby. Other times, family businesses are owned and/or operated by both men and women. All over the island, where men used to work the cash register in tourist shops or the hotel desks, women are increasingly found in these positions. Yet, unless she is an immediate family member, a woman will not be given full control over cash or accounting.

In bars and discotheques, some young women dress in a new way, in tight skirts or pants and revealing tops—modesty, even disguise of a woman’s sexuality under layers of clothing, no longer prevail. Yet it appears that the apparent changes that might be reflected in such attire are again superficial. Island women are still reserved in their interactions with men, especially when no male relatives are present to guarantee their safety and honor. Men still see women as inherently sexual, and see themselves as unable to resist sexual temptation.

In the public, males and females maintain discreet spaces, grouping together with others of the same sex. Young women walk together; mothers, aunts and grandmothers sit and watch children play. As boys mature, they move from play to undisguised gazing at women. Yet they, too, cluster together, not approaching or interacting with young women.

Thus, working more and more outside the home, Greek women may feel empowered, bringing in critical income for their family's ever-increasing desires. Yet, Greek women have only expanded their roles as wives, mothers and, in some cases, as highly sexual beings for men to desire and to guard against. The Greek man, in turn, performs and protects, occupying the public space with male prowess and guarding the family's honor.

***Flea Markets: A Journalist's Perspective, Scratching an Intellectual Itch***

*Orpheus Allison, Asheville, North Carolina*

*Bob Mahosky, Asheville, North Carolina*

*Ken Corn, Asheville, North Carolina*

Flea markets have been features of the landscape for many different societies. They function as clothing stores, furniture stores, pharmacies, and general stores for a variety of social groups. They function as clubs, meeting halls, and entertainment centers, making them rich sources for economic analysis, social analysis and integration, education, and journalistic endeavors. Flea markets function as barometers of the social fabric: Showing signs of prosperity, trends, and tribulations. The low initial investment, for the seller and the wide variety of participants make these locations appealing for the new immigrant or the resident citizen as they realize their dreams.

Originally discussed at a reporter's roundtable in 1990 when the author was a participant in a journalism workshop on economics reporting, a precursor project called "Flea Markets: The Art of The Deal", was filmed and aired on WLOS Television, Asheville, North Carolina, in April 2001. The project reflected the popular interest in flea markets: Low costs, unique items, and a fun activity for everyone. It proved to be popular with the viewers and staff. Further exploration of the idea was shelved as the author assumed other responsibilities. In 2002 the author decided to refocus his work on his Master's degree program by exploring the larger issues raised in the preliminary program.

The concept was very simple. Create a program of short vignettes capable of standing in whole or in part, which could be used in a variety of media formats and structures as a commercial vehicle. Examples of this realization would be as short feature clips for use in television news and magazine shows, as a complete program supported by sponsors, or as individual commercials for sponsors of varied programming. It was to be first an entertainment and then an exploration of some of the larger issues of society present in front of the lens. Integrating the fields of entertainment and education within a structural framework that could generate new interest from first-time and long-time viewers became the goal.

The author chose to examine two flea markets in close proximity to his home in an attempt to discover inherent natures, dreams and ideas unfolding within the confines of concrete, dirt, and humanity.

Research for the project led the producer to the discovery of the unique and groundbreaking research done by the Consumer Behavior Odyssey in 1986. This project sought to document actual flea markets, their participants and their relationship to consumer behavior using videotape as one part of the data gathering. The follow up papers, poems, essays, and reflections are powerful indicators as to the caliber and quality of information available to the researcher. Drawing from experience gained as a working journalist this author sought and received approval to develop this idea into a final project for his degree.

This project draws on the experience the author gained working as a photojournalist in a variety of broadcast markets. Battling a broken ankle, Diabetes, vagaries of employment and minimal funds, the author was able to complete the project with a budget of less than \$1,000 dollars. In the process he learned much about capabilities available for minimal costs: Colleagues donated time to photograph some aspects of the project; permission to use portions of the raw data from his previous project, "The Art of the Deal"; and, editing sessions in the University of North Carolina Asheville Media Laboratories. It was a first time effort using non-linear editing systems.

Flea markets do provide a social platform for the learning of new skills, new ideas, and new information. They are witnesses to socialization efforts as people learn the skills for doing business. They also are the defenders and protectors of cultural traditions, information and Languages. In the United States there exist approximately 5,000 of these occasional markets. One estimate is that 100 million visits to them will be made in one year and these visits generate five billion dollars in annual sales. Around the world the flea market functions as neutral ground for learning. Noisy, colorful, and fanciful collections of the mundane items of everyday life can be seen. As cultures interact with one another in this one to one relationship the chance to communicate with other people finds real appeal. It is a chance for one culture to observe, interact, and incorporate knowledge and information from another in a one to one moment.

This concept is sellable. Many flea markets are destination points for visitors to a region. Being able to see local and regional culture, history, and entertainment makes these locations mines for further study. The realization provided by this author indicates that it is possible to link commercial material into an intellectually challenging form of entertainment. The idea is intended as an igniter for further insight into the relationships, knowledge, and understanding to be gained from a visit to the local flea market.

***I Just Wanna Dance***

*Angela Hausman, University of Texas-Pan American*

Classical dancers are among the 30-50 million unpaid performers entertaining us each year. Every year increasing numbers of consumers rely on an endless stream of performers willing to donate their time and talents to enrich our lives (Weiss, Holbrook, and Habich 2001). Yet, we know little of what motivates and sustains these performers, most of whom will never achieve commercial success and notoriety. In fact, ballet was not considered appropriate in the United States until Jackie Kennedy decreed it acceptable and many retain negative stereotypes of male dancers. For instance, a teenage boy admitted to being a closet dancer, who changed schools to hide his dancing career.

Ballet, as one teacher noted, forms the language of dance, while other modalities are simple dialects of this language. As expressed by Meamber and Venkatesh (1998), this symbolic language creates individual and collective meanings as the body becomes a consumable object revealing control over culturally acceptable modes of conduct. Thus, the stylized and controlled body movements characteristic of classical ballet reflect the gendered reality of our culture. According to Hanna (1988), classical ballet echoes the puritanical ethos that the body must be harnessed in the pursuit of economic goals and denied freedom in efforts to achieve moral justice.

In contrast, modern ballet reflects postmodern themes, like intolerance and equality. It provides a rich voice to marginalized elements of our society. Even the movements, freed from constraining tutus and pointe shoes, celebrate the suppleness and sensuousness of the body. Jazz and Tap dances have gained wider acceptance in commercial performances with their modern themes and celebration of existence. Reflecting more freedom of movement, these art forms are less reliant on making audiences think, in favor of getting audiences to feel. Interestingly, especially in the case of jazz, this freedom is earned through years spent in subjugation to the more controlled movements of ballet.

The process of becoming a dancer reflects Staw's (1981) notion of escalation of commitment in a venture where the chances of success are slim. From the thousands of little 3 year olds who steal the hearts of audiences, intense competition produces only a few serious dancers and few of these will ever experience commercial success. And what professional success they might achieve is very fleeting, as ballet careers are measured in years not decades. Michael Flatley, whose performance introduced this film, is now unable to even walk without pain, for instance. Dancers must carefully weigh this reduced professional tenure against alternative life choices.

So, why do dancers devote countless hours training for careers with so little prospect of success. The answer appears to be in culturally-defined notions of success, which are less reliant on ephemeral and superficial values. Modern definitions of success, according to Firat and Venkatesh (1995), rely heavily on a rational economic system that affords no emotional, symbolic, or spiritual relief to the consumer. These intrinsic rewards are powerful motivators, especially obvious in observed gifting behavior. Not only is self-gifting evident, but rewards one obtains through giving gifts of dance to others is portrayed. Through dance, the body becomes not just a celebration of self-identity, it becomes an instrument for community consumption. Gifting dance is also seen as a sacrifice made in exchange for the talent a dancer was given—a cycle of gifting. Family members also participate in this gifting ritual of simultaneous giving and receiving, such that the mutuality of giving and receiving becomes so enmeshed in the dancer's definition of self that it escalates their commitment to dance.

Despite Bourdieu's (1984) contention that pleasure and pain avoidance have become hallmarks of postmodern consumer society, dancers embrace pain and deprivation to stimulate emotional experiences associated with mastery of the body. Others embrace the challenge of doing something others find difficult. But these rewards have costs. Dance thus articulates the inter-subjective relations between participants and audience (Tamisari 2000), emphasizing the sacrifice of self with the aim of advancing the larger society.

Dancers spend increasing amounts of time taking classes and preparing for performances, termed recreational specialization (Scammon 1987). This specialization isolates dancers from non-dancing peers and encourages emulation of codes established by more experienced dancers and teachers. Within this culture, symbolic meaning merges with mundane consumption artifacts, producing emotional involvement that transcends objective reality. Self-sacrifices endured in perfecting their craft further sanctify objects by transferring value to achievement tools and manufactured articles, especially pictures and videos that commemorate the transformation from novice to professional. Thus, while used pointe shoes are unattractive to outsiders, they attain special meaning for dancers, who develop rituals around old pointe shoes that enact the transformation to sacredness (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1991).

By observing cultural evolution informing the commitment of dancers to their art and interrelations between them and sacred artifacts representing that commitment, we develop an understanding of escalating commitment that transcends the economic, rational reality presented by modernist interpreters. Gifting, rather than ego-maintenance and sunk costs, create rationales for escalation in the absence of clear economic rewards. The study also highlights the importance of self-sacrifice, rather than impulsive hedonism in driving consumption. Concepts developed in this study enlighten understandings of similar pursuits, including such economically questionable activities as swimming and educational endeavors, like social work.

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*I'm an American Girl*

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At 111 East Chicago, just off of Chicago's Magnificent Mile, in one of the priciest retail districts in the world stands American Girl Place, a doll store. The store is currently the centerpiece of a \$350 million brand empire owned by the American toy giant Mattel. The American Girl brand was launched by Pleasant Rowland, a teacher, reporter, and textbook author who had grown frustrated with girls' toy choices. Before selling it to Mattel, she built American Girl into a powerhouse brand. In the \$2.4 billion doll market, American Girl stands alone, commanding not only a fifteen percent market share but also incredible loyalty and respect.

The American Girl brand and the American Girl Place store present a range of fascinating topics for marketers interested in brands, in themed retail, and in community-market relations. This videography is based on an ongoing, multiperspectival, multiperson ethnographic team's invasion of the American Girl Place in downtown Chicago, and subsequent interviews with girls, mothers, grandmothers (and even some fathers) that the brand has deeply affected. Our film explores brand-related themes that emerge from this research, such as the deep involvement of the brand with both family history and personal needs and desires.

In the videography, we explore American Girl consumer experience with the brand to try to unpack how these successful brand connections have been made, and to help continue the important investigations of the role of brands in people's lives and experiences. The historical connection is a key attractor highlighted in the film. Each of the dolls—Kaya, Felicity, Josefina, Samantha, Addy, Kirsten, and Molly—is situated in a particular historical period, from 1764 to 1944. Each is backed by a rich narrative of books depicting their daily lives, their hopes, fears, and routines. The various dresses and accessories for each doll are meticulously tied into the stories and images presented in the books. The result is a detailed world unto itself, not unlike the detailed *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* universes.

We examine these brand connections through the eyes of several different consumers. One woman details the importance of dolls in her past, and ties this to a deep emotional connection to the American Girl brand and its narratives of "goodness." Two young girls discuss the historical connection of the dolls, and then demonstrate how they play with them. A young girl discusses her connection with the African-American Girl Addy, and talks about the stories her grandmother told her. Her mother then relates a family Christmas card she wrote based on the narrative world of Addy. A father shares his affection for a hippie American Girl doll he named "Flowergirl" and describes how its openness is the source of its appeal.

In the film, girls, mothers, grandmothers, and even fathers deploy the American Girl brand in a great and never-ending identity construction project. As people seek to understand themselves, others, what matters to them, and what they want in life, the rich narratives and many links to lived experiences and realities make the brand come alive with personal relevance. The film teaches us through the particulars of the American Girl brand that successful brands like this one offer intertextual hooks as well as a mirror into which people can look and see themselves. Meaningful brands offer consumers a rich and detailed set of meanings and images with which to play, and the conceptual space to play with them. Our film shows how different people look into the eyes of an American Girl doll, in different ways, in endless celebrations of individuality united, and see themselves.

*Learning to Survive as a Consumer in Japan: Linguistic Illiteracy in a Cross-Cultural Setting*

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Today's world of knowledge is an explosion of printed information, electronic writing, and a seemingly infinite store of interconnected words on a computer-based web. So, illiteracy, a person's inability to read the written word, must surely be a very debilitating condition. It is hard to imagine how a consumer could function, today, without the ability to read.

Is it possible to get by, to survive, to maintain a reasonable standard of living, when one is illiterate? We know that many functionally illiterate people in our own society somehow manage to do this. They have rules of thumb, coping strategies, and ways of taking shortcuts to the knowledge essential for survival.

But what if you take a fully literate consumer—literate, that is, in his or her own society—and immerse this person in a completely alien culture? A culture where the spoken language is different, the writing is different, and even the ways of buying and selling are sometimes different.

How would such a consumer survive in this cross-cultural setting? What coping strategies would this consumer use? What barriers would there be to this consumer's standard of living, or even quality of life?

The subject in this 38-minute, case-study video is linguistically illiterate. For the past year, he has been living in Osaka, Japan's second largest city. He is illiterate because—as a consumer socialized in a Western culture and now living by himself in Japan—he is unable to speak, read, or write in Japanese. When he picks up a packaged food in the grocery store, he cannot read the label. When a waitress hands him a menu, he cannot decipher his choices. When he visits the cinema, he cannot make out the posters, to decide which film to see. Many of the marketplace cues that he has learned to use back home, in his English-language world, are useless to him in Japan.

So, how are his mental models, developed as a consumer in his own culture, transferred to his Japanese living environment? How does he fill in the blanks, for decision-making purposes, when he encounters marketplace data written in Japanese? And are his consumption decisions different because he is illiterate?

We find some answers to these questions when the camera follows him as he initiates shopping trips which conclude with consumption occasions for some of his day-to-day shopping and consumption needs. What methods does he use to get by (without a Japanese interpreter) when buying groceries, traveling by train, opening a bank account, renting an apartment, eating at restaurants, and so forth?



The case study is introspective and the subject in the video talks about his thoughts and decision making, giving an insight into the processes of acculturation, learning, episodic and iconic memory formation, and coping strategies adopted, in the absence of familiar marketplace cues learned back home in his English-speaking world.

The film shows that this linguistically illiterate consumer, living in Japan, appears to have learnt to survive in his foreign environment. Problems which arose during his day-to-day consumption activities—withdrawing money, buying food, taking trains, eating out—were handled with a variety of coping strategies. Many of these were decision-making strategies learnt from being a consumer in his native Western culture. A transfer of skills, from one culture to another. They could be applied in a foreign culture because Japan is a modern society with a highly developed economy and sophisticated infrastructure. It is similar, in many ways, to North America, Europe, or Australia.

And what about cultural illiteracy? It would be hard to make the case that our linguistically illiterate consumer was also culturally illiterate—in a general sense. After all, throughout his life he has traveled to widely differing countries and cultural regions and knows several languages (though not Japanese). Also, he has experienced foreign cultures through the artifacts of those cultures in the Western countries where he has lived—Chinese restaurants, for example, in Vancouver, Sydney, or Düsseldorf.

But, in a specific sense, he is culturally illiterate in Japan. Because he cannot speak or read Japanese, he cannot know how the Japanese think, or reason, or form opinions and attitudes. He must operate at the fringe of understanding, using only certain cross-cultural commonalities that seem to work in every alien culture—politeness, self-control, deference, gratitude, and so on. Some of these can be expressed through body language and gestures, and some by knowing a handful of words or phrases in the local language.

So, a specific kind of cultural illiteracy combines with linguistic illiteracy, and results in one type of consumption illiteracy. The kind we have seen in this video. And the results of this are: limited interactions with the native non-English speakers, a reliance on the available infrastructure in order to function as a consumer, and, occasionally, relinquished consumption opportunities and buying decisions.

### ***“My Home, My Comfort”: An Ethnography of the Fantasy Home Comfort***

*Peisan Yu, Tung Hai University, Taiwan*

Although the concept of comfort has long been empirically identified as a prevailing discourse involving a broad array of life values surrounding the home and the sense of homeyness, cultural research into these constructs is scant. The role of comfort in the building, maintaining, and sustaining of a symbolic home identity still remains unclear.

The present documentary is 54 minutes long. It is extracted from a pilot study exploring the ideas of comfort and its manifestation in the home sphere. Five in-depth interviews were conducted between the months of February and May, 2003, with long-term residents of Hong Kong in English and Cantonese. The use of group facilitation technique was also employed to better guide the informants from the objective imagery to the feeling state and to their elaboration of an ideal circumstance of home comfort. All the interviews were delivered at the informants' home. Other than the verbal narrative and conversation, drawings and projective tasks were also employed to complement the imagery of home comfort. The types of housing studied range from high-rise apartment buildings to suburban townhouses, with spaces ranging from 500 square feet public housing estate to privately owned housing of 400 square feet apartment, 1000 square feet apartment and 1800 square feet townhouse respectively. The informants come from a diverse socio-demographic background of age group, educational background, occupation and choice of residential districts.

I found that the idea of a home of comfort is often envisaged to lie somewhere between an abstract state of being and a concrete manifestation vested in a set of consumption objects. However, unlike the former diminutive depiction of single objects to decipher the symbolism in consumption objects, when home comfort is concerned, it is unexceptionally the ensemble of a constellation of consumption goods and their created atmosphere, style and harmony that the idea of home comfort is personified. The informants continuously juxtapose their ideal sought-after life values and the values embodied in their physical surroundings as a materialization of fantasies of self-fulfillment.

Interestingly, by probing the informants with the five senses, the researcher was able to facilitate the informants in visualizing their idea and relish of home comfort from an ineffable state of mind to the concrete and concentrated arrangement of various consumption goods to shape the overall design of interior space. Thus the idea of home comfort can be seen as a pendulum that swings between a constant adjustment between the different needs and desires, and the inevitable concession between the fastidiousness pursuit of one sense of comfort (e.g. visual imagery) and the crescendo of discomfort at the other level (e.g. the stress to maintain a visually harmonious display of interior space and objects)

By the same token, it is also through the extensive social comparison with other people's home and/or their experiences with the former residence that the informants are able to verbalize and articulate their desire and fantasy for a home of comfort. Emerging from the dialogues, home comfort is an ideal state that is always yet to be achieved and exist only when the ideal state of living conditions are realized. Moreover, to the informants, home comfort has largely to do with the anticipation of future events, either negative or positive, and the sense of security and satisfaction that is gained from the well-thought over management and preparation to tackle the incurred apprehension.

In the same vein of previous research, the perception home comfort does not merely encompass the pursuit of a physically perfect home interior, but rather follows the top-of-priority concerns of household harmony at the interpersonal level. Deeper levels of life values regarding intimacy, work-home separation and social-private boundary were also indicated by the informants in their conversation.

Themes of privacy, space and safety were often found to be the epitome of home-related values with significant impact in one's life. A majority of those interviewed also extended the conventional view of home “behind the closed doors” to include the exterior sphere of their residential environments, such as community and neighborhood into their overall scope of the territory. Evidently the consumption of home comfort does not stay with the interior sphere but also expands to the exterior frontier of surrounding neighborhood, scenic views and environmental conditions such as air quality, noise and closeness to the nature.

Contrary to treatments of home space as being split into a formal public sphere and a comfortable private sphere, ideas of home comfort were found to span this boundary. While it was often desired that there be a privatized retreat within the home, comfort was seen

to encompass both public and private spaces as well as to combine work and leisure aspects of life in an integral whole. Comfort was seen to occupy a large space within this three-dimensional characterization, such that seemingly paradoxical practices mirrored the similar oppositional underlying values such as freedom, independence and control.

*Pretend It Like Beckham: Symbolic Consumption through Soccer Jerseys*

*Jill G. Klein, INSEAD*

My previous film examined the loss of identity through the uniforms and numbers imposed on prisoners of Nazi concentration camps. This film examines an opposite phenomenon: the acquisition of identity through soccer uniforms and player numbers. I explore the meanings consumers project onto their soccer apparel.

It is often stated within the consumer behavior literature that the link between one's sense of self and one's possessions is powerful. Russell Belk (1988) has argued that possessions both build and reflect our identities. We derive a view of who we are (and who we were) from our possessions and we express ourselves through belongings (e.g., Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982; Richins 1999; Solomon 1999). Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982) assert that self-defining goals lead us to use symbols to define who we are, and that these symbols stand for the "capacity and readiness to behave and think in certain ways (p. 9)."

Through the interviews presented in the film, soccer players and fans discuss the meanings of their soccer shirts and the connections they feel to favorite teams and players through these possessions. Interviews were conducted in France and in Singapore (and one was conducted in Israel). Participants speak about the players they admire and the teams they support, and discuss how their shirts symbolize their feelings and project their allegiances to others.

Consumers strive for a strong congruence between self-image and the image of their clothing (Belk 1982; Solomon 1983), and they can also express their aspiration desires through their attire. The film strives to depict this aspiration through dialogue with interviewees and the interlacing of footage of recreational and professional players.

Respondents representing many ages, from as young as five to as old as 75, talk about the meanings held in their soccer shirts. Such topics as loyalty (e.g., continuing to support a team even when it performs poorly) and heroism are addressed in the film. Throughout, the beauty, passion and creativity that is the game of soccer is portrayed.

*The Embodied Brand*

*Anders Bengtsson, Lund University, Sweden*

*Jacob Östberg, Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden*

*Dannie Kjeldgaard, University of Southern Denmark*

This video focuses on the boundaries between the sacred, non-commercial sphere of the tattoo culture and the profane, profit-maximizing sphere of the commercial world, and the experienced inappropriateness of mixing these two spheres. Through interviews with tattoo artists, who are heavily immersed in this particular sub-culture, both as heavily tattooed consumers and as producers, we will capture some perspectives on the increasingly popular use of brand symbols as imagery for tattooing.

The meanings that are associated with tattooing have changed over the past century (DeMello 2000). From being heavily associated with people on the margins of society, such as sailors and bikers, tattoo consumption has developed into a more mainstream phenomenon. People who get tattoos today are not necessarily doing so to symbolize affiliation with a certain subculture, but can instead do so with the purpose of symbolizing a specific event in their personal life history (cf. Velliquette 2000). Given that tattoo consumption has spread into a larger spectrum of consumers and is no longer limited to members of specific sub-cultures, a more heterogeneous imagery from which proper inscriptions on the body can be chosen has emerged. In the eclectic use of tattoo imagery, symbols from popular culture such as football clubs, cartoon characters, and rock bands are frequently occurring. Some consumers go as far as choosing the logotype of commercial brands, such as Apple, Atari, Intel, Fender, MTV, Pepsi-Cola, and Wrangler, as imagery for their tattoos. This use of brand symbols in body expressions provides instances of permanent and deliberate brand consumption with the potential function of expression of self-identity. The practice illustrates how consumers take brands to new contexts, in a sense attaching a signifier to a new signified (cf. Ritson 1999).

In the late modern age it has been claimed that individual identities have become reflexive articulations of imagined biographies (Giddens 1991). As such, identities have become fluid in that there is a constant rearticulation taking place. Bauman (2001) goes as far as claiming that the identity strategy of today is less about committing oneself to one identity than it is about keeping possibilities for identity change open. Within consumer research, it is a widely received view that brands and consumer goods enter into this construction and display of self-identity (e.g. Arnould and Price 2000; Fournier 1998; Kates 2000). The brands used in body expressions are unique since they enter into a more or less permanent display and articulation of self-identity.

Compared to non-commercial tattoo imagery, brand symbols are part of a marketing system where systematic meaning management seeks to impose intended interpretations on the consumers (Holt 2002). Therefore, brands can be thought of as symbols with a more controlled association base than other symbolic expressions. The meaning of a brand can be subject to unexpected change; for instance, a brand can suddenly be repositioned and become loaded with new meanings and associations making the expression of a certain consumer self-identity more fluid. When using brands in body expression the consumer thereby leaves part of the power to construct the meaning to the whims of marketing strategies.

The tattoo artists interviewed for this video heavily opposed the use of commercial brand symbols as imagery for tattoos. In their view, the sphere of tattooing is infused with an ethos of outsidership that should be kept separate from commercial sphere. However, in trying to explain the relationship between the two spheres they could not escape the discursive logic of the commercial sphere. They hence willingly provided their services to consumers wanting to permanently mark their flesh with a brand symbol and regarded these consumers as "a dollar bill". In the tattoo artists' views, a brand symbol can not take on sacred meanings for the consumers. Therefore, it is not a pertinent symbol for body expressions in the way that, for instance, the portrait of a loved one can be.

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### *Tourist Photos: Signs of Self*

*Russell Belk, University of Utah*

One goal of tourist photography is to collect pieces of self-narrative. Even when the avowed purpose of a shot is to show beauty or document unusual people and places, the tourist is the director/cinematographer who expresses or reveals. In this video I explore the types of stories we tell about ourselves as tourists by drawing on participant observation, interviews with travelers, and comparisons with non-traveling locals.

Tourist activities in the video include flights over Antarctica, photo safaris in Africa, Ankor Wat visits, and hula performances in Hawaii. Across these diverse settings I find considerable similarity in the types of photos and videos taken or made. Of the ethnographic narrative types identified by John van Maanen, tourist tales come closest to dramatic- and self-ethnographies. However, tourists are not careful ethnographers. They instead play the lead in stories that draw on myth, adventure, comedy, tragedy, and pilgrim's tales. They also invoke many conventions, stereotypes, and clichés in making images to tell their tales. Besides idealizing, romanticizing, and exoticizing their experiences, they select local scenery, costumes, actions, and props in the service of an Orientalizing discourse that makes the Other their polar opposite. Unlike T. S. Elliot's traveler who returns home to "know the place for the first time," we seek to know or transform ourselves via tourist photography.

The photos made by tourists are partly a mnemonic aid and souvenir for recalling travel experiences, but they are also used in the service of ennobling the self and gaining bragging rights to the cultural capital of apparent familiarity with the exotic. That is, tourism, even by these potentially jaded global tourists, is an extraordinary event that is seen to open portals to an extraordinary ideal self. Human memory, together with selective photography and videography, gradually replace or omit dreary and embarrassing details. We choose not to photograph the mechanisms that ease and facilitate our encounters, such as tourist buses, souvenir sellers, guides, and amenities that make the less affluent world more like home. We polish the memories of our experiences through the telling of tales that are more consistent with the selves we would like to become. In the process we furnish ourselves with a meaningful past—at least as we anticipate enjoying our future reflections on our accumulated photographic artifacts.

Nevertheless, apart from their photography and sight-seeing, the international tourists studied are relatively passive posers in the scenes and activities they portray. In contrast, local spectacles are relatively devoid of photography and locals often play a more active role than the tourists. We don't tend to regard that which happens in our own back yard as being capable of revealing or creating a transformed ideal self.

Much has been written about the invasive, distancing, and acquisitive nature of tourist photography and its use to hide our guilt and unease as vacationers. The ways in which tourists apprehend the people and places they encounter via a camera is not the same as it would be without looking through a lens. The camera is a buffer that also keeps them from experiencing the scene that confronts them. While acknowledging these negatives, I also find benefits in touristic photo rituals involving emplaced meaning making, prospective memory making, mastery of the incomprehensible, and expression of the ineffable. Tourist photography enhances our life narratives even as it creates fictions that construct the Self vis-à-vis the Other.

### *Towards a Meaningful Identity: The (F)Utility of Lifestyle Research*

*David Toumajian, University of Utah*

*Gülnur Tumbat, University of Utah*

## Introduction

As Featherstone (1987) puts it "The term [lifestyle] ... connotes individuality, self-expression, and a stylistic self-consciousness" (p.55). Lifestyle research is one of the aspects of the movement towards a "postmodern consumer culture" in which there are no fixed status groups. In consumer research, postmodern approaches usually regard lifestyles as autonomous playful spaces beyond any determination.

According to Murray (2002), such theoretical accounts of conscious identity construction so prevalent in our field today are neglecting to give attention to broader social discourses and how our identity projects may have core structural components (i.e. *sign experimentation* vs. *sign domination*).

In the next section, we will provide a brief overview of lifestyle research followed by a presentation of the video. We will conclude with some implications.

### Lifestyle Research: An Overview

Social consumption patterns are important in marketing since they form the basis of segmentation strategies (Solomon, Bamossy and Askegaard, 1999). The so-called lifestyle concept is one of the widely used concepts in marketing practices in which psychographic techniques attempt to classify consumers in terms of psychological subjective variables in addition to observable characteristics (see Veal 1993 for a review and Holt 1997 for a critical summary). One example of research using psychographics is the List of Values (LOV) developed by Kahle and Homer (1986). LOV uses a simple and quick survey in order to ascertain informants' most important value (from a list of 9) and seeks to formulate buying patterns based on this limited information:

#### *The List of Values*

- Sense of belonging (to be accepted and needed by your family, friends, and community);
- Excitement (to experience stimulation and thrills)
- Warm relationships with Others (to have close companionships and intimate friendships)
- Self-Fulfillment (to find peace of mind and to make the best use of your talents)
- Being well-respected (to be admired by others and to receive recognition)
- Fun and Enjoyment in Life (to lead a pleasurable happy life)
- Security (to be safe and protected from misfortune and attack)
- Self-Respect (to be proud of yourself and confident with who you are)
- A Sense of Accomplishment (to succeed at what you want to do)

In his poststructuralist approach to lifestyle research, Holt (1997) argues that meanings are always socially constructed in association with other cultural objects and activities. Meanings are unstable and consumption patterns depend upon contextual characteristics and they are expressed through regularities in consumption practices, rather than in consumer objects themselves. Here practices refer to "...how consumers understand, evaluate, appreciate, and use consumption objects in particular contexts" (p.334). He further argues that lifestyles are created by relational differences between consumption patterns and he refers to these differences as a type of symbolic boundary. Consumption patterns are meaningful to the extent that they exist in opposition to comparable alternatives. He argues that symbolic boundary approach enhances our understanding of lifestyles since it enables to see consumption patterns as expressions of collectivities rather than cluster of individuals. This approach provides a theoretical linkage between lifestyle categories and the social, economic, political, historical, and technological environments.

Lifestyles marketing research is but one of any number of lines of inquiry in marketing that, in the name of efficiency and predictability, seeks to develop universal theories of humanity entirely devoid of any cultural emphasis or understanding. Our video hence is a parody of sort seeking to emphasize the limited kind of the knowledge we can gain through psychographically defined populations or subpopulations. The subject, an anthropomorphized golf ball branded with the American flag, in discovering itself alone and abandoned, begins a quest to discover its own humanity (akin to Camus' *Sisyphus* or *The Stranger*). Initially seeking to use psychographic models it finds in a similarly (and conveniently) abandoned marketing textbook as a guide, this quickly proves futile. Rolling along to a café, the golf ball interviews people and asks them for clues in its identity quest only to be terribly disappointed with the supposed persona attributed to it. This resistance to the ascribed traits it "should" have then eventually lead to the development of a voice, a social identity driven by emancipatory concerns.

### Moral and Managerial Mandates of Marketing Research

As researchers select and justify a concrete problem, they must reflect on the trade-offs between certain gains and certain losses in terms of the overall improvement of the human condition. (Murray et al. 1994, p. 564)

There are a number of problems with psychographics and lifestyle research, but perhaps one of the most profound is its refusal to problematize the relationship between "values" and consumer goods. There is no room in such an approach for the everyday struggles, frustrations, and desires that keep us bound to an endless cycle of consumption in order to achieve an idealized self, no mention of the interplay between the socio-cultural and life-worlds in theorizing where these values come from and how relative they are to different cultures and traditions, and there is a heavy bias towards developing a theory that can make concrete contributions to the applied-side of marketing rather than focusing on how a consumerist ethos impacts not only the individual psyche but also the world.

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