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CONTEMPLATIVE CONSUMER ACTIVISM

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Declaration of Authenticity and Copyright

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

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Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis examines the role of contemplation in driving consumer activism. Grounded in the Consumer Culture Theory perspective, it integrates insights from research on consumer activism and consumer spirituality. Employing the Social Phenomenology method, it investigates how mindfulness-based contemplation is understood and enacted within activist contexts, and how it fosters change across personal and social domains.

This thesis broadens the epistemological underpinnings of consumer activism research through the conceptualization of *Contemplative Consumer Activism (CCA),* defined as *a form of everyday activism that entails consumers` reflective and empathetic engagement with socially conditioned and personally ingrained thoughts and conduct, fostering subtle and processual social change that originates at a deeply individual level and unfolds across intra-consumer, inter-consumer and systemic domains of marketplace interaction*. In this sense, CCA represents an extension of conflictual, collective, competitive and immediate forms of conventional activism, by situating itself at the quieter and more mundane end of the activism spectrum.

The conceptualization of CCA offers three key contributions to consumer activism research across considerations on activism participation, resource mobilization and change. First, it rearticulates adversarial and collectivist logics of activism participation by juxtaposing them with emerging politics of negotiated settlement and shared individuality. Second, it advances the current understanding of resource mobilization by redefining activist resources, traditionally conceived as rare, explicit and competitive, by positioning contemplation as a common, quiet and non-competitive resource that is embedded in everyday practice. In doing so, it offers a nuanced perspective on essentialist assumptions and contextual rigidity of conventional activism. Third, it reconceptualizes activism-driven social change by extending underlying assumptions of immediacy, dramatization and externality into a novel understanding of processual, subtle and deep-seated transformations that unfold across diverse cognitive and behavioural contexts and multiple levels of everyday consumer interaction. Within this framework, marketplace change is decoupled from the constrains of brand, market, industry or system-level transformations, and reframed as an ongoing process that is inherently

individual yet socially connected, directed toward self-reconciliation, empathy development and collective welfare.

Beyond its contribution to consumer activism research, the thesis also contributes to consumer spirituality research by offering a novel perspective on the therapeutic focus of New Age spiritualities and demonstrating how consumer contemplation can connect private consumption with public concerns, fostering marketplace engagement and social change.

The chapter begins by explaining the research rationale and research background, followed by the research aim, objectives, questions, methodology and context. It closes with the research outline and concluding remarks.

1.2 Research Rationale and Background

The intersection of spirituality, particularly New Age forms, with a consumer activism agenda is not new. In the 1990s and 2000s, Europe witnessed the emergence of the institutionalized New Age-inspired political parties, such as the Party of Natural Law and the Crystal Party in Finland, Die Violetten in Germany, (Salmenniemi, 2019), De Nieuwe Mens in the Netherlands, and the Natural Law Party, initially founded in Great Britain and later established in the United States and other European countries. These formal initiatives have been accompanied by less organized efforts, such as eco-spirituality and intentional communities as well as broader social movements, such as Human Potential Movement, Engaged Buddhism and Mindfulness. New Age spiritualities have also been recognized and employed as unorganized, silent forms of protests. For example, on the International Day of Yoga in 2019, the Unites Nations highlighted yoga`s mobilizing potential by stating that it can "galvanize global action to address climate change, [and] inspire green growth" (https://press.un.org/en/2019/dsgsm1297.doc.htm, access on 18.08.2025). In 2020, more than one hundred people gathered at Black Lives Matter Plaza for a yoga session protesting social injustice in the United States (Schwartzman, 2020).

While recent world history has seen alternative forms of consumer activism emerging through various New Age spiritualities, research on consumer activism has largely overlooked the transformative potential of contemporary spiritualities, often by framing activism and change in terms of abrupt, external, drastic and antagonism-oriented processes (e.g. Gould, 2001; Kähr *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, consumer spirituality research has largely neglected the activist expansions of both faith-based and secular spiritualities by focusing primarily on their therapeutic foundations (Li *et al.*, 2021; Gentina, Daniel and Tang, 2020), and thus remaining

confined to critiques of radical privatization (Redden, 2002), consolation (Cloud, 1998), depoliticization and subjectification (Salmenniemi, 2019).

Building on earlier research, this thesis introduces the concept of Contemplative Consumer Activism as a nuanced form of consumer activism that emerges through cognitive and behavioural interplays, and is enacted across personal, inter-personal and systemic domains. In developing this concept, the thesis draws on research on consumer activism and spiritual consumption, which are outlined in the following sections.

1.2.1 Consumer Activism

Consumer activism is defined "as the decentralized but collective grassroot efforts by activist consumers to contest the actions of marketers and their organizations, as well as to more broadly mobilize a change in the cultural frames that guide consumption behaviour" (Handelman and Fischer, 2018, p. 257). It is enacted through various marketplace forms, ranging from radical interventions (e.g. Gould, 2001; Kähr *et al.*, 2016) to creative performances (e.g. Jones and Arnould, 2022; Kravets, 2021). There is also emerging research that explores alternative pathways of consumer activism that challenge assumptions of direct (Murrey, 2016), loud (Bayat, 2000) and competitive forms of engagement (Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019).

This emerging research often situates consumer activism within everyday contexts, which provides new insights "into understanding and theorising economy, politics and social transformation" (Yates, 2022, p. 145). Everyday activism represents a domestic iteration of activism (Micheletti, 2003), enacted through everyday acts of defiance (Baumgardner, 2000). These acts range from the playful exclamation of twin eight-year-old boys, "We don't have a dad … We`ve got two mums!" to the shop assistant seeking their dad`s help with heavy sacks (Vivienne, 2015, p. 4) to the seemingly mundane act of "calling one`s boss a male chauvinist" in conversation with a friend (Mansbridge and Flaster, 2007, p. 631). By expanding beyond organized, collective and strategic activism framings (Vivienne, 2015), everyday activism connects the individual with the public, the ordinary with the special, and the personal with the political. This aligns with Contemplative Consumer Activism as a form of everyday activism, enacted through consumers` contemplative engagement across layered personal and social interactions.

1.2.2 Consumer Spirituality

Consumer spirituality is defined as "the interrelated practices and processes engaged in when consuming market offerings (products, services, places) that yield 'spiritual utility'" (Husemann and Eckhardt, 2019b, p. 393). Spiritual utility is understood as the facilitation of the consumer's self-exploration and integration with the broader reality through their use of good and services designed and promoted for that purpose in the market (Kale, 2006). Consumer spirituality is often explored through religious (Hall *et al.*, 2018; Higgins and Hamilton, 2016; Kato and Progano, 2017; Thich, 2019), secular (Kimura and Belk, 2005; Veer, Herpen and Trijp, 2016; Shaw and Duffy, 2020) and hybrid perspectives that combine both perspectives (Bradford and Sherry, 2015; Rinallo, Scott and Maclaran, 2013; Sherry and Kozinets, 2007).

Consumer spirituality has gained attention within New Age research, as traditional notions of religion have undergone serious shifts, paving the way toward new spiritual tendencies since the late twentieth century. Resisting fixed definitions, New Age is often characterized as the bricolage of various belief systems, traditions, teachings, worldviews and practices (Aupers and Houtman, 2013; Luckmann, 1996), `mind-body-spirit` phenomena (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013) or religion a` la carte (Possamai, 2003). The New Age phenomenon provides fertile ground for consumer activism and consumer spirituality research by moving beyond privatization critiques and showing potential to evolve into social movements (Rowe, 2016; Redden, 2002; Buechler, 1995) and engage politically (Chari, 2016; Foster, 2016; Moran and Salter, 2022; Daniel Nehring, 2016).

Intersecting the fields of consumer activism and consumer spirituality, this thesis examines how contemplation, informing various spiritual thoughts and practice, is conceptualized and enacted within the context of everyday activism.

1.3 Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

The aim of this study is to investigate the role that contemplation plays in driving consumer activism. This aim is pursued through two specific research objectives, each guided by two research questions presented below;

Research Objective 1: To explore the ways in which contemplation is conceptualized and enacted across consumer activism contexts

Research Question 1: *How do consumers conceive of contemplation?*

Research Question 2: *How is contemplation practiced and mobilized within the contexts of consumer activism?*

Research Objective 2: To examine how contemplation contributes to social change in and around the marketplace

Research Question 3*: How do consumers relate to change within a consumer activism framework?*

Research Question 4: *In what ways does contemplative change manifest within the marketplace?*

The first objective situates contemplation within a consumer activism framework, investigating how it shapes and is shaped by activist efforts. The second objective focuses on the ways contemplation produces transformative outcomes, impacting both the consumer contemplator and other market constituents.

1.4 Research Methodology

Grounded in an interpretivist paradigm and a relativist ontological stance, this thesis integrates the subjectivist and social constructionist epistemological approaches to the study of contemplation across activist contexts. It particularly employs the social phenomenological approach as its underlying method to address the research questions. Grounded in a qualitative research design, the social phenomenological approach is a qualitative research method that "examines the reciprocal interactions among the processes of human action, situational structuring, and reality construction in the context of life-world" (Savolainen, 2007, p. 1711). Similar to many other phenomenological approaches, it studies the human world by emphasizing lived experiences and the meanings people ascribe to them (Kalary, 2005; Kalary and Schalow, 2011).

Within this phenomenological research design, the thesis draws on 21 in-depth interviews with consumers engaged in mindfulness-based contemplative practice across personal or professional consumption spaces, and associate it with an activist effort in either conventional or progressive forms. It also uses the researcher`s personal experiences and fieldnotes regarding the research context as an internal data source.

1.5 Research Context

This thesis explores consumer contemplation within the context of mindfulness. From a secular perspective, mindfulness refers to a particular attentional stance (Kabat-Zinn, 2003) and the ability to observe one's inner and outer experiences right here and right now (Rosenberg, 2004). While often associated with Buddhist meditative practices, mindfulness has been developed across a range of ancient and contemporary traditions, including ancient Greek philosophy, phenomenology, existentialism, naturalism, transcendentalism and humanism (Brown, Ryan and Creswell, 2007). This diversity provides mindfulness with a rich landscape that spans both religious (Bahl *et al.*, 2016; Chan, 2019; Brown and Ryan, 2003) and secular (Bahl *et al.*, 2016; Bruce, 2017; Kabat-Zinn, Lipworth and Burney, 1985) domains. Despite its growing popularity, mindfulness, particularly within the therapeutic ethos of New Age spiritualities, has been criticised for fostering a therapeutic industry and promoting neoliberal subjectivities (Davies, 2015; Carrette and King, 2005; Purser, 2019; Wilson, 2014).

Scientific advances in mindfulness have been matched by growing interest in its organizational applications. In the U.S., the military has employed mindfulness to enhance the resilience of soldiers (Myers, 2015). In the UK, the government-supported the Mindfulness Initiative has been established to promote wellbeing "in the areas of education, health, the workplace and the criminal justice system through the application of mindfulness-based interventions" (MAPPG, 2015). The UK Department for Education also launched a large-scale mental health trial in the schools, offering mindfulness trainings to children (UKDE, 2019). In the corporate sector, companies such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Bosch, SAP have implemented mindfulness programs to improve employee wellbeing, leadership and decision-making skills.

Mindfulness was introduced to consumer research by Sheth and colleagues (2011, p. 21), who conceptualized mindful consumption as "a consumer mindset of caring for self, for community, and for nature, that translates behaviourally into tempering the self-defeating excesses associated with acquisitive, repetitive and aspirational consumption". Within consumer research, mindfulness is often explored for its potential to moderate excessive consumption (Gentina, Daniel and Tang, 2020; Wilson and Bellezza, 2022), enhance consumer wellbeing (Brunneder and Dholakia, 2018; Luomala, Paasovaara and Lehtola, 2006; Veer, Herpen and Trijp, 2016) and promote ethical consumption (Chan, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2021; Shaw and Duffy, 2020).

Mindfulness provides a context for this thesis to investigate contemplation, as its various practices are rooted in contemplative engagement cultivated in diverse ways (Hanh, 1999; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). It offers a framework to explore contemplation across both faith-based and secular domains. Within religious traditions, mindfulness shares commonalities with the Kabbalah discipline in Jewish mysticism, Sufi practices in Islam, Christian contemplative practices (Faesen, 2023; Murray, 1998) and more contemporary alterations of spirituality (Suddaby, 2019), all of which underscore the role of contemplation in thought and practice. In secular contexts, particularly in its Westernized forms, mindfulness allows the study of contemplation (Bruce, 2017) among non-religious consumers as well as those who interpret and practice religion through secular lens. Together, mindfulness facilitates an egalitarian and integrative framework for studying consumer contemplation, while simultaneously aligning with consumer activism research through its development as a social movement.

1.6 Research Outline

This thesis comprises seven chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview by presenting the research rationale and background, followed by research aim, objectives, questions, methodology and context.

Literature review is presented in two chapters. Chapter 2 explores the conceptual and theoretical foundations of consumer activism, adopting a tripartite approach that includes activism participation, resource mobilization and change. Chapter 3 examines consumer spirituality across religious, secular and hybrid contexts, extending the discussion to contemplation, particularly within a mindfulness framework.

Chapter 4 outlines the philosophical foundations of the thesis and its methodological approach. It also presents an account of how validity and reliability issues are addressed within the thesis.

Research findings are presented across two chapters. Chapter 5 examines how contemplation is conceptualized and enacted within the context of consumer activism. Chapter 6 explores how consumer contemplation contributes to social change in and around the marketplace.

Chapter 7 discusses the theoretical contributions of the thesis to consumer activism and consumer spirituality research. After presenting managerial contributions, it outlines limitations and directions for future research, and concludes with final remarks.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provides a concise overview of the thesis, beginning with the research rationale and a summary of the two principal research streams that inform it. It then presents the research aim, objectives and questions, followed by an overview of the methodological approach adopted. After introducing the research context, the chapter concludes with an outline of the overall thesis structure.

Chapter 2 CONSUMER ACTIVISM

2.1 Introduction

The chapter comprises three main sections. The first discusses the definitional foundations of consumer activism and examines activism participation through the lenses of consumer grievance, interests, identity, affects and ideology. The second investigates resource mobilization in activism behaviour, focusing on platformization, self, discourse, arts and networking. The third explores social change as an outcome of activist behaviour, delineating four types of change, including firm-level, market-level, industry-level and system-level change.

2.2 Activism

Activism can be defined as a movement organized by social actors around a common issue that often involves contestation of an existing system of authority (Handelman and Fischer, 2018; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007; Lounsbury, Ventresca and Hirsch, 2003; Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey, 2008; McCarthy and Zald, 1977). Such systems, which may be economic, social, cultural or political in nature, are typically sustained by individual or institutional forces, including organizations, industries or governments. From a political standpoint, activism refers to "sequences of contentious politics that are based on underlying social networks and resonant collective action frames, and which develop the capacity to maintain sustained challenges against powerful opponents" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 2).

Often associated with collective behaviour, activism can manifest in diverse forms, including panics, mobs, riots, fads, fashion circles, sects, cults, religious revivals and revolutions (Morris and Herring, 1984). Accordingly, various socio-political, cultural, religious, and economic contexts may provide the grounds upon which activist groups articulate and contest particular issues (Collins, 2001). Research on collective behaviour has predominantly focused on social movements as collective entities and their intended outcomes, often overlooking the role of individual actors in legitimizing the socio-political and cognitive validity of these movements and in transforming existing structural practices (Sine and Lee, 2009; Rao, Morrill and Zald, 2000; Fligstein and Dauter, 2007). The tendency to hold organized and often formal entities accountable for collective action gradually shifted from organizational to individual domains, following the transfer of responsibility for addressing social issues from the state to the private sector (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). The transition to a post-

industrial society, marked with the growing influence of global corporations on multiple facets of consumer life further reinforced this shift by positioning the individual activist at the centre of collective action (Handelman and Fischer, 2018). Moreover, the broadening of the term `citizenship` from merely a set of individual rights to an entitlement encompassing civil, social and political dimensions strengthened the role of the social actor as a key agent in advocating for the rights of diverse stakeholder groups (Matten and Crane, 2005; Crane, Matten and Moon, 2004).

This shift in the broader socio-political understanding of citizenship gradually permeated the sphere of consumption, resonating with the emergence of consumer agency as a central concern in organized and unorganized activism (Daros, 2022; Redden, 2002). It affirmed the growing socio-cultural, ideological and political significance of the individual consumer. Concurrently, this reconceptualization underscored consumption as a political act (Miller and Stovall, 2019), whose consequences extend beyond the interpersonal realm to influence broader social and institutional structures (Glickman, 2006). The hybridisation of the citizen and the consumer (Fontenelle and Pozzebon, 2021) fostered a productive dialogue between consumer research and political science (Micheletti and Stolle, 2012; Micheletti and Stolle, 2014), thereby opening new avenues for examining the politics of consumption (Sandikci and Ger, 2010).

The widening scope of consumption, coupled with the growing influence of consumers as social and political actors, finds its fullest expression within the era of New Social Movements (NSMs) (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). A social movement broadly describes a form of activism situated within a wider sociological, cultural, economic or historical context (Atkinson, 2017, p. 12). Emerging in post-industrial or advanced capitalist societies, NSMs are characterised by their pursuit of more inclusive and humanistic aims, addressing issues related to humanity, race, gender, spirituality, nature, animal rights and disadvantaged citizens (Buechler, 1995). Such movement have been enacted across diverse arenas, including peace, environmental, queer, student and women`s movements (Staggenborg, 2016).

Representing an anti-hegemonic and countercultural form of social organization (Desmond, McDonagh and O'Donohoe, 2000), the era of New Social Movements is marked by the rise of a global consumer culture alongside a radical transformation of capitalism. This transformation introduces “a new neoliberal rationality”, enacted through the close interplay between market logics and socio-political landscapes (Fontenelle and Pozzebon, 2021, p. 504). Within this newly emerging, socio-politically-conditioned consumption milieu, the consumer

is reconfigured as a politicized actor, who not only voices concerns about the consumption society but also demands tangible responses and solutions (Barboza and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2022). The following sections further elaborate on the notion of consumer activism.

2.3 Consumer Activism

From a consumer perspective, activism is defined "as the decentralized but collective grassroot efforts by activist consumers to contest the actions of marketers and their organizations, as well as to more broadly mobilize a change in the cultural frames that guide consumption behaviour" (Handelman and Fischer, 2018, p. 257). From another standpoint, consumer activism is described as "organized consumption or, more often, nonconsumption that is collective, oriented toward the public sphere, grassroots, and conscious of the political impact of print and commerce" (Glickman, 2009, p. 26).

Often conceived as a public and communicative activity (Keränen and Olkkonen, 2022), consumer activism manifests in diverse forms, ranging from individual to collective, reformist to radical, and from actions aimed at altering marketing practices to those seeking to redefine product meanings. It may involve consumers` attempts to reclaim the sources of unrest from within the market or, alternatively, to challenge them from outside by employing non-marketing instruments of change (Penaloza and Price, 1993, p. 123). Activist influence can this be exerted through a variety of practices, including non-consumption, anti-consumption, alternative consumption, pro-consumption, as well as political, ethical, sustainable (likewise green, ecological or environmental) consumption practices. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the practices commonly employed in the enactment of consumer activism.

Table 2.1: Typology of Common Practices in Consumer Activism

Consumer Resistance Types	Forms of Resistance	Definition	How Resistance is Enacted	Exemplary Source
Anti-consumption				
	Brand rejection	Refusal to purchase and/or use a brand on a permanent basis because of its perceived association to a particular political ideology[1]	Refraining from using the brand`s product(s) / Maintaining a strong ideological divide between brand and themselves	(Sandıkcı and Ekici, 2009)
	Brand sabotage	Deliberate behaviour by customers or noncustomers who have the dominant objective of causing harm to a brand through the impairment of the brand-related associations of other consumers.	Thoughtful, and carefully selected, rather than impulsive or automatic, actions. They include consumers` conscious and planned behaviour intended to harm the brand	(Kähr *et al.*, 2016)
	Consumer-brand disagreement	Low levels of similarity between consumer and brand mostly regarding social and political issues	Forming asymmetric relationship between consumer attitudes, intentions, behaviours, and level of disagreement through low brand identification	(Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020)
	Culture jamming	Activity aimed at countering the continuous, recombinant barrage of capitalist laden messages fed through the mass media (Handelman, 1999)	Displaying spontaneous acts often involving emotion against market hegemony, such as campaigns, sit-ins, virtual protests, and petitions	(Sandlin and Callahan, 2009)
	Consumer cynicism	Process of related cognitive, behavioural, and affective reactions expressed by initial suspicion, defensive attempts, and eventual alienation of the consumer.	Suspicion, mistrust, scepticism, distrust, reactions of dissatisfaction, alienation, and resistance or even hostility towards the brand/firm	(Chylinski and Chu, 2010)
	Consumer animosity	Remnants of antipathy related to previous or ongoing military, political, or economic events (Klein, Ettenson, and Morris 1998)	Influenced by personality traits such as neuroticism and extraversion as well as individual and cultural constrains such as gender, power distance, and masculinity, and resulting in product avoidance	(Leonidou *et al.*, 2019)
	Brand hate	Psychological state in which a consumer forms an intense negative emotion and hatred toward a brand (Kucuk, 2018)	Displaying anti-branding activities such as brand avoidance, switching and complaining	(Roy *et al.*, 2022)
Non-consumption[2]				
	Consumer frugality	Consumers` showing more discipline and resourcefulness in their product and service acquisition, use, and reuse	Consuming more carefully, thoughtfully, and with greater restraint	(Witkowski, 2010)
	Consumer parodic resistance	A resistant form of play that critically refunctions dominant consumption discourses and marketplace ideologies.	Playfully rejecting and circumventing established ways of consumption, laughing	(Mikkonen and Bajde, 2013) (Kravets, 2021)

[1] There are various crossings across modes and ways of consumer resistance. For instance, consumer brand rejection due to the brand`s political ideology can also indicate a form of political consumption. Similarly, buycott is in essence a form of pro-consumption, i.e. an attempt to support purchasing from a certain firm/brand, it may also be practiced as part of a political ideology adopted or condemned by the opted brand.

[2] While anti-consumption refers to consumers` active resistance or refusal to use a certain brand or their product usually on the basis of an ideological clash between the consumer and the brand, non-consumption describes revising their need to consume overall and thus limiting or minimizing sorts and number of their consumption externalities on the basis of moral, religious or any other individual stance.

	Minimalism	A value that embraces the mindful acquisition and ownership of few, curated possessions, with a preference for a sparse aesthetic	Reducing the number of possessions based on thoughtful and actual consumer needs and an understanding of simple and inconspicuous aesthetics	(Wilson and Bellezza, 2022)
	Voluntary simplicity	Limiting material consumption and freeing up one's money and time in order to seek satisfaction through the non-commercial and non-material aspects of life	Reviewing actual consumption needs, disassociating happiness and comfort from consumption, living more consciously and simply, choosing products in line with their thoughts, beliefs, values and behaviours	(Walther and Sandlin, 2013)
Alternative consumption				
	Hipster forms of consumption	A critical perspective into consumerism which supports various consumption forms on an individual and emancipatory basis, as opposed to hegemonic and dictated ways of consumption	Resisting mainstream marketing, maintaining distinction and protecting authentic identity from mainstream co-optation, lifestyle change	(Cronin, McCarthy and Collins, 2014)
	Slow food	Member-supported organization dedicated to preserving and strengthening local food cultures; rebuilding lost connections between consumers and producers against accelerating pace of life (Petrini, 2001)	Countering market hegemony, offering and adopting alternative forms of consumption, naming, sharing, forming online groups, constructing ethical identity by helping others gain autonomy, lifestyle change	(Thompson and Kumar, 2021)
	Halal consumption	Appropriateness of various consumption forms such as food, cosmetics and furniture, to Islamic standards	Maintaining religious identity, sharing this identity within a religiously inspired community, being selective and abstaining from other forms of consumption seen as religiously inappropriate,	(Sandikci, 2020)
Pro-consumption				
	Consumer fandom	Production activities by devoted consumers that shape, change, and make the market evolve	Petitions, crowdfunding, blogging, identifying a common cause, setting up a mobilization strategy, educating and motivating supporters and creating brand-new market acting as entrepreneurs	(Fuschillo, 2020)
	Buycott	Attempt to induce shoppers to buy products/services of selected companies to reward them for their behaviour consistent with goals of activists	Appraising the brand, campaigning to encourage others to buy, positive-word-of-mouth, online petitions and calls, public announcement, listings,	(Friedman, 1996)
	Carrot mob (shorter termed buycott)	Consumers` collectively swarming a specific store and purchasing its goods to reward corporate socially responsible behaviour	Use of guerrilla tactics (by means of social media and social networking) to foster the participation of companies and consumers	(Hoffmann and Hutter, 2012)
Political consumption				
	Brand contestations	Attempt to achieve certain goals or objectives by refraining from making particular purchases or consumption choices	Situated agency (i.e. a view of consumer activism as being contingent on contextual factors), consumer boycott	(Bröckerhoff and Qassoum, 2021)
	Indirect consumer activism	Targeting one firm to elicit change from a third party	Indirect campaigns which are often decentralized, public mobilization through raising awareness, use of political relationships, twitting or emailing companies and, online based boycotts	(Colli, 2020)

	Politically oriented brand avoidance	Consumers` deliberate choice to reject and not to buy from a brand due to its political and ideological stance on the basis of value, morality, identity and the like violations	Public campaigning shaming, naming, blaming, disidentification, boycotting, negative word of moth	(Duman and Ozgen, 2018)
Ethical consumption				
	Fairtrade consumption	A form of consumption that prioritizes producer communities and producer-consumer relationships for fair and stable price for commodity products	Leveraging social networks to exert pressure and generate support, forming community spirit, maintaining common goals and ideals, lifestyle change	(Peattie and Samuel, 2018)
	Anti-sweatshop activism	Attempt demanding sanctions against Russell Athletic based on their violations of favourable factory conditions and worker rights in their manufacturing plants	Disruption-based tactics such as sit-ins, demonstrations shutting down administrative buildings as well as non-disruptive evidence- based tactic such as worker-testimonials	(Briscoe, Gupta and Anner, 2015)
	Veganism / Animal advocacy	A philosophical current, lifestyle and form of consumption that rejects the use of non-human animals in any form of consumption	Campaigns, sit-ins, networking with other movements and liaising with politically/socially important figures, protests, petitions, condemning, complaining, lifestyle change	(Bertuzzi, 2022)
	Charitable giving	Individual attempts to serve a collective good such as increasing supply for non-profits, dealing with poverty, and attempting to leverage the status of the disadvantaged	Individual attempts as well as collective organizing, forming action groups, positive word-of-mouth, sharing online, forming networks, liaising with supporting organizations	(Bradford, 2021) (Bajde and Rojas-Gaviria, 2021)
Sustainable consumption				
	Green consumption / Ecological / Environmental consumption	Adopting a consumption behaviour which utilizes existing resources in a way that would suffice for the sustainability of existing generations and would not risk future ones	Internalizing environmental and social concerns, adopting a conscious attitude to consumption, choice and disposal of products and services, and often leading a simpler lifestyle	(Saraiva, Fernandes and von Schwedler, 2020)
	Waste management	Finding new and workable solutions to minimize excessive amounts of waste produced by companies and/or industries	Non-contentious actions, acting as negotiators and forming alternative object pathways between companies and opposing consumer groups	(Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019)

Consumer activism is typically conceptualized across three key dimensions, including activism participation and motivational drivers, resource mobilization and social change (Handelman and Fischer, 2018), each explaining distinct yet interconnected dynamics of activist engagement. The first dimension, activism participation and motivational drivers, ranges from mass participation, marked by collective actions such as boycotts, buycotts, petitions, marches and rallies, to more individualized or low-participation forms, including cooperation, shareholder activism and the strategic use of publicity (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). In these latter forms, smaller groups of consumers mobilize to contest particular market actors, such as brands, firms or other consumers, or to support ideologically aligned groups. Across all forms, activism is participated by at least one activist group comprising social actors united by shared beliefs, values and ideals.

Second, the functioning of activist groups is realized through the mobilization of diverse resources aimed at addressing socially rooted problems (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). This mobilization is typically enacted through a range of participatory tactics, including violence, strikes, boycotts, protests, demonstrations, marches and sit-ins, which span a continuum from overtly material to highly symbolic forms of action (Rao, Morrill and Zald, 2000; Atkinson, 2017; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007).

Third, an element of (social) change is almost invariably embedded in any form of activism (Handelman and Fischer, 2018). Activism often embodies "the best indicators of the simmering directions of social change, if not always as the vehicle of change itself" (Sherif, 1970, p. 153), and is driven by "preference structures directed towards social change" (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1218). Desire for change may also serve as a motivational force, prompting individuals to engage in activism to transform their own circumstances (Klandermans, 2004). Across all three dimensions, a common thread lies in the presence of individual and/or collective consumers who contest existing market constituents (Barboza and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2022). The following section discusses these three dimensions of consumer activism in greater detail.

2.3.1 Activism Participation

Activism participation refers to the ways through which individual consumers or groups of consumers actively engage in activist endeavours. Research on activism participation primarily focuses on the motivational factors that drive consumers toward social action (Schrank and Running, 2018; Swimberghe, Flurry and Parker, 2011; Klein, Smith and John,

2004; Tajfel and Turner, 2004), although studies differ markedly in how they conceptualize these motivations (Atkinson, 2017). Such factors often range from micro-level contingencies, including personal grievance, interests and affective states, to broader social, cultural and political ideologies that shape collective engagement.

Table 2.2 presents an overview of the motivational underpinnings of consumer activism through the lenses of consumer grievance, interests, identity, affect and ideology. Each lens is discussed in the following sections.

Table 2.2: Overview of Perspectives on Activism Participation

Perspectives on Activism Participation	**Consumer Grievance**	**Consumer Interests**	**Consumer Identity**	**Consumer Affects**	**Consumer Ideology**
Enabling theories	Collective Behaviour View Mass Society View Relative Deprivation View	Resource Mobilization Theory Rational Action Model Organizational-Entrepreneurial Theory Political Process Theory	Social Identity Theory Realistic Group Conflict Theory Self-categorization Theory	Inter-group Emotions Theory Cognitive Appraisal Theories of Emotion	New Social Movements Theory
Dominant themes in each perspective	Frustration-Aggression framework Moral outrage Hatred	Neoclassic view of consumer Cost versus benefits approach Social media effect	Social identity construction and communication In-group versus out-group tensions	Negative affective states versus Positive affective states	Complementary ideologies versus Oppositional ideologies
Sources	(Humphery and Jordan, 2018); (Romani *et al.*, 2015); (Watkins, Aitken and Mather, 2016); (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b), 2012b); (Legocki, Walker and Kiesler, 2020)	(Sen, Gürhan-Canli and Morwitz, 2001); Klein (Klein, Smith and John, 2004); Brosius (Brosius, Fernandez and Cherrier, 2013); Brouard (Brouard *et al.*, 2023); (Hwang and Kim, 2015); (Daros, 2022);	(Papaoikonomou, Cascon-Pereira and Ryan, 2016); (DeVincenzo and Scammon, 2015); (Pentina and Amos, 2011); (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021); (Cronin, McCarthy and Collins, 2014); (Sage, 2014); (Varman and Belk, 2009)	(Barbeta-Viñas, 2023); (Hoffmann, 2013); (Valor, Lloveras and Papaoikonomou, 2021); (Johnson, Matear and Thomson, 2011); (Kuruoğlu and Ger, 2015); (Kähr *et al.*, 2016)	(Hemais and dos Santos, 2021); (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b); (Reich, Beck and Price, 2018); (Zhao and Belk, 2008); (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013); (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010); (Thompson and Arsel, 2004)

Consumer Grievance

Consumer grievance refers to consumers` formal or informal expressions of dissatisfaction that arise from perceived injustices or disturbances in market behaviour. The consumer grievance perspective is rooted in classical models of social movements, including collective behaviour, mass society and relative deprivation formulations. Among these, the collective behaviour view offers the least causal insight into movement participation. This is because, according to many of its theorists (e.g. Blumer 1951; Turner, 1981), social movements as non-routine forms of collective action, lack formal organization or structure. They acquire such organization as they evolve (Morris and Herring, 1984), and thus cannot be fully explained by pre-existing norms or motivational dynamics.

The mass society view, which regards social movements as collective efforts to transform existing modes of thought and actions, places stronger emphasis on the psychological processes and personality traits that motivate activist behaviour (King, 1956; Kornhauser, 1959). Feelings of alienation, anxiety, detachment and isolation, as characteristics of mass societies and influential in shaping individuals` way of life, are seen as key psychological drivers that mobilize large masses into action. The absence of strong social networks and attachments across class structures in society is thought to propel individuals toward extremist or radical activities, which intensifies when social institutions fail to fulfil their integrative and stabilizing functions (Morris and Herring, 1984).

The relative deprivation view posits that when individuals perceive a discrepancy between what they possess and what they believe they are entitled to, particularly regarding power and privileges relative to other social groups, they are more likely to engage in social action to mitigate the ensuing sense of deprivation (Morris and Herring, 1984). Rapid and large-scale social transformations, such as socioeconomic changes, economic crises, urbanization and industrialization, often exacerbate this perception by reshaping individuals` expectations of status and power. This view is especially pertinent to understand consumer activism, as it highlights the dynamic interaction between personal experiences of discontent and the structural factors that govern activism participation (Huntington, 1968; Crosby, 1976).

Usually examined through a social-psychology lens, the mass society and resource deprivation approaches are often reflected in consumer research through the frustration-aggression framework. The instances of frustration-aggression emerge when consumers perceive marketplace violence as “the actions and narratives of powerful market actors that perpetuate inequalities that less powerful market actors experience” (Martin *et al.*, 2021, p. 68).

Much of the consumer research highlights outrage as a key emotional stimulus for the emergence and persistence of social movements (Humphery and Jordan, 2018; Romani *et al.*, 2015; Watkins, Aitken and Mather, 2016; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b). In particular, moral outrage arises from a perceived discrepancy between consumers` ethical and moral standards and the normative outcomes imposed by broader market systems, thereby motivating resistance (Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019).

Consumers` perceptions of marketplace violence and the ensuing feelings of outrage often lead them to develop animosity toward the violating companies or brands by engaging in various forms of activism whose intensity corresponds to the perceived severity of the transgression. In their study on anti-brand activism directed to Nestlé, and Dolce and Gabbana brands, Romani and colleagues (2015) demonstrate that emotions, such as disgust, anger, fear and contempt, drive anti-brand behaviours including boycotting, picketing and blogging against the brand. Similarly, Kähr and colleagues (2016) reveal that negative emotions, particularly anger, outrage and hatred, can escalate into more violent reactions, such as brand sabotage that may even involve physical harm. Extending the frustration-aggression framework to a consumer-citizen perspective, Legocki and colleagues (2020) evidence that consumer grievance increasingly unfolds digital spaces, where aggrieved consumers engage in activist behaviours through content sharing that often contains injurious and even threatening discourse directed at the offending organization.

The consumer grievance perspective, however, has been critiqued by rationalist approaches that conceptualize activist participation through a cost-benefit lens. The next section elaborates on this view.

Consumer Interests

Consumer interests refer to the needs, preferences and priorities that shape consumers` engagement in activist behaviour. This perspective posits that consumers` decisions to participate in social movements are guided by a cost-benefit analysis (Handelman and Fischer, 2018; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). Accordingly, consumers engage in collective behaviour when they perceive that the benefits of participation outweighs the costs of maintaining the status quo (Zald and McCarthy, 1980), thus making movement outcomes "the products of strategic choices made by participants" (Morris and Herring, 1984, p. 27).

The perspective underlies various formulations of resource mobilization theory, which posits that the allocation of pre-existing resources and associations is pivotal to the

development and maintenance of social mobilization (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Klandermans, 1984; Cress and Snow, 1996). Within this framework, consumer interests, representing cognitive associations that consumers draw upon, serve as key factors in determining the success of activism to the extent that they align with the scope and objectives of the activist endeavour.

The consumer interest perspective differs from consumer grievance one in that it prioritizes individual interests over personal discontent, thereby framing activist engagement as a rational act guided by cognitive evaluations rather than emotional impulses. This stands in contrast to the `victimized or vulnerable consumer` discourses prevalent in the grievance perspective, which tend to associate consumer activism with impulsive or affective responses to systemic disfunctions or social deprivations beyond the consumer`s control. Sen and colleagues (2001) exemplify this distinction in their study on boycott participation, showing that consumers face sudden and unjustified price increases without viable substitutes, their decision to join a boycott is primarily driven by rational assessments of the boycott`s likelihood of success and the personal costs involved, such as preferences for the targeted product or the perceived suitability of its substitutes.

In their study on consumer motivations for boycott participation, Klein and colleagues (2004) demonstrate that consumers decisions depend on perceived intrinsic rewards, such as enhanced self-esteem or relief from guilt and social pressure, that are balanced against the perceived costs of participation, including the loss of preferred products, doubts about efficacy, and potential harms. Similarly, Brosius and colleagues (2013) evidence that even activism directed toward societal welfare can be motivated by hedonically oriented self-interest. In their study on consumer responses to waste reduction through inorganic collection, participants were found to pursue individually oriented `treasure hunting` interests rather than collective goals, such as contributing to a circle economy or benefitting others.

Although the consumer interest perspective has significantly contributed to advancing the understanding of activism participation, it has been critiqued for its reliance on the neoclassical economic model, that conceptualized social actors as rational agents (Handelman and Fischer, 2018), movements as formal organizations and mobilization as a means of resource acquisition (Buechler, 1995). This perspective fails, for instance, to explain why individuals engage in activism despite limited discontent, insufficient resources or awareness of the movement`s low likelihood of success, as well as why they persist even after their demands have been met (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003).

The following sections discuss consumer identity, affects and ideology as alternative perspectives to activism participation developed to address these limitations.

Consumer Identity

Consumer identity is defined as "any category label with which a consumer self-associates that is amenable to a clear picture of what a person in that category looks like, thinks, feels and does" (Reed et al., 2012, p. 310). Unlike the frustration framework in the grievance view or the rationality perspective in the interest view, the identity perspective posits that activism participation stems from a need for cooperation, in which individual distress merges into shared beliefs, concerns, norms and ideals (Sherif, 1975). This view is typically examined through concepts, such as identity construction, identity expression, group identification, solidarity, social identity and self-concept (Ashforth and Kreiner, 1999; Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995; Abrahamson and Fombrun, 1994; Sherif, 1958; Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003; Tajfel and Turner, 2004). While identity construction refers to developing a subjective self-view through activist efforts (Cherrier, 2009), identity expression may become a goal in itself through collective engagement (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003). Solidarity refers to "participants` recognition of their common interests that translates the potential for a movement into action" (Tarrow, 1998, p. 11), helping them withstand threats encountered during the course of activist behaviour (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021). Identification, in turn, describes a state, in which social actors internalize "the perceived prototypical characteristics of the others as their own" (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995, p. 443), hence, the individual identity becomes part of social identity[3] (Tajfel and Turner, 2004, p. 16). Finally, social identity fosters a sense of togetherness by legitimizing the symbolic utility of created collectively value (Abrahamson and Fombrun, 1994) and offering social capital that reinforces justifications for activism participation (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1995).

The identity perspective of activism participation is informed by social psychology theories of intergroup conflict, particularly social identity theory, realistic group conflict theory and self-categorization theory, which explain how in-group (i.e. members of the same group) and inter-group (i.e. members of different groups) relations shape and are shaped by collective behaviour in consumer activism (Saraiva, Fernandes and von Schwedler, 2020; Rumbo, 2002; Discetti and Anderson, 2022). Social identity theory, addressing "how the social context affects

[3] It might be necessary at this point to distinguish between the social identity of an individual and social identity of a group. The former describes "as a set of elemental propositions about the individual's social embeddedness or image (role, position, prestige, and relationships) that the individual holds to be true about himself or herself", while the latter refers to "the intersection of the social identities of the individuals in that group" (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003, p. 204-219).

intergroup relations" (Hornsey, 2008, p. 205), elucidates the roles of `in-group identification` and `group conflict` motivating activism participation (Ashforth and Mael, 1989; Tajfel and Turner, 2004). Realistic group conflict theory further suggests that intergroup tensions results from competition over valuable but limited resources (Brief et al., 2005), prompting collective consumer action (Cress and Snow, 1996). Distinct from these, self-categorization theory (Turner *et al.*, 1987) highlights the role of intra-group dynamics in the formation of activist behaviour (Hornsey, 2008).

Consumer research adopting the identity perspective particularly seeks to understand how collective identity is constructed, communicated and solidified through group dynamics across diverse activist contexts (Garnelo-Gomez, Money and Littlewood, 2022; Kunchamboo, Lee and Brace-Govan, 2021; Gurrieri *et al.*, 2018). Two key themes often guide this inquiry, that is, the role of `us versus them` discourses and the everyday consumption practices appropriated by group members.

First, many studies adopting the identity perspective highlight the `us versus them` discourse, which builds on conflictual distinctions between in-group and out-group members. For instance, Papaoikonomou and colleagues` (2016) study on identity construction in an ethical consumption context indicates that the ideological contrast between ethically motivated ingroup consumers and profit-oriented outgroup ones strengthens collective identity by facilitating members` identification with group ideals. Yet, such identification often depends on the negative stereotyping and exclusion of out-group members. Similarly, the study by DeVincenzo and Scammon (2015) on wind power consumption demonstrates that wind energy purchasers constitutes a principle-based in-group, whereas non-purchasers are perceived as `different` or `sticking out` in their values and norms. These shared emotional boundaries reinforce members` sense of belonging and play a critical role in cultivating environmentally conscious lifestyles.

While much research associates the `us versus them` discourse with conflicts between distinct groups, studies show that such divisions can emerge within a single group united by a shared ideology. For instance, in their study on the Freegan movement, integrating free/shared resources and veganism, Pentina and Amos (2011) reveal deep ideological divides between two camps within the same group. One promotes a market-mediated reformative stance that avoids radical collective action, while the other adopts a market-defying radical ideology open to both legal and illegal practices. Despite these tensions, a unified collective identity is negotiated through members` shared participation in activism. A similar form of internal fragmentation is

observed in the study by Chatzidakis and colleagues (2021) on consumer movements in Exarcheia, Greece, a hub of urban activism. Here, anti- and alternative-consumption practices experience ideological fatigue and internal weakening amid the economic crisis. Yet, collective identity is revitalized through renewed movement solidarity stemming from collectivizing practices and an emergent sense of `shared space` that help sustain the movement`s ideals despite pragmatic and emotion strain.

Second, research on activism participation explores how mundane consumption practices among group members promote activist endeavour through the manufacture of collective identity. Cronin and colleagues (2014), for instance, demonstrate that within the hipster community, collective identity is constructed and expressed through discursive emphasis on food regimes, such as vegetarian choices, and food-related consumption practices, such as kitschy dinner parties and group food shopping. The inconspicuous nature of mundane consumables enables idiosyncratic collective identification through inclusion and differentiation, fostering belonging while distinguishing members from `perceived others`. Similarly, Sage (2014) highlights role of food self-provisioning in facilitating identities grounded in community resilience, that is, the capacity to endure disturbances and sustain solidarity amid environmental degradation, food market instability and calls for redefining the role of the individual consumer. Practices, such as growing and producing one`s own food, serve as acts of consumer disengagement from mainstream markets yet simultaneously facilitates synergetic identities through reconnecting with the place and community in civic forms of social mobilization.

Studies further show that mundane consumption practices can also contribute to the construction of produced identities, those actively formed through participation, rather than stemming from consumers` preexisting selves. In their study on the acquisition of ethnic identity, particularly Indian nationhood, `swadeshi`, Varman and Belk (2009) show that the rhetoric condemning Coca-Cola consumption, associated with capitalism, colonialism and modernist identity politics, facilitates the articulation of a swadeshi-informed national identity. Counterposed to cultural imperialism and identity alienation mediated through Coca-Cola, national identity is enacted through the consumption of Indian drinks, such as lassi and sherbat, and popularized as a non-violent form of activism. Similarly, the production of a green motherhood identity has been investigated in an environmentally responsible consumption context by Atkinson (2014). This identity, centred on safer and more ethical parenting practices, is performed through consumption choices, such as breastfeeding instead of bottle feeding and

using cloth diapers rather than disposable ones. Internalizing the ideals of intensive green mothering is shown to distance women from their innate identities while empowering them through a newly constructed sense of self marked by self-sacrificing and child-centredness.

While the grievance, interest and identity perspectives into activism participation significantly advance understanding of activism participation, they are critiqued for neglecting the long-overlooked role of consumer affect in movement participation and maintenance (Benford, 1997). The following section elaborates in this affective dimension.

Consumer Affects

Affects refer to "experiential states of feeling" that differ in duration, intensity, specificity, pleasantness and arousal level, and play a key role in regulating cognition, behaviour and social interactions (Niven, 2013). As a superordinate category encompassing emotions and moods, such as love, hate and anger, consumer affects are often examined as experiential drivers of responses to perceived marketplace unrest. Within this framework, research explores how affective states transcend the personal realm and into the socio-spatial domain of the marketplace, forming marketplace sentiments (Gopaldas, 2014) as collectively shared emotions with the potential to transform markets.

From a collective behaviour perspective, affective states attract scholarly attention primarily for their impact on movement participation, success and social change (Calhoun, 2001; Collins, 2001; Polletta, 2002; Goodwin, 1997; Aminzade and McAdam, 2001). Equal emphasis is placed on how social movements shape participants` affective states. One stream of research (e.g. Aminzade and McAdam, 2001) argues that social movements provide participants with nonverbal rules that guide emotional alignment with shared causes and ideals, while another (e.g. Calhoun, 2001) suggests that individuals consciously employ strategies to connect emotional and cognitive states, thereby informing action.

The role of participants` affective states in social movements was acknowledged in early studies on collective behaviour, yet later overlooked due to the dominance of cognition-focused perspectives and dualistic, and often antagonistic, separation of reason and emotion (Calhoun, 2001). This emphasis on affects reemerged through feminist and LGBTQ+ movements that challenged the privileged status of rationality over emotion (Jasper and Owens, 2014; Hercus, 1999; Taylor, 1989; Gould, 2001). Recognizing the spectrum of affective states, from negative to positive (McAdam, 2017) has since enriched discussions on activism

participation, moving beyond identity-based explanations and underscoring the embodied nature of political action (Jasper and Owens, 2014).

The consumer affects perspective is often grounded in intergroup emotions theory (Paterson, Brown and Walters, 2019; Rydell *et al.*, 2008; Groenendyk and Banks, 2014; Smith and Mackie, 2015), which explains how group memberships shapes the production and modification of emotions through "the group-biased appraisal, construal, and interpretation processes" (Mackie and Smith, 2018, p. 17). These affective states are crucial for understanding activism dynamics, as emotions significantly influence group behaviours (Tufan, De Witte and Wendt, 2019), reactions, interactions (Mackie, Maitner and Smith, 2009) and the formation of shared emotional frames (Mackie and Smith, 2018). Theoretical formulations on affective states in activism further underline the transformative power of emotions, either through amplifying the initiating emotion or transmuting it into another form that sustain collective action (Collins, 2001).

Activism research adopting the consumer affects perspective generally falls into two streams. The first underlines the transformative potential of negatively laden affective states. Barbeta-Viñas (2023), for instance, demonstrates that guilt emerges as the most salient affect permeating green consumption discourses, shaping the socio-environmental coding of the movement, regardless of participants` level of engagement, social status or class position. Extending this line of inquiry, Hoffmann (2013) examines the role of negative affects in altruistically motivated boycott decisions against firms` relocating offshore. The study finds that negative empathic emotions, defined as "negative feelings that are evoked when an individual recognizes that someone`s actions cause hardship for another" (Hoffmann, 2013, p. 374), trigger a subsequent emotional response, that is, a sense of moral obligation to boycott.

While negative affective states are often associated with the construction and validation of consumer activism, research also shows that they can, paradoxically, delegitimize collective consumer practices by prompting scrutiny of their logic and constituents. Drawing upon institutional theory and discursive psychology, Valor and colleagues (2021) investigate how strong emotive discourses co-opted by activists can undermine the legitimacy of bullfighting in Spain. Their findings reveal that the organized and negative emotional prototyping of movement adversaries, portrayed as psychopaths, bullies or savages, imposes a persistent pathic stigma on group members associated with the stigmatized practice. This emotional vilification, reinforced through the continual reproduction of negative affective stereotypes,

facilitates the deinstitutionalization of the practice by subjecting relevant consumer collectives to intense emotional charge and the socially constructed figure of the villain.

In contrast to research emphasizing negative affective states, the second stream highlights the regenerative role of positive affective states on movement initiation and development. Johnson and colleagues (2011), in their study on the transformation of once-loved brands into sources of consumer hostility, investigate self-relevance as an emotionally charged state emerging from brand identification or attachment. Associated with emotions, such as pride and fulfilment, a self-relevant (as opposed to self-neutral) brand relationship is found to motivate retaliatory responses by rendering consumers affectively vulnerable, even in the absence of a triggering critical incident. Similarly, Kuruoğlu and Ger (2015) examine the affective dynamics involved in transforming the cassette from a mundane consumption object into a medium of resistance and rebellion among the counter-ideological Kurdish minority in Türkiye. Their findings reveal that the emotional materiality, circulating between bodies and objects, fosters affective bonding, sustains a sense of community and contributes to collective mobilization during the Kurdish national uprisings.

While these approaches collectively encourage a reconsideration of consumer activism through an affective lens, they also caution against attributing affective states as the sole motivational force, to the exclusion of related cognitive and ideological dimensions. Most scholars agree that emotions arise from individuals` cognitive evaluations of threats and opportunities associated with the phenomenon and its context (Marcus *et al.*, 2019), and that incorporating emotions into collective action research must involve more than "an ad hoc call to look at the additional variable of "emotionality"" (Calhoun, 2001, p. 51). Within this framework, Kähr and colleagues (2016) demonstrate that emotions and cognitions, such as perceived identity threat, hostile thoughts, hatred and rumination, jointly shape brand sabotage tendencies. Similarly, Sandlin and Callahan (2009) highlight the interplay between consumer emotions and ideology in motivating culture jamming as a form of consumer resistance, particularly through the mass media and advertising industries where such emotions are (re)produced, transmitted and transformed into consumption ideologies.

While the grievance, interests, identity and affects perspectives discussed thus far primarily focus on factors situated within the individual consumer space, they remain limited in scope. Recent research therefore calls for expanding the analytical lens to encompass macro-level forces, most notably ideology, as integral to understanding the formation, participation and evolution of consumer activism. The issue is addressed in the following section.

Consumer Ideology

Ideology refers to "a set of interconnected beliefs and their associated attitudes, shared and used by members of a group or population, that relate to problematic aspects of social and political topics" (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993, p. 24). It is often used publicly to justify political stances (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004). Within a consumption context, ideology describes "ideas and ideals related to consumerism, which are manifested in consumers' social representations and expressed in their communicative actions in the marketplace" (Schmitt, Brakus and Biraglia, 2022, p. 75). Operating at both conscious and unconscious levels, consumer ideology involves social representations and communicative actions, manifesting throughout the consumer journey from search, choice, purchase to usage and disposal (Schmitt, Brakus and Biraglia, 2022). It is inherently shaped and sustained through discourse and articulation as communicative and constructive ways of ideology (Kozinets, 2007).

Ideology frequently informs research on collective action frames, which "amply and extend existing ideologies or provide innovative antidotes to them" (Snow and Benford, 2000, p. 4, 9). It carries an implicit behavioural dimension (Fine and Sandstrom, 1993), shaping how individuals perceive and respond to internal and external stimuli. Prior research shows that consumer ideology influences a broad spectrum of practices, including coffee drinking (Thompson and Arsel, 2004), food purchasing (Reich, Beck and Price, 2018), Zoom background choice (Schmitt, Brakus and Biraglia, 2022), fashion styling (Mikkonen, Vicdan and Markkula, 2014), technology consumption (Kozinets, 2007), marketplace resistance (Rumbo, 2002) and prosocial engagement (Kidwell, Farmer and Hardesty, 2013; Watkins, Aitken and Mather, 2016). In the context of activism participation, ideology furnishes social actors with frameworks to seek meaning, articulate viewpoints and interpret the world, while inherently including a social change orientation (Klandermans, 2004). It thus contributes to activism outcomes by providing the motivational impetus to transform perceived sources and mechanisms of unrest (Blee and Currier, 2005).

From a theoretical standpoint, the consumer ideology perspective draws heavily on New Social Movements (NSMs) as both a contextual and theoretical framework, given their emphasis on the dynamic interplay between consumption and the socio-cultural, political and historical contexts in which it unfolds (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). NSMs, referring to social movements emerging in post-industrial or advanced capitalist societies (Buechler, 1995), typically address societal agendas, such as race, gender and nature (Staggenborg, 2016), and elucidate the reciprocal relationship between individual consumer agency and the social and

culture structures that shape it (Zald, 2000; Cohen, 1985). They thus offer a fertile ground for examining consumer movements (e.g. Kozinets and Handelman, 2004), providing valuable insights into motivation and mechanisms underlying activism participation.

The consumer ideology perspective reframes the actor-centric views of grievance, interests, identity and affects through the lens of broader and more complex social, economic, cultural and political dynamics, thereby advancing our understanding of the contextual embeddedness of consumer activism (Bröckerhoff and Qassoum, 2021). Research in this stream often adopts an oppositional ideological framework that encompasses both complementary ideologies and oppositional ideologies. First, complementary ideologies are "those that coexist with the dominant ideology but do not directly challenge it" serving "as alternative views of reality" (Hirschman, 1993, p. 538). Redden (2002), for instance, argues that the market-informed logic of New Age Movements aligns with the ideological tenets of neoliberal consumerism, as both emphasize and advance ideals of personal agency, autonomy and self-care alongside acquisitive aspects of religious consumerism. In particular, the self-help ideology characteristic of New Age spirituality resonates with the liberal subjectivism of market society, which privileges private agency and individual empowerment.

In another study on Fatshionistas, marginalized and market-excluded plus-sized consumers, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) indicate that, rather than rejecting dominant institutional logics in the fashion industry, Fatshionistas strategically unsettle and countervail them through constructive engagement. This includes articulating their specific needs to marketplace actors, persistently publicizing their demands and forming alliances with resourceful institutional partners. A comparable alignment between counter-reactive consumer ideology and prevailing market logics is observed among Hummer owners, who employ discourses of American nationalism and exceptionalism in response to moral critics of American consumerism (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010). Similarly, Thompson and Arsel (2004) demonstrate how Starbucks exerts a hegemonic brandscape over local coffee shops, not by counterarguing criticisms of `Starbucks experience` associated with the `café flâneurs`, but by rechannelling its marketing effort to produce an iconic brand experience grounded in consumers' experiences of glocalization. Starbucks`s hegemonic influence extends even to its critics, as "anti-Starbucks discourse has become as much a part of local coffee shop culture as an espresso served in a demitasse with biscotti on the side" (Thompson and Arsel, 2004p. 634).

In contrast to complementary ideologies, oppositional ideologies describe “those that contend that the dominant ideology is, in fact, fallacious and should be replaced by the beliefs and values of the oppositional ideology” (Hirschman, 1993, p. 538-539). Such oppositional stance underlies the raison d'être of Proteste, an anti-colonialist consumer organization in Brazil (Hemais and dos Santos, 2021), which, despite its ties with international consumerist organizations, seeks to replace Global North-dominated Eurocentric consumerism with a Global South-originated decolonial alternative. The disordering ideals of oppositional ideology also manifest in the `infidelity` discourse adopted by consumers embracing an Islamist ideology toward global brands in low income middle class circles in Türkiye (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b). Another form of delegitimizing discourse is also felt in anti-neoliberal critiques of emerging agro-food movements positioned against market-mediated food production and consumption regimes (Thompson and Kumar, 2021). This oppositional tone assumes diverse forms. For instance, the anti-neoliberal criticism of the hegemonic mainstream market and its institutions acquire a consumption-infused communist tone during China`s social and political transformation (Zhao and Belk, 2008); a morality-imposing and community-building evangelist tone in popularizing locavorism against national supermarket hegemony (Reich, Beck and Price, 2018); and a market-denying tone in the divergent social practices of the temporary hypercommunity in Burning Man (Kozinets, 2002).

As previously noted, the consumer ideology perspective introduces social, cultural, political, historical and economic insights into the study of consumer activism. Given the breadth of these macro-level dynamics shaping activist behaviour, current research varies considerably in its treatment of the interplay between ideology and consumer activism. To address this variety and the potential ambiguities it may introduce, Table 2.3. provides an overview of oppositional ideologies informing activism research.

Table 2.3: An Overview of Oppositional Ideologies in Consumer Activism

Oppositional Ideology	Source	Consumption domain	Ideological tensions	Consolidation of ideological opposition	Resources mobilized in instituting ideology	Outcomes of ideological tension
(Anti)-hegemonic	(Kozinets, 2007)	Everyday technology consumptions	Hegemonic technology ideologies, that accommodates various ideological standpoints from capitalism to hedonism	Construction and reappropriation of history-laden, industry-driven and society-supported ideologies in everyday technology consumption, expression and communication	Consumer narratives, discourses and articulation / Interplays among technology, consumption and ideology	Technology consumption modes have different ideological reflections that contradict or complement each other in various aspects of personal (such as morality and self-expression) and social life (such as community and productivity)
	(Schmitt, Brakus and Biraglia, 2022)	Upcycling, Zoom backgrounds, Commercialization of TikTok	Hegemonic consumption ideology permeating various consumption practices and experiences	Consumers adapting to the market through desire satisfaction in the market	Consumer desires, consumers lived experiences and market practices	Enhanced market dynamism and sublimation of consumption objects and experiences sublime
(Anti)-individualist	(Mikkonen, Vicdan and Markkula, 2014)	Fashion consumption	Wardrobe Self Help (with a non/anti-fashion and indifference-laden clothing logic) versus perpetual change and emulation of collective ideals of high fashion and mass fashion	Both emancipatory (looking at clothing as a non-fashion ideal) and restrictive norms, rules and action (turning a critical eye on oneself) at the same time / Emphasis on timelessness and individuality (as opposed to uniformity)	Rhetorical tactics prioritizing (thus governing) personal and unique bodily characteristics instead of following mainstream practices of fashion	Construction of a non-fashion-informed ideology through fashion and clothing as cultural mediators / Yet, seizure of this ideology by governmentality-dominant logic through scrutiny, normalization, confession, and responsibilization
	(Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007)	Organic food consumption	Institutionalization of a countervailing market practice through co-optation (Imagined community) versus assimilation of counterculture into mainstream market (classic view of co-optation) / (community-supported agriculture versus commercialization of organic food)	CSA, as an alternative to the organic food, enables consumers to perceive unconventional demands and transaction costs as socially redeeming benefits that include a sense of community, alternative subculture and countervailing the hegemonic mainstream market practices	Creation of ideological alignments between CSA farmers' economic interests and CSA consumers' perceptions of value. They include collective practices of community and artisan food culture creation, decommodification as well as social consensus creation	In CSA, the hegemonizing strategy of co-optation that eliminates the thread of countercultures by commodifying them (so that they can be repositioned in the market) turns organic food movement to its ideological advantage and generates a countervailing market response that aligns with consumers` perception of value
Anti-corporatist	(Thompson and Arsel, 2004)	Coffee consumption / Starbucks	localism versus globalization (and accompanying homogenization,	Amplification of hegemonic brandscape and brands` functioning a cultural model consumers act, think, feel through /	Consumers` discursive, symbolic, and competitive relationships to a dominant brand, particularly those	Global brands exert hegemonic influences on consumers` way of interpreting and constructing meaning out

			expansionism and capitalism)	Glocalization as a cultural heterohybridization	concerning café flâneurs (as opposed to localists)	of market resources provided by brands, and on their identity formations
	(Reich, Beck and Price, 2018)	Organic food consumption	Locavorism (food as ideology involving a sense of anticorporatism and ingroup favoritism, too) versus hegemonic national supermarketism and materialism	Consumer beliefs in a purpose-driven, structured and values-rooted approach to food consumption	Discourses on local food through lionization (superior taste and nutrition), opposition (against long-distance food systems) and communalization (support local communities) / Evangelizing / Indoctrination attempts	Locavorism transcends the established ways of seeing food consumption as meeting a basic need or preference, and acquires an evangelist aspect in its morality-imposing and community-constructing role
Anti-consumerist	(Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010)	Consumption of the Hummer, the often-critiqued example of an excess that American consumerism has arrived	Moralism versus consumerism (American exceptionalism and nationalism versus Un-Americanism)	Brand-mediated moral conflicts (such as Hummer condemnations, hostile discourses and acts versus Hummer ownership)	Moralistic mythic (and religious) structures (or moral protagonism) and mythological scripts	Construction of multifaceted and culturally framed moralistic identity through transformation of ideological beliefs
	(Kozinets, 2002)	Festival (Burning Man) participation and communal everyday consumption	Anti-consumerist critique versus Consumerism	Anti-consumerist rhetoric, alternative exchange practices as opposed to efficiency and rationality logic of market dominated consumerism	Community enhancing and anti-hegemonic market discourses (metaphors and meanings of consumption), and practices (gift giving and reducing social distance), and using self-expressive and self-transformative art	Construction of a temporary hypercommunity allowing for divergent social practices; and still reconfirmation of permeability of consumerist market logics
	(Rumbo, 2002)	Consumption of everyday	Anti-consumption ideology (rooted in postmodernism and anti-institutionalism) versus consumerism (embedded in materialism)	Enactment of post-modernist view through ideals of decentralized subsistence economies, juxtaposition of opposites, fragmentation and blurring between production and consumption	Culture jamming and use of anti-consumption, anti-mass media as ideological uprising against co-optation and commodification enacted by hegemonic mainstream marketing / Ad avoidance	While anti-consumption strategies lead to post-modern consumer`s transformation of self, they are also easily absorbed and co-opted by marketers as reasons for further consumption
Anti-colonialist	(Hemais and dos Santos, 2021)	Proteste, a consumer organization in Brazil, having ties with international, esp. euro-centric consumerist organizations	Decolonial consumer ideology versus Eurocentric consumerism (embedded in modernity and coloniality)	Historical proximity, organizational links between Proteste and consumerist organizations/ consumer informing through comparative product testing/ Financial dependence	Depiction of Eurocentric consumerist knowledge as being universalist, and the hierarchy created inside Euroconsumers organizations	Duality created in perception of Global south and Global north leads to the domination of eurocentrism over other ideological standpoints of the rest of the world
	(Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b)	Global brands-enabled consumption	Religiously (Islam)-informed brand meaning making versus global brands and market societies	Intertwining between religion, myth and ideology/ Idealization of Islam and formation of Consumer jihad ideals /	Infidelity discourse centred around themes of modesty, halal-haram, and tyranny, that also characterizes market societies as devoid	Religious (Islamist) ideology keeps informing and governing consumers` view and understanding of brands / Religion plays

				socio economic background of the dominant ideology (low-income middle class)	of social equality, morality, and justice	important role in mobilization of consumer myths and consumer goals and orients consumers into social change
Anti-(Neo)liberalist	(Thompson and Kumar, 2021)	Food consumption	Anti-neoliberalist agro-food movements versus market mediated neoliberalism	Cultural condemnations of the movement`s politicized taste practices and elitist ideals / "Actually existing neoliberalism" manifest referring to the neoliberal discourses and their ideological effects	Criticism about Slow Food Movement`s redressing societal problems through market-mediated beliefs and acts of consumption while propagating social elitism, status signalling and exclusionary taste, as anti-democratic ideals	Slow Food network resorts to therapeutic narratives and neoliberal idealizations (such as entrepreneurship) to defend their position against criticism targeted to the ideals and market outcomes of the movement
	(Zhao and Belk, 2008)	Everyday consumption as is co-opted by advertising	Communist ideology versus Neoliberal Consumerism rising to dominance in modern China (thus, blended with a critique of capitalist ideology)	Symbolism employed by advertising industry, particularly the appropriation of public support discourses, anti-consumerist campaigns and socialist landmarks, heroes and icons,	Recontextualization of language to transfer into a mythical meaning (or mythified)/ Naturalization of political reality and reproduction of ideology through mythification	Reconfiguration of China`s communism-rooted political ideology and symbolism into a consumption-promoted ideology during the country`s social and political transition
	(Sobande, 2020)	Everyday consumption	Intersectionality-friendly wokeness versus neoliberal notions of self-determination and meritocracy (blackness) and patriotism and post-racialism (feminism)	Mass consumption of advertising industry and portrayals of consumer and consumption ideals on social media advertising	"Woke" marketing representations, images and subject positions created by them in the mass media	Race and gender issues influence marketing strategies, particularly those on social media/ Brand responsibilization for increasing a sense of wokeness
Anti-unethical	(Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard and Kristensen, 2011)	Everyday mundane consumption	Demoralized brand-inflated `bad` consumption versus `good` consumption	Modernity epitomizes a never-ending desire to consume (Bauman) where consumption is polarized into a demoralizing and strictly individualized end. Here, brands are perceived to shelter the insecurity and search for solution to life complexities of modern consumer while indeed spurring the same insecurity and alienation through market-mediated materialism.	The myth of craftmanship and a new work ethic that permeates consumption and is based on a relationship between diligent work and admirable outcome rather than traditional production and consumption as well as union of both Protestant and Catholic ideals	While accepting that consumption is inescapable, the new work ethic produces another model of morality positing that consumption is work and should be done right to feel proud of, rather than condemning or escaping it. it also uses resources from both consumer and producer. Resistance it involves is silently effective rather than loudly revolutionary.
	(Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007)	Food consumption	Localized and de-territorialized consumption	Consumer (worker)-participated local food provision and distribution	Narratives on localized and community-generating power of food,	CSA operates by leveraging local food and anti-globalization ideals in

			versus Postmodern market-mediated consumerism	system where lines among, consumption, production and labour get blurred and communal connections are formed, as opposed to de-territorialized and corporate production–consumption cycles	idealizations of rural communities and sublimation of organic farmers as custodian of the land and protectors of small producers against the detrimental impact of globalization / dialectic of local food ideology and enchantment	prioritizing small farmers and empowering consumer through feelings of enchantment / It re-territorializes market system blurring boundaries between local and global, consumer and producer, and economic exchanges and moral obligations
Anti-exclusionist	(Sandikci and Ger, 2010)	Fashion consumption (Islamic veiling)	Destigmatization (and routinization, normalization) versus stigmatization (and marginalization repression)	Appropriation and commercialization of the stigmatized practice in the market/Political patronage as an enabling sociocultural and religious backbone/The emergence of a growing neoliberal market and rising political power of Islam	(New)Political abutment against the former acts of political intervention in personal realm/Fight against stigma by challenging or rejecting the constraints/growing community consciousness and its empowering role in changing demands	Consumption mediates negotiation and reconfiguration of power relations /Adoption of stigmatized practice is enabled by search for stability, comfort and encounter with a new community/Personalization and aestheticization embraced by new Islamist middle class
	(Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013)	Oversize fashion consumption	Inclusivity versus marginalization and exclusion	Platformization of Fatshionistas, plus-sized consumers, on social media/Assertiveness and demanding more options from mainstream marketers collectively/Unsettling specific market logics through alignment with institutional logics	Development of a collective identity, identification of inspiring institutional entrepreneurs, and access to mobilizing institutional logics from adjacent fields	Fatshionistas employ constructive strategies to legitimize their cause (appealing to institutional logics, publicizing institutional innovations and persistent institutional impediments, and allying with more powerful institutional actors). They unsettle specific market logics by reinforcing established ones
	(Arsel and Thompson, 2011)	Music, arts, and fashion consumption	Demythologization versus commercially mythologized and disauthenticating marketplace myth	Countercultural consumption field of hipster community is reciprocated across large consumer culture spectrum and acquire identity value /Acceptance and new cultural construction of the hipster on mass media/It reflects on the market as a cultural brand through emergent forms of music, arts and fashion	Practices, strategies, and counternarratives (Aesthetic Discrimination, Symbolic Demarcation, Consumer Sovereignty), utilized by consumers use to form symbolic boundaries between their identified consumption field and marketplace-imposed normalities	When prevailing marketplace myth clashes hipster community`s aesthetic values and lifestyles, they employ demythologizing practices to prove and consolidate their identity and distance their consumption field, rather than leaving the identity-devaluing marketplace

Overall, research on activism participation identifies multiple motivational factors driving consumers to engage in activist behaviour. Traditional approaches often emphasize consumer grievance and interests, framing activism within neoclassical logics of consumer rationality. Contemporary perspectives, by contrast, highlight identity, affects and ideology as more complex factors shaped by contextual dynamics. These motivational factors may also overlap (e.g. Fernandes, 2020; Trautwein and Lindenmeier, 2019) and be influenced by demographic conditions (e.g. Rangwala, Jayawardhena and Saxena, 2020; Thomas, White and Samuel, 2021).

The following section provides a detailed account of the resource mobilization perspectives prevailing in existing activism research.

2.3.2 Resource Mobilization

Resource mobilization refers to the process by which the activist groups employ enabling resources to address perceived unrest (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). According to resource mobilization theory, this process is crucial for activism development and persistence (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Klandermans, 1984; Cress and Snow, 1996). These resources often foster participation, allowing members to unite their strengths toward shared goals while maintaining competitive advantages over opponents (Turner, 1981; Snow *et al.*, 1986). Table 2.4 provides an overview of how resource mobilization is addressed in consumer activism research, followed by a discussion of each perspective.

Table 2.4: Resource Mobilization in Activism Research

Overarching Resource	Specific Resource Utilized	How Resource Facilitates Mobilization Process	Consequences of Resource Mobilization	Exemplary Source
Platformization				
	Consumer feedback platform	Social platform impacts consumers` activism behaviour as a means of empowerment that uses some same-side and cross-side network effects, affordances, and algorithms	`Digital civics` significantly impact citizen participation at social action by facilitating or limiting consumer empowerment	(Kozinets, Ferreira and Chimenti, 2021)
	Digital enclave #MyBlackReceipt	Consumers resort to five tactics in deploying the digital enclave as an enabling resource, namely, legitimizing, delimiting, vitalizing, manifesting, and bridging	Digital enclaves help marginalized market actors mobilize digital network tools to (re)participate in markets	(Brouard *et al.*, 2023)
	Ethical consumption apps	By means of creating crowdsourcing, facilitating a sharing process across network, necessitating actors to be politically active. It may also result in more individuality and fragmentation	Formation of digital technocultures / Greater connectivity and information availability / Construction of communities of activism	(Humphery and Jordan, 2018)
Self				
	Selfie	Selfie contributes to consumers` social dialogue by means of objectivity regarding their commodity form and subjectivity as a facilitator of self-expression, self branding and authenticity	As a type of image with a history, selfie strategically shifts traditional ways of advertising photography and transforms the way that social actors become engaged with themselves and their surroundings	(Iqani and Schroeder, 2016)
	Laughter	Acting as a weapon against the wrong doings of brands/marketers, polyvocal social commentary and a way of expression based on sense of collective humour rather than reason	Laughter can turn into a distinct form of critique and collective social action without any deliberation when it is in its repetitive and excessive forms.	(Kravets, 2021)
	Body (Biopower)	Overweight female bodies function as resource against governability of disciplinary mechanisms such as non-lean consumer subject	Women are subject to `complicit resistance` in coping with different forces exerted by biopower in a social context in which femininity is tied to fashion and body standards.	(Zanette and Pereira Zamith Brito, 2019)
Discourse				
	Islamist discourse	Through the use of an infidel parable embedded in the religious ideology of Islamism that picture market societies as devoid of social equality, morality, and justice	Islamist discourses in their emotive form connotate consumer jihad against global brands. Consumer jihad ideals are co-opted as forms of protests against crises of modernity and globalization	(Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b)
	Utopic discourse	Creating discourses on politics, economy, environment and technology expressed through reflexive, playful, imaginative, emotional and engaged messaging	Utopic discourses arise as a critique of capitalism and alternative systems while clicktivism represents an important online and political form of activism participation	(Kozinets, 2019)
	Motherhood discourse	Green motherhood discourses are framed by mainstream advertising which provides mothers with solutions for contemporary parenting crises AND reinforces lifestyle choices provoking those crises simultaneously.	Although such discourses seem to empower mothers in their pregnancy journey, they eradicate their subjectivity by emphasizing the child as the primary subject and brands as mere sources of expert knowledge	(Atkinson, 2014)
Arts				

	Quarantine Art	Through the formation of an aesthetic tribe of consumer-producers during self-isolation	Visual arts allow for an aesthetic and emancipatory expression of being together. It transforms `caring for other` aspect of female subjectivity	(Hietala, 2022)
	Music	Protest forms of music such as rock music excite transformational experiences and different modes of being through instrumentalization of music and collective reproduction of global activism discourse	Music within rock festival context (conceptualized as Activentertainment) transforms and recreates consumer identities by providing ideological grounds and multiple cultural codes	(Yazicioglu and Firat, 2008)
	Protest Art	Using public space to draw audience engagement, participation and co-creation of artwork, as well as educating and informing citizens through innovative art projects	Creativity and artistic expression of the protest camps result in greater global attention and contribute to movement success	(Patsiaouras, Veneti and Green, 2018)
Networking				
	Social networking	Digital fandom as a stage for a commodified cyberactivism becomes resource within consumer subculture	It both empowers consumer as prosumers letting them exercise their freedom and exposes them to exploitative forces such as unpaid labour.	(Daros, 2022)
	Online networking	Online ties create audiences for private actions, by means of whom consumer activists can reinterpret their actions into public ones.	Online networking contributes to political consumerism as consumers tied online are more prone to adopting changes consistent with the goals of the movement.	(Parigi and Gong, 2014)
	Celebrity networking	Relationships formed with celebrities aligning with the cause of the consumer activism	It allows consumers to reach a wider audience, better justify their cause of activism and attracts support from outside but related movements	(Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013)

Platformization

Platformization is understood in this study as the process through which diverse platforms, particularly digital ones, function as enabling contexts that facilitate, mediate and influence the emergence and progression of activist behaviours. Prior research emphasizes the significant role of social media in amplifying the voices of marginalized consumers. For example, in a recent investigation into the #MBR movement, established to support Black entrepreneurs and promote economic retention within the Black community, Brouard and colleagues (2023) illustrate how digital enclaves foster market participation by empowering racialized market actors to control relevant resources. Similarly, Sobande and colleagues (2020) argue that online encounters and digital representations constitute mechanisms of resistance, allowing Black women to effectively navigate market challenges.

Beyond facilitating market participation for racialized consumers, social media have also been shown to play a critical role in market creation for marginalized consumers, such as plus-size fashion consumers. In the study by Scaraboto and Fischer (2013), Fatshionistas, plus-size consumers marginalized by mainstream fashion market, are empowered through the provision of socio-cyber spaces, enabling them to mobilize for change against dominant institutional logics and advocate for greater inclusion in the fashion industry. Similarly, Hwang and Kim (2015) demonstrate that social media enhance movement participation by improving consumers` social capital, which acts as a mediator between social media usage and movement participation. Daros (2022) corroborates this capital-enhancement view emphasizing the digital realm`s capacity to transition consumers from passive consumption to active production. On the other hand, Discetti and Anderson (2022) challenge the binary distinction between digital and physical market spatiality, advocating instead for a hybrid model of consumer activism that simultaneously negotiates belonging and collective identity across both digital and physical environments. Regardless of whether the platform is physical, digital or hybrid, platformization is consistently shown to mediate consumer activism in contexts that are often difficult for marginalized voices to be heard.

The Self

Discussions on the consumer self are often intertwined with considerations of the visible aspects of identity (Belk, 1988; Cherrier, 2009) and the body (Kuruoglu, 2024; Veresiu and Parmentier, 2021). Within the resource mobilization framework, the self and its associations are leveraged to facilitate alternative expressions of consumer discontent or even

sarcasm. Iqani and Schroeder (2016), for instance, argue that the selfie serves as a strategic tool in consumers` social dialogue, transforming their engagement with themselves and their surroundings while challenging traditional advertising methods. Similarly, Zanette and Pereira Zamith Brito (2019) indicate that overweight female bodies act as bodily resources in complicit resistance against prevailing societal disciplinary mechanisms. Conversely, Kravets (2021) explores the body through the lens of laughter, which functions as a distinct form of critique and collective social action against marketplace injustices. Together, these approaches indicate how embodied practices constitute vital resources in consumer activism, enabling both individual expression and collective resistance.

Discourse

Discourse is understood in this study as the patterned ways of representations, often conveyed through speech or writing, that communicate certain meanings, beliefs or ideals. It is often associated with forms of counter-consumption, such as the anti-consumption discourse of voluntary simplicity and culture jamming (Cherrier, 2009) as well as resistant tactics, such as those opposing normative femininity (Harju and Huovinen, 2015). In this regard, discourse functions as a tool for meaning making, through which consumers construct, deconstruct and reconstruct structures of dominance, perceived as harmful. Izberk-Bilgin (2012a) evidences that consumers identified with an Islamist ideology resist and criticise market societies as devoid of social equality, morality, and justice through an infidel parable embedded in their religious discourse. This discourse reaches such a tone that it resonates a form of jihad against global brands as well as crises of modernity and globalization. Unlike Izberk-Bilgin, Atkinson (2014) shows that discourse can also be mobilized in a more organized way by organizational structures, especially the advertising industry. In this form, a motherhood discourse can function as resistive solutions to contemporary parenting crises. Yet, the author cautions that while seeming to empower mothers, it can simultaneously eradicate their subjectivity and exacerbate existing tensions. Kozinets (2019) more recently emphasizes discourse`s potential as a reflexive, playful, imaginative, emotional and engaged form of messaging. In the study, utopic discourse on politics, economy, environment and technology is evidenced as a way of criticizing capitalism in an online political activism context. Together, these studies underscore discourse as a multifaceted resource in consumer activism, capable of both challenging and reinforcing dominant social structures.

Arts

The use of arts is frequently associated with more creative forms of resistance, although these forms can also voice severe criticism and a strong resistive stance against the source of unrest. They can function as expressions of consumer beliefs, expectations and emotions (Hietala, 2022). In their study on protest art, Patsiaouras and colleagues (2018) indicate that arts were used as a voice of dissent during the Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement. During the protests, artwork mediated an artistic expression of consumer resistance through the use of public space where it was publicly performed and cocreated with the audience. Yazicioglu and Firat (2008), likewise, argue that protest music, especially rock music, can significantly contribute to the success of activism by providing consumers with ideological grounds and multiple cultural codes. Creating transformational experiences, the protest music in this context represents collective reproduction of global activism discourse. In these forms, arts often function as a powerful medium that amplifies the communication of activist messages and fosters community solidarity.

Networking

Networking describes the process through which consumers establish and maintain social relationships, which can in turn be functional in the expression of activism goals and ideals. Its contribution to activism success as a strategic resource is particularly stressed across traditional political activism contexts (Tarrow, 1998) as well as more contemporary forms of activism (Peattie and Samuel, 2018; Daros, 2022). Prior research on activism particularly underscores the role of social media on the formation of networking. Within a political activism framework, Parigi and Gong (2014) show that online networking facilitates consumers to adopt changes consistent with their goals more easily. It can further promote more individual forms of activism by enabling individual consumers to carry their personal actions into public spaces. Scaraboto and Fischer (2013), although not contextualized within a political context, likewise highlight that networking formed with celebrities can contribute to activism success by allowing consumers to reach a wider audience and attract support from relevant movements. On the other hand, Daros (2022), while acknowledging the power of networking, draws attention to exploitative exercise of social networking. Accordingly, digital fandom, as a form of social networking, can become a stage for cyber-activism, which can allow consumers to exercise their freedom while simultaneously exposing them to exploitative forces such as unpaid labour.

Overall, research on consumer activism highlights multiple types of resources, explicitly or implicitly mobilized by consumers to achieve activist goals. Although resources highlighted vary in form and tone, they commonly function in a way that strategically empowers the owner against sources of unrest.

The following section explores the third dimension of consumer activism, that is, social change.

2.3.3 Social Change

Any perspective on social activism inherently incorporates a goal-driven effort to alter existing social arrangements to restore disrupted order, therefore, an element of social change is almost always embedded in any conception of consumer activism (Handelman and Fischer, 2018; Atkinson, 2017). This change can take various forms, ranging from challenging to collaborating with the contested source, often rooted in the marketplace. In this regard, the social change perspective within consumer activism aligns with Giesler (2008)`s market system dynamics, which theorizes markets as evolving continuously through "discursive negotiations among and the practices of multiple stakeholders", including consumers (Giesler and Fischer, 2017, p. 3). Such dynamic and contentious social change collaborates with the overall market system by "producing innovation and restraining capitalism from destroying the resources it depends on for survival" (King and Pearce, 2010, p. 249). Accordingly, every social movement articulates a "vision for change […] to remedy the causes of protest or defiance" (Sherif, 1968, p. 51). As Bossy (2014, p. 187) notes, this belief in the unavoidability of change in consumer activism accommodates a utopian rationale, wherein social actors hold that "another society is possible and desirable", even if its precise form remains unclear. This utopian ideal is preceded by a rejection of the existing order as the source of unrest.

Social change as a by-product of social movements is often examined through the social psychological perspective of group conflict. This discussion traces back to Marx ([1846] 1998; 1967), who associates revolutionary movements and social change with structural contradictions inherent in capitalism (Morris and Herring, 1984). Echoing Marx, Tajfel and Turner (2004, p. 9) argue that social group relations are characterized by stratification, which "moves social behaviour away from the pole of interpersonal patterns towards the pole of inter-group patterns". The perceived extent of stratification correlates with the intensity of social change and diffusion. Beyond the conflictual nature of capitalism and stratification, Sherif (1970) draws attention to a socio-psychological perspective of social change emphasizing

alienation as a motivational base that arises from social problems and prompts people into social action. In this state of alienation and normlessness, actors seek new alternatives, often aiming to replace existing sources of unrest. The disrupted social order is then re-stabilized through change, enacted by various stakeholder groups, either directly involved in or indirectly affected by social movements.

Prior research on consumer activism-driven social change generally agrees that such change is executed between marginalized consumer groups and contested entities, such as firms or brands (Klein, Smith and John, 2004; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Alvarez, Brick and Fournier, 2021; Dietrich and Russell, 2021), industries or their constituents (Sine and Lee, 2009; Giesler, 2012; Hiatt, Sine and Tolbert, 2009), established systems or ideologies concerning particular consumption practices (Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Reich, Beck and Price, 2018; Schmitt, Brakus and Biraglia, 2022) or consumption as a whole (Varman and Belk, 2009; Rumbo, 2002; Kozinets, 2002). Change may also manifest between different consumer groups themselves in various cognitive, psychological, psycho-social or emotional forms during their interactions (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010; Valor, Lloveras and Papaoikonomou, 2021). Building on this foundation, the present study conceptualizes activism-driven social change across four key dimensions, namely, business-level, market-level, industry-level and system-level change. The following sections provide a detailed account of these dimensions.

Activism-driven Social Change

Consumer activism research examines social change from multiple perspectives. Key debated aspects in the activism-change relationship include the social level at which social change is experienced, its intensity, the scale of activist groups, the contested entities involved, the degree of homogeneity, that is, the similarity in interests, values and norms among group members, and moral legitimacy. Table 2.5 provides an overview of activism-driven social change across the business, market, industry and system levels of consumer interaction, each representing different scales of consumer confrontation with the source of unrest. It is followed by a detailed examination of the dynamics underlying each level.

Table 2.5: Overview of Social Change as Activism Outcome

Level of Change	Nature of Change	Contested Organism(s)	Level of Homogeneity	Examples
Business-level Change: Consumer vs. firm perspective/Material conflicts and explicit clashes/Well-defined demand and supply relation	Corrective/Relating a specific state of unrest/Resolved once business makes required amendment	One organizational form, such as a business as source of discord involved	Highest level of homogeneity with considerable similarity in interests, ideas, values and norms among group members	Disney (Scaraboto et al., 2013); Lovebot Blue (Pöyry and Laaksonen, 2022); Shell (Ozer et al., 2022); United Airlines (Kähr *et al.*, 2016); WalMart (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010)
Market-level Change: Occurs in already formed, well-functioning markets/Demand-driven and product substitutability-bounded	Reformative/Demands structural alterations/Requires reformative actions by more than one business functioning in the market	Contested supply side is represented with more than one organizational entity functioning within the same industry	Both in-group and between-group members are more diverse in their interest, ideas, values and norms than those in business-level change	Online fashion (Dolbec and Fischer, 2015); Indie music (Choi and Burnes, 2016): Plus-size (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013): Minimoto (Martin and Schouten, 2014)
Industry-level Change: Introduces a new understanding of a consumer need and expectation/Formation of a totally new industry	Radical/Fosters disruptive innovations at the industry level/Industrial dynamics are changed and/or recreated from scratch	Involves various organizational entities inside and outside the industry, different players along the supply chain, NGOs and policy makers	The level of homogeneity decreases considerably with a more diverse group and member characteristics	Botox (Giesler, 2012); Music downloading (Giesler, 2008); Yoga (Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur, 2017); Food waste (Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019)
System-level Change: Ideological transformation/New Social Movements perspective/Complex network of socio economic, cultural and historical fabric	Paradigmatic/Collective actions targeted to consumption act per se/Subsequent establishment of a new understanding of consumption together with the ways manifesting it	Involves a wider range of stakeholders such as suppliers, investors, creditors, media, communities, trade unions and government agencies/ Transferable between cultural groups and generations	Represents the highest level of heterogeneity with the inclusion of a rather diverse stakeholder groups with differing interest, ideas, values and norms	Food culture (Ulver, 2019); Voluntary simplicity (Zamwel, Sasson-Levy and Ben-Porat, 2014); Fairtrade Towns (Peattie and Samuel, 2018); New Age (Redden, 2002)

Business-level Change

According to Low and Davenport (2009), modern consumer movements, such as ethical consumption, differ from earlier movements in their shift from seeking broad political change at the state level to facilitating more localized change at the business level. This business-level change perspective often frames the relationship as a dichotomy of `consumer versus firm`, where businesses, as economic actors, are cast in an antagonist role (Handelman and Fischer, 2018), frequently implicated in creating or exacerbating social problems that negatively impact large consumer groups (King and Soule, 2007; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2013; Georgallis, 2017; Carberry *et al.*, 2019; Hadani, Doh and Schneider, 2019; King, 2008). Conversely, affected or potentially affected consumer groups assume a protagonist role, pivotal in keeping organizational cohesion to pursue collective goals based on shared interests. From a business perspective, these consumer concerns are viewed as priorities that must be managed by the business, given consumers` profound influence on business decision-making (Freeman, 1984; Frooman, 1999).

The business-level change perspective often centres on material conflicts and explicit clashes between clearly defined yet opposing supply and demand sides. According to Sherif (1970, p.144), "the development of a social movement always implies, sooner or later, the confrontation of partisans committed to conflicting positions". These positions are represented on the one side by "partisans of an established authority", who set the "natural" boundaries for what is expected, acceptable, respectable, prestigious and desirable, and on the other side by "partisans to a new social movement, questioning, challenging the Establishment", often driven by "unrest, dissatisfaction, and frustration with things as they are" (Sherif, 1970, p. 144).

This clash is evident in Legocki and colleagues` (2020) study, which shows that consumers successfully challenged the 2017 Charlottesville Unite the Right rally and its political ideology when they perceived it as a public service provider`s failure to meet performance expectation. In Sherif`s term, this reflects the domination of an established authority over consumer groups. In another study, Scaraboto and colleagues (2013) explore frustrated consumers resistance to Disney`s closure of the adverworld `Virtual Magic Kingdom`. The authors demonstrate how competing logics between consumers` community-oriented and democratic commitments and the top-down, producer-sovereignty-driven promotional logic of the officials shape consumer activism. Likewise, Pöyry and Laaksonen (2022) reveal confrontational dynamics in consumer contestation of brand activism rather than mere contesting of the brand. In this case, a dissatisfied consumer group opposes Finnish candy producer, Lovebot Blue`s campaign to detect online hate speech using artificial intelligence,

objecting on grounds of field infringement, socio-political concerns and campaign broader impact.

While generating conflict, the assignment of opposing roles and logics between the supply and demand sides simultaneously legitimizes and fuels the `disruptions` created by social movements, which arise as "effective means to compel change" (Luders, 2006, p. 964). In the context of business-level change, such disruptions to existing social arrangements are often *corrective* in nature, aimed at addressing a specific state of unrest between the two sides of the exchange relationship. Social change, in this sense, is achieved when the supply side, conceived as the source of conflict, implements effective remedial actions to resolve this discord. Supporting this view, Ozer and colleagues (2022) highlight the importance of corrective actions undertaken by the contested firm, Shell, in mitigating conflict and restoring damaged relationships. The authors particularly underscore the importance of narrowing the gap between consumers` sense of moral obligation and their perceptions of how it has been violated by the firm through credible and actionable remedies.

Moreover, disruptions aimed at business-level change may span a wide spectrum from symbolic damage intended to affect the corporate image of a firm to disfunction impairment or even the replacement of an existing institution with a new one (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007; Morrill, Zald and Rao, 2003; Scott, 1989). Material forms of damage [such as sabotage or theft], typically seek to subvert, destroy, obstruct or appropriate "organizational technologies and resources, while symbolic forms [such as covert conflict, grievance expression, hidden transcripts and symbolic escape] attempt to subvert dominant meanings, ideologies, and discourses" (Morrill, Zald and Rao, 2003, p. 394 in reference to Scott, 1989). Kähr and colleagues (2016) distinguish consumer brand sabotage, as a hostile and aggressive response to perceived brand violations, from other negative consumer behaviours, which tend to serve more instrumental purposes, such as restoring equity or venting negative emotions. In their study, the authors illustrate this through the case of musician Dave Carroll, who protested against United Airlines after the company damaged his guitar, releasing a YouTube video that garnered millions of views and caused both financial loss and lasting reputational harm to the firm. Thus, in many instances of social activism, material and symbolic forms of contestation coexist and often intersect with one form reinforcing or giving rise to the other.

At business level change, what is commonly contested concerns the manner in which a business or organizational entity conducts its activities, particularly when such practices are perceived as harmful or as failing to meet consumer needs and expectations. Activist efforts at this level often emerge around a shared set of views and interests, thus exhibiting a relatively

homogenous character among group members. Such homogeneity is frequently facilitated by processes of platformization, that is, the unification of consumers under a specific, and often online, platform. Such platforms are usually founded and maintained by like-minded individuals who gather around shared concerns and ideals, attributing symbolic and affective meaning to the online community itself.

In their study on an online anti-Wal-Mart community, Hollenbeck and Zinkhan (2010) demonstrate that consumers engage in comparable forms of counterfactual reasoning, contrasting their experiences with imagined better or worse alternatives, while employing discursive storytelling rooted in personal encounters with the brand, and participating in non-compulsory observation through incidental exposure to others` anti-Wal-Mart behaviours. Brandão and Popoli (2022) similarly show that social media-mediated platforms foster a collective consciousness grounded in shared ideals, rituals and moral responsibilities, while also enabling the articulation of contested relationships between consumers and the brands under scrutiny, such as Apple, Nestlé, Uber and McDonald's. Conversely, Daros (2022), in an analysis of digital fan communities surrounding American singer Britney Spears, cautions that online platformization may also devolve into a commodified cyberactivism wherein consumers simultaneously experience exploitation and empowerment while producing value, practicing entrepreneurship and exercising self-organization and personal agency while being subject to the extractive dynamics of digital labour.

The business-level change perspective remains the most prevalent framework within consumer research on consumer activism and its associated outcomes. Another important line of inquiry concerns market-level change, which surpasses the dichotomous `consumer versus firm` view by focusing on the broader configurations of market relations. This perspective explores how activist efforts reshape market dynamics among multiple stakeholders rather than within a single business relationship. The topic is elaborated in the following section.

Market-level Change

The business-level change perspective on consumer activism places particular emphasis on the dynamic exchange processes occurring between production and consumption sides within established and well-functioning markets. Prior research highlights that social movements can act as a critical impetus for new market creation within an existing industry[4]

[4] Although there is no consensus on a clear distinction among the concepts of industry, market and sector, this study relies on the study by Zald and McCarthy (1980, p. 1219) for further clarification. Accordingly, "close substitutability of product usage and, therefore demand interdependence" comprises the theoretical basis for defining `industry`, while `Sector` describes "broader inclusiveness" than an industry. On the other hand, `market` is used in this research to refer to a smaller segment bound with closer product and demand-relatedness within a specific industry.

(Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Martin and Schouten, 2014; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013), rather than merely addressing a specific relationship between clearly defined supply and demand actors. Giesler (2012, p. 56) conceptualizes market creation as "a progressive sequence of brand image contestations among opposing groups of stakeholders through which their divergent interests are aligned and concrete exchange structures between producers and consumers are established". Within this framework, market creation emerges as a "brand-mediated legitimization process" (ibid), wherein contestation, negotiation and alignment among multiple market actors contribute to the creation of new market logics.

In its attempt to examine how consumer activism challenges existing institutional structures and contributes to new market formations, the market-level change perspective largely draws on (neo)institutional theory and particularly the notions of deinstitutionalization and reinstitutionalization (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). Deinstitutionalization describes the process through which established institutions weaken and disappear, whereas reinstitutionalization denotes an "exit from one institutionalization, and entry into another institutional form, organized around different principles or rules" (Jepperson, 1991, p. 152). While the concept of deinstitutionalization illuminates how dominant norms, practices and structures erode through activist endeavours, reinstitutionalization emphasizes the mechanisms through which new institutional arrangements gain legitimacy and become embedded within the broader social system.

In this regard, Dolbec and Fischer (2015), in their study on the online fashion market conceptualized as a new `arena of action` within the mass fashion market, explore how consumers` unintentional acts of resistance can trigger new market creation through processes of institutionalization. The authors demonstrate that the new online fashion market emerges from the institutionalization of shared ideals and enthusiasm among newly arising market actors, such as street photographers and fashion bloggers, and their contestation with traditional actors. A similar process is evidenced in Choi and Burnes (2016)`s study on the emergence of the `indie` music market in South Korea, which reveals how consumer passion and commitment to independent music, reflective of national identity, foster the creation of a distinct cultural market within a larger profit-oriented and conventional music industry. This new market becomes institutionalized through consumers` sustained responsibility for its maintenance and development, which is further reinforced by support from adjacent fields, such as social media, technology and fan communities. The authors further emphasize that the success of new market creation depends on a negotiated coexistence with established norms and incumbent actors, rather than a complete rupture from them.

Prior research adopting an institutional theory perspective highlights the role of institutional entrepreneurship, and the institutional entrepreneur it engenders, in processes of market creation (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Defined as "activities of actors who have an interest in particular institutional arrangements and who leverage resources to create new institutions or to transform existing ones" (Maguire, Hardy and Lawrence, 2004, p. 657), institutional entrepreneurship provides a valuable theoretical lens for examining how social actors organized around shared goals and ideals mobilize resources to effect change in existing organizational forms (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). In doing so, the concept reintroduces notions of agency, interests and power into studies situated at the intersection of consumer activism and new market creation (Garud, Hardy and Maguire, 2007).

In their study on the formation of a plus-sized market segment within the fashion industry, Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) explore how institutional entrepreneurship functions in redefining the fashion field. The successful institutionalization and legitimization of `Fatshionistas` as a distinct niche market within the broader fashion system is attributed not only to the collective efforts of the marginalized group but also to their ability to gain endorsement from adjacent fields, such as the Fat Acceptance Movement, and from other institutional entrepreneurs, including American indie-rock singer Beth Ditto. In this regard, the study resonates with Choi and Burnes (2016)`s investigation of the `Indie` cultural music market, as both underscore the importance of compatible rather than radical forms of consumer resistance in fostering market change.

Similarly, Martin and Schouten (2014) agree with Scaraboto and Fischer on the critical role of embedded entrepreneurship, as a concept closely aligned with institutional entrepreneurship, in inspiring diverse consumer actors to participate in market creation through the use of symbolic and field-specific capital, such as knowledge, skills and material resources. The study on the emergence of the minimoto motorcycle market within the male-dominated U.S. motorcycle industry highlights the significance of ensuring alignment and complementary linkages with existing market offerings and communities of practice. Taken together, these studies illustrate that human (such as consumers, celebrities), nonhuman (such as magazine, collective events) and hybrid (such as communities) actors operate as crucial catalysts in consolidating and legitimizing market change and development.

Market-level change differs from business-level change in its reformative, rather than corrective, nature by involving more incremental structural alterations to existing market arrangements, such as the addition of new elements or the removal of existing ones, in response to perceived sources of social unrest. Such alterations often manifest through the emergence of

new, typically niche, markets or through processes of market fragmentations and segmentation within an established industry. The development of online fashion, plus-size fashion, Indie cultural music and minimoto markets exemplify such market fragmentations within established markets that arise from consumer resistance, alongside non-human catalysts, and are subsequently consolidated through consistent and collective consumer action. Unlike business-level change, which often centres on dyadic relationship between a specific firm and a consumer group, market-level change entails transformations that span multiple organizational entity, such as groups of firms operating within a shared domain or other actors along the relevant supply chain. Moreover, resistant consumer groups driving these changes tend to exhibit lower levels of homogeneity in their needs, ideals and expectations toward the contested entities.

The following section explicates how consumer activism extends beyond market restructuring to instigate broader forms of transformation at the industry level.

Industry-level Change

Besides changes instituted at the business and market-levels, consumer contestations can also lead to broader industry-wide transformations or even the emergence of entirely new industries, rather than merely altering existing practices within an established industry (Sine and Lee, 2009; Lounsbury, Ventresca and Hirsch, 2003; Giesler, 2008). Such industry-level change transcends the conventional supply-demand dynamics that typically characterises business-level contestations, by introducing a novel or significantly advanced conceptualization of consumer needs, which may already exist or have newly emerged in the market but have not been adequately addressed by prevalent organizational forms (Lounsbury, Ventresca and Hirsch, 2003; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007).

The industry-level change perspective represents a more radical form of transformation which fosters disruptive innovations across an entire industry. It typically seeks to "take an entire set of social practices into or out of a market-based regime" (Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey, 2008, p. 532). Such transformation entails structural reorganization involving a multiplicity of organizational entities, both newly established and existing, as well as a range of marketplace actors directly or indirectly engaged in production and consumption processes, including mediating institutions, governmental and non-governmental organizations and policy makers. Giesler (2012) illustrates this structural and systemic reconfiguration in their study on the emergence of the Botox industry. The author argues that the rapid rise of the self-enhancement technology-driven Botox industry was enabled by brand-mediated conflicts surrounding the nature-technology dichotomy and the ensuing meaning negotiations among

diverse marketplace actors. In another study, Giesler (2008), in examining the ideologically divergent positioning within the music downloading industry, demonstrates how antagonistic interactions between the possessive ideals of the demand side and the utilitarian ideals of the supply side reshape market logics. The historical process of cultural conflict between these opposing sides, conceptualized by the author as a `marketplace drama` (Giesler, 2008, p. 740), leads to the formation of new industrial establishments, the institutionalization of emergent ideals, and the construction of novel meaning systems. Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur (2017) further identity comparable multi-dimensional contestation processes in the legitimization of the yoga industry in the U.S. The authors highlight the reterritorialization strategies through which dialectical exchanges between India and the U.S., the two geographically and culturally divergent geographies, facilitated the appropriation and transformation of an ancient practice into a new cultural and market context.

Studies further demonstrate that in transforming ingrained thought patterns and enduring practices within an industry, the negotiation of opposing meanings and reconciliation of longed-for goals and ideals between parties play a role as significant as contestation itself (Lindberg and Mossberg, 2019). In line with this view, Gollnhofer and colleagues (2019) suggest that consumers can develop alternative movement strategies by forming collaborative alliances with other consumer groups that pursue similar objectives. Drawing on an ethnographic investigation of the German retail food sector, the authors illustrate how the detrimental effects of the industry`s prevailing value regime, particularly its excessive food waste, can be mitigated through the creation of disjunctive and complementary pathways. Such pathways align activists` higher-order values with the value outcomes of the groups they contest. Similarly, Lounsbury and colleagues (2003) highlight the role of meaning-negotiation in shaping industrial change. The authors evidence that the emergence of U.S. solid waste field and the subsequent rise of the recycling industry were largely driven by the alignment between non-profit recyclers, who systematically insisted on shared principles and policies, and for-profit entrepreneurs willing to address consumer-led pressures. Through this analysis, the authors advance the concept of a `field frame`, which describes the social structures of meanings and resources that underpin, guide and stabilize the creation of new industrial practices.

In addition to institutional actors, diverse consumer groups from various social and class backgrounds also play a role in industry formation, not only by challenging established codes and practices but also by collectively advancing new ones (Lounsbury, Ventresca and Hirsch, 2003; Sine and Lee, 2009). These consumer groups tend to be more heterogeneous, reflecting

the diversity of their motives and needs for collective action. While their collective behaviour is unified by shared interests, beliefs, norms and goals, inter-group members often differ in their specific expectations from the desired change.

Bhawal and Salimath (2022) illustrate this heterogeneity in their study on the emergence and evolution of the U.S. cannabis industry. They show that the industry is shaped by conflicting values, ethics, moral orientations across interest groups, each mobilizing distinct resources, and exerting different levels of influence in the industry creation process. Similarly, Sine and Lee (2009) draw attention to the role of varied entrepreneurial capabilities among consumer groups in legitimizing the rise of the U.S. wind energy industry. The authors argue that while sustained public awareness of environmental degradation and advocacy for renewable energy disrupt the established industrial logic, entrepreneurship exercised at different levels drives the transformation of existing industrial forms. Echoing Lounsbury and colleagues (2003), they highlight the importance of constructing and communicating collective action frames, referring cognitive, normative and regulatory structures that enable shared understanding and coordinated action, in the success of emerging industries.

Consumer activism-driven changes may also transcend industrial boundaries, generating broader transformations in how large consumer groups perceive and engage with an entire consumption regime. Representing a system-level change, this perspective is discussed in the following section.

System-level Change

Unlike the preceding three levels of activism-driven change, system-level change entails far-reaching, structural transformations of widely adopted consumption patterns among large consumer groups. Rather than targeting a specific firm, market or industry, system-level change fundamentally alters the consumption practices themselves. This shift is typically driven by evolving consumer perceptions, attitudes, norms and ideals, which align with broader transformations in market systems and the new behavioural expectation they bring about. Consequently, such change often involves ideological shifts in consumption patterns that may further extend across related contexts.

Change at the system level is often met with complementary shifts facilitated by various mediating market institutions and stakeholder groups, including governments, media, trade unions, non-governmental organisations, policy makers, competing businesses and related sectors, requiring greater systemic coordination. This comprehensive alignment among diverse market actors enables alternative consumption practices to embed themselves within the

sociological, political and cultural milieu of the hosting market system. Accordingly, system-level change involves a paradigmatic transformation, redefining consumption and its expression based on new ideals, norms and values. This paradigmatic shift, instituted by social movements, fosters cultural change enacted through both market institutions [such as pressuring supply chains toward structural reforms] and state institutions [legislative actions prohibiting certain products or altering production systems (Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey, 2008).

System-level change reflects the greatest heterogeneity in personal interests, needs and expectations, identity structures, emotions, values and ideals that motivate participation in activism, both within and between groups. This heightened diversity among activist groups may involve both competitive and collaborative dynamics within and across these groups (Zald and McCarthy, 1980; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007).

System-level change can manifest across diverse consumption contexts, notably alternative food cultures, voluntary simplicity, fair trade and New Age movements, each exerting far-reaching influence on existing consumption subcultures, lifestyles and prevalent market politics. First, alternative food cultures present considerable potential for system-level change due to their diverse value regimes encompassing production, distribution and consumption (Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019). Commonly studied topics include `the foodie market` (Ulver, 2019), green food consumption (Leggett, 2020), the rise of locavorism (Reich, Beck and Price, 2018; Balzano and Vianelli, 2022), community supported agricultural movements (Schrank and Running, 2018; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007), alternative ideologies on meat consumption (Barboza and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2022; Weber, Heinze and DeSoucey, 2008; Lundahl, 2020), organic food (Fernandes and Saraiva, 2022; Saraiva, Fernandes and von Schwedler, 2020), slow food (Bossy, 2014; Thompson and Kumar, 2021), ethical food (Pecoraro and Uusitalo, 2014; Bertuzzi, 2022), food-related religious ideologies (Johnson, Thomas and Grier, 2017; Mumuni *et al.*, 2018), health-related food practices (Luomala, Paasovaara and Lehtola, 2006; Thompson and Troester, 2002) and identity construction through food consumption (Cronin, McCarthy and Collins, 2014; Ulver, 2019).

Second, the voluntary simplicity movement is described as “a diverse social movement made up of people who are resisting high consumption lifestyles and who are seeking, in various ways, a lower consumption but higher quality of life alternative” (Alexander and Ussher, 2012, p. 66). Key topics explored within this movement include the politicization of consumption patterns through consumer choice (Zamwel, Sasson-Levy and Ben-Porat, 2014), systemic issues, such as ecological overshoot, humanitarian injustice and overpopulation (Alexander and Ussher, 2012) as well as consumer minimalism (Boutroy, 2021; Wilson and Bellezza, 2022).

Third, fair trade towns are often understood both as activist-driven initiatives (Peattie and Samuel, 2018) and ethically inspired market developments (Micheletti and Stolle, 2007). Emphasizing bottom-up strategies, the fairtrade movement begins with an "one cup at a time" approach targeting individual consumers, while aspiring to broader transformative change at the collective level (Low and Davenport, 2009, p. 97). Key topics studied within this context include the anti-sweatshop movement (Zwolinski, 2007), place-based activism (Peattie and Samuel, 2018), nested and glocalised activism (Samuel, Peattie and Doherty, 2018) and hybrid consumer activism (Discetti and Anderson, 2022).

Fourth, New Age is described as " a broad milieu which allows participants to undertake a range of activities in pursuit of self-improvement" (Redden, 2002, p. 33). Often located at the nexus of social movements and religion, it reflects a religious consumerism ethos (Snow and Beyerlein, 2019). Yet, it typically challenges traditional religious practices and does not easily align with anti-capitalist or anti-globalism critiques of consumption. Among various New Age practices, mindfulness stands out as a key focus, where consumers resist socio-cultural, political and even biological impositions through a spatial and temporal emphasis on `the here and the now` (Veer, Herpen and Trijp, 2016; Shaw and Duffy, 2020; Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021). The New Age and related consumption practices are explored further in the following chapter on consumer spirituality.

Taken together, consumer activism research is often examined through a tripartite framework encompassing perspectives on activism participation, resource mobilization and social change (Handelman and Fischer, 2018), each elaborated in the preceding sections.

2.4 Consumer Activism on a Spectrum

As discussed in the previous sections, research examines consumer activism through diverse perspectives that differ in their modes of execution and in the intensity with which they are enacted. Scholarship on activism participation indicates that consumers are motivated to engage in activist behaviour through perceived grievance, personal interests, identity-based factors, as well as various affective states and ideological orientation. Research on resource mobilization likewise illustrates that resources enabling the emergence and development of activist behaviour can take different forms. In particular, platformization, the self, discourse, arts and networking have been discussed as important resource forms, each shaping activist engagement in distinct ways. Finally, research approaches social change as an outcome of consumer activism across multiple levels, ranging from business- and market-level changes to

broader industry- and system-level transformations. The manner in which change is enacted varies across these levels, depending on whether the intended intervention is corrective or transformative, the nature of the contested actors and the degree of structural homogeneity within the system.

These variations across different stages of activism enactment indicates that consumer activism cannot be confined to specific temporal and spatial contexts or to particular modes of participation, resourcing and change-making. Rather, it exists along a spectrum, encompassing diverse forms of activist engagement. These forms often exhibit externally oriented, pronounced and competitive characteristics, which often position activist behaviour within more exclusive contexts while simultaneously allowing consumers to assume a distinctive activist identity. Such variation in the enactment of consumer activism also aligns with Harrebye (2016)`s framework that situates activism on a spectrum, encompassing radical, confrontational, creative, professional, occasional and everyday forms of activism. Table 2.6 provides an overview of these activism forms, compared across the informing tripartite framework and other related characteristics.

Table 2.6: Comparison of Conventional Modes of Consumer Activism

MODES of CONSUMER ACTIVISM	RADICAL	CONFRONTATIONAL	CREATIVE	PROFESSIONAL	OCCASIONAL	EVERYDAY
Activism Participation	High-risk, militant engagement based on strong ideological commitment	Disruptive, aggressive engagement based on visibility and collectivity	Artistic, expressive and participatory engagement based on indirect messaging and symbolism	Systematic, knowledge-based advocacy based on strong institutional networking and relationship building	Situational, flexible and low-commitment engagement based on individually ideological stances	Small-scale, habitual, inter-personal advocacy based on accessible participation
Resource Mobilization	Intense, strategic, often underground organizing through both legal and illegal networks	Highly visible, adversarial tactics based collective solidarity and supported by online, offline, (non)institutional networking	Blend of individual and cultural tools such as imagination, arts, humour, storytelling, performances	Strategically designed, formal institutional structures such as national and international alliances, collaborations and partnerships	Loosely organized spontaneous volunteers, civic participation, small-scale donations, crowdfunding and ad hoc supporting from cause-related individuals or institutions	Daily routines, low cost and personal practices, which can develop into locally mobilized networks and financing
Change Creation	Deep, systemic and status quo-challenging collective reforms and strong ideological shifts	Direct, visible, bold (sometimes marginalized) disruptions to existing institutional or systemic structures	Artistic reimagining, new visioning and alternative forms of future	Organized, systemic transformations starting with incremental shifts, formation of strategic, sustainable alliances and networks	Symbolic changes in public perceptions, awareness creation, ad hoc alliances, media exposure, can be performed in broader activism	Changes in lifestyle choices, heightened individual responsibility, personal habits of change and mindset sharing
Main Logic	Violence	Disclosure	Symbols	Lobbyism	Numbers	Do-It-Yourself
Typical Activities	Militant Demonstrations	Civil Disobedience	Public Spectacles	Campaigns and Meetings	Peaceful Demonstrations	Local Solution-oriented Projects

Intended Goals	Revolutions	Open Procedures	Individual Reflection	Reformation	More Direct Democracy	Immediate and Tangible Results
Sayings	Disruptive slogan	Challenging slogan	Critical questioning	Campaign suggestion	Cause slogan	Note in cooperative
Dominating Perception of Framing Agents	Troublemakers (very tense relationships)	Challengers (somehow tense relationships)	Entertainers (uncertainty frames the relationship)	Cantankerous Experts (relationship is appreciated, but often ignored)	Voters (fairly respectful relationship)	Heroes (highly regarded, but rarely listened to)

*Adopted from the study by Harrebye (2016, p. 83)

Radical activism represents a militant form of consumer activism that rejects existing systems or their constituents, demanding broad structural transformation (Boghossian and Marques, 2019). It often entails high-risk militant engagement driven by strong ideological commitments (Gould, 2001). Mobilization typically occurs through underground organizing including both legal and illegal activities, demonstrations and discourses (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b) with change expectations directed toward deep, systemic and collective transformations involving multiple stakeholders.

Confrontational activism, marked by disruptive and confrontational engagement, is prevalent in many established forms of consumer activism. It employs visible and adversarial tactics, such as consumer protests (van den Broek, Langley and Hornig, 2017), acts of anti-consumption (Pentina and Amos, 2011), non-consumption (Nixon, 2020) and civil disobedience (Ritter, 2014). Its pursuit of social change is typically direct, dramatic and directed toward systemic structures or their constituents.

Creative activism represents an artistic, expressive and participatory form of consumer activism, often communicated through indirect messaging and symbolism (Harrebye, 2016), grounded in art (Patsiaouras, Veneti and Green, 2018), humour (Kravets, 2021) or performances (Jones and Arnould, 2022). Its vision of change is imaginative, envisioning alternative futures and modes of engagement (Klein Schaarsberg, 2025).

Professional activism unfolds through organized, knowledge-based advocacy, supported by strong institutional networks, such as alliances (Schneiberg, King and Smith, 2008), lobbying and fair trade initiatives (Peattie and Samuel, 2018). Social change it involves is systematic and gradual, seeking to initiate incremental shifts that accumulate into broader transformations.

Occasional activism is a situational, spontaneous and flexible form of consumer activism, characterized by low-commitment engagement. It is often employed through solidarity-based collective actions, such as crowdfunding (Calic, Arseneault and Ghasemaghaei, 2023), donations (Bradford, 2021), carrotmobs (Hoffmann and Hutter, 2012) and fandom participation (Numerato and Giulianotti, 2018). Its change dimension is typically

ad hoc and situational, producing temporary shifts that may intersect with other forms of consumer activism.

Finally, everyday activism, which extends existing understandings of organized, strategic and intentional activism (Vivienne, 2015), is mobilized through low-cost and personal acts of defiance embedded in daily life (Baumgardner, 2000). It is often directed toward generating implicit (Horton and Kraftl, 2009) and gradual cognitive and behavioural transformations (Murrey, 2016) within and around individual spaces.

All in all, consumer activism is enacted through diverse forms that differ in their approaches to the logics and goals underlying activist behaviour, the activities through which it is performed, the discourses it encompasses, and activist identities formed during its development, as well as in the modes thorough which participating is motivated, resources are mobilized and change is created. This diversity highlights the dynamism through which activist behaviour is understood and practiced across both individual and social spaces.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter discusses consumer activism in three sections, focusing on activism participation, resource mobilization and social change, as key considerations in activism research. The first section explores motivational drivers of participation through six main perspectives. The consumer grievance perspective emphasizes the revanchist nature of the consumer, while the consumer interests perspective frames the consumer activist within a costs versus benefits dichotomy. The consumer identity perspective highlights social identity construction and communication, while the consumer affects perspective underscores the influence of consumers` affective states on movement participation. Finally, the consumer ideology perspective situates consumer activism within a larger socio-cultural, political and historical milieu.

The second section explores resource mobilization in consumer activism through the lenses of platformization, self, discourse, arts and networking. Each resource type promotes the emergence and maintenance of activism behaviour by providing consumers with diverse means to initiate and develop responses to sources of unrest.

The third section investigates social change as an inherent activism outcome across four levels of consumer interaction in the marketplace. The first level, business-level change, typically involves corrective adjustments undertaken by businesses as a response to the calls of their resistant consumer base. The second, market-level change, draws on market creation

approaches and involves more comprehensive and reformative alterations of established market structures. The third, industry-level change, entails larger-scale and more radical transformations addressing diverse and less homogenous consumer resistance. Finally, system-level change represents a paradigmatic and far-reaching shift that transforms the very nature of consumption, fostering the establishment of new consumption understandings, practices and value systems.

Chapter 3 CONSUMER SPIRITUALITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates spirituality across various consumption contexts. Spirituality is central to the study of contemplation, providing a conceptual framework that informs contemplative practices, while contemplation serves as a means to enact, deepen and sustain spiritual experiences in both sacred and secular domains. The chapter begins by presenting three definitional approaches to spirituality, namely, religious, secular and hybrid. It then explores New Ages spiritualities, highlighting prevailing perspectives on the rise of this phenomenon. The chapter concludes by explicating how spirituality intersects with the marketplace, informing consumer research through sacred, secular and integrated perspectives.

Table 3.1 presents a summary of the contexts in which spirituality is explored in this study, which include the definitional aspects of spirituality, New Age spiritualities and the main trajectories of consumer spirituality research. It is then followed by a detailed examination of topics underlying each context.

Table 3.1: Spirituality Approaches Addressed in the Study

Definitional Aspects of Spirituality	**Religious Perspective**	**Secular/Individual Perspective**	**Hybrid Perspective**
	"all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality" (Wuthnow, 1998, p. viii)	"the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective" (Piedmont, 1999, p. 988)	"a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate" (Elkins et al., 1988, p. 10)
New Age Spiritualities	**Industrialization**	**Increasing Prominence of Faith**	**Rise of a Quest Culture**
	In line with the secularization view, many important theorists including Marx, Nietzsche, Lerner and Bell predicted that increasing modernization would lead to the decline of religion. Yet, religion has not faded; conversely, the last decades of the twentieth century were marked by the revival of various spiritual beliefs and forms of spirituality. Therefore, the New Age Spiritualities emerges as a result of the heightened status of religion.	Rise of New Age Spiritualities results from the decline of the established religions' influence on people's lives at both individual and social levels. Once-dominant religious authority in many societies, particularly the Western ones, has been subject to questioning as a consequence of various subtle and long-run changes that societies have gone through over the years. These changes have seriously impacted economic, political and social systems in the way to strengthening the secularization thesis.	Spiritual awakenings of the 1990s were a consequence of the changing character of the established religion as a response to the social and cultural transformations that societies have been going through, rather than of its decline in societies. As a result, people's interpretations of the traditional and historical religious beliefs and symbols as well as spirituality have been altered since the mid-twentieth century. This change often came with a revolutionary transformation of the understanding of spirituality.
Spiritual Consumption within Consumer Research	**Sacred Perspective into Consumer Spirituality**	**Secular Perspective into Consumer Spirituality**	**Integrated Perspective into Consumer Spirituality**
	Consumption is driven by motivations that can be described as sacred / For instance, religious pilgrimage site of Lourdes, as therapeutic servicescapes "where localized sociospatial features orchestrate market-mediated performances that compensate for sociocultural dilemmas (Higgins and Hamilton, 2019)	Consumption externalities do not necessarily connote virtuous objectives; therefore, their consumption does not convey a scared or religious meaning / For instance, secular ritual or tailgating as "a social gathering comprising individuals grilling, eating, drinking, and socializing in advance of an event" (Bradford and Sherry, 2015)	While consumption externalities carry virtuous objectives through sacralization, they are consumed for more secular and individual benefits to the consumer at the same time, which may not necessarily carry religious connotations directly / For instance, The Burning Man festival as both sacred and secular atmosphere where people come together and practice consumption 'rituals' in various ways (Bradford and Sherry, 2007)

3.2 Defining Spirituality

Spirituality is often approached from multiple perspectives and diverse abstractions, resulting in a lack of definitional consensus in the existing literature (Speck, 2005). To address this ambiguity, definitional attempts are commonly categorized into three key approaches, that is, religious, secular/individual and hybrid. Table 3.2 presents an overview of these approaches to spirituality.

Table 3.2: Definitional Approaches to Spirituality

Religious Approach	**Secular/Individual Approach**	**Hybrid Approach**
"that vast realm of human potential dealing with ultimate purposes, with higher entities, with God, with love, with compassion, with purpose" (Tart, 1983, p. 4)	"an increase in non-local connectedness between an individual and the totality, and by the very same token also between the individual and its own subsystems and other individuals" (Walach *et al.*, 2009, p. 299)	“a way of being and experiencing that comes about through awareness of a transcendent dimension and that is characterized by certain identifiable values in regard to self, others, nature, life, and whatever one considers to be the Ultimate” (Elkins *et al.*, 1988, p. 10)
“all the beliefs and activities by which individuals attempt to relate their lives to God or to a divine being or some other conception of a transcendent reality” (Wuthnow, 1998, p. viii)	"the animating life force, represented by such images as breath, wind, vigor, and courage. Spirituality is the drawing out and infusion of spirit in one's life" (Association for Spiritual, no date)	". . . the passage from traditional forms of religion to more personal and individual expressions of what is called 'spirituality'" (The Catholic Communications Office, 2003, p. 1, as cited in Heelas and Woodhead, 2005, p. 1)
"it involves something beyond the material and something beyond the person, sometimes referred to as transpersonal. Often this implies forces that are invisible as opposed to the visible, the immaterial versus the material and refers to phenomena ranging from levels of consciousness to spirit beings, God(s), among other things" (Gould, 2006, p. 64)	"the capacity of individuals to stand outside of their immediate sense of time and place to view life from a larger, more objective perspective" (Piedmont, 1999, p. 988)	“‘the hidden yearning’ within us…Spirituality encompasses the way an individual lives out his or her sense of interconnectedness with the world through an ability to tap into deep sources…From a faith perspective, spirituality can be seen to be about four sets of connections with self, with others, with nature or the environment, and with a higher power” (Howard, 2002, p. 231-232)
"spirituality is a process by which individuals recognize the importance of orienting their lives to something nonmaterial that is beyond and larger than themselves…so that there is an acknowledgment of at least some dependence upon a higher power, or Spirit." (Martin and Carlson, 1988, p. 59)	"courage to look within and to trust." What is seen and what is trusted appears to be a deep sense of belonging, of wholeness, of connectedness, and of openness to the infinite" (Shafranske and Gorsuch, 1984, p. 233)	"a mode of culture, or a subculture, in which the human being transforms the problematic of the human predicament immanently within the plenum and spectrum of human resources in time and space. This plenum and spectrum includes the religious dimension of human experience" (Sheridan, 1986, p. 43)
"inner experience of the individual when he or she senses a beyond, especially as evidenced by the effect of this experience on his or her behavior when he or she actively attempts to harmonize his or her life with the beyond" (Lewis and Geroy, 2000, p. 684)	"human flourishing, because it is the development of our true human self and living with greater awareness" (Gill and Thomson, 2014, p. 64)	"the pursuit of a trans-personal and trans-temporal reality that serves as the ontological ground for an ethic of compassion and service" (Clifford, 2001, p. 6)

"it does involve belief in a higher power and acting in more ethical and socially desirable ways in either case" (Vitell *et al.*, 2016, p. 148)	"our concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life" (Wright, 2000, p. 7)	a relation to God in which God is called “my Mighty One”, that is, in which God is addressed as the God who shapes everyone in his or her mother’s womb, causes them to be born and leads them throughout life (Waaijman, 2006, p. 6)
"the search for connection with the divine" (Skousgaard, 2007, p. 249)	"individualised form of self-contemplation and searching for the spiritual within us" (Hemetsberger et all, 2019, p. 541)	"the experience of the transcendent, or the quality of transcendence, something that welcomes, but does not require religious beliefs" (Bento, 2000, p. 653)

First, the religious approach positions spirituality within established faith systems. For instance, Benner (1989, p. 20) defines spiritualty as “human response to God’s gracious call to a relationship with himself”. In a similar vein, Vaughan (1991, p. 105) describes spirituality as a subjective experience of the sacred. In this view, spirituality frequently conveys an individual’s obedience to divine order, often implying a subservient dimension.

Second, the secular/individual approach conceptualizes spirituality as an individual quest for self-transcendence, meaning and depth of life, independent of any religious frameworks. According to Solomon (2002, p. 13), spirituality is not a matter of religious beliefs; it is rather “a way (or a great many ways) of experiencing the world, of living, of interacting with other people and with the world”. Although it includes certain beliefs and rituals, these do not necessarily involve prayer, church services or meditation. Similarly, Schneiders (1989, p. 684) describes spirituality as “the experience of consciously striving to integrate one’s life in terms not of isolation and self-absorption but of self-transcendence toward the ultimate value one perceives”. Both definitions emphasize the individual as the active agent, doer, initiator and enabler of this ongoing quest, with the autonomy to pursue or discontinue it. Berman (2000) distinguishes between the sacred and secular dimensions of spirituality, referring to the former as ‘vertical spirituality’, which often involves a ‘fall from grace’, and the latter as ‘horizontal spirituality’, characterized by a more secular and less exotic orientation.

Third, the hybrid approach integrates the religious and secular/individual perspectives, emphasizing that religion and the secular/individual approach are interconnected rather than entirely separate (Zinnbauer *et al.*, 1997). Within this framework, Reich (2000, p. 126) defines spirituality as “a sharing of joy and sorrow and the deep connections made between human beings, between them and nature, and between them and a “higher being””. Similarly, Kale (2004, p. 93) views spirituality as “the engagement to explore—and deeply and meaningfully

connect one's inner self—to the known world and Beyond". While these definitions still highlight the individual's role in initiating spiritual relationships, they do so without negating the involvement of a higher being or the knowledge of realms beyond the material world. According to Bruce (2011, p. 111), spirituality often involves temporarily transcending the mundane and belief in supernatural entities or a strong sense of communal bonding, which can extend to secular activities that share these characteristics. Myers and colleagues (2000, p. 252) define spirituality as "an awareness of a being or force that transcends the material aspects of life and gives a deep sense of wholeness or connectedness to the universe". While maintaining the theme of expanding one`s perception of the universe, the definition acknowledges a mediating being or force facilitating the individual`s experience of oneness with the universe. Furthermore, this later definition shifts from the 'doing mode' of spirituality, characterized by "a continuing search" to a 'being mode', emphasizing "awareness", as a central goal in many spiritual traditions.

The New Age movement offers a salient context in which spirituality manifests, illustrating the contemporary rise of spiritual tendencies across religious, secular and hybrid forms. The topic is discussed in the following section.

3.3 New Age Movement and New Age Spiritualities

The final decades of the twentieth century witnessed a revival of new spiritual tendencies and practices, alongside shifts in the understanding of established religions. Often framed within the 'New Age phenomenon` or 'New Age movement', these transformations in individual and cultural faith systems have made a profound influence on how people perceive themselves and their surroundings. 'New Age' describes;

> *"a sometimes bewildering variety of 'holistic' or 'mind body spirit' phenomena…practices of possession, channeling and mediumship, magical ideas about multiple "bodies", and occult ideas about hidden anatomies; body practices like yoga, tai chi and ch'i kung; popular psychotherapies and counselling ideologies; and forms of healing positioned as either 'alternative' or 'complementary' to biomedical healthcare, from Reiki to homoeopathy"* (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013, p. 3).

Redden (2002, p. 33, 34) describes New Age "as offering solutions to the problem of personal agency in a post-traditional society which obliges individuals to assume the burden of plotting their own destinies", further characterizing it as "a striking anomaly among religious

phenomena". The author notes that New Age stands out with two qualities, that is, its metaphysical, mystical orientation and countercultural stance. Although the term New Age has been applied to a wide range of phenomena and domains, since the 1980s it has acquired a more subjective and idiosyncratic meaning that is characterized by weak institutional commitments and an emphasis on the 'here' (or locality) and 'now' (or temporality) (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013).

While New Age expressions appear in diverse contexts, their impact has been most pronounced in the developed Western world. Referred to as "Easternization of the West" by Campbell (2007), this process denotes "a rejection of a traditional Western worldview in favour of beliefs, values and practices that are more characteristic of Eastern (understood as Oriental) civilizations" (Campbell, 2010, p. 738). Campbell interprets the cultural transformation in the West since 1960s as a Kuhnian 'paradigm shift', facilitated by pre-existing currents of Eastern influence, including Gnosticism, Occultism, Surrealism, Freudianism and Existentialism (Campbell, 2010; Campbell, 2001).

Across Western societies, the New Age movement has achieved its most pronounced development in the United Kingdom, with a steady rise in diverse adherent groups. Campbell argues that this expansion has been underpinned by a process of selective translation, in which both Western traditions and imported Eastern spiritualities are reformulated to fit Western cultural logics. While the movement first took hold in the developed West, its diffusion over recent decades has extended into non-Christian contexts, prompting further hybridisation. The Middle East, where Islam is the prevailing religion, illustrates this dynamic. Although New Age ideas entered the region later, their uptake has accelerated with digital connectivity and emergent forms of media reshaping local spiritual tendencies and practices (Aslan Ozgul, 2020; Maestri and Profanter, 2017).

Within the broader discourse on contemporary spirituality, the New Age movement is often conceptualized under the umbrella of 'New Age spiritualities' (Houtman, Aupers and Heelas, 2009; Rindfleish, 2005; Huss, 2020). Despite its widespread use across multiple domains, the term remains conceptually diffuse and lacks a universally accepted definition. Aupers and Houtman (2013, p. 174) characterize New Age spiritualities as an eclectic movement that incorporates "an apparently incoherent collection of spiritual ideas and practices" that draw simultaneously upon diverse traditions, styles and ideas, resulting in highly individualized forms of spiritual engagement. Possamai (2003, p. 32-33) similarly emphasizes the eclecticism of the phenomenon, suggesting that the term encompasses a broad spectrum of

distinct yet loosely connected religious expressions. Along these lines, Hamilton (2000) describes New Age spiritualities as a cultic milieu in which participants pick and mix spiritual elements according to their own needs, modifying these elements – and themselves – in the process. This eclectic orientation is reflected in the breadth of the movement, whose forms and practices extend from Eastern healing systems, therapeutic modalities and martial arts (e.g. judo, karate, aikido, tai chi and qigong) to Eastern religious traditions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, as well as feng shui, yoga and various forms of meditation (Campbell, 2010).

Among the diverse expressions of New Age spiritualities, mindfulness has emerged as one of the most widely recognized practices. Defined as a practice of maintaining present-moment awareness in a nonjudgmental way toward both internal and external stimuli (Kabat-Zinn, 2015; Kabat-Zinn, 2003), mindfulness constitutes an individualized form of spiritual engagement that is typically detached from formal religious institutions. It is often oriented toward fostering reconnection with oneself and one`s surroundings. Within the broader landscape of New Age spiritualities, mindfulness also provides a fertile context for cultivating contemplation. In this research, contemplation is conceptualized as a specific state of focused attention that shapes consumers` responses to internal and external stimuli within and around the marketplace.

3.3.1 Conditions Enabling New Age Spiritualities

The proliferation of new spiritual movements from the late twentieth century to the present is widely regarded as a significant social phenomenon. Although often examined through a religion-centric perspective highlighting shifts in the established position of religion in both personal and social life in the contemporary era, these transformations are rooted in broader economic, social, cultural and political dynamics unfolding both within and across national contexts. Examining these underlying conditions is important within the scope of this study for two main reasons. First, it helps to clarify how consumer contemplation, as a form of spiritual engagement, is perceived and enacted across both faith-based and nonfaith-based settings. Second, it illuminates the processes through which consumer contemplation intersects with marketplace environments that shape and are shaped by a complex array of socio-culturally, historically and politically situated forces. The conditions that facilitated the emergence of New Age spiritualities are discussed below through the lenses of industrialization, increasing prominence of faith and the rise of a quest culture.

Industrialization

This view argues that industrialization, which refers to the process through which societies undergo important economic and social transformations as they pass from agrarian to manufacturing systems, played a significant role in reshaping social structures and enabling the rise of alternative spiritualities. According to Bruce (2017), industrialization and its attendant economic, technological and social transformations weakened traditional communities, world views and relational forms. These shifts eroded the historically elevated status of religion, fragmenting established belief systems and consequently diminishing religion`s dominance as the main provider within the religious market. The decoupling of religious institutions from the political structures that once gave them privileged authority further contributed to the decline of institutional religions, particularly Christianity (Marler and Hadaway, 2002; Pargament, 1999; Drane, 1995), and facilitated the broader retreat of religion from the public sphere (Taylor, 2007).

From a Weberian perspective on modernity and capitalism ([1922] 1993), the post-industrial era, particularly the transformation of institutional structures, has produced widespread disenchantment, driven by the commodification of values, frustration with unmet personal aspirations and growing uncertainty about the future. Paradoxically, these developments have unfolded alongside rising affluence and increasing societal complexity. Yet, Bruce (2017) and Taylor (2007) argue that this landscape has also elevated ideals, such as individual agency, self-care and self-worth, within both personal and social spheres. In this context, New Age spiritualities are often interpreted as a de-modernizing movement that enables individuals strained by the pressures of modernity to embrace alternative spiritual tendencies and practices as guiding resources (Hunter, 2018).

Increasing Prominence of Faith

This view links the emergence of New Age spiritualities to the growing importance of faith-based systems in the contemporary era. Although theorists, such as Marx, Nietzsche, Lerner and Bell, predicted the decline of religion in modern societies, the late twentieth century instead witnessed a notable revival of diverse spiritual beliefs and forms of spirituality (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). For instance, a Pew Research Centre report ('The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050', 2015) forecasts that by 2050, more than eighty five percent of the world`s population will have been affiliated with a religion, including

monotheistic, polytheistic and other faith traditions, while the share of the unaffiliated population is projected to fall from approximately sixteen percent to thirteen percent.

Within this framework, Wallis (2018) classifies the new spiritual movements that have gained importance since the late twentieth century into three categories, namely world-rejecting, world-affirming and world-accommodating movements. World-rejecting movements, such as the Hare Krishna Movement, the Unification Church and the Children of God, are markedly religious and authoritarian, offering string critiques of mainstream religious and social orders. World-affirming movements, such as Silva Mind Control, Soka Gakkai and Transcendental Meditation, adopt a more secular and individualistic stance, presenting spiritual development as independent of established religions. World-accommodating movements, such as Neo-Pentecostal Movement and Charismatic Renewal Movements, emerge from established religious traditions but emphasize spiritual revival as a means of coping with the complexities of modern life.

The growing prominence of diverse faith systems and groups has been widely noted in consumer research. Ger (2013), for instance, highlights the increasing public influence of religious institutions worldwide, illustrated by the rise of the religious right in the Unites States, Islamist politics in secular Türkiye and Hindu nationalism in India. Spohn (2003, p. 281) similarly attributes this resurgence to the expansion of religious nationalism, often emerging in reaction to the authoritarian imposition of Western European models of state secularism. Carrette and King (2005, p. 4) further situate the proliferation of new religions and spiritualities beyond the political sphere, associating it with the broader promotion of consumerist and entrepreneurial ideologies. Within this context, the rise of alternative spiritualities is not merely a matter of faith – or non-faith – but is closely intertwined with marketplace dynamics that shape contemporary consumption behaviour.

Rise of a Quest Culture

This view holds that the post-industrial phase of modernization has been marked by an increasing tendency to question established normative rules and social structures, accompanied by a search for new, individualized modes of living. Wuthnow (1998) conceptualizes this shift through the analogy of a movement from `dwelling` to `seeking`, wherein individuals distance themselves from traditional normative frameworks in pursuit of novel experiential possibilities within and beyond spiritual domains. Roof (1999) similarly argues that social and cultural transformations in developed nations are marked by a quest culture, a search for certainty and

a desire for a more authentic, intrinsically satisfying life. This quest culture results from the limitations of Western rationalization and social differentiation, the influence of media and globalization and the expanding consumer culture centred on the self. Inglehart and Welzel (1977; 2001) likewise underline an intensified need for belonging, esteem and self-realization in this newly emerging individual and social order. According to Roof (1999), the quest culture gradually transformed the contemporary view of the self from early notions of self-centeredness and self-fulfilment that stimulated the spiritual awakenings of 1960s and 1970s, toward a more holistic understanding of transformation through the self.

New Age spiritualities have found a distinct place within these cultural transformations by emphasizing individuality and simultaneously rejecting adherence to a single source of authority. This openness facilitates new life experiences rather than prescribing a fixed way of living. The key characteristics of New Age spiritualities are discussed in the following section.

3.3.2 Characteristics of New Age Spiritualities

New Age Spiritualities are often viewed as marginal phenomena that diverge from established faith and non-faith traditions in several key aspects, which are outlined below.

Multiple Sources of Authority

New Age spiritualities do not align well with the traditional 'world religions' paradigm, due in part to their accommodation of "multiple sources of authority" rather than the monotheistic framework of established religions (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013, p. 9). In other words, many New Age forms lack belief in a singular God, deity or unique transcendental authority, rendering their classification as a religion problematic. Even when some forms acknowledge supernatural forces or entities, these are often understood as residing within the self rather than externally (Bruce, 2011). Furthermore, while certain New Age spiritualities intersect with particular religions, they often incorporate secular elements in their approach to both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships, thereby diverging from conventional understandings of religion (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013).

Individuality

According to Luckmann (1996), New Age spiritualities draw heavily on the modern myth of the autonomous individual and place strong emphasis on the sacralization of subjectivism. This individuality is linked to the broader de-institutionalization of religion in the

modern era, fostering greater personal autonomy and an increased freedom to choose among diverse sacred universes. In many New Age forms, this emphasis on the autonomous self evolves into the notion of 'self-spirituality' that refers to the belief that the self is inherently sacred (Aupers and Houtman, 2013). The sacred self, in turn, foregrounds the importance of 'inner insight', understood as an inner capacity within every person that can lead to wisdom when cultivated (Campbell, 2010). Bruce (2011) calls this inner insight 'intuition', positioning it in contrast to Western rationalism, echoing Campbell`s critique. This pronounced individuality characterizing new spiritualities also limits the formation of formal organizations (Campbell, 2001), distinguishing New Age spiritualities from established religions that typically rely on strong institutional structures, sense of community and togetherness.

Eclecticism

Spirituality has been shaped by broad cultural practices as well as more context-specific influences, resulting in a varied, comprehensive and often complex character. Consequently, many New Age forms are characterized by a bricolage of coherent and incoherent belief systems, traditions, teachings, worldviews and practices (Aupers and Houtman, 2013; Luckmann, 1996), along with what Possamai (2003, p. 35) describes as "religion a` la carte", in which individuals reject the 'set menu' offered by established religions. This openness enables extensive individual and cultural appropriation, fostering a high degree of diversity and tolerance within New Age contexts (Bruce, 2017). Yet, such diversity and tolerance do not imply an absence of shared foundations and agreement; rather, New Age spiritualities are often underpinned by perennialism, which refers to the belief that a common, universal truth runs through many religious traditions despite their underlying differences (Aupers and Houtman, 2013).

Anti-Dualism

The Eastern religious worldview, from which many New Age spiritualities draw, rejects dualisms, such as body-mind, life-death, physical-spiritual or sacred-profane. Instead, the world is conceived as a fully interconnected and self-contained cosmos, often articulated through the figure of the Earth Mother, who "represents all the earth's living creatures as interdependent, part of one natural–spiritual system" (Campbell, 2001, p. 47). This anti-dualist orientation aligns with a holistic understanding grounded in the belief that all things are interconnected, at least at the level of cosmic consciousness (Bruce, 2017). Such holism is particularly evident in field of medicine where, unlike Western biomedical models, mind, body

and spirit are treated as components of an indivisible whole. This worldview also supports the understanding of syncretism [likewise eclecticism], a common characteristic of many New Age forms, in which diverse ideas, beliefs, values and practices can coexist harmoniously as different expressions of an underlying unity (Bruce, 2017).

Economics of Spirituality

Beyond these characteristics specific to New Age spiritualities, it is also important to acknowledge that the commercial exchange of spiritual goods and services has given rise to a distinct spiritual market, demanded by spiritual consumers who "are looking for a spiritually transforming experience" (Kotler, 2019, p. 2). Describing this marketization of spiritualities as `consumer religion`, Possamai (2003, p. 31) highlights the entanglement between these spiritualities and neo-liberal capitalism through a wide array of marketplace practices, such as visiting healing centres, purchasing self-care literature, tarot cards, crystals and aromatherapy products, and engaging in astrology. Similarly, referring to the commercial dimension of New Age spiritualites as "a privatized social form of religion", Luckmann (1996, p. 73) notes that these spiritualities depend on "an open market of diffuse, syncretistic packages of meaning, typically connected to low levels of transcendence and produced in a partly or fully commercialized cultic milieu". Hamilton (2000, p. 192) associates the commodification of the movement with the eclecticism and diversity inherent in New Age spiritualities, observing that "practitioners find their customer base more fluid, less deferential towards spiritual authority and leadership and more likely to transfer their allegiance elsewhere". Wallis (2018) further highlights the parallels between commercial marketplaces and the spiritual marketplace, both of which are shaped by precariousness and competitiveness.

3.3.3 Reflections of New Age Spiritualities

The declining authority of institutional religion and the rise of new spiritual faiths have often been examined through the lens of Western (de)modernization. Modernization has largely been framed as a distinctly Western phenomenon, which non-Western societies may follow only insofar as they relinquish their traditional cultural values and surrendered to ostensibly superior Western modes of thought and practice (Inglehart and Baker, 2000, p. 19). This Western-specific framing has, in turn, led most academic discussions of twentieth century spiritual awakenings to focus predominantly on Western contexts, especially the American setting and, more specifically, on developments within Christianity (e.g. Bruce, 2017; Roof,

1999; Wuthnow, 1998; Inglehart, 1977; Durkheim, [1915] 1995). The popularity of new spiritual movements in the West have further reinforced these scholarly tendencies. While some of these movements have emerged from, or represent departures within, Christian tradition, others constitute novel forms of faiths that do not reference any organized religion.

As the New Age movement progressed into the 2000s, often described as its second wave, the geographic focus of scholarly research broadened significantly. Studies began to extend beyond the predominantly American and Western European contexts to include Central and Eastern Europe, such as Spain (e.g. Cova and Cova, 2019) and Lithuania (e.g. Liutikas, 2017); East Asian countries including Singapore (e.g. Fischer, 2019), Korea (e.g. Hwang, 2018) and Japan (e.g. Kato and Progano, 2017); as well as the Antipodean region, such as Australia (e.g. Roshani Perera and Rathnasiri Hewege, 2018) and New Zealand (e.g. Hall *et al.*, 2018). This expansion of empirical attention has encouraged scholars from disciplines outside religious studies to engage with New Age spiritualities and to explore their implications across diverse domains (Sutcliffe and Gilhus, 2013), including tourism, health, workplace cultures and sustainability.

Despite this widening scope, other religiously significant regions, most notably the Middle East as the birthplace of Islam and Judaism, are markedly underrepresented in the extant literature. Consequently, these contexts have received limited attention regarding how they have influenced, and been influenced by the spiritual awakenings of the late twentieth century (Bruce, 2017). Nevertheless, several studies have begun to examine how particular spiritual ideas and practices within the established religions of the region influence consumption behaviour. For instance, Sufism (or Tasawwuf) encompasses a body of Islamic teachings and practices, while Kabbalah represents an important tradition in Jewish mysticism, although neither is regarded as a separate religion. Reflecting these intersections, a growing body of literature offers valuable insights into how these traditions interact with post(modern) trends and New Age milieu. For instance, Varul (2013, p. 506) in their examination of Sufi ethics and consumerism, draws attention to how Islamic spirituality has, paradoxically, contributed to the rise and diffusion of consumerist culture within the Islamic world. Campbell (2001, p. 45), adopting a more pessimistic stance toward the expanding influence of Eastern ways of living, asserts that the revival of Islam may provoke a reactionary return to more traditional forms of Christianity in the West. Similarly, Huss (2020) contends that both the New Age movement and postmodern sensibilities have shaped emerging perspectives and scholarly directions within the study of Jewish mysticism

Despite their diversity in scope and focus, a significant strand of recent research on New Age spiritualities and consumption behaviour emphasizes the creation of a spiritual marketplace through the dissemination and commercialization of spiritual ideas and practices. In contrast, comparatively limited research examines how the activist potential of New Age spiritualities challenges and transforms established marketplace practices. The following section explores how consumer research conceptualizes and engages with New Age spiritualities.

3.4 Consumer Spirituality

Consumer spirituality is often framed as both an experiential and motivational orientation toward the marketplace. Husemann and Eckhart (2019b, p. 393), for instance, emphasize the experiential dimension by defining it as "the interrelated practices and processes engaged in when consuming market offerings (products, services, places) that yield 'spiritual utility'". Spiritual utility refers to the facilitation of consumers` self-exploration and their sense of integration with a broader reality through good and services that are designed and promoted for such purposes (Kale, 2006). Complementing this perspective, Mehta and colleagues (2020, p. 298) highlight the motivational dimension by conceptualizing consumer spirituality as "the intrinsic motivation to seek and express autonomy, inner satisfaction and self-actualisation, maintain harmonious and sacred relationship with others, and desire sacredness in products, services and experiences". Taken together, these perspectives position consumer spirituality as a multifaceted construct shaped by a wide array of marketplace dynamics. The discussion that follows examines consumer spirituality through two interconnected domains, that is, Spirituality and the Marketplace, and Spirituality in Consumer Research.

3.4.1 Spirituality and the Marketplace

Spirituality, particularly its forms associated with religion, has long been marginalized in discussions of the marketplace and consumption, largely due to what Kale (2006, p. 109) describes as "the slavish insistence on separating spirituality from other elements of life" . It has also been deemed incompatible with market logics, as the singular or excessive pursuit of material goods is condemned by nearly all established religions on the grounds that it distracts individuals from the pursuit of higher values (Belk, 1983). Yet, despite this apparent incompatibility between spirituality and consumption, spirituality has become increasingly

consequential within contemporary marketplaces, where "consumption can become a vehicle of transcendent experience; that is, consumer behaviour exhibits certain aspects of the sacred" (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989, p. 2). Today, "the spiritual marketplace overlaps with, but extends well beyond, the established religious structures" permeating a broad and heterogenous social field in which various agents, whether conventionally religious or not, and whether rooted in long-standing or newly emerging traditions, compete to produce and sustain religious capital, including legitimacy, acceptance, and influence (Roof, 1999, p. 80).

The interaction between spirituality and the marketplace is commonly examined through perspectives that frame spirituality primarily within a religious, rather than secular, context. These religion-oriented perspectives display substantial diversity, encompassing a broad range of conceptual and theoretical insights. For instance, the market theory of religion (Stark, 1997; Stark and Bainbridge, 1985; Stark, 1999; Stark and Iannaccone, 1994; Iannaccone, 1991; Iannaccone, 1997; Finke and Iannaccone, 1993) conceptualizes the spiritual marketplace as shaped by both supply-side and demand-side dynamics. From a supply-side perspective, a greater variety of religious products on offer is argued to stimulate higher levels of consumer demand within the spiritual market (Bruce, 2017, p. 143). Such religious pluralism encourages the diversification of spiritual offerings tailored to diverse consumer needs, and enhances market efficiency by intensifying competition among market actors, such as religious institutions and entrepreneurial spiritual providers. In this sense, the competitive structure of the spiritual marketplace propels spiritual suppliers toward more efficient production and delivery (Iannaccone, 1991).

In contrast, the demand side perspective places consumers, rather than producers, as the primary social actors in the emergence and evolution of spiritual markets. It is grounded in the view that religious change takes place in response to the changing needs, desires and perceptions of religious consumers operating within changing socio-cultural circumstances (Finke and Iannaccone, 1993). This approach marks a broader transformation in the social construction of religious significance by showing how authority shifts from an other-worldly transcendence to the individual, who is increasingly accorded a sacred status (Robertson, 1984, p. 127). Consequently, the preferences, aspirations and needs of individuals become central in shaping spiritual supply (Redden, 2002), thereby reorienting the spiritual marketplace around consumer-driven logics.

Haddorff (2000) goes beyond the supply and demand argumentation on the interaction between spirituality, religion and the marketplace and offers a more comprehensive theoretical

lens by distinguishing three traditions, namely, the oppositional, the absorption and the ambiguous traditions. Relying on classic institutionalists, such as Weber and Marx, the oppositional tradition adopts the secularization theory and contends that market and the religion cannot coexist. The absorption tradition, grounded primarily in Durkheim`s perspectives, argues that in modern societies the economy incorporates a contemporary form of religion, such that market and religion serve parallel functional purposes, and thus their boundaries become blurred. In contrast, the ambiguous tradition conceptualizes that market and religion as dialectically related and interdependent, mutually shaping one another. Haddorff (2000) maintains that this ambiguous tradition most accurately captures the dynamics of market-religion interaction, as it avoids the reductive dichotomy between secularization and sacralization.

Another approach advances this line of reasoning by building on comparatively secular exchange frameworks to theorize the formation and operation of the spiritual marketplace. For instance, Appau (2021) delineates three interrelated forms of religious exchange, that is, exchange with the church, exchange among religious members and exchange with God, through which the author conceptualizes a `divine economic system`. Accordingly, the emergence of such an economic system, akin to other contemporary spiritual marketplaces, is grounded in postmodern logics that emphasize the complexity, fusion, and diffusion of cultural categories, rather than reducing spiritual markets to dichotomous models, such as the consumer versus the producer or the past versus the present (Appau and Awaworyi Churchill, 2019). In their commentary on Appau (2021)`s conceptualization of the divine economic system, Jafari and colleagues (2023) highlight that the relationship between spirituality and the marketplace, particularly in religious contexts, is considerably more complex than a framing that reduces it to the `consumption of religion`. Jafari underscores the significance of adopting a multi-theoretical perspective into the spiritual marketplace by cautioning against interpreting Appau`s approach as implying a ` religionization of the market`. On the other hand, Moufahim and Rinallo, as the other contributors in the same study, question the centrality attributed to institutional structures in the formation and maintenance of the divine economy. They suggest greater attention to how religious exchanges might unfold between individuals and in their relationship with God in the absence of formalized institutionalized prescriptions that define `appropriate forms of exchange`.

This perspective also resonates with extant research that extends the `religion-as-institution` argument by arguing that institutionalized influences within the spiritual

marketplace may manifest in multiple forms, rather than being confined solely to formal religious structures. For instance, Kimura and Belk (2005) explore the Christmas experience and related consumer practices in Japan, illustrating Western cultural imperialism operates as an institutional force shaping marketplace meanings and rituals. Similarly, Kozinets (2002) in their study of the Burning Man festival, questions the extent to which the event reflects an institutionalized anti-consumption ideology by highlighting the oscillation between sacred and secular consumer practices. More recently, Jafari and Saleh (2025) argue that the institutionalized ideology of Islamophobia, appropriated by the far right during the Boycott Halal Campaign in the UK, extends beyond shaping attitudes and behaviours within the religious marketplace. Rather, it serves as a mechanism of institutional work that mobilizes consumers toward activist behaviour, sustained through processes of ideological ossification.

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, scholarship on the intersection of religion-oriented spirituality and the marketplace exhibits considerable diversity. This includes both demand- and supply-oriented perspectives within the market theory of religion, Haddorff`s trifold categorization of the religious marketplace, Appau`s conceptualization of divine economic system and the subsequent expansion of this "religionization of the market" perspective into more multi-sided analytical frameworks. While discussions on the intersection of spirituality and the marketplace are not limited to these perspectives and a substantial body of research continues to develop in this area, a comprehensive coverage of these perspectives falls outside the scope of the present study. This is primarily due to the fact that contemplation in this research is approached through an inclusive lens that is not confined to any particular faith-based or nonfaith-based belief system. Such inclusivity, and the resulting analytical neutrality, derives from the empirical data, that is, the participants` own accounts, rather than from any personal (non)commitment to a particular religious perspective. Table 4.1 on page 98 further illustrates the diversity of the participants` demographics, which is also reflected in the multiplicity of both religious and non-religious contexts in which these participants understand and practice contemplation. These considerations justify the study`s approach to contemplation as a non-doctrinal concept, further detailed in the Contributions section, that can be analytically engaged across diverse spiritual and non-spiritual contexts.

Taken together, these approaches illustrate that the evolving relationship between spirituality, religion and the marketplace is complex and multifaceted, shaped by a continuous negotiation between secular, sacred domains and beyond. This complex interplay positions spirituality as an adaptive, rather than fixed, phenomenon, and highlights the critical role of

marketplace dynamics in its ongoing evolution. The following section explores how spirituality is approached in consumer research.

3.4.2 Spirituality in Consumer Research

Spirituality has been approached through diverse perspectives within consumer research, including *pilgrimage consumption* (Higgins and Hamilton, 2019; Higgins and Hamilton, 2016; Higgins and Hamilton, 2014; Hall *et al.*, 2018; Liutikas, 2017; Moufahim, 2013; Gesler, 1996; van Laer and Izberk-Bilgin, 2019; Almuhrzi and Alsawafi, 2017; Kato and Progano, 2017; Santana and Botelho, 2019; Sherry and Kozinets, 2007); *consumer wellbeing* (Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2009; Gesler, 1996; Lopez, Lois González and Fernández, 2017; Dodds, Jaud and Melnyk, 2021; Jafari *et al.*, 2015); *consumer identity* (McAlexander *et al.*, 2014; Mumuni *et al.*, 2018; Liutikas, 2017; Vitell *et al.*, 2016; Roshani Perera and Rathnasiri Hewege, 2018); *consumer self* (Higgins and Hamilton, 2016; Husemann and Eckhardt, 2019a; Thich, 2019; Dawson, 2011; Belk, 1987; Leigh, Peters and Shelton, 2006; Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Kates, 2004; Belk and Costa, 1998); *consumer altruism* (Kulow and Kramer, 2016; Belwalkar, Vohra and Pandey, 2018); *consumer ethics* (Vitell *et al.*, 2016; Minton, Bret Leary and Upadhyaya, 2018; Souiden, Ladhari and Zarrouk Amri, 2018; Arli and Tjiptono, 2018; Dhandra and Park, 2018; Li *et al.*, 2021); *consumer experience* (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989; Dodds, Bulmer and Murphy, 2018; Scott, Cayla and Cova, 2017); *green consumer behaviour/sustainability* (Sharma and Sharma, 2017; Ghazali, Mutum and Ariswibowo, 2018; Minton *et al.*, 2018; Hunting and Conroy, 2018; Hunecke and Richter, 2018); and *consumer emotions* (Beruchashvili, Moisio and Gentry, 2015; Higgins and Hamilton, 2014).

As evidenced, research on consumer spirituality varies considerably in scope. To clarify and organize these diverse approaches, existing research on consumer spirituality is categorized into three main lines of inquiry. The first line views consumer spirituality primarily through a sacred lens, focusing on objects or experiences closely linked to the sacred realm. The second line broadens the scope by investigating secular aspects of consumer spirituality. Building on these two perspectives, the third, less prevalent line offers a hybrid approach, examining how sacred and secular associations are integrated within consumer spirituality. Each of these lines is discussed in the following sections.

Sacred Consumption Perspective into Consumer Spirituality

The first line of inquiry approaches consumer spirituality from a sacred, or religious, consumption perspective. According to Hirschman (1988, p. 348), sacred consumption is a form of consumption that "places primary importance on virtuous objectives such as love, honour and integrity". It involves attributing sacredness to the consumption setting, where consumption is typically driven by sacred intentions. Research within this framework often focuses on three key topics, namely, consumer pilgrimage, extraordinary consumer experiences and consumer subcultures. In these contexts, sacralization is enacted through diverse consumption practices spanning both sacred and mundane settings. These topics are discussed in the following sections.

Consumer Pilgrimage

One frequently investigated topic in consumer pilgrimage studies is the reproduction of customer perceptions through ritualized and subjective consumer performances. For instance, in their study of the Catholic pilgrimage site of Lourdes, Higgins and Hamilton (2019) explore the reproduction of customer perceptions of felt emotions from a therapeutic servicescapes perspective. Therapeutic servicescapes are defined as contexts "where localized sociospatial features orchestrate market-mediated performances that compensate for sociocultural dilemmas" (Higgins and Hamilton, 2019, p. 1230). The authors illustrate how Lourdes, as a therapeutic servicescapes, recreates consumer emotions related to therapeutic relationships, release and renewal. In a related study, Higgins and Hamilton (2016) illustrate that the pilgrimage experience at Lourdes prompts consumers to reproduce perceptions of the self through narratives of "mini-miracles" that are subjectively experienced as divine gifts. These mini miracles, categorized as physical, social and peaceful, foster positive transformations, such as health restoration, enhanced self-confidence, greater peace of mind and increased ability to cope with difficulty. Similarly, Husemann and Eckhart (2019a) explore the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, revealing that consumer perceptions are also shaped through a slowed-down experience of time. This temporal deceleration, existing in embodied, technological and episodic forms, allows consumers to experience time as abundant and transformative, extending re-synchronization to a heightened and other-worldly temporal logic.

In all three studies, the pilgrimage experience involves various acts of consumption, particularly those related to marketplace externalities surrounding the pilgrimage sites. Yet, such consumption practices are peripheral to the core pilgrimage experience, which is primarily driven by sacred intentions as described by Hirschman, and connected to a process of cognitive

reframing for consumers. Cognitive reframing through the reproduction of consumer perceptions often occurs at pilgrimage sites that are conceived and communicated as sacred (e.g. Cova *et al.*, 2019; Higgins and Hamilton, 2019; Kato and Progano, 2017; Santana and Botelho, 2019; Almuhrzi and Alsawafi, 2017; Moufahim, 2013). Yet, there are also so-called 'secular pilgrimages' that similarly spur cognitive reframing. Secular pilgrimage refers to "a journey away from home to a consumption site where an experience of intense sacredness occurs" (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989, p. 15). An example is the Gallipoli pilgrimage site in Türkiye, frequently visited during the annual Anzac Day commemoration. Hall and colleagues (2018) demonstrate that while the site may appear ordinary to many, Australian pilgrims reproduce its sacredness through beliefs and practices during their visit, resulting in intense consumer experiences. Although the pilgrimage`s defining feature is not primarily religious, the reframed consumer experiences closely parallel those of religious pilgrims. The study further indicates that factors, such as self-fulfilment, a sense of belonging and accomplishment, alongside motives like re-affirming death and expressing gratitude for freedom, significantly contribute to the reproduction of ordinary consumer experiences as sacred ones.

The study by Hall and colleagues (2018) is notable for examining a Christian secular pilgrimage site in predominantly Muslim Türkiye, thereby challenging the clear-cut distinction between sacred and secular pilgrimages. This process, described by Belk and colleagues (1989) as the sacralization of the secular, refers to individuals ascribing sacred meanings to objects, practices or experiences. According to the authors, sacralization occurs through at least seven modes, that is, ritual, pilgrimage, quintessence, gift-giving, collecting, inheritance, and external sanction, and can involve places, times, tangible things, intangible things, persons and experiences, thus encompassing diverse domains of sacred consumption. The inclusivity and scope of the sacred may extend even into the most mundane realms. The rise of individualism in a consumption-oriented, hedonic society has intensified sacralization, elevating the individual closer to sacred status by making certain consumption aspects ends in themselves rather than means. The also aligns with earlier conceptualizations of the sacred by Durkheim and Berger, emphasizing its inclusive and expansive nature.

The sacralization of the secular also extends to consumption contexts beyond pilgrimage, which are explored in the following sections.

Extraordinary Consumer Experiences

One way by which extraordinary consumer experiences are cultivated within the sacred consumption perspective is through corporal pain, which is often understood as the erasure of the self and entry into a non-physical realm (Cova, 2020). Through corporal pain, consumers transcend their physical and ordinary realities into a bodiless, celestial and often esoteric consciousness, thereby transforming the self. For example, Scott and colleagues (2017) examine this process in the context of Tough Mudder, an obstacle race involving painful challenges, such as electric shocks, fire, and freezing water. Participants use this pain to escape the complexities and burdens of modern life, experiencing moments of regeneration, self-renewal and fulfilment through acute bodily awareness. Similarly, Roux and Belk (2019) study tattooing as a painful consumer experience that produces embodied heterotopias, understood as spaces where individuals reconceptualize their bodies as more inhabitable places. Echoing Scott and colleagues` (2017) portrayal of pain as a pathway from entrapment to regeneration, Roux and Belk describe the body as initially an inescapable topia, with tattooing-induced corporal pain facilitating transitions through fleeting spaces between here and elsewhere, ultimately reaching embodied heterotopias. These intense moments involve temporal shifts among past, present and future, fostering utopian visions of beautification, escape, conjuration and immutability, as experiences that verge on the sacred.

Another commonality identified in studies focusing on sacred consumption through extraordinary consumer experiences is the sense of liminality and ephemerality associated with these experiences. Belk and Costa (1998) explore intense liminal moments experienced during the reenactment of the 1825-40 fur trade rendezvous in the Rocky Mountain American West, known as Mountain Man. Through communal rituals, such as the sacrificial burning of sage, honour dances, rifle shooting, tomahawk throwing and arrow making, consumers enter a fantasy time and place, experiencing flow as fleeting yet phenomenal moments of intensification and transformation into an alternative reality, described as a `like-paradise` status. Hemetsberger and colleagues (2019) further explore extraordinary consumer experiences by focusing on their physiological and embodied dimensions, exemplified by consumers` consuming a chlorophyll-based substance that facilitates bodily transformation and a sense of unity. Following consumption, consumers undergo cycles of reduction, reflection and release, which eventually leads to the reunion of body and mind, emotional transformation and ultimately self-renewal. These liminal experiences enable consumers to access deeper levels of inner spirituality by means of physiological processes.

In all cases discussed, the sacralization of typically secular consumption externalities is mediated through extraordinary consumer experiences that span physical, physiological, non-physical and spiritual levels.

Consumer Subcultures

Sacralization of the secular often manifests in consumer subcultures, which Schouten and McAlexander (1995, p. 43) define as "a distinctive subgroup of society that self-selects on the basis of a shared commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity". Unlike the subjective nature of extraordinary consumer experiences, consumer subcultures are legitimatized through shared beliefs and practices. The creation of unique ethos and rituals within these subcultures provides the means around which a consumption ideology is built. For example, Schouten and McAlexander (1995)`s study of the Harley-Davidson subculture reveals an ideology that permeates social, political and spiritual aspects of members` lives, reflected in practices, such as tattoos, pins, leathers, club-specific clothing and motorcycle customization. Similarly, Kozinets (2001)`s research on the Star Trek fandom, the phenomenal science fictions series, shows how a consumption ideology develops around a single brand through shared beliefs and rituals. Unlike both studies that explore consumption ideologies created around a single brand, Kates (2004) illustrates that non-brand-focused subcultures, such as the gay community, can also construct consumption ideologies through dynamic framing processes. In all cases, these ideologies become so powerful that they take on culture-like qualities, shaping and adapting across diverse consumption domains.

Narration plays a crucial role in the creation and sacralization of shared consumption beliefs and practices. In their study of the abandoned Apple Newton brand community, Muniz and Schau (2005) reveal that survival tales, often supernatural, religious and magical in nature, dominate the community`s discourse, with resurrection tales frequently expressing the hope that the Newton will one day return. Another common theme is miraculous recovery in which lost data, battery life or functionary is suddenly restored. Similarly, the Star Trek subculture expresses sacredness through narratives emphasizing `devotion`, `searching for God in the episodes, `mythic resonance`, and `scientized spirituality`. While these community narratives carry religious undertones, they also embody New Age elements, a trait further highlighted by the MG car brand owners, who emphasize authenticity in their storytelling, as indicated in the study by Leigh and colleagues (2006).

In many studies on consumer subcultures, brand communities are portrayed as forms of civil religion, with shared codes of moral conduct adhered to by their members. For example, the Harley-Davidson subculture is often conceived as a religious domain, evident in the brotherhood among bikers and practiced through communal riding activities. Within this extraordinary, otherworldly and almost shamanic experience, the motorcycle attains a sacred status, so much so that it is strictly taboo to touch another person's Harley without permission. However, this biker religion also harbours a darker, cultic side that can seem antichrist, reflected in outlaw club names, the Harley owner's manual and biker jewellery. Similarly, Star Trek functions as a civil religion, offering a motivating vision of the future and a moral compass around which fans shape their lives. Such shared sense of religion provides members with the perception of a powerful utopian refuge and a postcapitalist social and technological utopia. In the Apple Newton brand community, faith as an essential religious construct helps members remain committed to a discontinued technology and believe in its continued viability. A comparable form of religious devotion is observed among Macintosh users in the study by Belk and Tumbat (2005). Across these examples, consumption experiences take on a cultic quasi-religious dimension that permeates many aspects of members` lives.

Consumer subcultures also serve as avenues for self-transformation, a theme echoed in studies on consumer pilgrimage and extraordinary consumer experiences. Within the Harley-Davidson subculture, riding acquires a spiritual dimension that allows enthusiasts to transcend the mundane. This sense of transcendence is accompanied by heightened sensory awareness and a consciousness of being part of a larger community or purpose. Similarly, in a golf community, self-transformation occurs through experiences of flow and communitas, which also shape members` perceptions of sacredness, as demonstrated in McGinnis and colleagues` (2012) study. Such extraordinary experiences offer fans a sense of higher existence that transcends the individual self, as seen in the Star Trek subculture.

Lastly, it is common in many consumer subcultures to anthropomorphize a consumption object. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the Harley-Davidson subculture, where the bike is perceived to have human-like needs, such as requiring cleaning, self-care and affection, which are fulfilled through ritualistic practices by its owners. Moreover, the garage is regarded not simply as a storage place but as a shrine dedicated to housing the bike. Similarly, members of the Apple Newton community anthropomorphize the product by ascribing extraordinary characteristics and intentionality to it, with narratives serving as powerful tools tin fostering this perception.

Across all the sacred consumption contexts explored thus far, consumption is framed through various aspects of sacredness, and the act of consumption is primarily driven by religious motives. Yet, there are also consumption cases where religious motives give way to more individualistic and secular ones, while simultaneously maintaining a spiritual undertone. This topic is explored in the following section.

Secular Consumption Perspective into Consumer Spirituality

The second line of inquiry provides a secular perspective on consumer spirituality, wherein spirituality is enacted through a more individualized consumption lens. Secular consumption refers to "the acquisition of man-made products, typically those resulting from technological processes and those sought after by consumers in a competitive fashion" (Hirschman, 1988, p. 343, 344). In this research, the scope of secular consumption is considered more broadly than in Hirschman`s original formulation. Within this framework, the secular consumption context resembles sacred consumption in that it may also accommodate diverse consumption objects, services or experiences. However, it also differs markedly in how such consumption externalities are contextualized, and in the purposes that they fulfil for consumers. In secular consumption contexts, consumption externalities do not necessarily connote virtuous or transcendent objectives; therefore, their consumption does not convey scared or religious significance, although elements of spiritual processes may still be embedded within the consumption experience. Instead, spirituality serves alternative functions for consumers, such as fostering personal development, fulfilment, happiness or a sense of achievement.

Furthermore, the secular consumption perspective on consumer spirituality aligns with the notion of the secularization of the sacred, proposed by Belk and colleagues (1989), which represents a counterpoint to their earlier articulation of the sacralization of the secular. Secularization of the sacred becomes evident in the ways consumers respond to diverse aspects of the consumption object, context and experience. Both perspectives on consumer spirituality, that is, secular consumption and the secularization of the sacred, are particularly salient in studies focusing on religious festivals and rituals, as well as in research addressing New Age spiritualities.

Spiritual Festivals and Rituals

According to Belk and colleagues (1989), the secularization of the sacred is especially evident in the increasing commercialization of religious festivals, whose character and the significance ascribed to them have been transformed over time. Similarly, Schmidt (1991) underscores the commercialization of holidays, whether civic, religious, and folk in nature, with the rise of consumerist culture in America. More than a decade later, Rinallo and colleagues (2013, p. 10) also reframe this secularization process as "the commodification of the spiritual".

All three arguments discussed above approach spirituality and its historical transformations largely within Western and Christian contexts. Yet, given shared features of human meaning-making, these arguments can be reasonably generalized to other cultural settings. For instance, Sandikci and Omeraki (2007) investigate Ramadan rituals in rural Türkiye and reveal the influence of a rapidly expanding consumer culture and globalization on the reinvestment and reinterpretation of traditional Islamic beliefs and practices. In this view, the redefinition of Ramadan and its subsequent commercialization are not treated as mere by-products of cultural imperialism or postmodernity, as is often assumed; rather, both Western and non-Western contexts reveal a shared willingness to accommodate commercial logics across diverse consumption practices.

A similar line of reasoning is advanced by Sandikci and Ger (2010), who extend the secularization of the sacred view to the evolution of the Islamic veil, which is often stigmatized as a deviant practice by secular sides in Türkiye, into a fashionable garment. This evolution results in diminishing the historically embedded religious meanings of veiling. The authors attribute this transformation to structural and emergent shifts in the country's social, political and economic systems, which parallel shifts on the global arena. Both studies thus interpret secularizing tendencies within long-standing religious traditions and practices as expressions of the broader triumph of consumerism over tradition across the world.

A comparable dynamic appears in the case of the Japanese Christmas. According to Kimura and Belk (2005), its commercialization reflects more complex cultural ideologies than those attached merely commercial products and services. Similar to previous studies, the authors explain how a deeply ideological and religious structure becomes dominated by rising consumerist interests through the interplay of global and local forces in contemporary marketplaces. Notably, such forces may even threaten to displace traditional local holidays altogether.

New Age Spiritualities

The secular perspective into consumer spirituality also characterizes many studies examining New Age spiritualities, particularly mindfulness, and their manifestations in the consumption sphere. In this body of work, New Age spiritualities, associated with both established or non-established forms of religious faith, are expressed through diverse ordinary, mundane and materially grounded consumption experiences. In so doing, these spiritual traditions undergo notable shifts, losing much of their originally religious connotations and, in turn, becoming increasingly secularized.

Bahl and colleagues (2016, p. 30) define mindful consumption as "an ongoing practice of bringing attention, with acceptance, to inner and outer stimuli and their effects on the consumption process", positioning it as an antidote to mindless consumption and its detrimental effects on individual and collective well-being. Much of the consumer research on mindfulness emphasizes its capacity to cultivate ethically oriented consumption motives, thereby inviting a reconsideration of consumption behaviour through a less materialistic lens. For instance, Veer and colleagues (2016) illustrate that mindfulness, conceptualized as an enhanced attentional state, improves consumers' dependence on internal physiological cues that are typically overshadowed by external prompts. Consumers who successfully focus their attention on bodily signals are shown to compensate more for previous food intake in subsequent consumption episodes, effectively reducing their food intake without experiencing heightened physiological need. This occurs because mindful body meditation increases consumers' awareness of post-consumption physiological cues, rather than retrospective estimations of quantity consumed, thus facilitating greater introspection.

The consumption-reduction effect of mindfulness is further emphasized by Li and colleagues (2021), who investigate connectedness to nature and self-control as key psychological mechanisms underlying ethical consumption. Their findings indicate that mindfulness positively predicts both the refinement and reduction dimensions of ethical consumption through its capacity to cultivate these traits. Extending this logic beyond food-related contexts, Armstrong (2021) investigates the ethical tensions surrounding consumers' aspiring for fashion. From a Buddhist standpoint, fashion intensifies human suffering by promoting attachment, material possession and identity investment. In response, the author presents Buddhist economics, positioned in contrast to classical economic theory`s prioritization of productivity through ever-increasing consumption, as a moral framework

grounded in moderation and nonviolence. Such a framework, they argue, may help to narrow the ethical gap in consumption practices and render consumer ethics more consequential.

In all three examples above, the relationship between mindfulness and consumption behaviour is explored primarily through its effects at the individual consumer level. Yet, several studies extend the refinement and reduction aspects of mindfulness to broader societal contexts, highlighting implications for multiple stakeholder groups. For example, Hunecke and Richter (2018) explore how different dimensions of mindfulness, such as observing, describing, acting with awareness, non-judging and non-reactivity, relate to environmentally relevant behaviour. Among these dimensions, only acting with awareness is found to positively predict ecological behaviour. Similarly, Kulow and Kramer (2016) examine the impact of belief in karma, another Buddhist concept, on consumers` responses to prosocial initiatives undertaken by firms. Karma describes "the belief that the universe bestows rewards for doing right and exacts punishments for doing wrong" (Kulow and Kramer, 2016, p. 334). The study indicates that karmic beliefs do not universally enhance support for prosocial behaviour, contrary to popular belief. Rather, they motivate favourable responses only when the prosocial action is not perceived as self-serving for the firm. Participants with strong karmic beliefs react less favourably to charitable initiatives framed as commercially motivated, thus prioritizing an ethical sense of collective wellbeing over individualistic gain in the marketplace.

In the examples discussed above, various aspects of mindfulness, originating from an Eastern archaic religious and philosophical tradition, are revisited through a secular and everyday consumption lens. Although mindfulness is approached from a secular standpoint in these cases, it remains important to recognize that the ethical dimension embedded within the notion still reflects a connection to the spiritual realm from which it historically emerges. This indicates that the degree of secularization applied to mindfulness is highly context-dependent and resists a one-size-fits-all approach. The following section introduces Integrated Perspective into Consumer Spirituality that synthesizes secular and secular dimensions.

Integrated Perspective into Consumer Spirituality

The third line of inquiry adopts an integrated perspective on consumer spirituality, encompassing consumption contexts in which consumption externalities embody both sacred and secular qualities. While these externalities may be imbued with virtuous or transcendent significance through rituals, objects or experiences, they are simultaneously consumed for benefits that are secular and individual in nature. As a result, the sacred and the secular often

interpenetrate, producing multi-layered, intense and hybridized consumer experiences. This integrated perspective resonates with Belk and colleagues (1989)`s broader conceptualization of consumer behaviour, which suggests that consumption simultaneously enacts processes of sacralising the secular and secularizing the sacred. What renders an object sacred or profane within the consumptionscape is ultimately the consumer, who enacts and negotiates this distinction through lived consumption practices (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989). In this regard, consumption itself becomes a medium of transcendent experience.

According to Sherry and Kozinets (2007), the meanings historically inscribed on traditional lived religions have undergone transformation over recent decades, giving rise to a reflexive spirituality of lived religion that now characterizes the contemporary spiritual marketplace. These spiritualities are no longer confined to formal religious settings but have moved toward more dynamic and decentralized spaces of mutual display, such as festivals. In this context, Sherry and Kozinets (2007, p. 121)[5] investigate how nomadic spirituality is enacted throughout the Burning Man festival, a communal event that brings together "a subculturally diverse congeries of campers, an anarchists, ravers, digerati, artists, spiritual seekers, tourists, urban planners, visionaries, and increasingly, researchers and media reporters". Their findings reveal complex experiential entanglements between the sacred and the secular. The sacred dimension of participants` lived experiences begin to unfold during their long and arduous journey to the Black Rock Desert, echoing religious pilgrimages undertaken to Santiago Del Camino, Mecca or Jerusalem. It continues throughout key stages of the festival, such as the greeting ritual and the burn, during which participants encounter intense, transformative experiences that are often likened to baptism or exorcism. Yet, even during these spiritually charged and transcendental moments, consumer participation is marked by worldly, mundane, secular and playful practices, such as music-making, gaming, sporting, navigating and celebrating sexuality. To interpret this secular dimension of Burning Man, the authors draw extensively on the highly individualized, deeply experiential and subjective conceptions of religion, articulated by Taylor (2001) and Berman (2000). Through this lens, the nomadic spirituality enacted at the festival integrates an individualized form of secularization into primal experience of immanence and transcendence, thereby blurring the boundary between the sacred and the secular. This fusion ultimately yields a third modality of

[5] In an earlier study titled 'Can Consumers Escape the Market? Emancipatory Illuminations from Burning Man', Kozinets uses the same example of the Burning Man Festival, this time to explore the widespread cultural tensions between communal ideals and market logics. In the study, the emancipatory dynamics of the festival for the individual are approached from a marketization and consumerism viewpoints, rather than a sacralization process.

consumer spiritual experience, which is constituted by the mutual absorption of the secularization of the sacred and the sacralization of the secular.

A comparable form of experience that resists classification at either pole of the sacred-secular continuum emerges in the consumption of the rosary, a central prayer artifact of the Catholic Church, as explored by Rinallo and colleagues (2013). Investigating the commodification of rosaries through various market offerings, such as D&G, the authors argue that "the religious and historically established attribute of sacredness contributes a powerfully marketable quality to rosaries" (Rinallo *et al.*, 2013, p. 37). Much like the individualized yet spirituality-evoking nomadic experiences documented at the Burning Man Festival, branded rosaries still maintain a significant degree of sacredness that is historically and religiously inscribed into their commodified forms. For many younger consumers, who are often non-practicing Catholics, the rosary preserves its sacred status. Many own one or more rosaries received on religiously meaningful occasions and readily acknowledge the artifact`s religious connotations. Yet, these same individuals tend not to exhibit strong negative reactions to what might traditionally be perceived as profane uses of the rosary. Indeed, some fashion-oriented consumers conceive of branded rosaries as occupying an in-between position, simultaneously being sacred, sexy, swanky, and secular. This hybridity illustrates how commodified sacred objects can transcend their spiritual significance without forfeiting their value within contemporary consumption contexts.

In both studies discussed above, the individuality, and thus subjectivity, of the spiritual experience significantly contributes to the secularization of spiritual frontiers. In other words, what intertwines the scared and the secular is largely the individual consumer, a point also emphasized by Belk and colleagues (1989, p. 9, 13), who argue that consumers themselves determine the degree of distinction between these domains by constructing meaning at varying levels of ontological intensity. A similar perspective, which entitles the individual consumer with the authority to negotiate and enact the extent of sacralization and secularization, emerges in Bradford and Sherry (2015)`s study of tailgating, conceptualized as a form of secular festival. Although tailgating comprises largely mundane activities, such as grilling, eating, drinking, and socializing, this 'vestaval' gives consumers the opportunity to shape the event according to their own preferences, thereby generating an extraordinary experience which approximates the sacred. As consumers move through the stages of location ("enacting our place"), construction ("defining my place"), customization ("creating my place") and

inhabitation (“living my place”), they experience varying degrees of individually constructed spirituality.

In the examples above, the boundaries between the sacralization of the secular and the secularization of the sacred gradually fade, as consumers move from one experiential stage to another. Ultimately, these realms converge in a way that their distinction becomes inconsequential for consumers, who instead immerse themselves in the sheer intensity of the experience. The nomad at Burning Man, the Christian believer who wears rosary jewellery and the participant of the vestaval each exemplify consumers who do not actively engage in cognitively distinguishing between the sacred and the secular but rather experience them simultaneously and holistically.

Unlike these cases, Hirschman (1988)`s study suggests that the sacred-secular frontier do not necessarily have to be transcended or collapsed for consumers to experience transformation in its fullest sense. Instead, consumers may actively navigate between both realms, what Baudrillard characterizes as secular materialism and sacred materialism, throughout their consumption journeys. In their analysis of the television programs Dallas and Dynasty, Hirschman demonstrates how characters, who embody secular lifestyles shift toward sacred values, such as integrity, care for others and hard work, while virtuous characters heavily rely on the capitalist systems to pursue and express those very virtues. Hirschman explains this oscillation through processes of mediation and transformation. Mediation serves to reconcile tensions within a bipolar pair of alternatives, while transformation occurs when bipolar positions gradually adopt the oppositional characteristics of their counterpart until they ultimately become their antonym (Hirschman, 1988, p. 346). Through these movements, consumers confront cycles of crises and exercise conscious choice. As they shift between these experiential poles, they engage in self-definition, not only as consumers but as individuals, and consequently construct their identities (Hirschman, 1988, p. 357). In this sense, the form of consumer transformation depicted by Hirschman is a conscious and deliberate process, whereas the transformations described in the previous studies portray consumers as being drawn into an integrated sacred-secular experiential state through the natural unfolding of events.

Finally, a growing body of research on eco-spirituality suggest that spiritual orientations can foster significant shifts toward individual and collective environmental sustainability efforts (e.g. Adow *et al.*, 2024; Coates, 2025). This work commonly highlights co-creative engagement and a sense of unity between humanity and nature, grounded in an ongoing commitment to harmonious coexistence. Although its ecological focus foregrounds a worldly

commitment to peaceful living, such orientations are operationalized through forms of spirituality that extend across both faith-based and nonfaith-based belief systems.

While this literature primarily centres on environmental activism, the CCA approach adopted in this thesis engages a broader range of activism contexts, conceptualizing spirituality, particularly contemplation, as a capacity-building resources that informs everyday activist practices. Yet, both lines of research converge in positioning spirituality as a foundational site of activism-oriented individual transformations that diffuses across social contexts through interpersonal engagement.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter explores spirituality across diverse consumption contexts. It begins by introducing three distinct approaches to defining spirituality, including religious, secular/individual and hybrid perspectives. Establishing these definitional foundations is essential to understand contemplation, which is often perceived and practiced across both faith-based and non-faith-based forms of spirituality. The chapter then discusses New Age spiritualities as a social, cultural and spiritual phenomenon, highlighting the dynamics that have shaped their rise, including industrialization, the increasing prominence of faith and the rise of a quest culture. Within the context of New Age spiritualities, mindfulness is positioned as a context through which contemplation is examined in this study. After addressing the interaction between spirituality and the marketplace, the chapter concludes with an overview of how spirituality has been conceptualized and investigated within consumer research.

Overall, the chapter articulates a multi-dimensional dialogue among diverse approaches to spirituality in and around consumer research, illustrating how New Age spiritualities have permeated into the social fabric of contemporary marketplaces. Although the relationship between spirituality and activism may appear paradoxical, especially given that consumer spirituality is often framed through lenses of individualization and de-politization amid therapeutic politics, its activist potential has been largely overlooked. This study seeks to uncover this subtle yet consequential potential by juxtaposing the overt, external and often adversarial logics of conventional consumer activism with quieter, internal and empathy-based dynamics of consumer spirituality, thereby generating new insights into contemplative consumer activism.

Chapter 4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the philosophical foundations of this study across two sections. The first explains its paradigmatic, ontological and epistemological orientations. The second section presents a detailed account of the social phenomenological approach employed as the research method, encompassing sampling, data collection and analysis procedures. This is followed by a discussion of how validity and reliability issues are addressed. The chapter concludes with ethical considerations concerning the study.

4.2 Philosophical Foundations of the Study

The term research philosophy describes "a system of beliefs and assumptions about the development of knowledge" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 130). Philosophical assumptions are understood as "statements accepted without direct empirical support and are based on different views of reality, social beings, and knowledge" (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, p. 508). Research philosophy is commonly articulated through paradigmatic, ontological, epistemological and methodological stances, which collectively underpin a study`s approach to knowledge.

Regarding the broader research paradigm, this study is situated within the *Interpretive paradigm*, in its attempt to understand and explain the social world as constructed through subjective experiences. This orientation is grounded in a *Relativist* ontology, which posits the existence of multiple realities rather than a single objective reality. Epistemologically, the study adopts a *Subjectivist* stance in its attempt to uncover meaning through lived experiences, complemented by a *Social Constructionist* orientation that emphasizes the contextual and socially embedded nature of interpretation.

With regard to methodological design, this study adopts a *Social Phenomenological Approach* (Schutz, 1972), which explores lived subjective experiences and their relation to the construction of the social world. Within this framework, social constructionism, as the epistemological orientation, emphasizes the role of social dynamics in shaping reality, while the social phenomenological approach as the methodological orientation provides the tools to explore how such realities both influence and are influenced by subjective experiences. The method is operationalized through twenty-one in-depth interviews with participants from

diverse backgrounds, complemented by the researcher`s own experiential engagement with the phenomenon under study. The philosophical underpinnings of the study are discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.2.1 Interpretivism as Paradigmatic Orientation

Kuhn ([1962] 1996) defines a paradigm as "some accepted examples of actual scientific practice – examples which include law, theory, application, and instrumentation together provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research". Paradigm can also be understood as a worldview, described as "a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research that a researcher brings to a study" (Creswell and Creswell, 2003, p. 5). It represents a sum of a study`s philosophical underpinnings (Atkinson, 2017). According to Burrell and Morgan (2017), research paradigms can be categorized along two dimensions, namely, *subjective* versus *objective* and *regulation* versus *radical chang*e. Figure 4.1 presents an overview of sociological paradigms, as outlined by the authors.

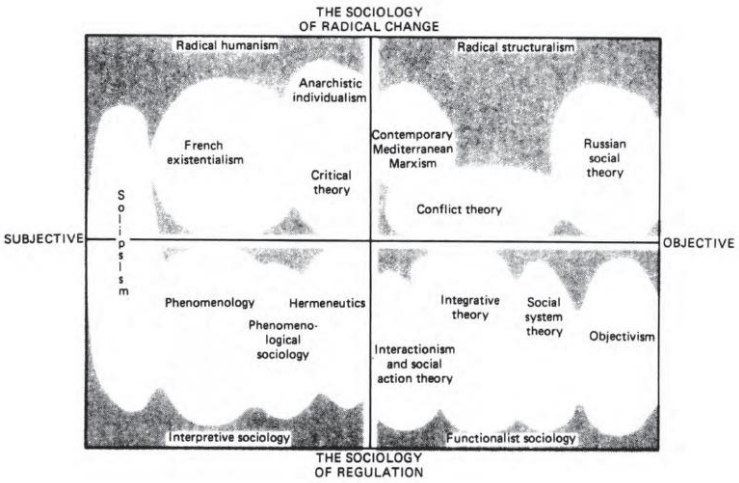


Figure 4.1: Sociological Paradigms by Burrell and Morgan

Oriented toward the subjective and regulation ends of the paradigm spectrum, the interpretivist paradigm refers to a theoretical perspective that "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). It is informed "by a concern to understand the world as it is, to understand the fundamental nature of the social world at the level of subjective experience" rather than that of "the observer of action" (Burrell and Morgan, 2017, p. 28). Alongside positivism (Hunt, 1991), interpretivism

constitutes one of the two main approaches to knowledge generation in the social sciences, and specially in consumer research (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Interpretivism has its roots in the German idealist tradition, drawing on Immanuel Kant`s emphasis on participant subjectivity, mind and intuition in understanding the social world. Historically, it is often traced to Max Weber, particularly his concepts of `verstehen`, a German word meaning `understanding`. Interpretivism`s focus on understanding social phenomena through subjective experience contrasts with the explanatory and causal aims of the natural sciences (Crotty, 1998). Within this framework, interpretivism posits that the external manifestations of human life can be understood by exploring subjective experiences, that is, the particular ways that the individual thinks, feels, behaves, thereby bridging the inner life with the outward social realities (Burrell and Morgan, 2017).

Regarding the intersection of interpretivism and consumer research, Askegaard and Linnet (2011) associate the interpretivist voice with the introduction of experiential consumption in consumer research (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, 1997; Holbrook, 1988). In contrast, Tadajewski (2006) traces interpretive consumer research further back, suggesting its embryonic form appeared in motivation research in the 1930s, which aimed to understand motives underlying consumer behaviour. In either case, interpretivism is widely employed in consumer research, particularly in those studies adopting the Consumer Culture Theory perspective (e.g. Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Goulding, 1999; Fagbola, McEachern and Raftopoulou, 2023; Thompson, 1997; Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989). Within this tradition, interpretivism informs research on both consumer activism (e.g. Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Sandikci, Jafari and Fischer, 2024; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a; Sandlin and Callahan, 2009) and consumer spirituality (Cova and Cova, 2019; Hemetsberger, Kreuzer and Klien, 2019; Higgins and Hamilton, 2014). Building on prior research, this study seeks to understand the role of contemplation in driving consumer activism. It explores consumers` interpretation of activism through their lived experiences of contemplation, and examines how these contemplative states manifest in the social world via intersubjective negotiations. In so doing, the study adopts both an in-out and out-in perspective, investigating how contemplation-informed states of being and doing both shape and are shaped by socially constructed dynamics, particularly those related to social change.

4.2.2 Relativism as Ontological Orientation

Ontology refers to “a philosophical belief system about the nature of the social world (e.g. whether it is patterned and predictable or constantly re-created by humans)” (Leavy, 2017, p. 25) and concerns assumptions about the nature of reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In a research context, ontological orientation is particularly important, as it influences how a researcher perceives and studies their objects of inquiry (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 133). Ontological positions are often positioned along a continuum from relativism to realism, while also encompassing constructivism and idealism, each reflecting a distinct understanding of reality. Relativism is typically contrasted with realism, which assumes an independently existing, patterned and predictable reality, and seeks to predict and control natural phenomena through epistemological approaches, such as positivism, objectivism, empiricism, absolutism and determinism (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011).

This study adopts relativism as its underlying ontological stance. Relativism “accounts for the plurality of values and for moral ambivalence by holding that the universal limits on adequate moralities do not narrow the range of such moralities to just one” (Wong, 2006, p. 66). This pluralistic perspective emphasizes the in-distinction of persons and orders (Schnapper, 2009, p. 177), representing a more democratic approach to reality that resists absolutism. While relativism often provides the general ontological framework for interpretivist inquiry, it is expressed through specific positions on the nature and subjectivity of reality, including objective relativism within a functionalist paradigm and nominalism in its most extreme form (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009; Burrell and Morgan, 2017). In contrast, solipsism holds that “given there is no external point of reference, knowledge must be limited to what we as individuals experience”, implying that, “there is nothing beyond oneself and one`s ideas” (Burrell and Morgan, 2017, p. 239).

Ontological positions approach reality in different ways, ranging from contextual reality or multiple realities to no reality at all, circumventing scepticism and even reaching a nihilistic threshold. This study adopts a view of reality “derived from community consensus regarding what is `real`, what is useful and what has meaning (especially meaning for action and further steps) within that community” (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011, p. 116). That is, while acknowledging that reality emerges from individual consciousness, it extends subjective reality into the social realm, underscoring intersubjective processes through which reality is created and negotiated. In this context, reality is constructed through consensual language

(Lincoln and Guba, 1985), embedded within larger social, cultural, political and historical frameworks, and is subject to constant change.

The relativist perspective on context-bound human knowledge has notably expanded the boundaries of marketing (Hirschman, 1986), providing diverse viewpoints to study social phenomena (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). Relativism, whether implicitly or explicitly, underpins research on consumer activism, particularly those guided by an interpretivist paradigm (e.g. Discetti and Anderson, 2022; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Kravets, 2021) as well as research on consumer spirituality (e.g. Cornwell *et al.*, 2005; Souiden, Ladhari and Zarrouk Amri, 2018; Sherry and Kozinets, 2007). The following section details the epistemological orientation of the study.

4.2.3 Subjectivism and Social Constructionism as Epistemological Orientation

Epistemology refers to a philosophical belief system concerning "what counts as knowledge" (Leavy, 2017, p. 25), "how we know what we know" (Creswell and Creswell, 2003, p. 60; Crotty, 1998, p. 3), and in which ways "relationship of knower to known" works (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 37). It rests on the premise that "knowledge does not directly reflect reality but is a theoretical structuration of it" (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p. 397).

Epistemological orientations that underpin research are often positioned along a continuum between objectivism and subjectivism. Objectivism assumes that the social world exits independently of social actors and can be apprehended as true reality, whereas subjectivism incorporates a dynamic worldview, in which reality as "made from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors" (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009, p. 137). Crotty (1998) adds constructionism as the third major epistemological orientation to objectivism and subjectivism, which together inform diverse research frameworks, such as positivism, interpretivism, critical inquiry, feminism and postmodernism. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 37) further conceptualize epistemology along a spectrum from dualism to inseparability. Dualism, consistent with the positivist stance, posits that "the inquirer [or the knower] and the object of inquiry [or the known] are independent", whereas inseparability, aligned with naturalistic and interpretivist inquiry, holds that the knower and the known are in constant interaction and therefore cannot be disentangled.

This study relies on both subjectivism and social constructionism as its epistemological orientations. Subjectivism, as Schulting (2017, p. 10) defines, posits that "the possibility of knowledge of objects essentially and wholly depends on subjective functions of thought or the

capacity to judge, given sensory input, that is, on transcendental apperception—in its twofold guise of intellectual and figurative synthesis". Within this orientation, meaning is constructed from and within the individual`s lived experience, rendering knowledge an inherently personal and self-contained truth. Subjectivism has frequently been employed as an epistemological stance in consumer research, particularly in studies situated within the interpretivist paradigm (e.g. Gould, 2012; Holbrook, 1997; Takhar, 2020; Tiwsakul and Hackley, 2012; Walther and Schouten, 2016).

Social constructionism is "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). It is distinct from social constructivism, which emphasizes the subject`s active engagement with, and sense-making of, the object in the world. As adopted in this study, constructionism posits that meaning making is inseparable from the complex processes of enculturation to which individuals are exposed throughout their existence. This socially embedded and dynamic orientation aligns with this study`s aim of exploring how contemplation extends into the social sphere and drives activist change, which both shapes and is shaped by complex marketplace interactions.

Within a social constructionist view of reality, "everyday life presents itself as a reality interpreted by men and subjectively meaningful to them as a coherent world", which enables multiple realities to exist, yet only one among them to emerge as "the reality per excellence" (Berger and Luckmann, 1991, p. 33, 35). Meaning, therefore, is constructed as individuals engage with and interpret the external world, always involving intentionality and consciousness. In contrast to subjectivism, where meaning is produced through a largely linear construction process extending from the subject toward the object, social constructionism emphasizes a reciprocal interactional process. Here, while the subject makes sense of the object, the object, already embedded with meanings originating from its broader social context, simultaneously shapes the subject`s meaning making (Burr, 2015; Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Subjectivism and social constructionism, which constitute the epistemological foundations of this study, inform it in complementary yet distinct ways. Subjectivism enables an understanding of how contemplation as a deeply personal cognitive engagement is conceptualized, mobilized and enacted *within an individual space* by investigating consumers` subjective experiences and their internal processes of meaning making. Social constructionism, in turn, facilitates an exploration of how these individually constructed meanings are negotiated

through consumer interactions *across social spaces* and subsequently translated into social change within an activism framework. Furthermore, its emphasis on the everyday, experienced "in terms of differing degrees of closeness and remoteness, both spatially and temporally" (Berger and Luckmann, 1991, p. 36) further situates social constructionism in alignment with the everyday context, in which Contemplative Consumer Activism unfolds. Furthermore, the *inter-subjectivist* character of social constructionism (Leavy, 2017) aligns closely with the study`s social phenomenological research design, elaborated in the following section. This plural epistemological orientation, although not always explicitly articulated, is employed in consumer research that investigates consumer experience as both constructed within a deeply subjective domain and negotiated within the social domain (e.g. Cherrier and Türe, 2023; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995; Swimberghe, Flurry and Parker, 2011).

The next section provides a detailed account of the research methodology informing this study.

4.3 Research Methodology

Methodology provides a framework for investigating a research topic and understanding the processes behind its emergence and development (Lincoln, Lynham and Guba, 2011; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009). This study adopts a qualitative design to explore the role of contemplation in consumer activism. Qualitative designs, common in activism research (Atkinson, 2017), are best suited to capturing subjective meanings within their social context. Specifically, the study employs S*ocial Phenomenological Approach*, detailed in the following section. The methodology section further outlines the sampling, data collection and analysis processes, followed by considerations of validity and reliability.

4.3.1 Social Phenomenological Approach as a Research Method

The social phenomenological approach is a qualitative method that "examines the reciprocal interactions among the processes of human action, situational structuring, and reality construction in the context of life-world" (Savolainen, 2007, p. 1711). Rooted in Schutz (1972)`s reinterpretation of Husserl`s transcendental phenomenology, it emphasizes lived experience while highlighting how subjective meanings are negotiated within the social world.

Social phenomenology emerges as an extension of phenomenology, which refers to "an attempt to return to the primordial contents of consciousness, that is, to the objects that present

themselves in our very experience of them prior to our making any sense of them at all" (Crotty, 1998, p. 96). It focuses on "the activities of consciousness and the objects that present themselves to consciousness" (Giorgi and Giorgi, 2003, p. 9).

In Schutz`s conceptualization, social phenomenology seeks to understand knowledge of the external world through the interpretation of subjective experience, without confining it to the borders of mere consciousness as Husserl, to bodily perception as Merleau-Ponty, or to abstract hermeneutics as Heidegger does. Schutz emphasizes that much of the meaning of the social world, particularly those concerning daily life, emerges through communication and selective articulation (Knoblauch, 2013), and constantly evolves across spatial and temporal contexts beyond "the special case of identical meaning or meaning-structures" (Strassheim, 2016, p. 496). This study applies a social phenomenological approach to the study of contemplation within consumer activism. The following section discusses the rationale for using this method.

Rationale for the Use of Social Phenomenological Approach

This study integrates subjectivist and social constructionist epistemologies. The social phenomenological approach aligns with this framework by examining contemplation as a subjective experience and how it is externalized through consumer interactions across various marketplace contexts. The subjectivist stance reveals how contemplation is internally conceptualized by the consumer contemplator and mobilized across individual contexts. The social constructionist stance extends this to explore its enactment in social spaces and contribution to social change. This approach thus illuminates the person-culture dialectics of Contemplative Consumer Activism and provides a rich representation of the self and the contemplative modes of Being.

The social phenomenological approach also relies on intersubjectivity, through which meaning is constantly (re)constructed between subjects. This perspective is crucial for understanding how silent, internal modes of contemplation navigate external expression through consumer interactions (Pagis, 2010). Moreover, intersubjectivity aligns with the Consumer Culture Theory framework guiding this study, which views meaning as negotiated between the subject and the social world (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

Although phenomenological approaches are frequently used in consumer research (e.g. Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994), a social phenomenological perspective is often lacking, despite its potential "to open up the closure of

widely spread representations of marketing phenomena" (Svensson, 2007, p. 287). This study addresses this gap by providing an integrative framework that focuses on the social dimension of consumer activism, particularly social change, while preserving the authenticity of subjective contemplation even within externalization dynamics.

Figure 4.2 illustrates how the social phenomenological approach informs the study of Contemplative Consumer Activism through a circular process based on the hermeneutic circle.

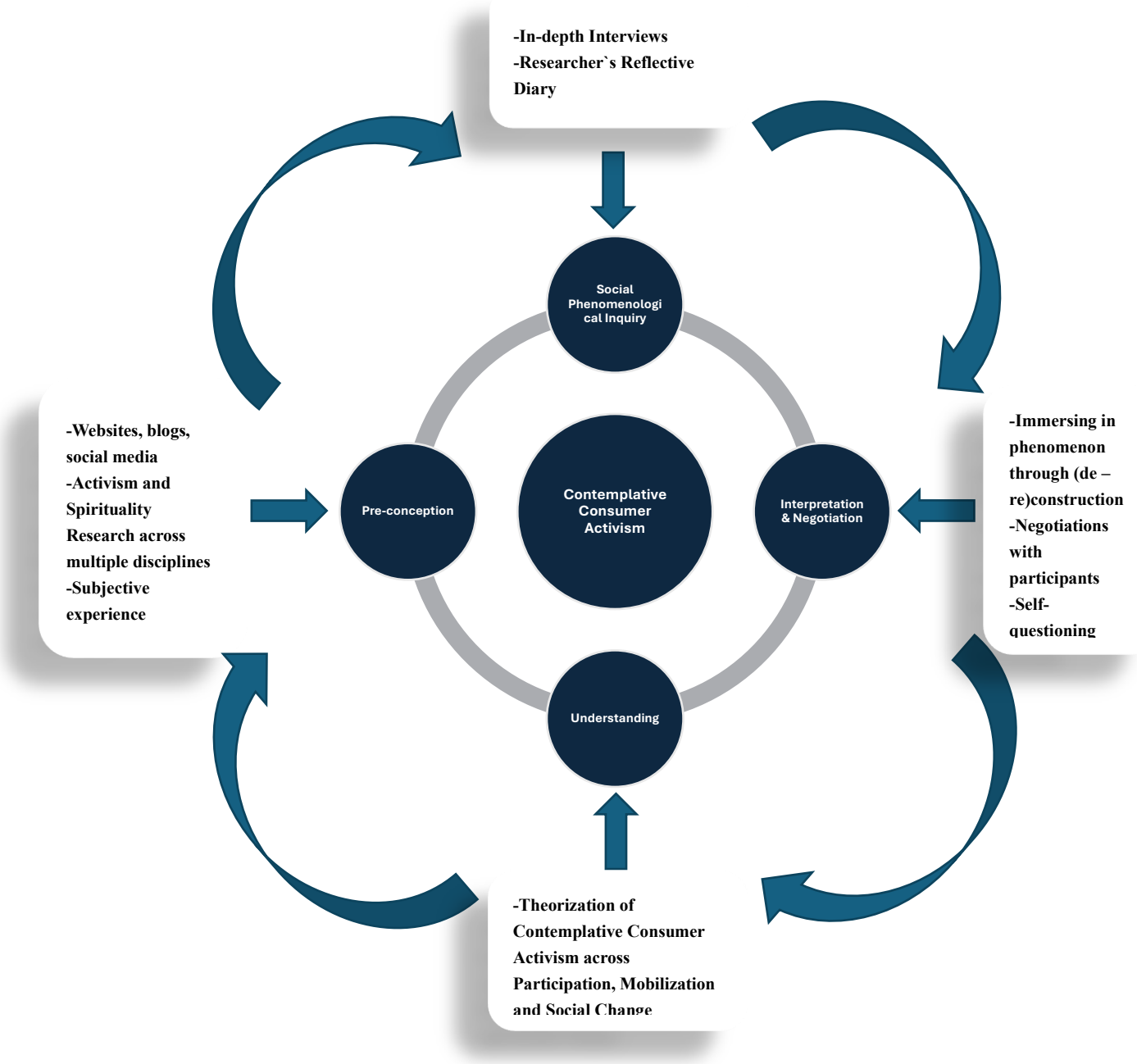


Figure 4.2: Evolution of CCA Research within a Social Phenomenological Framework

The research process unfolds through the stages of pre-conception, social phenomenological research, interpretation and understanding. It begins with developing an initial understanding of the relationship between the consumer as a contemplative being and their potential to mobilize activist change. This *pre-comprehension* stage is informed by the researcher`s engagement with diverse data sources, including websites, social media, blogs and personal encounters with contemplation. It reflects that personal meanings and interpretations do not exist separately but are embedded within a complex network of cultural knowledge and socialization (Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994). Insights are further supported by a critical literature review focusing on consumer spirituality and activism across the domains of consumer research, social psychology, religious and health studies. The researcher`s personal engagement in multiple contemplation domains enriches understanding and provides a nuanced description of the marketing phenomenon. (See Researcher`s Reflective Diary in Section 4.3.3)

This stage is followed by *social phenomenological inquiry* that seeks to understand the contemplation across both personal and social contexts. It employs interviews with consumers from diverse backgrounds, alongside the researcher`s own experiences, to explore how contemplation fosters an alternative form of consumer activism. This process examines how the consumer contemplator perceives contemplation through self-observation and self-exploration and how they project it into the domain of social change.

The third, *interpretation*, is guided by the researcher`s prolonged immersion in the phenomenon, involving the construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of meaning. It includes multiple conversations with participants to co-produce understanding and incorporates the researcher`s introspective self-questioning to maintain cognitive and behavioural engagement with the topic.

The final stage, *understanding*, involves theorizing Contemplative Consumer Activism and its enactment across activism participation, resource mobilization and social change. Throughout the research process, it is recognized that this understanding remains contextually bounded, reflecting a provisional co-production of spatial and temporal meaning (Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994) among the researcher, participants and the larger social fabric shaping the research process.

The section now proceeds to outline sampling, data collection and analysis procedures.

4.3.2 Sampling Process

Sampling is the process of selecting "a number of individual cases from a larger population" from which research data are generated (Leavy, 2017, p. 71). It is crucial, as it impacts the quality of data gathered and interpreted. The sampling process for this study is outlined in terms of frame and boundary conditions, followed by the selection and application of sampling method in the research context.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 27), two important aspects of qualitative sampling are *frame* and a *boundary setting*. Frame setting involves uncovering, confirming or qualifying the basic processes of construct underlying a study, while boundary setting is understood as defining "the aspects of your cases(s) that you can study within the limits of your time and means, that connect directly to your research questions" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 27). For this study, the frame is defined as the consumption of contemplation within an activism framework. Here, contemplation refers to "an intellective (or non-discursive), simple apprehension of the truth (especially divine truth)" (Van Nieuwenhove, 2021, p. 23), entailing a critical reflection on accepted patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving. The boundary is set as cross-cultural contexts in which consumers regularly engage in contemplative practices and associate them with activist endeavours. Such contexts enable deeper insights into consumer contemplation, which may be cultivated across spiritual, non-spiritual and hybrid backgrounds. Furthermore, this contemplative engagement is explored within a mindfulness context, as one of many forms of New Age spiritualities, in which contemplation is practiced through practices, such as meditation, breathwork and yoga.

Within these frame and boundary conditions, the study sample comprises consumers engaged in mindfulness-based contemplative practice for at least five years, across personal or professional consumption contexts, with or without formal training, and who associate their practice with activist efforts, in either conventional or progressive forms. Mindfulness helps to contextualize the contemplative engagement, while the five-year criterion ensures the practice is well-established through sustained familiarity within the consumption context.

In qualitative research, purposeful (or purposive or judgmental) sampling is often used (Miles and Huberman, 1994), based on the premise that selecting the most information-rich cases produces the best data, and research outcomes are a direct result of the cases sampled (Leavy, 2017, p. 74). It also enhances research credibility (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This study employs theoretical sampling, complemented by snowball sampling, as two forms of purposeful sampling. Theoretical sampling involves collecting,

coding and analysing data iteratively to guide subsequent data collection and theory development (Glaser&Strauss, 1967, p. 45 as cited in Merriam and Tisdell, 2015, p. 32). Snowball sampling involves a process, in which the researcher "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich" (Creswell, 2018, p. 287). Theoretical sampling provides a framework that integrates data collection and analysis in line with the research objectives and questions, while snowball sampling advances this process by enriching research sample through participant networks. The integration of these techniques also aligns with the progressive characteristic of qualitative research, in which "samples…are usually not wholly prespecified, but can evolve once fieldwork begins" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 27).

The theoretical sampling process began with the determination of the ways of reaching out to and recruiting potential participants. For that purpose, the researcher initially got in touch with those people in her social circle whom she believed could be good sources of data. These people included personal contacts with whom the researcher had become acquainted in previous activities, workshops or trainings centring on contemplation, and other people known by name due to their stated interest in various mindfulness activities, such as mindfulness practitioners and trainers actively producing content on social media. The variation in the demographics and mindfulness experiences of potential research participants was prioritized at this point to reflect different viewpoints and thus contribute toward the credibility of the research.

In addition to this initial attempt to invite participants from the researcher`s social circle, a participant recruitment notice was employed to invite individuals who were interested in contemplative practice and practiced it either as amateurs or as professionals to participate in the research (See Appendix A for the Participant Recruitment Notice). Following a formal approval from those in charge of the places, the notice was placed in physical venues, such as local shops, supermarkets, meditation centres and public places in Glasgow and in online platforms, such as the researcher`s social media accounts and online communities such as Reddit. Individuals who indicated an interest in participating in the research were sent a participant information sheet that provided information about the research process, and a consent form to be signed and returned to the researcher before the formal interview took place.

Following the research advertisement stage, those individuals who stated their willingness to participate in the research were contacted by the researcher to make a final decision about their appropriateness for the investigation, and to make necessary arrangements

for the interview such as the determination for the interview place and time. At this stage, those volunteers who were below the age of eighteen were eliminated, to ensure both a maturity level, necessary for the expression of subjective experiences, and better compliance with ethical requirements. The initial theoretical sampling was concluded with eleven volunteers, who were initially contacted and participated in the research. Six additional volunteers were added to the research participant group as the interview process was going on. During the interviews, the participants were asked about their recommendations for any other volunteers(s), whom they know might want to contribute to the study. This snowball sampling produced four more volunteers, recommended by the former participants, comprising twenty-one participants in total.

Although there is no consensus on the number of sample units sufficient for qualitative research, the suggested numbers often range from five to thirty (Creswell and Creswell, 2003; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2009) for a single group study, depending on the nature and requirements of the research as well as research questions and objectives (Patton, 2002). Saunders (2012), on the other hand, indicates to a number between four and twelve for a homogenous sample group and between twelve to thirty for a heterogeneous one. There are also researchers (e.g. Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006) who advocate for the importance of the point of saturation, rather than the number of interviews, in determining `where to stop` the investigation. In this investigation, the number of interviews conducted are believed to meet the requirement in terms of both number sufficiency and saturation, to facilitate the understanding of the investigated phenomenon, that is, the role of contemplation in driving consumer activism.

An overview of sample demographics is presented in Table 4.1;

Table 4.1: Participant Demographics

Anonymized Name	Occupation	City/Country of Residence	Age	Education	Marital Status	Involvement in Contemplation	Interview Duration
William	Analytics manager	London/UK	39	Master`s degree	Single	more than 5 years	1`05``
Elizabeth	Plates studio owner	Geneva/Switzerland	36	Master`s degree	Single	more than 8 years	47``
Victor	Support worker	Liverpool/UK	45	GCSA	Divorced	7 years	1`28``
Isabella	Accountant	Glasgow/UK	44	Professional qualification	Married	15 years	54``
Olivia	PhD student	Algiers/Algeria	29	Master`s degree	Single	8 years	1`27``
Steven	IT engineer/Entrepreneur	Pennsylvania/USA	45	College degree	Single	6 years	1`02``
Lesley	Primary school teacher	Brighton/UK	63	Bachelor`s degree	Divorced	more than 30 years	1`06``
Ronald	Mindfulness teacher	California/USA	58	Self-taught	In Relationship	more than 40 years	2`08``
Jacob	Building developer	New York/USA	57	Master`s degree	Married	more than 35 years/More actively for the last 10 years	1`29``
James	Psychiatrist/Mindfulness teacher	Glasgow/UK	48	Doctor of Medicine	Married	more than 20 years	1`10``
Kylie	Retired engineering technician	Glasgow/UK	72	High School	Divorced	more than 25 years	1`44``
Luca	Works in chemistry sector/Mindfulness teacher	Glasgow/UK	32	PhD	Married	6 years actively/Practicing it since 16 years old	1`19``
Harrison	Senior yoga teacher/Former business executive	Glasgow/UK	60	Bachelor`s degree	Married	personal involvement for 35 years/professional involvement for 11 years	1`08``
Josephine	Buddhist nun	Australia/New York	78	Bachelor`s degree	Single	more than 45 years	50``
Taylor	Mindfulness teacher	Istanbul/Türkiye	41	Bachelor`s degree	Single	more than 7 years	1`01``
Tony	Mentor for entrepreneurs	Chicago/USA	38	Bachelor`s degree	Married	5 years	47``
Alan	Psychotherapist/Mindfulness teacher	Majorca/Spain	43	Master`s degree	Married	25 years	1`47``
Dawson	Prefer not to say	Miami/USA	PNTS	Bachelor`s degree	PNTS	more than 20 years	1`40``
George	Professor of Social Work	North Carolina/USA	62	PhD	Divorced	more than 30 years/More actively since 2012	1`01``
Alicia	Photographer	Glasgow/UK	46	Master`s degree	Married	14 years	47``
Sylvia	Spiritual guide and teacher	Southern California/USA	70	Master`s degree	Divorced	more than 40 years	1`35``

4.3.3 Data Collection

Interviews with research participants were conducted online, some of which were also supported by a second and a third round of meetings with participants to clarify their viewpoints. Internet-mediated online interviewing can be especially informative in those cases where it may be difficult to reach a geographically dispersed, international and physically isolated participants, facing time and travel constraints (Salmons, 2015). It was also observed within this study that some participants particularly preferred online interviews, rather than physical ones, stating that it might feel more comfortable given the deeply personal nature of the inquiry.

Interviews lasted between forty-seven minutes to two hours-eight minutes. The topics covered during the interviews included the participants` engagement in contemplation, the enactment of contemplation in an activism framework, the relationship between contemplation and social change, and the marketplace reflections of contemplative change. (See Appendix B for the interview questions) The interviewing process spanned approximately twenty months between May 2023 and December 2024, during which data collected informed the subsequent data analysis processes, which, in turn, led to further data collection as the need arose. Data collection continued until the point of saturation was reached, meaning that there was a strong belief that additional interviews at that point were not going to "yield additional insights"; and they might even carry the risk of "inundation and redundancy" (Leavy, 2017, p. 72). This was also the point where the themes started repeating themselves and there was no contribution to the generation of novel codes that could impact the direction of the research.

In addition to participants` interviews, the research also included data based on researcher`s subjective experiences resulting from personal engagement in the research context. This process is explained in detail in the Researcher Reflective Diary section below. The researcher`s reflective diary served not only as a data source but also as a guiding instrument throughout the research process, particularly during data collection and analysis, by facilitating closer engagement with the participants` experiential domains.

Researcher`s Reflective Diary

I have kept a reflective research diary for nine years, spanning from my initial years of contemplative engagement to the end of this thesis. This form of contemplative engagement denotes a personally meaningful involvement in diverse contemplation-based practices, undertaken independently of any particular religious or secular faith or non-faith. In a total of

2154 pages of both hand-written and digital notes, the diary includes reflections on my own experiences with various contemplative thoughts and practices that I have studied and practiced throughout the years, detailing how they shape the way that I think, feel and act within both individual and social spaces. While the individual space concerns my reflections on how I have responded personal life challenges that I have faced during these years, the social space includes reflections on how such challenges expand into a larger domain, impacting my interactions with other individuals, organizational and systemic structures surrounding my life. Through this interplay across different domains, the research diary details how my personal activism oscillates between ongoing internalization and externalization, while simultaneously experimenting with myself, particularly how my self is constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed in the mundanity of my everyday life.

In addition to these reflections, the reflective dairy also includes reflections on the phenomenological interviews I have conducted as part of this research, as well as fieldnotes, gathered from my participation at various lectures, seminars, workshops and retreats. Together, they have significantly contributed to my understanding alternative modes of consumer activism.

My journey, as accounted by this reflective diary, reflects a discovery of my own vulnerabilities (Downey, Hamilton and Catterall, 2007; Jafari *et al.*, 2013), both as a consumer contemplator and a researcher, as well as providing a rationale and justification for my research (Atkinson, 2017, p. 49). These vulnerabilities relate to challenges that I encountered during my PhD research, spanning both personal and social domains, which were systematically addressed through ongoing reflexive practice. In line with the centrality of researcher positionality, I critically examined my predispositions for and against certain contemplative practices across both faith and secular contexts. I also identified an initial overreliance on others` reported accounts, which I sought to mitigate through deeper immersion in the research setting to enhance contextual sensitivity. The phenomenological intensity of some interviews generated emotional demands that required careful management. To address this, I incorporated structured periods of reflective distancing following each interview, which allowed for emotional processing and critical sensemaking. Additionally, given the ethical importance of faithfully representing participants` lived experiences, I engaged in follow-up meetings with several participants following the formal interviews to clarify and refine my understanding of their viewpoints.

Although these vulnerabilities were particularly salient especially during the early stages of the research, they became critically important for the development of the scholarly inquiry, rather than limiting it. They enabled me to cultivate heightened awareness of my positionality and interpretive assumptions, while simultaneously fostering more effective relational dynamics with participants. In doing so, they contributed to the rigor of the study and to my development as a researcher capable of navigating the complex interplay between personal identity, contemplative practice and scholarly inquiry.

The reflective diary further reflects an account of how I perceive and interpret the social world and its constituents such as other people, organizations and systems, through various biases, misperceptions and misunderstandings as well as deep insights. In this sense, the reflective diary carries an axiological importance, facilitating me to uncover my beliefs and values that influence my interpretation of my life experiences as well as others` (McArdle, Hurrell and Muñoz Martinez, 2013).

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 174-186) identify at least five sources of impact for any research, which include personal values of the researcher, values underlying the substantive paradigm, values underlying the methodological paradigm, values inherent in the research context (or cultural setting), and concord between personal values and axioms underlying substantive theory, methodology and context. I believe that I and my entire research process have been impacted by these dynamics. First, my personal interest and years-long engagement in the history of religions and enthusiasm for social-psychological view of the consumer have impacted the choice of the investigated topic. Second, my moderate relativism-oriented worldview, particularly regarding ethics and morality, has also influenced the way that I approach the research topic and its subject, that is, the consumer contemplator. Third, my belief in a socially constructed reality and intersubjective negotiations of meaning, as opposed to a determinist and an absolutist view, has further directed me toward the interpretivist paradigm, driven by subjectivist and social constructionist epistemological orientations. Fourth, this philosophical stance, together with the character of the investigated topic, has oriented me toward social phenomenology as the research method, as it allows for the employment of an etic code of interpretation, necessary to understand consumers` lived experiences regarding activism and change. Finally, my close dialogue with the research topic and the context has significantly contributed to the formation of my own convictions and conceptualization of the research phenomenon.

Table 4.2 presents an overview of research data;

Table 4.2: An Overview of Research Data

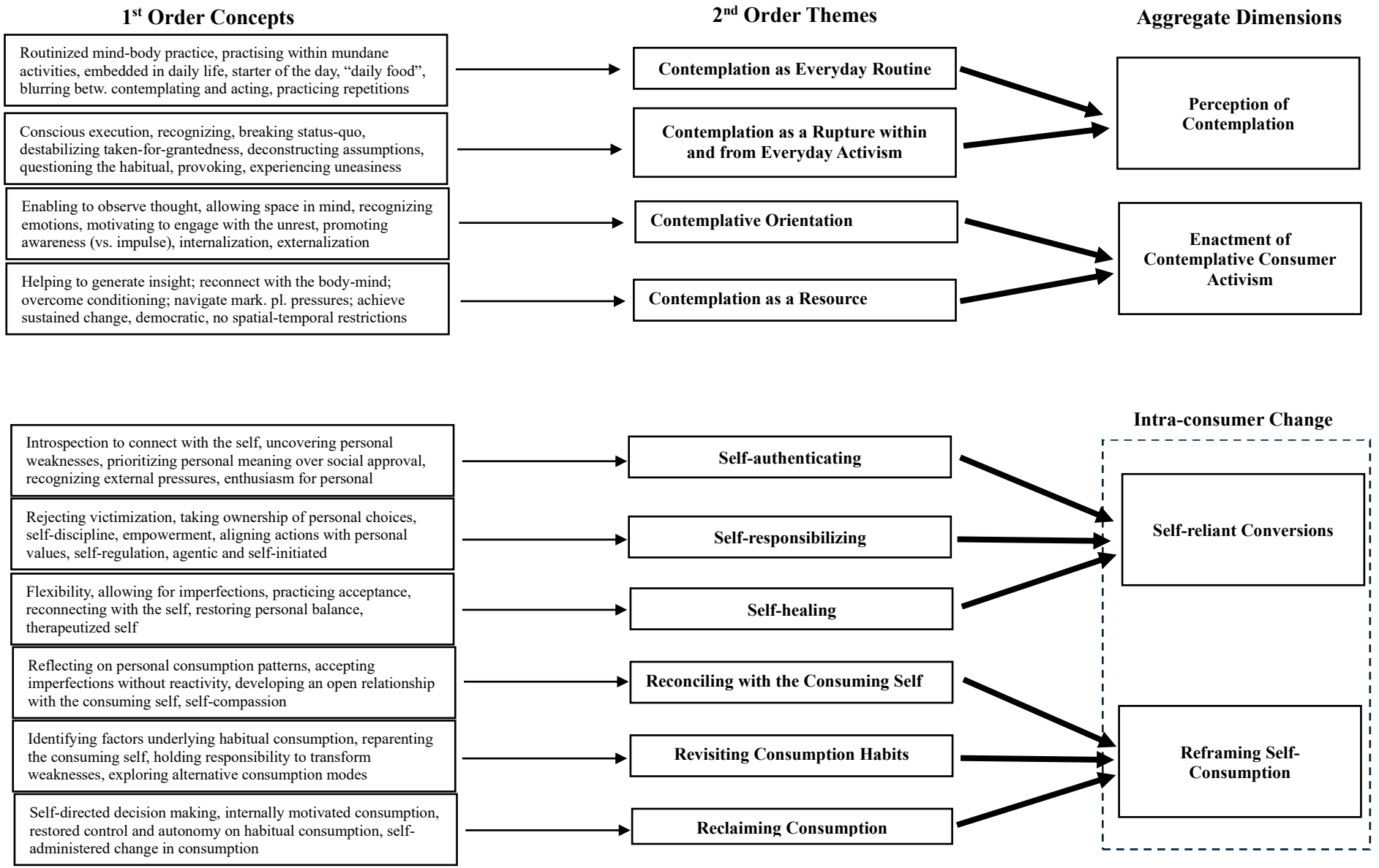
Data Type	Sample	Data Metrics	Contribution
Phenomenological Interviews	Participants engaged in contemplation within a mindfulness context, associating it with an activist effort	21 Interviews; 1474 pages of verbatim transcription; 1375 minutes (22.91 hours) of video recording	Facilitates to understand how consumer contemplation is conceived and enacted within an activism framework across various marketplace interactions
Researcher`s own Experience	Personal engagement in contemplative practices; attendance in lectures, workshops, seminars and retreats	2154 pages of hand-written and digital notes; spanning 9 years of personal interest and formal research period	Provides an internal insight into understanding consumer contemplation across activist contexts based on subjective experience

4.3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis commenced with the transcription of interview recordings, followed by the revision of the researcher`s personal notes and fieldnotes. Each transcript was read multiple times to develop an initial understanding of participant narratives. An open coding process was then employed to label data segments reflecting both participants' and the researcher`s own experiences, following the inductive approach proposed by Gioia (2022; 2021; 2019). This stage was characterized by an emic categorization, capturing participants` and researcher's own discourses, and resulted in a broad range of first-order concepts illustrating how contemplation is perceived and enacted across diverse activist contexts. Conceptually related first-order concepts were subsequently grouped into second-order themes. This process was complemented by an etic categorization, informed by a review of the extant literature, to organize the emerging themes from a conceptual and theoretical standpoint. This analysis evolved through constant iteration between the data and the developing etic categorization, as the researcher repeatedly revisited the data to critically evaluate and refine themes from multiple interpretive perspectives.

In the subsequent stage, the second-order themes were compared both within and across interviews as well as among other emerging themes to identity patterns of convergence and divergence in participants` meaning constructions, as proposed by Glaser (1999). Through a process of abstraction (Spiggle, 1994), these comparisons evolved into third-order aggregate dimensions, representing more encompassing conceptual and theoretical groupings. This analysis unfolded iteratively as new data and insights emerged, allowing the researcher`s evolving understanding to continually reshape earlier interpretations. The researcher`s field

experiences and reflective diary notes played a crucial role in this reflexive process, fostering sensitivity to participants' voices while simultaneously guarding against the imposition of a researcher-defined reality on the emic data (Spiggle, 1994; Thompson, 1997). In this regard, the overall analysis process was not a linear progression but a dynamic interplay between participant narratives, the researcher`s own experiences and successive reinterpretations. Nvivo software facilitated the systemic organization of this interpretive process. Figure 4.3 provides an overview of the final coding framework;


1st Order Concepts
2nd Order Themes
Aggregate Dimensions
Routinized mind-body practice, practising within mundane activities, embedded in daily life, starter of the day, "daily food", blurring betw. contemplating and acting, practicing repetitions
Conscious execution, recognizing, breaking status-quo, destabilizing taken-for-grantedness, deconstructing assumptions, questioning the habitual, provoking, experiencing uneasiness
Enabling to observe thought, allowing space in mind, recognizing emotions, motivating to engage with the unrest, promoting awareness (vs. impulse), internalization, externalization
Helping to generate insight; reconnect with the body-mind; overcome conditioning; navigate mark. pl. pressures; achieve sustained change, democratic, no spatial-temporal restrictions
Contemplation as Everyday Routine
Contemplation as a Rupture within and from Everyday Activism
Contemplative Orientation
Contemplation as a Resource
Perception of Contemplation
Enactment of Contemplative Consumer Activism
Intra-consumer Change
Introspection to connect with the self, uncovering personal weaknesses, prioritizing personal meaning over social approval, recognizing external pressures, enthusiasm for personal
Rejecting victimization, taking ownership of personal choices, self-discipline, empowerment, aligning actions with personal values, self-regulation, agentic and self-initiated
Flexibility, allowing for imperfections, practicing acceptance, reconnecting with the self, restoring personal balance, therapeutized self
Reflecting on personal consumption patterns, accepting imperfections without reactivity, developing an open relationship with the consuming self, self-compassion
Identifying factors underlying habitual consumption, reparenting the consuming self, holding responsibility to transform weaknesses, exploring alternative consumption modes
Self-directed decision making, internally motivated consumption, restored control and autonomy on habitual consumption, self-administered change in consumption
Self-authenticating
Self-responsibilizing
Self-healing
Reconciling with the Consuming Self
Revisiting Consumption Habits
Reclaiming Consumption
Self-reliant Conversions
Reframing Self-Consumption

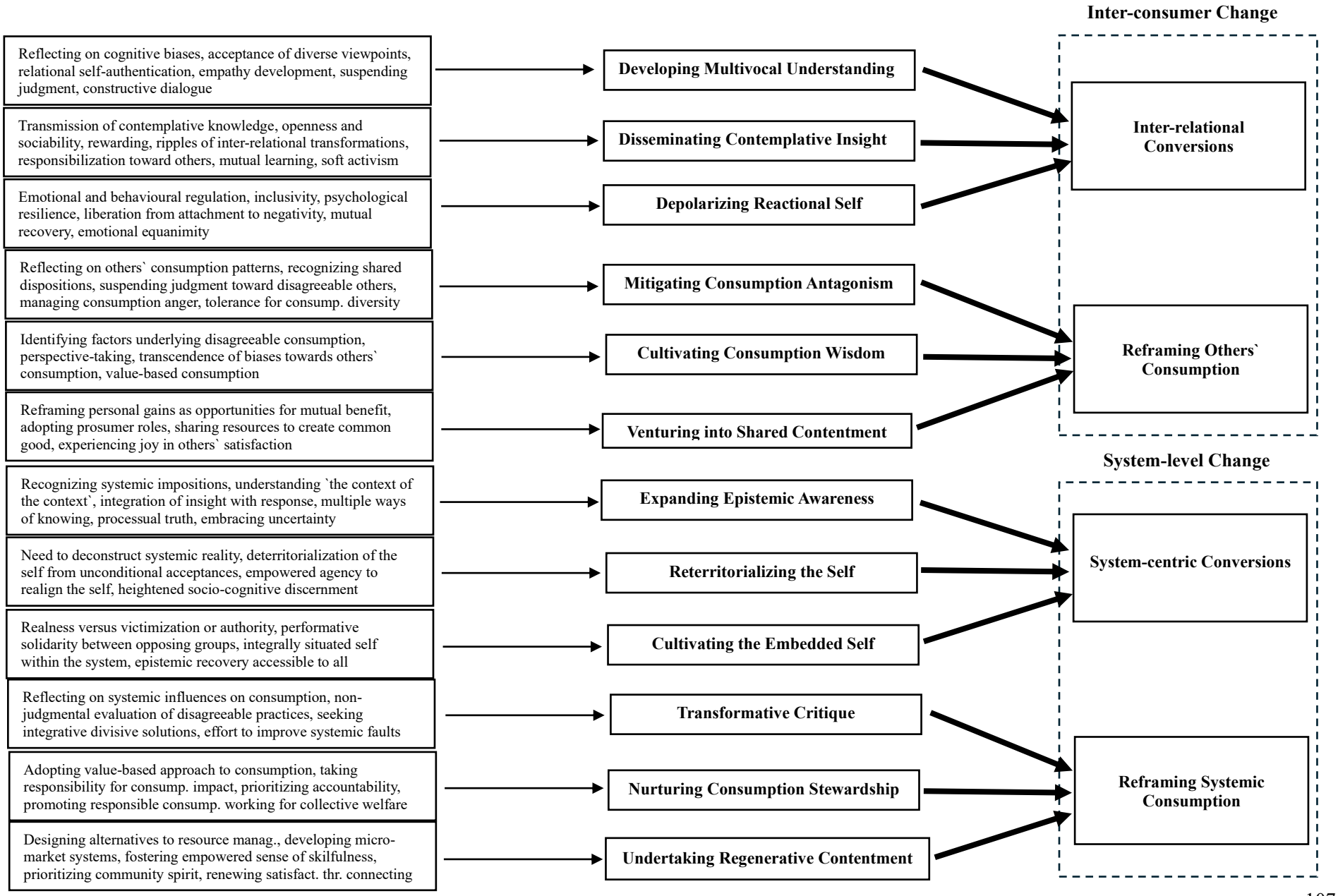


Figure 4.3: Final Coding Framework

4.3.5 Validity and Reliability Issues

Validity and reliability are key criteria for assessing research quality and rigour. While reliability concerns the replicability of research findings, validity describes their accuracy in relation to the research aim and data (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). However, given their incompatibility with the interpretivist critique (Hirschman, 1986, p. 244), these criteria are often reframed through the notion of *Trustworthiness* within interpretivist, naturalistic inquiry. Trustworthiness refers to "the objective, invariant, and generalizable qualities of an interpretation", and seeks "to gauge transparency" (Holt, 1991, p. 59). Different approaches exist for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research. The first major framework addressing trustworthiness in naturalistic consumer research was introduced by Wallendorf and Belk (1989), who proposed five evaluative dimensions for trustworthiness, namely, *Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability and Integrity of the Informant.* This framework represents a qualitative extension of Lincoln and Guba (1985)`s original model, expanded through the inclusion of the fifth dimension.

The second framework is proposed by Holt (1991), who, unlike Wallendorf and Belk (1989), argues that within qualitative inquiry, "interpretations should be judged on their insightfulness […] and their ability to convince the reader, no more" (Holt, 1991, p. 61). For Holt, applying objectivist evaluative criteria to interpretive consumer research risks imposing methodological dogma at the expense of interpretive depth and insight.

A third and more recent approach to trustworthiness is introduced by Roller and Lavrakas (2015), who conceptualize validity and reliability within a `Total Quality Framework`. Accordingly, the quality of qualitative research is ensured through four interrelated components, namely, *Credibility, Analyzability, Transparency* and *Usefulness.*

This study adopts an integrative approach to trustworthiness by drawing upon multiple perspectives (Hirschman, 1986; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Roller and Lavrakas, 2015; Wallendorf and Belk, 1989) to ensure methodological rigor. This fusion of interpretive perspectives (Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994) facilitates a richer understanding of Contemplative Consumer Activism through a triadic interpretative process contributed by the meaning maker (participant), the researcher and the reader. Table 4.3 provides an overview of the trustworthiness approach adopted in this study, followed by a detailed account of each consideration.

Table 4.3: An Overview of Validity and Reliability Issues

Reliability and Validity Criteria	Definition	Methodological Borrowing	Definition	Application of Reliability and Validity Standards
Sensitivity	The ability to approach research data through developing an empathy with subjective experiential states	*Credibility* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989) and (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015)	Convincing and believable representation of the reality within the studied context	*Triangulation of data sources and data collection methods *Prolonged engagement in data collection *Member checks *Debriefing with peers
		Dependability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), and (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989)	The process of constructing the interpretation "in a way which avoid instability other than the inherent instability"	*Dependability audit (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) *Prolonged observation and explanation of change (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989)
		Researcher Reflexivity (applies to entire research process)	Critical reflection of the position that the researcher occupies in the research	*Evaluate data provided by informant through a personal and critical lens *Self-observation and self-exploration *Empathize with the informant *Check researcher position against data by informants *Journalling and field notes
Insightfulness	The extent to which the reader is enabled to develop an understanding of the investigated phenomenon through a detailed and transparent disclosure and interpretation of the entire research processes	*Analyzability* (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015)	The completeness and accuracy of analysis and interpretations	*Thick description *Multidisciplinary and critical reading and reviewing process *Checks and negotiations with faculty having expertise or experience
		Transparency (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015)	Full disclosure of all aspects of the research	*Interpretations supportable based on data *Thick description of the entire research process
		Confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985)	The supportability of research findings based on data	*Constant iteration between data and the researcher
		Integrity of the informant (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989)	Extent to which the interpretation was unimpaired by lies, evasions, misinformation, or misrepresentations by informants	*Prolonged engagement with the informants *Construction of rapport and trust *Data triangulation *Personal interest, self-analysis
		Researcher Reflexivity (applies to entire research process)	Critical reflection of the position that the researcher occupies in the research	*Evaluate data provided by informant through a personal and critical lens *Self-observation and self-exploration *Try to reflect informant`s position authentically and in negotiation with them *Check researcher position against data by informants *Journalling and field notes

The criteria employed to ensure trustworthiness in this study are organized into two main categories, namely, *Sensitivity* and *Insightfulness*. Sensitivity refers to the researcher`s ability to engage empathetically with participants` subjective experiences, whereas insightfulness describes the extent to which readers can develop an informed understanding of the investigated phenomenon through a transparent and comprehensive interpretation of the research processes. Both criteria are elaborated in the following sections.

Sensitivity

Sensitivity is addressed through considerations of *Credibility, Dependability* and *Researcher Reflexivity*. First, credibility refers to the convincing and contextually grounded representation of participants` realities. It was ensured through triangulation of data sources, prolonged engagement in the field, member checks and peer debriefing. The researcher actively participated in workshops, teachings, courses, retreats and trainings related to contemplation and mindfulness across both physical and online platforms. Detailed notes documenting both the researcher`s and the participants` contemplative journeys within various activist contexts were maintained in a reflective diary throughout the research process.

This engagement was complemented by an extensive review of the topic across multiple research streams, including consumer research, religion, spirituality and health, as well as relevant media and industry reports. The researcher`s understanding was further enriched through in-depth interviews with participants representing diverse backgrounds and levels of contemplative engagement. Findings, refined through iterative comparison and analysis, were cross validated via member checks, often involving second or third follow-up where participants provided feedback on the researcher`s interpretations of their lived experiences. These interactions, together with ongoing peer debriefing that challenged and refined the researcher`s interpretations, contributed to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the data.

Second, dependability describes constructing interpretations “in a way which avoid instability other than the inherent instability” of research data (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). To ensure dependability, the study employed both a *dependability audit* (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) and *prolonged observation* and *explanation of change* (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989). The dependability audit involved peer checks, in which research findings were discussed with faculty members to incorporate diverse perspectives and maintain critical stability and logical coherence. This process facilitated an open and reflective dialogue with the interpreted data.

Additionally, following Wallendorf and Belk (1989), the researcher maintained ongoing contact with participants throughout the study, inviting them to communicate any changes in their views or experiences, thereby supporting the stability and accuracy of the findings.

Third, the researcher reflexivity, understood as the critical examination of the researcher`s position within the study, was openly documented in the reflective diary. This practice provides readers with insight into the researcher`s positionality, highlighting how her assumptions, interpretations and interactions may have influenced the research process and the construction of findings.

Insightfulness

Insightfulness is addressed through *Analyzability and Transparency, Confirmability, Integrity of the Informant* and *Researcher Reflexivity*. First, analyzability refers to the completeness and accuracy of research analysis and interpretations, while transparency describes full disclosure of all aspects of the research (Roller and Lavrakas, 2015). Together these criteria align with `integrity` as described by Wallendorf and Belk (1989), and `confirmability` by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Analyzability and transparency standards were primarily achieved through *thick description,* referring to the provision of rich, detailed documentation of the entire research process. This approach enabled readers to understand how contemplation is perceived and enacted across activist contexts by situating consumer perceptions and behaviours within their particular contexts, allowing the meanings of the marketing phenomenon to emerge, rather than merely describing occurrences. The data analysis was further informed by the researcher`s immersion in a *multidisciplinary and critical reviewing process* across multiple disciplinary areas, including sociology, psychology, cultural and religious studies, in addition to consumer research, to develop a nuanced understanding of contextual influences (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Finally, analyzability and transparency were strengthened through ongoing discussions with consumer groups and faculty members with relevant expertise, supporting iterative *checks* and *negotiations* throughout the research process.

Second, confirmability refers to the extent to which research findings are supported by the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), maintained through ongoing iteration between data and the researcher. Along with the checks and negotiations processes, this iterative engagement ensured that the meaning structures emerging from the data were approached reflexively and interpreted collaboratively as they developed.

Third, integrity of the informant is critical to ensure a research process, in which "the interpretation was unimpaired by lies, evasions, misinformation, or misrepresentations by informants" (Wallendorf and Belk, 1989, no page number). To support this, the researcher engaged in *prolonged engagement* with participants, assessing their suitability for the study prior to interviews and maintaining contact afterward to clarify ambiguous points. Ongoing social connections with many participants fostered *rapport and trust*, enhancing the reliability of the data. Moreover, *the researcher`s personal interest* in the studied domain served as a control mechanism, allowing for introspective filtering and reflection before negotiating the meanings socially, further contributing to the trustworthiness of the findings.

As noted earlier, *researcher reflexivity* was openly communicated to the reader, with further details documented in the Researcher`s Reflective Diary. Transparently reporting the researcher`s positionality was essential, as it may have shaped both the theoretical and methodological perspectives guiding the study. In this regard, the researcher endeavoured to conduct the study in a nonprejudiced and nonjudgmental manner at all stages, following the guidance by Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Wallendorf and Belk (1989).

Taken together, this study provides a sensitive and insightful account of extended research into the role of mindfulness-based contemplation across activist contexts, highlighting an alternative mode of social change within individual and collective spaces. Its primary aim is to `understand` the role of contemplation in driving consumer activism through personal interpretation and social negotiation, rather than to `predict` relational patterns.

The following section elaborates the alignment of validity and reliability considerations with the study`s ethical framework.

4.3.6 Ethical Considerations

The validity and reliability of research is closely linked to the researcher`s ethical stance (Patton, 2002; Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). Ethical considerations pertain to the "rightness or wrongness of our actions as qualitative researchers in relation to the people whose lives we are studying, to our colleagues, and to those who sponsor our work" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 288). Ethical issues may arise at multiple stages of the study as the researcher seeks to remain responsive to the needs of various stakeholders (Creswell, 2018). Following Miles and Huberman (1994), Table 4.4 outlines potential ethical issues relevant to this study and describes how they are addressed.

Table 4.4: Study's Approach to Ethical Considerations

Type of Ethical Issue	Questions Driving the Issue	Approach taken to minimize
Worthiness of the project	Is my contemplated study worth doing? Will it contribute in some significant way to a domain than my funding, my publication opportunities, my career?	The study advances a novel approach to consumer activism, offering significant theoretical and managerial contributions to the domains of consumer activism and consumer spirituality.
Competence boundaries	Do I (and my colleagues) have the expertise to carry out a study of good quality? Am I prepared to study, be supervised, trained, consulted with? Is such help available?	The researcher brings prior experience in managing research processes at the PhD level and is supported by a supervisory team with extensive expertise and experience in the field.
Informed Consent	Do the people I am studying have full information about what the study will involve? Is their "consent" to participate freely given - fully voluntary and uncoerced?	Each participant received a participant information sheet, and informed consent was obtained prior to the interviews. The research purposes were also disclosed to other stakeholders during workshops, seminars, and lectures in which the researcher participated.
Benefits, costs, and reciprocity	What will each party to the study gain from having taken part? Is the balance equitable?	Interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis, with meeting arrangements tailored to participants' needs and preferences. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage.
Harm and risk	What might this study do to hurt people involved? How likely is it that such harm will occur?	The study did not involve vulnerable groups or sensitive topics at any stage of the investigation, nor did it pose any risk of harm to animals or other third parties.
Honesty and trust	What is my relationship with the people I am studying? Am I telling the truth? Do we trust each other?	Research sample was selected using a combination of theoretical and snowball sampling, in which participants volunteered and were chosen based on their relevance to the study and its objectives.
Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity	In what ways will the study intrude, come closer to people than they want? How will information be guarded? How identifiable are the individuals studied?	Participant privacy and anonymity were maintained through the pseudo-anonymisation of research data. Both the data and the key linking participants to their codes were securely stored on the university's password-protected cloud storage.
Intervention and advocacy	What do I do when I see harmful, illegal or wrongful behaviour on the part of others? Should I speak for anyone`s interests besides my own?	The researcher was prepared to prioritize health and safety concerns in the event of any violations; however, no harmful, illegal, or unethical behaviour was observed or experienced throughout the study.
Research integrity and quality	Is my study being conducted carefully, thoughtfully and correctly in terms of some reasonable set of standards?	Informed consent, privacy and confidentiality were prioritized throughout the study. The researcher maintained prolonged engagement with most participants, who were also consulted for their feedback on the interpreted data.
Ownership of data and conclusions	Who owns my field notes and analyses? Once my reports are written, who controls their diffusion?	This research has been conducted under the authority of the University of Strathclyde and is therefore considered its academic property. In all subsequent publications, the names and affiliations of the researchers have been, and will continue to be, appropriately disclosed.
Use and misuse of results	Do I have an obligation to help my findings be used appropriately? What if they are used harmfully or wrongly?	The findings of the study will be used solely for academic purposes. Research results, including participant information, will not be shared with any third parties outside this scope.
Conflicts, dilemmas and trade-offs	How will researcher behave when faced with an issue concerning sacrificing one end for the other?	At every stage of the investigation, human health and safety, participant privacy and anonymity, and researcher integrity have been prioritized. No other considerations have been allowed to compromise these principles.

4.4 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provides a detailed account of the philosophical foundations and research methodology guiding this study. The first section discusses the Interpretivist paradigm underpinning the research, followed by an exploration of Relativism as the study`s ontological

orientation, and concludes with Subjectivism and Social Constructionism as complementary epistemological stances.

The second section presents the Social Phenomenological Approach as the research methodology, detailing sampling, data collection and analysis procedures, followed by a discussion of validity and reliability through the lenses of Sensitivity and Insightfulness. The chapter concludes by outlining how ethical considerations are addressed throughout the study.

Chapter 5 CONCEPTUALIZATION and ENACTMENT of CONTEMPLATIVE CONSUMER ACTIVISM

5.0 Findings Introduction

The findings chapters draw on an interpretative analysis of diverse data sources to explore the role of contemplation in consumer activism. They are presented across two chapters, each corresponding to a specific research objective. Chapter 5 addresses the first objective by examining the ways in which contemplation is conceptualized and enacted within a consumer activism framework. It is guided by two research questions; How do consumers conceive of contemplative engagement, and how is contemplation practiced and mobilized within activism contexts?

Chapter 6 addresses the second research objectives by exploring how contemplation contributes to social change in and around the marketplace. It is guided by two research questions: How do consumers relate to change within an activism framework, and in what ways does contemplative change manifest within the marketplace?

5.1 Chapter Introduction

The agonistic and combative conflict argument that often underpins conventional activism has come under increasing scrutiny with the introduction of *the everyday* into the social movement and activism agendas (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). This turn to the everyday has intersected with the rise of various forms of New Age spiritualities, as discussed in Chapter 3. Rooted in contemplation and contemplative practices, these spiritualities frequently seek to transform the mundanity of the everyday into extraordinary experiences, cutting cross the conventional boundaries of the everyday (Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021).

This chapter begins by examining how contemplation is conceptualized within the context of everyday activism. After introducing Contemplative Consumer Activism as a form of everyday activism, it explores the mechanisms through which it is enacted. Specifically, it highlights two key functions of contemplation, that is, facilitating an alternative cognitive and behavioural orientation and providing a common resource for developing and sustaining activism dynamics. The chapter concludes by outlining key findings regarding the conceptualization and enactment of the theorized Contemplative Consumer Activism.

5.2 Framing Contemplation in Consumer Activism

Contemplation, often practiced within the context of mindfulness, is commonly understood "as a complex dialectic of routine and awareness, in which routine, and persistent alertness within a routine, is treated as the medium for exploring and inculcating different forms of awareness" (Slater, 2009, p. 226). The entanglement of unpretentious routine with sustained effort to maintain alertness through contemplation acquires new significance when situated within an activism framework. In this context, contemplation intersects with everyday activism through two distinct dynamics; one embedded in the routinized everyday, and the other emerging through a deliberate rupture from it. The following sections examine these dynamics in detail.

5.2.1 Contemplation in the Making of Everyday Activism

Findings reveal that, within an activism context, contemplation emerges as a mind-body practice that gently orchestrates the consumer`s moment-to-moment engagement with both the inner self and the outer world in everyday life. Similar to many Eastern spiritual traditions, this practice is based on a phenomenological engagement with everyday routine (Chattopadhyay, 2022; Slater, 2009, p. 218). In mindfulness meditation, this engagement is performed through micro repetitions of breathing in and out, the observation of feelings and bodily sensations, and the intentional act of letting them pass without assigning positive or negative value.

Findings also indicate that while the perception and practice of contemplation within an activism framework largely aligns with conventional understandings, they further extend into a domain, in which deep awareness, cognitive reflection and ethical stance converge to shape a behavioural orientation within the everyday. This counters the view of activist contemplation merely as a form of prefigurative changemaking (Klein Schaarsberg, 2025). The contemplative orientation, as understood in this study, instead reflects what Yates (2022, p. 145) describes as "a way of seeing and analysing for exploring tensions around scale, time, and between the seen and unseen, the tangible and intangible, structures and local interactions". George, a 62-year-old professor of social work, illustrates below how his contemplative practices inform his everyday life;

> *Here's what I do. I sit with a straight back. I close my eyes. I focus on my breath in one way or another, and there are other sequences from there. You can spread any feelings you get throughout your body. You can focus on one spot. I've had different people tell me different*

things. Am, that will eventually do two things. Number one; it slows down my thoughts, so I notice them more effectively. And number two; it produces pleasant states, calm states known as `jhana`, which is terminology I am referring for. The challenge then becomes, I also do some Tai Chi and martial arts which are mindfulness things. When I go for a walk, I synchronize the word Buddha with my steps sometimes, which calms my mind and I can eventually drop the Buddha and just walk […] you can set up your daily life to foster mindfulness or to foster Metta [meaning loving kindness meditation], to foster good will. So, a foundational Buddhist practice is actually done on generosity. Yeah, give an extra buck in a tip, give a few bucks for a panhandle or bring some food to the monks, which is, you know, obviously a big way of doing. Living reasonably clean set of Buddhist precepts is helpful […] It requires practice. So that's daily life as it goes into practice, daily life as it comes out of practice. You try to maintain mindfulness as much as you can, and not naturally talented at it, but I work at it […] my meditation makes it easier for me to, it makes it easier for me to keep precepts, because I want to be decent to other people, and because I come to value calm. And in American society we tend to value the absence of calm in all sorts of subtle and unsubtle ways, right?

To George, contemplation lies at the core of his meditation, Tai Chi and martial arts routines, where the intangibility of meditative contemplation intersects with the expressiveness of physical movement. While it demands deep internal attention and concentration, it is also embodied through rhythmic cycles of breath works and the alignment of his steps with the word Buddha. The skilful regulation of thoughts and emotions constitutes a key aspect of his contemplative practice, which, he emphasizes, "requires practice". What differentiates contemplation from habitual routines, such as waking up, making the bed and brushing teeth, as well as from undeliberate ritualization (Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989), is its conscious execution, where each moment is infused with intentional awareness, reflection and introspection, directed both inward and toward the contemplator`s relation to the external world.

For George, contemplative practice is deeply embedded in the fabric of everyday life. He describes his effort to maintain mindfulness amid the normal flow of the everyday. *The everyday* encompasses the macro and micro spatialities and temporalities of daily life that are often routinized in the mundanity of daily practices (Shove, 2003; Shove, 2012; Trentmann, 2009). These interwoven timespaces "form a kind of infrastructure through which human activities coordinate and aggregate" (Schatzki, 2009, p. 39). Moreover, social order is produced and reproduced through the orchestration of the everyday rituals (Douglas, 1980).

For George, contemplative engagement takes on an activist character through a dynamic interplay between everyday life and intentional practice. As it extends from the individual to the collective space, his contemplative practice reflects a sustained commitment to pursuing an ethical life, grounded in generosity and concern for the wellbeing of others within the ordinariness of the everyday. Within this framework, everyday activism is understood "as an expansion on existing definitions of organized, strategic and intentional activism", effecting gradual yet profound alterations in both individual and public domains (Vivienne, 2015, p. 1). The everyday acquires activist undertones by personalizing collective action (Micheletti, 2003, p. 25).

The form of everyday activism George engages in is rooted in cultivating and reworking a strong ethical orientation in and around the individual space. These personal reorientations create transformative societal outcomes, particularly in contexts marked by social fragmentation, increased polarization and a general absence of calm. Within such conditions, contemplation as a contributor of everyday activism plays an important role in maintaining good citizenry (Bahl *et al.*, 2016; Bassam, Ellen and Francesco, 2014) and helping to "create order, reduce the complexity of tasks and uncertainty", which "in turn makes life feel more safe and secure, and makes our behaviour predictable both to ourselves and to others" (Wilk, 2009, p. 147).

Unlike many everyday routines that centre on the explicit, the visible and the dramatic (Shove, 2003), contemplation as an inconspicuous and internalized practice offers a form of everyday activism that subtly and peacefully reconfigures the meanings ascribed to the everyday and its articulation within the social sphere. Furthermore, while much of the everyday routines are characterized by unintentionality, contemplative practice is deliberate and cultivated with purpose, which aligns it more closely with conscious and agentic decision-making, aimed at achieving transformative outcomes.

Taken together, contemplation, as understood by participants, arises as a distinct form of cognition that rests on deep mental reasoning. This reasoning involves conscious efforts to interrogate how the contemplator thinks, feels and relates, both internally and externally, while fostering more genuine and less biased relations with human and nonhuman others. In this regard, it aligns with a transformative approach to service conversations (Gopaldas *et al.*, 2021), in which microtransformations in thinking, feeling and acting are nurtured through questioning and nonevaluative listening, yet by the consumer themselves. Both contemplation

and these microtransformations similarly enable consumers to experience psychological freedom, thereby supporting the gradual transformation of the self over time.

The practice of directing consumers` self-transformation through deep internal reflection may be compared to psychotherapeutic modes of thinking, in which individuals are typically guided by external mentorship and thus remain subject, to some extent, to external direction and validation. By contrast, contemplation significantly differs from such thinking as it constitutes an internally informed and self-directed process oriented toward understanding the ways that one relates to oneself and to others, rather than an externally guided process aimed at transforming the individual through external intervention. Moreover, psychotherapeutic intervention is often oriented toward healing by suspending or even eliminating the impact of internal and external influences on the self (Hölzel *et al.*, 2011). While contemplation is likewise concerned with healing the way in which the self relates to itself and others, its healing potential lies in fostering awareness of existing imperfections and cultivating constructive approaches to transform them in ways that enhance collective welfare, rather than seeking to suspend or eliminate them. In this sense, contemplation unfolds as a reformative rather than a psychotherapeutic process.

Moreover, contemplation, as understood by participants, arises as an internally oriented yet externally engaged mode of thinking. Its orientation toward collective welfare may be compared to an anti-dualist way of thinking, a characteristic frequently mentioned within the context of New Age spiritualities. Anti-dualism, often compared to or interchangeably used with, the notions of `unity` or `cosmic unity`, especially within Eastern philosophical traditions, is grounded in the rejection of binary opposites, such as mind-body, life-death and me-other. Instead, it is based on the view that the world constitutes an interconnected cosmos, in which its micro constituents are interdependent, and operate within a shared system (Bruce, 2017; Campbell, 2001). Although contemplation adopts a similar non-Cartesian view of unity between the self and others, it rests on a heightened sense of individual agency in sustaining this unity through ongoing reconfigurations of established modes of thinking and relating, rather than through the diffusion, and potential disappearance, of individual agency in certain interpretations of cosmic unity.

A related concept to anti-dualism or unity, also frequently associated with contemplative practices is emptiness. This concept is often understood as the absence of inherent existence and the resulting oneness among all living and non-living beings, which ultimately leads to liberation. Contemporary research, on the other hand, often approaches

emptiness, or specifically “inner emptiness” as a condition that consumers seek to address by turning to various forms of spirituality (e.g. Hemetsberger, Kreuzer and Klien, 2019). By contrast, contemplation neither rejects the notion of existence nor seeks to impose a particular form of existence through spirituality. Rather, it is oriented toward improving the conditions in which the self exists in relation to others. In this regard, the understanding of existence it rests on is relational, and can be enhanced through ongoing reconfigurations of thinking, feeling and acting toward both the self and others. Moreover, contemplation does not necessarily entail a form of spirituality that `fills` a perceived gap; instead, it arises as a capacity-building resource which enables the ongoing transformation of self- and other-harming assumptions and socially conditioned patterns of reacting. In this sense, contemplation exists within, and informs, everyday life through deeply-thought and embodied practices, rather than emerging as a form of “mystified consumption” (Dawson, 2011).

Finally, contemplation is often interpreted and practiced as a normative practice that is informed by faith-based modes of thinking across diverse religious traditions, as previously discussed in Section 3.3.3 on Reflections of New Age Spiritualities. Unlike this approach, contemplation within the context of CCA emerges as a non-doctrinal form of everyday engagement that transcends such contextual constrains. The topic is explored in greater detail in the next section.

Non-doctrinal Everyday Activism

The socially integrative and depolarizing character of contemplation within an activism framework is further evidenced by its resistance to doctrinal confinements. For example, while commonly associated with Eastern religious systems, particularly Buddhism (Chattopadhyay, 2022), contemplation in this context emerges as an unbiased orientation that functions independently of specific religious or spiritual affiliations, as evidenced in the following quote;

> *It's really based around my Christian faith. And it's a thing that I do each morning where I have a particular app for Bible reading and prayer. And I sit down in a particular chair each morning and the app takes you through a little sort of calming and focusing ritual where you can listen to someone speaking on it. And they would say, you know I pause to breathe deeply. And I think that the phrase is to re-centre my scattered senses upon the presence of God. And then at that point I do, you know, I breathe deeply, I allow myself to be aware of any sensations you know […] It just makes me feel better about the days. As I start the day, it makes me feel healthy. It puts a spring in my step. And yeah, it's just a nice feeling to go out with. I mean, sometimes I*

think `Oh, if I didn't have to get up so early every morning to do this, life would be easier`. But actually, I could possibly not do it now. It's so important to me. I mean, there are other things about my morning routine that I could probably shorten. But this one, I couldn't live without it. [laughs] I don't know what else to say, but it`s just it's like my daily food, you know. It's that important to me.

Lesley, a 63-year-old primary school teacher and devoted Christian, engages in contemplative routines grounded in her Christian faith, where contemplation functions as an everyday routine that facilitates a deep connection with the Divine. Like George, whose practices are shaped by Buddhist influences, Lesley`s contemplative engagement is both active and intentional, yet calm and pleasant, as it serves to "recentre scattered senses upon the presence of God" through heightened attention and a sense of agency. In contrast, Isabella, a 44-year-old accountant, sees her contemplative practice through the lens of the Islamic tradition with which she identifies;

When I'm praying, you know, coz I do pray, I used to pray 5 times a day, at the moment that's reduced to one, once a day […] when I've gone through a bad patch, praying mindfully has also been quite rhythmic, and helps you come out of your mind because chanting set sort of words, and they don't mean anything to me, because I'm not an Arabic speaker, so it really is like chanting just like we'd be able to in Hindu may chant something like `Om`. So I just recite Arabic and you know, verses. And while I'm doing that, it can be quite rhythmic, and it can help me be mindful. It really helps me slow my brain down and actually be here in the here and now, be in the moment.

Isabella engages in contemplation through her daily praying, a religious requirement in Islam, in which the rhythmic cadence of the Arabic verses facilitates a mindful state. It is precisely her adherence to the Islamic tradition that sustains a state of contemplation within the everyday. While performed in diverse religious settings, contemplative practice transcends doctrinal boundaries, generating an open and impartial space that fosters deep connection with the inner self across both individual and collective domains.

5.2.2 Contemplation as a Rupture within and from Routinized Practices

Contemplation serves as an impetus for the practice of everyday activism not only by fostering deep temporal and spatial attunement but also by enabling moments of rupture from routinized associations embedded within the everyday. These dual modalities of everyday activism are inherently performative, requiring skilful and intentional cultivation, and

relational, as they gently mediate the individual and social domains. Victor, a 45-year-old support worker, describes how his daily contemplative practice facilitates such a moment of disruption;

> *There is a status quo we will fall into, yeah? That may be an idea of normal. If we just go through life, you get educated, you are told this and that. This is what people do, this`s what black people do, this`s what women do, this`s what men do. And it's all stick with that, you know. And then, when this happens, do this. When it happens, do that, and you just keep going. Do this and you`ll be great, get this job and you`ll get paid. And do this, you`ll get this, and you just keep going on and on and on and on. Mindfulness can help you realize that that's happening and well hold on! You can come off that racetrack and just go drive in any way you want. You don't have to go around that circle again and again and again […] So contemplation gives you the ability, I guess, to break out of that status quo, go on a little bit of a journey, and then create a new status quo in the Joseph Campbell`s book. And I think what you're talking about there, that's what activism is. It's breaking the cycle, creating a new cycle and contemplation empowers you to be able to do that.*

To Victor, the contemplation embedded in his daily meditative routine functions as a deliberate mechanism for disrupting everyday patterns and the habitualized, thus normalized modes of thinking, feeling and behaving, which he describes as status quo. This contemplative practice initiates such a rupture by first cultivating awareness of these routinized orientations and subsequently enabling the contemplator to actively disengage from their repetition and reinforcement. In doing so, it destabilizes the taken-for-granted nature of the everyday by inculcating "a kind of non-routinized response to the routine" thereby "increasing the `skilfulness` with which one deals with the everyday" (Slater, 2009, p. 218). In this regard, contemplation functions as a means of deconstructing and reconstructing the common assumptions and normalized acceptances embedded in the everyday through an intentional mind-body practice. Victor interprets this contemplative practice as form of activism, enacted through a cyclic flow of disruption and renewal within the fabric of the everyday. He further idealizes this dynamic by likening the contemplator to the protagonist in Joseph Campbell`s book, the Hero`s Journey, wherein the hero ventures forth from the ordinary world, going through the experiences of "separation, initiation and return"[6].

Reflections in my researcher diary capture a comparable rupture within the everyday;

6 https://www.jcf.org/learn/joseph-campbell-heros-journey (access date: 11/12/2024)

Just a few minutes. That's all it takes to feel like I`ve stepped into another reality. It`s feels like another time, another place, the one I`ve been searching for so long. Just a few minutes. It`s exactly what I need […] I notice a little fear in me about going back to the usual reality. Maybe it`s fear, maybe just wishing I could stay here longer. Probably both. But still, this time and place feel so different. I know I can hold onto it, stretch it out, make it last as long as I want. I know I `can` do that, and it feels so good. (Researcher diary, 23/03/2023)

Contemplation, when functioning as a rupture from everyday routines and routinized associations diverges from its earlier formulation as an enabler of everyday activism. In this disruptive form, it operates by recalibrating relationships with the self and the external world, by breaking these associations from the routine and reorienting them to a renewed sense of presence. Within this framework, contemplation dissociates the everyday routine from its normative entanglements, characterized by passivity, the absence of agentic consciousness and alienation, and instead reframes it as a site of intentional disruption. In doing so, it enables the practitioner to transcend the docility and inertia embedded in routinized everyday (Slater, 2009).

Overall, this sub-section addresses the first research question concerning consumers` conception of contemplation. Findings reveal that contemplation functions as a mind-body practice that enables consumers to engage gently with both the inner self and the outer world in daily life. This engagement, grounded in deep awareness, reflection and ethical orientation, shapes a new stance within the everyday, manifesting as both an everyday routine and a rupture from routinized associations.

5.3 Contemplative Consumer Activism

Within an activism framework, contemplative practices operate through dual mechanism, that is, they both attune consumer contemplators to the micro temporalities and spatialities of a routinized everyday life and simultaneously facilitates dissociation from such routinized patterns. The interplay of these two modes constitutes a novel articulation of everyday activism, that is, Contemplative Consumer Activism. Contemplative Consumer Activism (CCA) is defined as *a form of everyday activism that entails consumers` reflective and empathetic engagement with socially conditioned and personally ingrained thoughts and*

conduct, fostering subtle and processual social change that originates at a deeply individual level and unfolds across intra-consumer, inter-consumer and systemic domains of marketplace interaction.

Situated at the intersection of New Age movements and consumer activism, CCA offers new insights into conventional assumptions of activism, typically grounded in antagonism, collectivity, competition, unilateral victory, by juxtaposing them with alternative possibilities, such as empathy, negotiation, shared individuality, commonness and communal welfare. These dimensions will be elaborated in the following sections. Prior to this, the next section explores the ways through which Contemplative Consumer Activism is enacted, by highlighting two primary mechanisms, that is, contemplative orientation and contemplation as resource.

5.4 The Enactment of Contemplative Consumer Activism

The enactment of CCA refers to the mechanisms through which contemplation becomes engaged and is mobilized into practice. Findings reveal that contemplation is enacted within a consumer activism framework through two primary pathways; first, by orienting the consumer contemplator toward new modes of thought and action, and second, by providing an alternative resource for activist engagement. The following sections explain these pathways in more detail.

5.4.1 Contemplative Orientation toward Emergent Thoughts and Practice

Contemplative orientation concerns the way in which contemplation prompts the consumer contemplator to engage with the source of unrest, inspiring them to think and behave in alternative ways, and thereby bridging cognitive and behavioural influences. It functions through three key dynamics; namely internalization, externalization and habituation. James, a 48-year-old psychiatrist and mindfulness teacher, shares his experiences during mediation below;

> *In the meditation I guess you're kind of letting things come to you, you're allowing for space in your mind. And you're you're waiting for things to touch your heart, basically whether that's an understanding or an emotional state or determination. But you're waiting for a feeling. Now you might be contemplating something that you know intellectually very well. But you can also understand, `Well, do I live my life by this idea all the time, like instinctively, automatically? No. Okay. So that shows that although I understand this at a superficial level, it's not really*

deep in my heart. So, things deep in my heart, I wouldn't forget it. Because, you know, the definition of mindfulness from Buddhist point of view is simply just remembering, just to remembering to bring things into your day-to-day life. And that doesn't mean remembering a platitude or an idea on your head. It means that you remember an experience like, other people are important or people wanna be happy, and they don't wanna suffer, or remembering the compassionate desire you have to help other people, experience less suffering. So, you're trying to contemplate in this kind of heartfelt way. And you're paying a lot of attention to how you're thinking about things. Whereas normally, we just thinking about the end product […] Whereas in Buddhist point of view, that's it's completely relevant, how you know things, how you think about things, how you understand things, because that will predict whether or not they actually have any impact in your life.

For James, cultivating contemplation in daily life is both an intentional cognitive effort, by "allowing space in your mind" and an affective experience that "touch your heart". The emergence of such emotions prompts the contemplator to ask, "Do I live my life by this idea all the time, like instinctively?". This question, however, is not meant to be posed sporadically but rather internalized as an ongoing orientation integrated into the consumer contemplator`s everyday life. Over time, it encourages them to embody ethical values "instinctively", without the need for continuous self-prompting (Gentina, Daniel and Tang, 2020). This tendency reflects a process of *internalization*, through which the consumer contemplator cultivates a deep inward focus by critically attending to their own ways of thinking and behaving in relation to the source of unrest. This process of internalization contrasts with conventional activism that tends to externalize unrest from the outset, often by criticizing, rejecting and assigning blame to opposing actors. Such oppositional tendencies are commonly justified through appeals, such as vulnerability (Miller and Stovall, 2019), subjectification (Zanette and Pereira Zamith Brito, 2019) and victimization (Muralidharan and La Ferle, 2018). Jacob, a 57-year-old building developer, comments on the antagonistic tone prevalent in conventional activism as follows;

I'll use political activism as an example, because it's so clear, or social activism. Like you feel this`s righteous anger, you know. And you're like, and you feel on a subtle level like you see, one sees clearly one is better than the other person. It slides into that. And then this righteous anger, which kind of you know, this slides easily into the unjustified means, you know, which I think is what I was talking about, like with the Russian Revolution. And then anything goes, you know, and in all these social movements and political movements now I see that, and that's why

> *I kind of stop or curtailed my political activity a little bit as I grew older, because it was hard to be around that.*

According to Jacob, conventional activism is rooted in a logic of superiority, which fosters "righteous anger", often enacted through "unjustified means". Unlike this antagonistic orientation, CCA operates on a contemplative orientation, marked by empathy and responsiveness to others` emotions and needs, even amid conflict. Within this framework, the initial act of internalization gives rise to a gentle *externalization*, not through opposition but through a solution-oriented empathy that seeks mutual understanding and collective welfare. Contemplative motivation becomes engaged and activated as it redirects the locus of unrest from the external to the internal, prompting reflexive and gentle externalization. Victor, a 45-year-old support worker, describes this transition from the internal to the external as follows;

> *It's like an exercise. Yeah, it's like stretching in the morning to me. But you're stretching your awareness rather than being sort of narrowly focused, you`re opening it all up […] It's almost like a compassion for the human condition, because you start getting that insight into how easily it is to get caught up in things. So when you're in a situation, even if someone is getting frustrated and they say something that annoys you, you're not immediately reacting in a defensive way. You're so saying, Okay, you tend to look at it more like, "Okay, that`s just a bit frustrating. I'm gonna pause and speak to him later, when we're back to the situation, we can talk about it" … I think mindfulness just lets you be open and aware of that whole thing going on, you`re almost like, okay, you can work it out, you just want to start again. Let`s just stop, let all of it go and just start again.*

There is broad consensus that most forms of activism derive from discontent with an existing authority or its constituents (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007). Consequently, the emergence and development of resistance is often contingent on a perceived external antagonism between opposing sides, typically framed as protagonist and antagonist (Handelman and Fischer, 2018). Through his engagement in daily contemplation, Victor shifts the locus of unrest inward, recognizing his own role in the conflict, rather than attributing the blame to the other. This reflexive engagement enables him to confront adversity more holistically, allowing for continuous renewal through repeated new beginnings.

Participants often describe the externalization aspect of contemplative practice through the discourse of a `meditation break`, which describes temporal and spatial dimensions enacted

beyond the formal contemplation practice. Ronald, a 58-years-old mindfulness teacher explains;

> *It's like, archery. Yeah, okay, so with archery, when you release the shaft, it's sliding against the bow, for it's an initial part of its journey. And then the influence of the bow, the contact with the bow to the shaft affects the journey of the shaft on the way to the target, correct? So how we practice in our contrived meditation influences what happens during the meditation break*.

Accordingly, the depth and richness of contemplative moments shape the extent to which social engagement becomes meaningful. Such depth and richness during contemplation provide the means and quality through which the contemplator connects with themselves and the external world outside contemplation. Participants further emphasize the effortless and spontaneous nature of this connection as such;

> *True contemplation is the absence of any sort of practice. It is integration of this state of being into the contemplator's everyday life effortlessly.*
>
> (Dawson, who prefers not mentioning his age and occupation)

> The goal is to have that in my mind, in my being. It's like to again to be like a kind person, to do that without even thinking!
>
> (Kylie, a 72-years-old retired engineering technician)

Both Dawson and Kylie emphasize that while contemplation requires intentional effort, its externalization should emerge spontaneously, flowing intuitively without coercion. This marks the importance of a processual *habituation* in the enactment of contemplation within the social space. This dimension of habituation aligns with both spiritual and secular approaches that frame contemplation as inherently social and ethically grounded. Various rational and moral reasoning models, therefore, position contemplation as integrally active and ethical decision-making (Gunia *et al.*, 2012). In both Aristotle`s and Confucius`s usages of the term, contemplation is linked to an ethical commitment to communal life, that is, the good of others and the community (Walsh, 2015). In the Buddhist tradition, mental training through contemplative practice aims to transcend the individual forms of pragmatism and establish a firm ethical foundation for interpersonal harmony and social welfare (Chattopadhyay, 2022). Thus, contemplation does not negate action; rather, its inward orientation can coexist

peacefully and complementarily with the outward, socially-engaged nature of action, “not as a juxtaposition, but as internally connected on two different levels” (Faesen, 2023, no p.n.).

5.4.2 Contemplation as a Resource

Drawing on Resource Mobilization Theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), resources in the context of activism are understood as enabling elements, such as “money, participants, skills and/or influential allies”, that social actors must mobilize to achieve desired social change (Handelman and Fischer, 2018, p. 256). Harrison, a 60-year-old former business executive and current senior yoga teacher, offers a new perspective on this conventional view by framing resources through the lens of embodied contemplative practice;

> So I'm thinking of contemplation as something where you, you know, reconnect to the sense of the body, take the consciousness from the mind and have it exist within the body, and then from there you can, you could either wait for insights to come or take ideas and let the body integrate them […] It's definitely different. To view it as a resource, I mean, the fundamental feeling of being alive, is that a resource? I mean to me, it's, it`s, it's deeper and it sits below and above every concept of resource and every resource around us. The feeling of your aliveness is not, to me, a resource. All those other things, you know, your knowledge is a resource and the organization that you work for, and money and everything is a resource and the planet is full of resources that we use. But the fundamental field of aliveness, I can't put it in the same pile as all that stuff, because it's so much more basic and fundamental. And when you live in a sort of more embodied way, you view the resources differently. You know, for example, the planet which we exploit as a resource, and because we're so head-centered, we actually think we are cut off from nature and slightly above it. We've forgotten that we are part of it. If you're doing embodiment practices, you will come to find after not too long a period, that you're fundamentally so connected to nature and everything in it, that your view of it changes, and you don't see nature as a resource. You see it as a thing you exist with. And this is where activism comes in, because you would, if you view nature in that closer and deeper way, and you feel it rather than think it, that will change how you act in the world […] It's an activism that came from a deeper place, and therefore is more genuine and real to the person than the intellect. So say I was brought up on within the Green Peace community, and I was raised through green peace parents, and the green peace whole thing. I would very likely be a green peace activist, but that's came from my conditioning. When you leave the conditioned mind and go into the intelligence of the body, the insights that come are different when not from the conditioning.

> And they come back from somewhere I don't really know. And then they emerge back in through the mind, and that could be a call to action.

To Harrison, contemplation manifests as a felt sense of embodiment during his yoga practice where consciousness shifts from the mind to the body. He describes such contemplation-enabled embodiment as existential and foundational, associating it with a feeling of aliveness that transcends conventional understandings of resource, as it "sits below and above every concept of resource". From this perspective, contemplation and the vitality it evokes are the origins of all other resources accessible in the physical world. As a fundamental aspect of life, contemplation enables George to connect with other resources, such as nature, in a way that dissolves boundaries between the contemplator and the contemplated, allowing them to coexist as one.

Harrison further highlights that contemplation represents a common and abundant resource, accessible to all. It is not subject to the control of any single individual, organization or system; rather it is decentralized and distributed. Its decentralized nature stands in sharp contrast to the logic underpinning conventional activism. This logic typically associates activism resources with its ability to create strategic advantage that lies in its being valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable and nonsubstitutable (Barney, 1991), inadequate (Penrose, 2009), causally ambiguous (Lippman and Rumelt, 1982), distinctive (Mahoney and Pandian, 1992) and dynamic (Teece, Pisano and Shuen, 1997). Such resources are further empowered by "their potential and actual concentration, ease of mobilization, ease of transformation and range of applicability" (Refslund and Arnholtz, 2022 as cited in Korpi, 1978, p. 23). In much contemporary activism research, this `distinctive resource` perspective that emphasizes exclusivity and strategic advantage, explicitly or implicitly, is often reflected in forms, such as special arts (Hietala, 2022; Yazicioglu and Firat, 2008), discourse (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a; Atkinson, 2014), networking (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Daros, 2022) and self (Kravets, 2021; Iqani and Schroeder, 2016).

Research on social movements (Aminzade and McAdam, 2001; Benford and Snow, 2000; Cress and Snow, 1996; Somma, 2023) and consumer activism (Culiberg *et al.*, 2023; Page, 2017; Sandlin and Callahan, 2009; Swimberghe, Flurry and Parker, 2011) has paid particular attention to resources and resource allocation in activism, especially through the lenses of resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977) and political process theory (Bob, 2002). Resources studied range from tangible assets, such as money and participants, to less tangible or intangible ones, such as skills and networks. Despite this diversity, many studies

emphasize the critical role of the strategic deployment of competitive resources for activism success.

By contrast, within the CCA framework, contemplation emerges as an abundant, non-competitive and non-exclusive resource, accessible to all, rather than advantageous to any single party. This extends the conventional resource logic, which emphasizes exclusivity by presenting contemplation as common, contextually heterogenous, reproducible and uncontentious. Despite its non-competitive character, contemplation as a resource holds significant potential to create meaningful outcomes for conflicting parties. Originating internally, it expands into the social domain through consumer interactions and marketplace exchanges, thereby influencing social change (Cooper, Kong and Crossley, 2018; Törnblom *et al.*, 2023). Before exploring this change-making dimension of contemplation in the next chapter, the following section will examine how CCA, oriented and enacted through contemplation, diverges from conventional activism perspectives.

This sub-section addresses the second research question on the enactment of consumer contemplation within activism contexts. Findings indicate that contemplation relates to consumer activism through three primary mechanisms. First, it orients the consumer contemplator toward a deep inward focus on the source of unrest, prompting critical reflection on their established ways of thinking and behaving, rather than resorting to criticism, rejection or othering. This process of internalization unfolds into a gentle externalization through the intentional cultivation of empathy and responsiveness to others` positions within the conflict, ultimately directed to collective rather than unilateral welfare. Both internalization and externalization processes are later habitualized across various levels of consumer interaction through the development of deep intuition.

Second, contemplation functions as an alternative activism resource that is common, abundant, non-competitive, non-exclusive, heterogenous, reproducible, uncontentious and accessible to all, widening the conventional logics of activism resource. Originating as an internal resource, it expands into the social sphere through consumer interactions and marketplace exchanges.

Taken together, addressing both research questions on the conception and enactment of consumer contemplation, this section delineates the key characteristics of Contemplative Consumer Activism regarding activism participation and resource mobilization, which distinguish it from more conventional forms of consumer activism.

5.5 Chapter Conclusion

The chapter theorizes how contemplation is conceptualized and enacted within an activism framework. In so doing, it situates contemplation within the everyday life as a dialectic interplay between its routinized and routine-breaking dimensions. In its routinized form, contemplation is continuously worked and reworked through micro repetitions of deliberate cognitive and bodily performances. Over time, this deliberateness gives way to a more spontaneous state as contemplation becomes routinized. In its routine-breaking form, it disrupts habitual patterns considered normal within the everyday, rendering them visible.

Following a discussion of how contemplation is conceptualized, the chapter explicates the ways through which contemplation is enacted, thus becomes engaged within an activist milieu. This enactment is examined through two lenses, that is, contemplative orientation and contemplation as resource. Contemplative orientation refers to alternative modes of thought and behaviour initiated by contemplation, while contemplation as resource highlights its role as a common, abundant and non-competitive asset within activism. The chapter concludes by outlining key characteristics regarding the conceptualization and enactment of the proposed CCA framework.

Chapter 6 CONTEMPLATIVE CHANGE

6.1 Introduction

Consumer activism builds on an inherent logic of change, wherein activist efforts seek to alter contested issues by influencing the underlying attitudinal and behaviour factors (Bradford Lightfoot, 2019; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007; Patsiaouras, 2022). While this change often targets a specific market agent, such as a brand, firm or practice, it can also aim to reshape the broader socio-cultural, political or economic structures implicated in the issue (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Handelman and Fischer, 2018). This chapter explores how Contemplative Consumer Activism contributes to (social) change by revealing a three-layered process of change creation, that is, the Intra-consumer, Inter-Consumer and System levels. Across all levels, change is framed through an initial cognitive conversion and its subsequent influence on market behaviour.

6.2 Reconfiguring Change through Contemplative Consumer Activism

Conventional activism tends to frame change as external, direct, forceful and large-scale (e.g. Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Giesler, 2008; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a; El Jurdi and Ourahmoune, 2021). Contemplative Consumer Activism, by contrast, envisions change as slow, gradual and implicit, rooted in the ordinariness of everyday life. Within this context, change manifests in everyday outcomes, which are not diminished in significance despite their distance from larger policy outcomes (Mansbridge and Flaster, 2007).

Within the context of CCA, change emerges through multi-layered cognitive and behavioural engagement across the Intra-consumer, Inter-Consumer and System levels. *Intra-consumer change* involves internal shifts within the consumer contemplator, which, in turn, gives rise to *Inter-consumer change*, as alterations emerging through consumer interactions with other market actors. Together, these processes contribute to *System-level change*, marked by broader transformations across the marketplace. Isabella, a 44-year-old accountant, reflects on how her daily contemplative practice affects both the individual and social aspects of her life as follows;

> *So I think it does have practical ramifications in my life […] The more we know ourselves, the more we are able to contribute to society in a meaningful way, because we are not always just in our own heads, then we are a bit more able to engage positively with people and with society*

[…] So when I'm scrolling through, looking for dresses, coz there's a lot pretty dresses, everybody's wearing them, and I've got lots of dresses, but I want to buy more, so I'm looking at dresses and I'm even tapped on, like, to check out and put the dress in the basket, but I can't help asking myself that question, Do I really need this extra dress?[…] I think people who are more self-aware they might be aware of their surroundings, and they might even be more aware of sustainability and climate change issues […] The more in touch I am with my spirituality and so religious thoughts, it might even impact what companies I might buy from. I regard some companies as unethical and I`m not buying from them, and I think being more mindful increases, coz then you're not numb, you're not just following what you're seeing on advertisement boards. You're able to create a space, I guess, between advertisement and what's being thrown at you through social media. You are able to step back, coz you've got the tools to do that […] I would say politics come into it too. And I do agree that the more mindful you are, or the more aware, self-aware you are, it would affect your consumption, or how much you buy from certain companies or goods made from certain countries, or just produce of certain nations that you don't agree with their politics. So yeah I think that`s true. And also sustainability, again, you might not like the ethos of certain companies. Maybe they've shown that they don't care at all about the environment, whereas some of them are better. You know, you know that they're sort of against cruelty to animals or their packaging is, you know, recyclable. So yeah, all of these things are affecting me more and more, I guess, as I'm becoming more aware of the issue.

For Isabella, personal activism and transformation do not occur as sudden, comprehensive shifts, but as selective adjustments which gradually permeate various aspects of her interaction with the external world. First, *intra-consumer change* involves a transformation in the consumer`s connection to the consuming self. This transformation unfolds through two key stages, that is, a cognitive stage and a consumption stage. At the cognitive stage, change is initiated through deep introspection and heightened self-awareness, cultivated through regular contemplative practice. This inward shift then informs her marketplace behaviour, exemplified in moments of reflection, such as questioning “Do I really need this extra dress?”.

Second, intra-consumer change expands into *inter-consumer change*, which marked by a transformation in the consumer`s connection to the consuming others. For Isabella, contemplation-enabled self-awareness acquires a social dimension as she interacts with other consumers, firms and brands in the marketplace. Questioning the corporate advocacy of the companies she favours prompts her to reconsider whether and from whom to purchase. Similar to intra-consumer change, these transformations are guided by initial cognitive conversions, followed by changes in consumption behaviour.

Third, the intra-consumer and inter-consumer changes across both cognitive and consumption stages culminate in *system-level change*, which involves a transformation in the consumer`s connection to the consuming system. Isabella navigates this level as her increased awareness for self and others leads her to question "the ethos of certain companies", including their political ideologies, sustainability practices and animal rights policies. While rooted in earlier stages, system-level change differs in its broader scope, reflecting concern with the way that broader systemic structures function in the marketplace and influence everyday practices. As Isabella puts it, "The more we know ourselves, the more we are able to contribute to society in a meaningful way". Within this framework, activism for Isabella is grounded in a logic that moves beyond an internalized sense of victimization and reactive antagonism, evolving into a broader commitment to societally relevant action. This involves transforming the way that she thinks about herself and others, and translating that awareness into meaningful changes with wider impact. Figure 6.1 presents a visual representation of social change reconfigured through Contemplative Consumer Activism, as the analysis reveals.

The remainder of the chapter explores change with the CCA framework across the intra-consumer, inter-consumer and system-levels, each comprising cognitive and consumption stages.

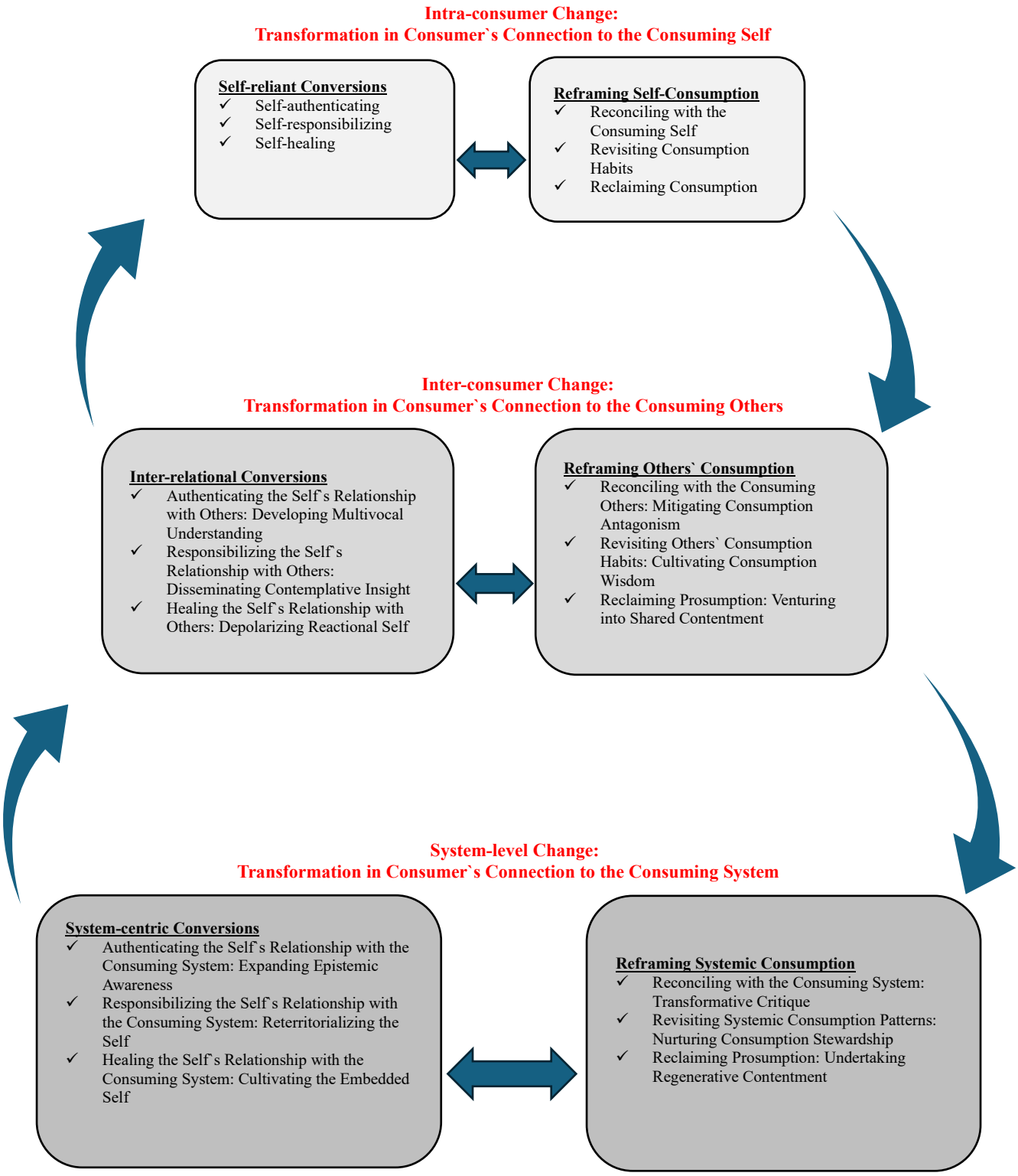


Figure 6.1: Social Change through Contemplative Consumer Activism

6.2.1 Intra-Consumer Change: Transformation in the Consumer`s Connection to the Consuming Self

Intra-consumer change refers to cognitive and behavioural shifts that influence how the contemplator relates to themselves as a consumer and engages with consumption practices within their individual sphere. As the foundational level, it informs changes at subsequent levels. This dimension is explored through the lenses of Self-reliant Conversions and Conversions in Self-Consumption in the following sections.

6.2.1.1. Self-reliant Conversions

Self-reliant conversions describe a cognitive process through which the consumer contemplator experiences a disruption and reconstruction of their relationship with the self during everyday contemplative practice. Within a religious context, conversions can unfold "as an undramatic reawakening and reaffirmation of previously held but dormant religious beliefs, as an end result of a slow maturational process, or as the result of an abrupt shift in assumptive systems precipitated by a mystical experience" (Frank and Frank, 1993, p. 82). Within the context of CCA, these conversions enable the consumer contemplator to critically reflect on their own way of thinking and behaving, almost as if observing themselves from an external vantage point.

Self-reliant conversions involve an intense process of reconsideration and meaning (re)making, which transforms everyday life in a self-cathartic manner without directly confronting larger political-economic structures, being an inherent trait of everyday activism (Martin, Hanson and Fontaine, 2007), in which CCA is situated. These conversions contribute to what Vivienne (2015, p. 1) terms "erosive social change; changes in attitude that take place slowly over extended time frames, profoundly reshaping social norms as they diffuse among networked publics […] difficult to quantify or correlate with a specific cause". As foundational processes, self-reliant conversions precede and enable broader system-oriented changes, involving dynamic interrelations between consumers and market actors. They unfold through interrelated processes, that is, self-authenticating, self-responsibilizing and self-healing, which are explored in detail below.

Self-Authenticating

Authenticity broadly denotes identification with "a narrative of origins, or a sense of original and unadulterated selfhood" (Umbach and Humphrey, 2017, p. 1). Within the context

of CCA, self-authenticating refers to reconnecting with the unconditional nature of the self through contemplative practice. This practice of self-authenticating is significant given that authenticity is frequently discussed in relation to its perceived erosion under civilization forces, such as secularization, urbanization and industrialization (Umbach and Humphrey, 2017, p. 1) as well as postmodern market dynamics, including globalization, deterritorialization and hyperreality (Arnould and Price, 2000). These forces often estrange the self from its perceived origins by immersing it in normalized assumptions and normative modes of being. Lesley, a 63-year-old primary school teacher, illustrates how this self-authenticating process unfolds through her contemplative practice;

> *This is, I mean, this is very weird, because it's not so much of discovery as a rediscovery, because I feel it puts me back in touch with my real self. So it's not as if this is something new. It's `Oh, this is something that's always been there, and that I've just been ignoring`. So it's not so much a discovery is, as an embrace. And yet it is a discovery because 40 years ago, I hadn't really thought about it. So, it's only when someone introduced this practice that I suddenly was able to embrace myself! properly as a physical breathing being.*

Lesley describes this process as a natural attunement to what is already present, that is, an unforced and welcomed experience of reconnection with the true self. This resonates with Wang (1999, p. 359)`s notion of "existential authenticity", defined as the preoccupation "with an existential state of Being", activated through lived experience. Yet, for Lesley, self-authenticating includes not only heightened awareness of her internal self but also a sensitization to her external embodiment as "a physical breathing being", thereby enabling a dynamic interplay between interiority and exteriority. In that regard, Lesley`s self-authenticating is firmly situated within an experiential domain (Belhassen, Caton and Stewart, 2008), particularly involving spiritual experiences (Moufahim and Lichrou, 2019). This emphasis marks an important shift in authenticity research, which tends to focus on objects (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010), places and activities (Buchmann, Moore and Fisher, 2010). Within this research stream, the individual`s interior world is often presented as "a source for recapturing authenticity" (Umbach and Humphrey, 2017, p. 39-40), which further contributes to the construction of the authentic postmodern self (Arnould and Price, 2000). Within the context of CCA, contemplation facilitates this internal conversion through three key dynamics, namely, internalization, externalization and habituation described in the previous chapter. First, contemplative orientation inspires the consumer contemplator to turn inward and rediscover an

unmediated sense of self, which is later externalized and habitualized within a social space. Second, contemplation as a resource provides the tools and accessibility required for such self-discovery.

Lesley further elaborates on her authenticating experience;

> *And you know, if this is who I am, and this is what I believe and stand for, I can go out and live it. And there's a real sense from within all that, you know. As I say, some days are better than others, but yes, it feels like it's sort of coming from in here [pointing towards her chest], a sense of `Yes, I think, Yes to life!`*

For Lesley, self-authenticating is not a sporadic occurrence but a deliberate action-oriented process. Knowing "what I believe and stand for" entails actively engaging in self-exploration, identifying personal strengths and weaknesses with the intention of acting upon them across diverse life circumstances. This performative aspect aligns with Arnold and Price (2000, p. 138)`s conceptualization of authenticity as rooted in "authenticating acts", which "are self-referential behaviours actors feel, reveal or produce the "true" self".

Self-authenticating acquires activist tones as it becomes a form of resistance against dominant power structures operating under the conditions of modernity (Wang, 1999). In this context, self-authenticating as activism unfolds through a rejection of inauthenticity, realized outside the reach of these structures and within a symbolic space that demarcates the ordinary from the non-ordinary. Contemplation provides this protected space, which is secluded and temporally carved out within the everyday where power`s influence is momentarily suspended. Within such moments, Lesley`s activist motivation is reignited through a renewed "sense of Yes, Yes to life".

Achieving self-authenticating is followed by a cognitive shift in the consumer`s sense of victimization and empowerment, which is explored in the following section.

Self-Responsibilizing

Responsibilization broadly refers to "expecting and assuming the reflexive moral capacities of various social actors", aiming to mobilize individual actors to engage in self-governing tasks by reshaping existing roles and identities (Shamir, 2008, p. 8-9). Building on this, self-responsibilizing refers to a process through which the consumer contemplator reconsiders their ascribed and normalized position of victimhood in conflictual contexts,

fostering a heightened sense of agency. Taylor, a 41-year-old mindfulness teacher, illustrates this state as follows;

> *As our attention is returned to here and now, we learn how to choose among different options, draw conclusions and adopt a course of action in those tiny scenarios within meditation that can change moment to moment […] I say that I do not feel comfortable with what is happening right now, but what can I do with this state? Or how do I want to approach this? This very question dissociates me from a sense of being victimized, you know, as a feeling, that I am the victim of this state, and turns me into an agent that can make their own choices under this very state. We all see it, don't we? For example, in the face of an earthquake, some people choice to make the emerging experience even more catastrophic and so get burnt with the sense of suffering, turning it a more traumatic state. In the face of exactly the same suffering, some others live the same suffering without repressing the feeling but being motivated into action, seeing a mission for themselves to be completed amid all that suffering.*

For Taylor, the tendency to self-accuse in the face of difficult life circumstances is an inherent human condition, rather than the result of an external agent or power structure imposing blame. This internalized dynamic gives rise to a sense of victimization, which individuals often attempt to resist through oppositional thoughts and behaviours. Contemplation enables Taylor to recognize and challenge this tendency through two interrelated dynamics, that is, resisting against self-victimization and fostering self-empowerment. Together, these dynamics allow her to engage with a range of possible scenarios and emotional responses, and crucially, to choose among them. This process unfolds as a form of responsibilization that liberates Taylor from the confines of normalized thinking and behavioural patterns by granting heightened agency in navigating life choices. This capacity for selective engagement and intentional choice facilitates a dissociation from the sense of victimhood and activates a sense of empowerment, rooted in enhanced consumer agency.

Such contemplation-enabled self-responsibilizing differs from consumer responsibilization, defined as a process through which "consumers are reconstructed as free, autonomous, rational, and entrepreneurial subjects who draw on individual market choices to invest in their own human capital, such that the need for top-down intervention into the market is rendered obsolete" (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014, p. 841-842). In this framing, consumer responsbilization is often understood as a result of a systemic imposition shaped by neoliberal policy regimes (Cherrier and Türe, 2023; Thompson and Kumar, 2021; Jones and Arnould,

2022; Döbbe and Cederberg, 2024). Drawing on a Foucauldian lens, it is critiqued as a form of neoliberal governmentality, as an ontological shift in the way that power is exerted. This shift facilitates the implementation and perpetuation of neoliberal policies, particularly consumer subjectification (Pellandini-Simányi and Conte, 2021, p. 281), by attenuating resistive tendencies.

While the conventional view of consumer responsibilization involves resisting externally imposed influences, within the context of CCA, the self is responsibilized through a challenge directed at its own internalized sense of victimhood and loss of power. Unlike externally enforced responsibilization that often occurs beyond consumer control, contemplation-driven self-responsibilizing is an agentic and self-initiated process of empowerment. As Taylor puts it, it entails "seeing a mission for themselves to be completed amid all that suffering". This process is not about passively receiving options, but about actively exercising the capacity to choose among alternatives. In this sense, self-responsibilization unfolds as "as a call for action […] an 'enabling praxis' and a technique of government that set into action a reflexive subjectivity deemed suitable to partake in the deployment of horizontal authority" (Shamir, 2008, p. 4).

Through the intertwined process of authenticating and responsibilizing, the self is reconfigured and set on a trajectory towards healing, which is elaborated in the following section.

Self-Healing

Within the context of CCA, self-healing refers to a deliberate process through which the consumer contemplator actively transitions from a cognitive state of surviving `despite` imperfections to one of surviving `with` imperfections. While the former denotes resistance to flaws and vulnerabilities, the latter reflects an acceptance-driven reorientation that sees imperfections as natural elements of human experience. This shift is facilitated by drawing on contemplation as an inner resource, rather than relying on external forces. Ronald, a 58-year-old mindfulness teacher, illustrates this transformation by reflecting on how years of contemplative practice have supported his recovery from various mental and physical challenges experienced since childhood;

> *The more you will meditate effectively, and contemplate as well, the more you will be in touch to the full spectrum of human emotions, to the glorious, to the grotesque. You will feel everything […] The more we meditate and contemplate with abandoned willing to let our brain*

spontaneously go where it may, the more we're going to feel better about ourselves, even the stuff about ourselves where we are abject losers. You know, we can feel more, we don't need any reasons […] Similarly we have a certain homeostasis we are wired for. Most of the time we're disconnected from it because we're living in opposition to those natural mechanisms […] When our higher brain chooses to cooperate with that mechanism, a lot of healing takes place, some of it very rapidly, some of it takes time but healing does take place. So, I've been meditating full time, multiple decades, I'm still disabled. It hasn't changed my path. That hasn't changed the way my brain is wired but it's helped me to cope with it, to dance with it […] As a vegan, I've known many activists, political activists and civil rights activists and the like. And there's a lot of people burn out and those who burn out are the ones who are trying to do the right thing, but they are using the wrong method. They're using yang techniques as opposed to yin techniques, and that's actually thought about a little tiny but honestly they have the most loftiness of intention but their execution is patriarchal, rigid, fearful, controlling. But it's unsustainable. So the most sustainable way to be an agent of love and peace and human evolution is to flow from the center of spontaneity. Now, in America we like football. In Britain they've got Rugby, not known for the gentleness or subtlety. But there's also ballet. There's also dance. So if we meditate, if you practice meditation, mindfulness, contemplation in a way that helps us to practice flexibility, love, letting go to the degree of mastery, to the degree of practising it spontaneously, habitually, easily, and effectively, then we can be like an agent of great change. But that change may be indirect, it could still be change.

Ronald echoes Taylor`s earlier reflections on the human tendency towards self-victimization, emphasizing this through his use of the term “abject losers”. He further argues that individuals are disconnected from a natural state of homeostasis, as a point of internal balance, because “we're living in opposition to those natural mechanisms”. For Ronald, transcending this disconnection requires cultivating spontaneity in both thought and behaviour. A centred and unforced spontaneity, he suggests, enables the authentication of the self by releasing it from the grip of conditioned responses. This liberation sensitizes the self to being “in touch to the full spectrum of human emotions, to the glorious, to the grotesque”, allowing one to feel “everything”. This emotional expansion opens a space of “flexibility, love and letting go”, through which healing emerges not by resisting imperfections but by embracing, even `dancing` with them. In this sense, with the context of CCA, self-healing unfolds as a process of healing through joy, acceptance and emotional attunement.

Ronald`s self-healing through contemplation resonates with the body-mind-soul triad characteristic of New Age healing (Levin and Coreil, 1986), in which bodily transformation is

pursued through mental or physical self-betterment, typically within a secular, non-supernatural Western context. This is followed by mental healing, facilitated by engagement with esoteric teachings, and complemented by the healing of the soul through ritualistic contemplative practice. For Ronald, healing does not stem from resisting his born-with disabilities, but rather from spontaneous integration of flexibility, love and letting go into the fabric of everyday life, without coercion as "we can feel more, we don't need any reasons". In this regard, self-healing aligns with New Age notions of holistic healing, which defy single paradigms of illness, healing and cure. Instead, healing is conceived as an individually curated process, wherein the self assembles a personalized package of healing practices from a large reservoir of alternatives, guided by their market preferences (Bowman, 1999; Thompson, 2003).

In addition, unlike forms of self-healing, often situated within public contexts and reliant on the presence of others (e.g. Gesler, 1996; Higgins and Hamilton, 2019; Moisio and Beruchashvili, 2009; Scott, Cayla and Cova, 2017), healing in the context of CCA unfolds internally and independently of socio-spatial environments. While public healing typically involves a dramatic shift from an undesired to a desired state, contemplation-enabled self-healing proceeds through a peaceful and gentle spontaneity, free from negative or positive valence. Although it may not result in immediate change, as Ronald notes, it can nevertheless generate lasting effects, reconfiguring how the consumer contemplator relates to themselves and to the world, ultimately positioning them as "an agent of great change".

The remainder of the chapter explicates how the contemplation-driven cognitive conversions of self-authenticating, self-responsibilizing and self-healing inform and reshape the marketplace behaviour of the consumer contemplator, thereby intersecting with a consumer activism agenda.

6.2.1.2. Reframing Self-Consumption

Reframing self-consumption delineates a process through which the consumer contemplator reinterprets their consumption patterns through an empathetic and compassionate lens. It highlights how cognitive conversions, including self-authenticating, self-responsibilizing and self-healing, materialize in the context of everyday marketplace engagements. Contemplation, practiced at the intra-consumer level, marks an initial phase of activism by unfolding as an internal resistance to socially conditioned, self-sabotaging constructions of the self. It facilitates this uprising by both motivating and resourcing the

individual to liberate themselves from socio-culturally ingrained patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving, through deep internalization and heightened awareness. Self-healing emerges as an outcome of this initial activist endeavour. This theoria of cognitive contestation against the conditioned self leads the way to praxis in the form of three distinct marketplace behaviours, that is, R*econciliating with Consuming, Revisiting Consumption Habits* and *Reclaiming Consumption*. These behaviours reflect a reconfiguration of the consumer contemplator`s relationship with their *consuming self*. The consuming self represents the consumer`s particular way of engaging in consumption behaviour that is shaped by societal, cultural and media influences, often in tension with the self.

Reconciling with the Consuming Self

Reconciling with the consuming self refers to a state in which the consumer contemplator acknowledges their persistent susceptibility to consumption and chooses to engage with it reflectively rather than suppressing or denying it reactively. This stance challenges the moralistic urge to criticize or reject consumption outright, prevalent in some conventional activist discourses, and instead fosters a more agentic, compassionate and grounded relationship with one`s consumer tendencies. Kylie, a 72-year-old retired engineering technician, illustrates how her contemplative practice has reshaped her view of consumption as follows;

> *Fast fashion is this, this is my retail therapy, if they call it badly. It's still, I`m still hanging on to that. But it's, it's okay. I know I know it will be, it's attachment. It's, you know, it's a need. I think I need this […] But I think we all do know this given the environment, right? We think of fast fashion that way. But also, now I'm thinking of it as that needy attachment to it. You know the need for it and and having to let go off, you know. I mean, for me, just the idea of living simply, it's just wonderful, you know. It's like I don't need all these things. I`ve got, I`ve got 2 bedrooms. It is for visitors. But if I hadn't found Buddhism, I think I would have been like, my my place is not furnished yet fully, you know. But it's not going to be the way I would have done before, having to have this, having to have that. I put more importance on my little Buddha. Would you like to see my Buddha?*

Figure 6.2: The Buddha sculpture that Kylie bought during one of her recent contemplative retreats

Kylie acknowledges that her contemplative engagement has initiated a gradual shift in her relationship with possessions that is increasingly mindful of her actual needs. Central to this transformation is her conscious recognition of her market attachment, that is, a "hanging on" to fast consumption, which she chooses to approach in a friendly and peaceful manner. Rather than rejecting this tendency, she accepts it and even frames such consumption as "a need". While neoliberal discourses often construct the consumer as an economically rational and affective subject (Bajde and Rojas-Gaviria, 2021), Kylie`s contemplative transformation extends this view by cultivating a self-attuned awareness paired with a willingness to take responsibility for change. This stands in contrast to the previously discussed sense of victimhood, which is often suppressed through reactive modes, such as anti-consumption, counter-consumption or non-consumption.

Research on consumer activism suggests that guilt plays an important role in shaping both attitudinal and behavioural tendencies toward involvement in various activism and social movement contexts, including environmental activism (Culiberg *et al.*, 2023), sustainable consumption (Antonetti and Maklan, 2014) and ethical decision making (Chatzidakis, 2015). In cases where guilt is self-directed, it often arises from a widening gap between inability to regulate consumption behaviour and the ideal self with particular standards set for the individual (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003). Within this context, Kylie`s authentic engagement with her market attachment allows her to reposition the ideal self as accessible and attainable, thereby counteracting guilt and replacing it with an agentic consumer awareness. Moreover, consumer responses to resolve guilt typically range from attempts at behavioural amendment to rationalization or denial (Dahl, Honea and Manchanda, 2003). Kylie navigates

these contradictory tendencies through a grounded awareness of her vulnerabilities and a strengthened sense of agency to act upon them.

Interestingly, Kylie juxtaposes her former tendency towards home-related consumption, such as furnishing her rooms with a sense of "having to have this, having to have that", with her purchase of a small Buddha sculpture (See Figure 6.2), itself a market offering. In this comparison, the typically rejected feeling of market attachment is reframed, not as something to be resisted but as a human condition to be accepted, revisited and reinterpreted. In this regard, reconciling with self-consumption leads the way for a cognitive revisit of personal consumption patterns, while gently acknowledging the enduring presence of market attachment at the same time. This topic is explored in greater detail in the next section.

Revisiting Consumption Habits

Revisiting consumption habits refers to the reflective process through which the consumer contemplator autonomously reassesses habitual consumption patterns and realigns them with newly internalized values. This process builds on an initial reconciling with the consuming self, which allows for a gentle and impartial evaluation of entrenched marketplace behaviours. Taylor, a 41-year-old mindfulness teacher, reflects on how her contemplative engagement reshapes her relationship with existing consumption habits;

> *Regarding my consumption, when I realize that I am drinking the third coffee that day, I turn to myself and say `[Taylor], you`re feeling a bit down now and expect to gain satisfaction from coffee. This is really interesting, isn't it?` Or I say `[Taylor], you want to eat another jar of Nutella now. Alright, you can have some but you also know that this will not bring you happiness, don't you?` […] Like parenting yourself but not by shaking your finger at yourself but approaching your vulnerabilities from a less reactive and more compassionate point of view.*

Taylor highlights that her years-long contemplative engagement has fostered a self-attuned awareness of her vulnerabilities, coupled with a strengthened willingness to take responsibility for transforming them. During this process, contemplative practice enables Taylor to frame her weaknesses as opportunities for immediate, value-driven action, which is supported by an enhanced sense of agency. In this regard, intra-consumer conversions begin at a micro level, focusing primarily on the consumer contemplator`s relationships with the self by seeing it clearly and choosing to engage it with intentionally.

Taylor likens this contemplation-enabled process of revisiting her existing consumption habits to reparenting herself, wherein she seeks the roots of her attachments to consumption with self-empathy and compassion, rather than self-criticism. Upon recognizing her self-harming consumption patterns, particularly a lack of control over consumption, she takes initiative to transform them in a value-driven and compassionate manner. In this regard, revisiting consumption habits through contemplation involves cultivating a `fresh mindset`, defined by Price and colleagues (2018, p. 21) as "a belief that people can make a new start, get a new beginning, and chart a new course in life, regardless of their past or present circumstances". Unlike a fixed mindset that is inclined toward self-ratification and self-image maintenance, thereby allowing limited space for improvement, the fresh mindset promotes agency, growth and goal-directed self-improvement (Murphy and Dweck, 2016). Taylor elaborates on the activism-oriented agency emerging from contemplative engagement as follows;

> *This is part of the self-compassion training that you do not need to change to be loved and accepted. I am whole and complete in the way that I am. Change can take place only! to the extent that I! want and accept it. Thus, the motive behind the desire to change is coming from another standpoint, a more authentic, loving and compassionate one […] Realizing this and letting change take place in this way implies a lot of activism, doesn't it? This is also a kind of activism in the sense that developing this attitude protects others, as well as yourself from being harmed by similar pre-established and society-harming ways of thinking and behaving. You know, replacing concerns over body-shaming or sexual identity, you name it, with acceptance in society as the number of people practicing contemplation and mindfulness grows, is this less of an activism? I really don't think so!*

For Taylor, activism emerging from the deconstruction of the socially constructed self and its market-mediated consumption habits culminates in a self-administered change, which she describes as "authentic, loving and compassionate". This internally empowered change liberates the consumer from the compulsion to conform to socially conditioned norms of thought and behaviour in pursuit of love and acceptance. In this regard, contemplation-enabled change contrasts sharply with change driven by market-mediated desires that operate both at the micro level of personal consumption (Giesler, 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013) and at the macro level of broader consumption systems (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; Fernandes, 2020; Fine and Sandstrom, 1993). While safeguarding the self from the pressures of externally

dictated living, cultivating an internal, change-oriented mindset also fosters transformative outcomes for others who navigate similar everyday conditions. Before elaborating more on the inter-personal implications of contemplative engagement, the next section explores how this inward-oriented change reshapes consumption behaviour.

Reclaiming Consumption

Reclaiming consumption describes a process through which the consumer contemplator liberates their consumption behaviour from externally imposed scripts and expectations, resulting in a shift from socially conditioned responses toward more self-directed and value-driven decision-making in the marketplace. This process is also marked by heightened control and restored autonomy on consumption behaviour. Taylor illustrates how this mental reorientation yields tangible market outcomes, stating;

> *Look, it is perfectly okay to purchase something you need. This is conscious consumption. I mean there is no need to feel guilty about it. What mindfulness helps you with is to make you aware of the distinction between your consuming something out of a real need and your wanting to consume something out of your expectation to enjoy yourself or own something. This also means getting aware of the real motives behind your actions.*

The renewed mindset cultivated through contemplative practice enables Taylor to distinguish between authentic consumption needs and socio-culturally conditioned desires, thereby exercising greater agency in her market choices. This capacity for discernment signals a subtle yet significant resistance to what Belk (1988) terms `the extended self`, as the notion that possessions constitute and reflect the self. By becoming aware of how material ownership intervenes in self-perception and by gently deconstructing possessions from the sense of the self, the consumer contemplator engages in a socially meaningful act of reclaiming autonomy from normative consumer expectations. As noted by Taylor, this deconstruction of the extended self enables her to make purchase decisions grounded in internal clarity rather than external validation. In doing so, she not only repositions herself within the marketplace but also reorients her place in the broader social landscape.

William, a 39-year-old analytics manager, describes how reclaiming consumption contributes to a personal form of activism, performed at an intra-consumer level;

I think in a lot of scenarios, I'd look at something as `Do I actually, do I really want this?` `Is this just me of this moment making a decision or is it me of whatever the lifespan of this item is making the decision?` […] Activism is actually thinking about it and saying, `Right, is this actually the right thing I want to do?` Like it's almost breaking from what we see, tradition or automatic, and like actually making your own choice […] So, in terms of contemplation, I do think that would help with that first part of activism, certainly, because just taking any sort of time to think and instead of the purchase becoming automatic or someone else's, it becomes your own purchase that you're conscious of, actually asking `Why am I buying this? What am I buying it for? Is it something I really want?`

Both Taylor and William claim that consumption takes place under the influence of diverse external forces, which hinders consumers from making decisions aligned with genuine needs and expectations. Reflecting a Foucauldian perspective on neoliberal governmentality (Bajde and Rojas-Gaviria, 2021), this external influences contribute to the subjectification of the modern consumer by suppressing authentic self-expression. Yet, rather than instrumentalizing consumption as a tool of resistance, either through non-consumption (e.g. Nixon, 2020) or anti-consumption (e.g. Portwood-Stacer, 2012), they autonomously reassert control over their consumption practices through a deep cognitive interrogation of the needs for their authenticated self. In doing so, they voluntarily take responsibility for liberating themselves from the confines of dominant market influences and repositioning themselves with intentionality in the marketplace. The following excerpt from my researcher diary reflects a similar consolidation in the perception of my consuming self both within and beyond;

Can a whole life really fit into a suitcase? How could it feel so comforting to realize how little I actually need. To survive as only what I am, with what is already part of my self, everything I`ve worked hard to become up to this point, that`s what I carry with me everywhere […] I liked that expensive bag, yeah, it was nice. But why I don't feel as excited about having it. Maybe it would feel good to show it off, to carry it around…but honestly, I`m not sure. Could it really be? Well, I don't know. I don't feel the same need for it now. That`s a bit strange. Maybe even a little scary. Like I am meeting a different version of myself, so different, like I didn't really know before […] Pride, I think that`s what I feel about it now. Pride in this new me. It feels enough, just as it is. It is about `me`, not `others`, not about what they`ll think or expect. Just me. Simple. Pure. (Researcher notes, 29/05/2023)

My perception of my consuming self aligns with both Taylor`s and William`s view of consumption, not as something to be despised or rejected, but as something to understand to be understood. It involves recognizing the genuine self that desires a marketplace item, and extending sympathy to it, rather than responding with criticism or shame. This moment of understanding enables me to distinguish my authentic needs from the version of myself that seeks external validation. It also represents a form of inner activism, unfolding within and against myself. The pride in my potentialities and sense of liberation it generates fosters a more self-assured connection with the external world, marking the beginning of a new transformation, an important one.

This feeling of inner activism is also shared by Taylor and William. Both participants frame their contemplative practices as personal forms of activism that unlock consumer potentialities for engaging in activism within an expanded social sphere. They regard this as an important step toward initiating a silent yet profound upheaval, beginning with the recognition of eroded consumer authenticity and followed by self-administered change in the marketplace. At the intra-consumer level, Contemplative Consumer Activism thus juxtaposes materiality-based conceptions of the self and identity constitution (Borgerson, 2005) with a motivation to deconstruct the externally-dependent self and reconstruct it through a deeper contemplative insight that consolidates its position in both the marketplace and the broader socio-cultural domain.

6.2.1.3 Section Conclusion

This section explores the intra-consumer change dimension of Contemplative Consumer Activism. Traditional forms of consumer activism often rest on externally administered change aimed at influencing market agents, such as brands, firms, industries or systemic structures (Bradford Lightfoot, 2019; Den Hond and De Barker, 2007; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). In contrast, intra-consumer change encompasses a personal, internally initiated transformation driven by contemplative engagement. Rather than fast, dramatic and outwardly oriented, this form of change is slow, gradual and implicit, grounded in the ordinariness of everyday life. It unfolds through two interconnected processes, that is, Self-reliant Conversions, occurring at the cognitive level, and Reframing Self-consumption, reflecting how these internal shifts manifest in market behaviour.

In the context of Contemplative Consumer Activism, intra-consumer change involves contemplation-informed contestations enacted by the consuming self. In this process, the

consumer simultaneously occupies the roles of antagonist and protagonist, first cultivating awareness of socially conditioned consumer needs, and then liberating associated practices from both subliminal conditioning and explicit systemic impositions. Unlike enforced, agonistic and radical enactment of contestation, intra-consumer change is characterized by a warm-hearted, empathetic and constructive engagement with existing consumption habits. It begins with reconciling, and proceeds toward revisiting and reclaiming consumption in ways that are more authentic and independent of external pressures. Here, contemplation shifts beyond its conventional role as theoria or abstract thinking to become an enabling resource for action and transformation. The remainder of the chapter explores the broader dynamics of change through discussions on *Inter-Consumer Change* and *System-level Change.*

6.2.2 Inter-Consumer Change: Transformation in the Consumer`s Connection to the Consuming Others

> *Purely private and subjective experience during the meditation you have on your own in your solitude is only part of the story. We must be careful not to privilege deep meditative states as if they have an intrinsic value on their own while actually, they don't. They are just part and parcel of our interrelatedness with the world. The real question is not how deep enlightenment you did get in that ceremony or meditation, but how that experience in that ceremony helped you become the kind of person you want to be, which is how I would define `ethics`. Is this gonna make me a kinder, wiser, more courageous, more creative, more imaginative person? Can I demonstrate that in the actual things I do, the work I do, the relationships I have, the art I do?*
>
> Stephen Bachelor, Buddhist author and teacher, in an online public talk

Inter-consumer change refers to cognitive and behavioural shifts that influence how the consumer contemplator relates to others as consumers and how they engage with consumption practices in social contexts. It represents a social extension of contemplation-enabled, intra-consumer change through market interactions. This approach builds on two key standpoints: the externalization of contemplative engagement and the market system dynamics approach. First, while contemplation is inherently inward and personal, it is externally manifested when practiced as "a carefully thought-out plan to the activities of the day", thereby moving from theoria into praxis (Azize, 2020, p. 8). This shift allows contemplation-driven momentary experiences in everyday life to develop into a socially active agenda. Beyond its individualistic

role in everyday pragmatism, contemplation also plays crucial part in moral decision making (Gunia *et al.*, 2012), thereby expanding into a socially-engaged practicality that contributes to the regulation of inter-personal relations.

Second, the market system dynamics approach posits that markets are formed through "discursive negotiations among and the practices of multiple stakeholders" (Giesler and Fischer, 2017, p. 3). This approach draws on two key premises. First, markets evolve through ongoings circles of contestations (Giesler, 2008; Giesler, 2012), an important portion of which involves various forms of consumer activism (Giesler, 2008; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Choi and Burnes, 2022). Second, multiple market actors, such as other consumers, organizations and systemic structures, collectively shape market evolution. This view challenges the traditional economic actor bias in mainstream marketing scholarship, which typically assumes that markets are driven by interactions between consumers and producers. The market system dynamics approach informs the inter-consumer change dimension of Contemplative Consumer Activism by emphasizing consumer-induced market formation and change through strategic and formally organized actions (Kjeldgaard *et al.*, 2017; Bradford Lightfoot, 2019), organized affects (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021) or entrepreneurial consumer behaviour as forms of organized act (Martin and Schouten, 2014; Cherrier and Türe, 2023). This study extends existing research on organized market formation and change by introducing a novel perspective grounded in ordinary, unorganized, unstructured and ad-hoc interactions between consumer actors.

Importantly, inter-consumer change is grounded in intra-consumer change, which serves as an archetypal phase for both cognitive and marketplace transformations. It similarly unfolds through two complementary processes, including *Inter-relational Conversions* at the cognitive level and *Reframing Others` Consumption* at the marketplace level. These processes are explored in the sections to come.

6.2.2.1 Inter-relational Conversions

Inter-relational conversions refer to contemplation-enabled cognitive shifts in how the consumer contemplator relates to others within shared social spaces. Grounded in the cultivation of "interrelatedness with the world", as noted by Stephen Bachelor in the opening quote, such shifts emerge through contemplation`s spatial and temporal affordances, which allows the consumer to reevaluate their habitual patterns of thought and attitude toward others. For Bachelor, this interrelatedness also carries ethical implications, as contemplative

engagement becomes socially and morally enacted through everyday interpersonal encounters (Azize, 2020; Gunia *et al.*, 2012).

Inter-relational conversions are explored under the sub-sections, *Developing Multivocal Understanding*, *Disseminating Contemplative Insight*, and *Depolarizing the Reactional Self*. Each unfolds as an extension of the previously discussed processes of authenticating, responsibilizing and healing the self in relation to others.

Authenticating the Self`s Relationship with Others: Developing Multivocal Understanding

Developing multivocal understanding refers to a contemplative process of recognizing and engaging with diverse perspectives and practices in ways that respect both marginalized and mainstream voices. Given that marginalization is shaped socio-culturally, interpersonally, and individually (Duncan-Shepherd and Hamilton, 2022), this process helps mitigate the impacts of social conditioning in interpersonal relations, thereby fostering a more authentic connection with others. Here, authentication, understood as a desire to seek for the real, true and genuine (Beverland and Farrelly, 2010), takes place through the individual`s interaction with and responses to external others, which is later negotiated internally (Umbach and Humphrey, 2017). This interpersonal authentication builds on a prior internal authentication of the socially constructed and internally processed self (Beverland, Lindgreen and Vink, 2008; Arnould and Price, 2000; Rose and Wood, 2005). Steven, a 45-year-old IT engineer and entrepreneur, describes how his contemplative engagement fosters a sense of empathy towards other(s) in conflictual situations;

> *I'll say one situation I went through after I came out of a meditation, and I remember thinking that I should be describing my time and the way that my marriage ended with my ex-wife a little bit differently. I've never been one to kind of like basher, or, you know, just whatever like to, you know, to bad mouth or behind her back. But I think you know, as I went through a divorce, there is some kind of energy around that that has the telling of the story, kind of charged with a little bit of like, you know, `F… me!` right? Like, you know, `Look what she did`, and all this, whatever, that kind of energy around it, of not intentionally making her out to be a villain, but some of that energy coming across in the telling, right? […] I remember coming out of a session feeling like `She is trying to figure out things, too. And so you need to frame the way that you talk about this when it comes up with a little bit more kindness than you have, because it didn't come from a villainous place. It came from the place of somebody who is trying to figure out their own shit as well […] The one thing that is really hard for me to not directly tie to my*

mindfulness practice is a sense of empathy that I didn't really have before. I'm not gonna say that I was like completely devoid of empathy before, because I don't think I was. But I'm tuned to it in a way now that I can't really explain. Anything else that I've done that that feels like it's got such a direct one to one correlation to a sense of empathy, of understanding that everybody's kind of going through their own thing and some of this is hard to articulate, but look in somebody's eyes, look at them in the eyes and see `Okay, like, this person's going through something. Let's let's slow down, and let's figure this out` […] I'm drawing on this mental state of, you know, `nothing matters` versus `Hey, It's okay, like `none of this matters, like all of it matters, but none of it matters, so it's okay`. In that sense it is a resource in that I'm operating from a more a stable psychological footing maybe if that makes sense.

For Steven, developing an ability to act from a stable psychological footing amid conflict is a crucial step toward establishing a true self. Although he believes he has never been "like basher", he nonetheless feels compelled to consolidate this self-perception, especially considering his turbulent separation from his ex-wife. Steven`s perception of a true and authenticated self is relational, that is, largely shaped by his acceptance of how he believes he should act towards the other. In this regard, his existential authenticity acquires an inter-personal dimension (Wang, 1999), formed through and within social interactions. Reflections in my researcher diary capture a comparable contemplative transformation emerging through routine contemplative engagement, in the aftermath of a challenging life experience;

I notice my breath, the way it moved in and out of my nose, the cool air filling me, the feeling of expansion and coldness again. It feels so different from a few minutes ago. It`s over! I got through it. I really thought I wouldn`t […] Breathing in, breathing out […] Is it really over? Maybe not. That doesn't matter […] She shouldn't have acted like that. She always does. Everybody knows. And. I was right […] Still, it leaves me feeling uneasy, I mean, to be right. Not safe somehow. But I was right […] My breath, it has lost its rhythm again. I can bring it back. I notice I breathe out quicker than I breathe in. That`s okay, doesn't have to be perfect. Nothing is perfect. No one is perfect […] My heartbeat is slowing down now, feeling like normal again. I feel calmer, more at ease, Happier even. I know I can come back to this space again […] Everybody deserves happiness. Even her. Despite what she did. Never mind. (Researcher diary, 01/10/2021)

Similar to Steven`s experience, daily contemplation for me motivates a sustained effort to cultivate authenticity through a continuous search to return to what feels real and untainted

by externalities in the way that I connect with myself. Yet, this self-connection is not isolated from external influences shaped through inter-personal relationships. Rather, authenticity emerges precisely through the recognition of these influences and an awareness of how they inform my experiences. In this sese, the pursuit of sustained authenticity is inherently relational.

In both Steven`s experience and my own, contemplation serves as a vital means of cultivating relational authenticity. It fosters multivocal understanding by enabling the negotiation of diverse viewpoints through mutual understanding, thereby mitigating antagonism and fostering conciliatory engagement. This aligns with Moufahim and Lichrou (2019)`s conceptualization of spiritual authenticity, which is constructed across different relational links to the authenticating experience. In Steven`s experience, the relational links concern his ex-wife as the contested side, himself as the contesting subject, and the reframing of the conflict as the underlying source of unrest. His contemplative engagement fosters an unfamiliar sense of empathy, facilitating more constructive dialogue with his ex-wife, even in highly agitated and potentially harmful situations. It serves as a resource he draws on in "understanding that everybody's kind of going through their own thing", and creates space for "slowing down", and "figuring out". However, this development of empathy does not diminish the importance of his own positionality within the conflict.

Finally, Steven reframes the conflict from a former sense of "nothing matters" to an understanding of "all of it matters, but none of it matters, so it's okay". This shift enables him to approach the source of contestation with enhanced psychological resilience and mental steadiness. Such an epistemological reorientation in his relationships to both self and others supports the negotiation of a truer and more authentic sense of self.

The process of developing multivocal understanding through relational self-authentication paves the way for the dissemination of contemplative insight by responsibilizing the self`s relationship with others. This topic is examined in the following section.

Responsibilizing the Self`s Relationship with Others: Disseminating Contemplative Insight

Disseminating contemplative insight describes the transmission of contemplative knowledge through everyday interactions that foster mutual benefit in conflictual situations. It rests on a form of responsibilization, wherein consumer self-expectations expand and are reconfigured through evolving social roles (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014; Shamir, 2008; Cherrier and Türe, 2023). Within this framework, earlier self-responsibilization becomes socially

engaged and relational, as the consumer navigates and reworks their social ties through the communication of contemplative knowledge. Harrison, a 60-year-old former business executive and now senior yoga teacher, reflects on how his yoga-enabled contemplation and embodied practice have transformed his relationship from the inside out, fostering a heightened sense of responsibility to improve others` lives;

> *At a personal level, I was, say 15 years ago was a business executive at run own companies, worked about 60 hours a week, was extremely unhappy. I was probably drinking far too much, very very very aggressive, and I don't mean punching people, but aggressive in my approach to life, aggressive and trying to acquire things, achieve things, not very pleasant to my own family, my wife and children. Not really the person that I would ever want to be, and extremely stressed almost to the point of you know nervous breakdown due to all the pressures of work in the way things were going for me. And I began embodiment practices and reading about it, and a point came where I was working with a teacher, a particular teacher, and she took me to an understanding of the body and the over-controlling nature of the mind that I didn't realize was even possible […] My perspective was changing. My life had already taken a different direction because it was embodied. I was working less hours. I wasn't caring about money as much. I was, I was more considerate towards those around me. More gentle, more polite, more calm with myself. And I eventually even took me into the path of teaching. I went to India and studied from a business executive to sitting and meditating for you know, sometimes 20 days on silent retreats […]When I came back to the UK, I just packed my job in one day and started teaching yoga the following day. It so quickly happened. Well, that did completely turn around my whole direction of life. Now I've got a job where I make people relax and calm down and feel happier, and they usually leave the room with a smile on their face. And so rewarding. It's just such a different lifestyle. And life is just so calm and pleasant [...] It ripples out a little bit, yeah. So those people that perhaps leaving my class that day particularly, they might be very calm, and they might respond to those around them more calmly and be less agitation in the world than that might ripple forward again. So as a form of activism, activism`s coming, like I`ve no banner, I'm not marching with a banner, and I'm not on a megaphone, and I'm not going down the street shouting. But this form of activism, it's softer but it's potentially more more effective. If you change 10 people that you speak to today because you are calmer and softer and easier on yourself, not only do those relationships change, but those people might interact with other people slightly more kindly, and who knows how far that could go.*

Harrison`s yoga-enabled contemplative practices ripple outward through a layered interactional process as his contemplative insight disseminates to others. The first phase

involves his transformation from an unhappy, aggressive and stressed workaholic to a gentler, more polite and calmer individual through deepened contemplative engagement. This primordial intra-consumer change triggers further shifts, as his lived experiences in yoga increase his openness and sociability, ultimately leading him to teach and share these practices with others.

The second phase unfolds at the interpersonal level, as Harrison`s interacts shift from an aggressive, near-nervous-breakdown approach to life to a markedly different mindset focused on helping "people relax and calm down and feel happier […] with a smile on their face". Profound enough to transform his immediate social relationships, this change initiates a third phase by extending to distant others connected to his close social circle, thereby generating ripples across multiple layers of social interactions.

Harrison`s experiences with disseminated contemplative insight resonate with both classic and contemporary approaches to social movements. Tarrow (1998), a seminal scholar of political movements, for example, argues that increased conflictual tension diffuses from more mobilized to less mobilized and from more organized to less organized circles. More recently, Harrebye (2016) similarly observes that contemporary movements evolve in circular movements, rising and falling before reemerging in new forms. Within the context of Contemplative Consumer Activism, the dissemination of contemplative insight fosters social justice (Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021) by impacting the everyday practices of individuals engaged in social change (Doetsch-Kidder, 2012).

Harrison further highlights that contemplation-led embodiment during his yoga teachings facilitates a voluntary and fulfilling exchange, in which the body informs and guides the mind from both inside and outside. For him, such bodily informed insight constitutes a form of activism by countering the calculative mind`s reliance on presumptions, prejudices and expectations. In this sense, Harrison`s activism aligns with the notion of transformative mindfulness, which "integrates mind-body practices with a political agenda that challenges current societal trajectories of injustice and unsustainability" (Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021, p. 3). While not necessarily rooted in a political agenda, the development and dissemination of contemplative insight can position consumers in relation to diverse forms of social activism and change.

Harrison describes this transformation as `soft activism`, enacted with no banners, no marches, no shouting. Despite its subtlety, he regards it as more effective, as it targets the underlying causes of conflict through "calmer and softer and easier" interventions within and

beyond the individual consumer. This conception aligns with Murrey (2016)`s slow dissent and Bayat (2000)`s quiet activism, both of which illustrate that activism can diverge from and even contradict with the fast, loud, direct organized and highly visible modalities of conventional activism. Its gradual progression increases its endurance and effectiveness, solidifying its position as a form of everyday activism.

Healing the Self`s Relationship with Others: Depolarizing the Reactional Self

Depolarizing the reactional self refers to a dynamic process by which the consumer contemplator intentionally replaces reactional and unstable emotional and behavioural reactions inherent in conventional activism with more neutral, impartial and non-binary responses. This shift transforms perceptions of both the conflictual situation and the contested party in dramatic ways. It rests on healing the self`s relationships with others, resulting from the cognitive processes of authenticating and responsibilizing the self`s relations within the social sphere.

Healing occurs across various contexts, including the body, mind or soul, and can take secular, spiritual or religious forms (Levin, 2022; Levin and Coreil, 1986; Bowman, 1999). Healing in this form transcends individual renewal to become a collaborative process, where the self`s healing is reciprocated through a sense of togetherness and mutual restoration with the interacted others. In this dynamic, the self evolves through multiple layers and “expands, contracts, absorbs and rejects the social and environmental influences which buffer it" (Tadajewski, 2024, p. 547). This represents an intentional, other-focused cognitive shift, wherein the consumer extends their conception of space beyond themselves and responds to it interactively. Sylvia, a 70-year-old spiritual guide and teacher, illustrates how her contemplative engagement facilitates healing within relational contexts;

> *I think it's mostly healing. And I think that's really what it's about. This is the main benefit that you get from this experience. But healing is so broad. I mean, my brother and I, my gosh, we could hardly talk to each other four years ago. This didn't happen till two years ago when he retired. My brother, he took me to the vet yesterday. He would never have asked! I would never have even asked him! It's like our relationship is healed. We don't hate each other anymore! And we can stand to be in the same room […] So it's not really any more about, `Hey! wondering why I was mad at my brother anymore.` It's more about understanding these qualities that I didn't experience before then.*

Sylvia`s experience of healing is reflected, among other ways, in the marked improvement in her strained relationship with her brother following her engagement with contemplative practices. Unlike intra-consumer level of self-healing, this process is reciprocated and shared by her brother, leading to the restoration of their relationships. Rather than dwelling on the causes of their fractured relationship, Sylvia creates space for new experiences and deeper understanding in her relationship. Healing occurs as she consciously releases the discomfort of past conflicts and replaces feelings of hate with an intention to understand the other.

Contemplation, cultivated through practices such as meditation and yoga, underpins this healing process by fostering a cognitive environment that embraces plurality and inclusivity amid conflict. Acting as a micro cognitive healing space (Sternberg, 2010), it facilitates improved interaction among the human mind, heart and social environment. Often accompanied by heightened tolerance, this interaction promotes emotional and behavioural regulation during adversity (e.g. Brown and Ryan, 2003; Hill and Updegraff, 2012; Hülsheger *et al.*, 2013). Josephine, a 78-year-old Buddhist nun, describes how her contemplation has guided her shift from passionate political activism to compassionate activism over time;

> *The Buddhist analysis of that is because of this massive primordial attachment, and really one way of talking about this attachment here is this attachment in this is primordial, emotional hunger. All it wants is the nice things. It's drives all of us. The more we have this attachment, the craving for everything to be lovely, and attachment just can't stand problems […] So either you gotta get out there like I did and become a political activist and have compassion for this group but huge anger for that group. I could never separate the compassion for the victim with the anger towards the enemy. You had to have these both together, and that's how we tend to think in our world, you know […] So the Buddhist approach is I suffer when I see suffering, not because I've got compassion, which is powerful, but because I have attachment and can't stand to see it. So if you work on your own mind and listen to your attachment, listen to your anger and listen your depression, you'll have far more compassion. And then you will have this attitude of never giving up doing what you can, always being optimistic, always not being, in other words, not being afraid of all the suffering, not being overwhelmed by all the suffering, but have the courage just to keep moving, do what you can, do what you can! […] Now if I could go to the Ukraine tomorrow and stop the war, I would! But I can't. So what do I do? I help the fly. I help the next-door neighbour, I help who I can!*

For Josephine, achieving profound emotional and behavioural stability through depolarizing the reactional self represents true healing, which corresponds to the cessation of

suffering in Buddhist thought (Hanh, 1999). This healing fosters both greater emotional control in an individual space and increased endurance in pursuing social causes. She highlights that attachment obstructs healing in both personal and social realms. Particularly harmful in social contexts is the relentless pursuit of perfection, or "emotional hunger […] craving for everything to be lovely". According to Buddhist philosophy, attachment, regardless of its form, is the root of suffering, therefore, must be relinquished for healing to occur in relationship with others and the self (Brahmavamso, 2016; Gethin, 2001; Sangharakshita, 2007).

To Josephine, conventional activism behaviour is driven by at least one form of attachment, rendering its motivations inherently flawed. She reflects on her former political activism, rooted in unconditional anger toward the enemy and compassion for the victim, as a form of attachment. Whereas effective and sustainable activism requires more than uncontrollable reactive responses fuelled by attachments. True activism, she argues, arises from `undoing attachment`, referring to an active process of recognizing and releasing attachments. By undoing attachment, the consumer activist can replace frustration, a frequent attachment in activist contexts, with compassion, allowing their activism to be guided by transformative awareness.

At the inter-consumer level of Contemplative Consumer Activism, healing unfolds as a form of spiritual healing in a public context (e.g. Scott, Cayla and Cova, 2017; Higgins and Hamilton, 2019). Yet, this healing is actively negotiated between the sides of the contestation, rather than occurring peacefully among like-minded others. In this regard, consumer activism emerges through a mutual `therapeutic production` (Thompson, 2003), wherein the sufferer challenges their reactional self`s confrontational stance and reconstructs their social self by questioning and countering dysfunctional assumptions. Contemplation plays a critical role in this negotiation by providing a therapeutic landscape (Hoyez, 2007), which helps to regulate the cognitive environment for a thorough and impartial understanding of the other relative to the self.

Building on the discussion of contemplation-informed cognitive conversions in relational contexts, the next section explores how these inter-relational transformations influence consumers` relationships with others` consumption behaviour within a shared marketplace.

6.2.2.2 Reframing Others` Consumption

Reframing others` consumption describes a process by which the consumer contemplator reinterprets and restructures their habitual perspectives on the consumption patterns of fellow consumers within a shared marketplace. Anchored in the former cognitive responses to socio-culturally conditioned assumptions regarding others, it entails transformative interactions between consumers or consumer groups during everyday marketplace engagements.

An examination of how consumer interactions shape marketplace dynamics is crucial, as individualized consumption is impacted by and negotiated with other stakeholders functioning within the same market system (Giesler and Fischer, 2017). Through contemplative engagement, inter-relational conversions give way to inter-consumer processes of reconciling, revisitation and reclamation of consumption by actively involving fellow consumers in the marketplace. These dynamics are explored in the following sections under the topics of *Mitigating Consumption Antagonism*, *Cultivating Consumption Wisdom* and *Venturing Shared Contentment*.

Reconciling with the Consuming Others: Mitigating Consumption Antagonism

Mitigating consumption antagonism refers to a process through which the consumer contemplator reframes their attitude toward other consumers by moderating emotionally, socio-culturally or ideologically driven oppositional orientations that often result in othering and estrangement. This process is grounded in an intentional effort to reconcile with, rather than reflexively react to, the ways that other consumers behave in a shared marketplace.

The marketplace can occasionally be a stage for intergroup hostilities, unfolding as religioethnic (Jafari *et al.*, 2015), political (Ulver and Laurell, 2020), ideological (Sandikci and Ger, 2010) and cultural tensions (Coskuner-Balli and Ertimur, 2017). In these cases, consumer reactions are often driven by preconditioned antagonism, rooted in unmet expectations. Jacob, a 57-year-old building developer, reflects on how his contemplative engagement has prompted a significant shift in his antagonism-driven perception of others` consumption;

> *I think it [contemplation] is a more mature kind of thinking, but it also is, you know, like the mind wants to be right and wrong. We love right and wrong, black and white, you know, good and bad, but that's not the way the world is, especially political stuff. So it opens up to other sides, other people's other perspectives. And that is inherently, I think, less emotionally right, but it is wiser. And it leads to solutions that I think are more more sustainable, more more, how*

do you say, well-thought with a stronger foundation […] I live in New York City, which is kind of the center of like this consumer, consumption, you know. It's like all around us. They're very, very wealthy people here and the symbols of the high status in your face all the time, and I think that when I was younger, I was very like oppressed by it. And I'm less oppressed by it now. Even though it's running around and like it's very much it, and I think I always felt a little bit towards a simpler lifestyle, but now it's less like fraught and less angry. My voices are less fueled by anger, like I don't need that.

Jacob states that our reactions are often driven by cognitive polarization, that is, we perceive the environment as either right or wrong, black or white, good or bad. Contemplative engagement helps to moderate such tendency by guiding the consumer contemplator though a steadier mode of mind, which is based on mutual inclusion rather than exclusion, intermediation rather than absoluteness, and moderation rather than rigidity. He illustrates this shift by reflecting on his pre-contemplative childhood in New York city, where his exposure to excessive consumption by others sparked antagonism toward these consumers, characterized by two salient marketplace sentiments (Gopaldas, 2014), namely, oppression and anger. Of these, anger has been shown to be a particularly powerful driver of conventional activism (e.g. Bayat, 2000; Rydell *et al.*, 2008; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). Unlike other negative emotions that often result in avoidance, anger promotes approach tendencies, such as resistance and attack (Hutcherson and Gross, 2011), contributing to marketplace antagonism (Soscia, 2013). Jacob`s felt antagonism similarly amplified as he compared others` privileged lifestyles with his simpler one, which motivatied him to engage in activism, including sit-ins and demonstrations during his pre-contemplative life.

Jacob`s contemplative engagement causes an important shift in his perception of others` consumption, providing him a foundational basis to move beyond feelings of oppression and anger toward more sustainable and reflective decisions, thereby reconciling with diverse consumption practices. This entails a regulated acceptance that others may consume excessively while he does not, without cognitively legitimizing such excess. As he explains, it "opens up to other sides", by fostering perspective-taking, heightened emotional regulation and tolerance for diversity in conflict resolution. This acceptance entails acknowledging reality as it is, without feeling succumbing to antagonistic predispositions.

Jacob states that he still participates in public activism occasionally, emphasizing that contemplative engagement does not deter his participation. However, he notes a transformation in his approach, which is now "less like fraught and less angry". Contemplation plays a key

role in this transformation by eliminating the socially conditioned attachment to anger, as he states, “I don’t need that”. Jacob`s experience aligns with research on contemplative practices, particularly mindfulness, which demonstrate their moderating effects on feelings of suppression (Bullis *et al.*, 2013), psychological biases (Hafenbrack, Kinias and Barsade, 2014) and extremism (Taylor, 2018). Additionally, studies indicate that contemplative practices promote increased psychological (Brown and Ryan, 2003), societal (Bahl *et al.*, 2016) and environmental wellbeing (Fischer *et al.*, 2017), while inspiring practitioners toward social change (Greenaway *et al.*, 2016).

The following section explores how contemplation-enabled psychological regulation fosters consumption wisdom, illustrated through Jacob`s own experiences.

Revisiting Others` Consumption Habits: Cultivating Consumption Wisdom

Cultivating consumption wisdom involves developing a capacity to reevaluate others` consumption-related choices and behaviour through a thoughtful, value-based and ethically informed perspective that prioritizes collective and long-term wellbeing over personal and short-term interests. This process builds on the prior regulation of antagonistic predispositions toward others` consumption, recognizing their right to consume, even in excessive forms, allowing for a more neutral, less emotionally charged assessment of contested consumption within the shared marketplace. Continuing with the previous example, Jacob describes how his contemplative engagement facilitates a repositioning of others` consumption;

> *I was in India for a long time, and I remember way back, and Richard Gear was supporting these teachings [related to Eastern faith systems]. And this is back in the late eighties, early nineties and in India, where the Tibetans live in India. And I was like, really like, Oh you know, Richard Gere, of course, he should be using that! […] Okay, you know he has a lot of money, and he`s living really well, but he's also doing this, like that's great, you know. Not every, not all the people with that amount of money would do this, and allow wisdom and teaching and practice to spread in this way, so you know, so I do think that you know some people with a lot of wealth are doing good things with some of their money, and people with a lot of wealth are doing good things with all of their money, some people with a lot of wealth doing good things with none of their money, so you know, to take it, look at it with the positive […] My sister who actually for whatever reason, I won't bore you, has a fair amount, not a lot but you know she has a fair amount of money, and she just doesn't, she can`t deal with it. She can't spend it. She can't give it away. It's like it freezes her and she can't. Yeah, she's paralyzed by it, and she can't give. She can't do anything with it. So I do think it's just like another aspect that that your*

intention, through which contemplation is spread, you know, is energized. It's just more energy through which your intention or how your being is is spread through.

Jacob`s socially conditioned bias toward Richard Gear`s financial support for Eastern faith systems as conspicuous consumption or a strategy for future wealth acquisition transforms into a novel understanding of prosocial behaviour that he engages in, despite no obligation to do so. Contemplative engagement facilitates this shift by countering the established all-or-nothing mindset directed toward excessive public consumption by others, which creates a regulated space to reconsider it through a new, wider perspective. This marks the process of cultivating consumer wisdom, defined as "the pursuit of well-being for oneself and for others through mindful management of consumption-related choices and behaviours", characterized by "intentionality, contemplation, emotional mastery, openness and transcendence" (Luchs and Mick, 2018, p. 384). In this process, consumption encompasses all dimensions of acquisition, use and disposal (Discetti and Anderson, 2022).

This form of contemplation-related wisdom (Luchs, Mick and Haws, 2021) accommodates the repositioning of consumption through acceptance that it can transcend its selfishly harmful orientation and encompass individual engagements that benefit wider society. Within this framework, personal wellbeing integrates into public wellbeing as it extends into social causes, thereby becoming wiser (Ozanne *et al.*, 2021). Contemplation provides an impetus for this integration by energizing how "your intention or how your being is spread through", as Jacob describes. He underscores its role in promoting intentionality for broader welfare (Foxall, 2013; Foxall, 2010), illustrated by his sister`s case of hesitant spending as a contrast to contemplation-enabled intentionality. Intentionality is understood as "property of many mental states and events by which they are directed at or about or of objects and states of affairs in the world" (Searle, 1983, p. 1). For Jacob, contemplation fosters intentionality that transcends the individual and disseminates into wider society for common good, thus becoming shared among individuals. As contemplative engagement spreads, this shared intentionality plays an important role in resolving issues where individual actions produce collective outcomes (Bratman, 2014). In contrast, Jacob`s sister exemplifies a lack of intentionality toward public good, as a state that "freezes and paralyzes her". Jacob`s perspective aligns with research suggesting that hidden and stated intentions shape activist behaviour (Lee, 2023) and contribute to forming a post-capitalist and autonomous activist identity, grounded in everyday activism (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010).

Contemplation-enabled consumption wisdom, as described by Jacob, may appear as having a pro-consumption stance, given the fact that conventional forms of consumption-related activism are often enacted through practices of non-consumption (Nixon, 2020) or anti-consumption (Culiberg *et al.*, 2023; Portwood-Stacer, 2012). Culiberg and colleagues (2023, p. 827) express concern to the `normalization` of individual consumption within political action frameworks, which ultimately serves the purpose of "legitimating forms of consumption it critiques". Whereas, within Contemplative Consumer Activism, consumption is distanced from anti-, counter-, against- or non- stances, adopting a more emotionally balanced, thoughtful character that benefits all parties involved in the conflict, rather than privileging some at others` expense. This grounds consumption, in both individual and public forms, on a purposeful, value-based foundation rather than normalizing it.

The following section examines how contemplative engagements ultimately guides the consumer contemplator toward reclaiming consumption through shared contentment.

Reclaiming Prosumption: Venturing into Shared Contentment

Venturing into shared contentment describes contemplation-enabled voluntary engagement in marketplace efforts that foster mutual, relational satisfaction at an intersubjective level, aiming for community benefit. It builds on the concept of prosumption (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010), which refers to mutual acts of co-production and co-consumption. In this process, individual consumption intertwines with individual production in ways, in which both efforts are aligned to create and maintain inner satisfaction for multiple parties rather than for a single individual or group. This alignment also unfolds as a process of reclaiming prosumption by challenging established logics that separate production and consumption, which are typically managed by distinct parties by pursuing one-sided gain. Contemplation facilitates this process by revealing and activating a drive to contribute to shared contentment. Steven, a 45-year-old IT engineer and entrepreneur, describes how his contemplative engagement prompts him to design a free mobile app, aimed at supporting others facing life challenges similar to his own;

> It's a mobile app that I've been working on. And you know frankly, if not for the experiences that I've had in my life both on the fitness side over the last 14 years, and mindfulness over the course of the last 7, this thing wouldn't be built. But it is because of the experiences that I've had, I've felt kind of a compulsion to try and help people who have been dealing with some of what I've been dealing with over the years […] And it kind of feels like that to me, of like that

> I was in this white-knuckled place, and it's like, Oh, Jeez! I feel like I found a way around this. Yeah, like yes, other people do know it, and obviously there are other apps out there, and you know there's, you know, plenty of other things around that. But there, there is a sense of, I kind of almost feel like an obligation. If there's something that I can help other people, discover that can help them make their lives a little bit easier […] And you know, like I've got a good thing going with my day to day like my 9 to 5 career, and all this stuff like, there's plenty of reasons for me to say I don't need to do this. I don't need to put my myself out there like this. You know, what if I fail, and all of this stuff and that could be embarrassing, and all of that. But there is a sense of durability that comes with it to your question, of, `it's okay, like this is part of my ride. No matter where that road leads, it's it's going to be okay`.

Steven states that contemplation has immensely helped him in overcoming life challenges, including his divorce and related physiological issues. He now feels a compulsion and sense of obligation to help others recover from similar difficulties through the online app, to which he dedicates significant effort. Prior research indicates that such feelings of compulsion and obligation can motivate consumer activism in both decision-making (Hoffmann, 2013) and behavioural processes (Hinsch, Tang and Lund, 2021). Integrating Steven`s role as a contemplative consumer into an active production phase generates extraordinary experiences for him that sustain his efforts to help others despite associated risks to his professional career and potential financial losses due to market competition and uncertainty in the spiritual app sector. Research shows that such uncertainty, especially nonstrategic forms like risk and ambiguity, often prevents entrepreneurial ventures (Holm, Opper and Nee, 2013). Likewise, embarrassment has been identified as a key emotional barrier to launching new ventures (Brundin and Gustafsson, 2013). In his context, Steven`s pursuit of a community-benefitting project despite risk and uncertainty challenges the conventional entrepreneurial logic, which typically prioritizes minimizing risk to achieve competitive advantage (Read *et al.*, 2009).

Steven explicitly notes that his contemplative engagement provides him with mental durability, not to eliminate perceived risk and uncertainty associated with his venturing but to act despite them. This resilience enhances his entrepreneurial attempt by fostering higher task engagement (Bunjak *et al.*, 2022), determination and decisiveness to keep going (Ross and Rocha Beardall, 2022). Such risk and uncertainty-enduring venturing align with transformational leadership (Kroon, van Woerkom and Menting, 2017), which, in Steven`s example, is oriented toward pro-social behaviour for the common good (Donald *et al.*, 2019).

Many other participants also report that contemplative engagement prompts them into

prosumer roles intersecting consumption and production, serving as a trainer, teacher, coach or spiritual figure in community-benefiting contemplative pursuits. They emphasize that contemplation enables a transformative life path, where they not only improve their own lives through spiritual consumption but also disseminate contemplative insights by engaging in production activities for public benefit. These efforts include broadcasting educational programs and videos, as well as organizing free workshops and seminars on social media, all without expectation of financial gain.

Notably, Steven emphasizes that his pre-existing skill set, developed prior to his contemplative engagement, plays a crucial role in his venture toward shared contentment. In that regard, his contemplative insight becomes effective when combined with these resources in hand, rather than in isolation. Contemplation provides him with a resource and encourages the application of his skills to promote the common good. This is where contentment is actively constructed and shared by creating a sense of connection, togetherness and completeness (Cordaro *et al.*, 2024; Cordaro *et al.*, 2016).

6.2.2.3 Section Conclusion

This section explores how intersubjective engagements and relationships contribute to Contemplative Consumer Activism, with a particular focus on how contemplative engagement prompts the consumer contemplator to act at a social level. Building on prior intra-consumer change, inter-consumer change expands existing perspectives on the externalization of spirituality and market system dynamics by situating them within a contemplative framework, centred on shared contentment and collective wellbeing.

The intra-consumer level of Contemplative Consumer Activism is characterized by a cognitive journey of self-authentication, responsibilization and healing. This process manifests in the marketplace as an expanded consumer role, wherein consumers act simultaneously as antagonist and protagonist in their consumption journey by developing an enhanced capacity for empathetic and constructive self-response, akin to reparenting the self. The inter-consumer level of CCA involves a parallel journey that focuses on the consumer`s relationships with others. At this level, the consumer contemplator transcends a solely consumer identity by adopting a producer role, supported by contemplation-enabled mental durability and heightened capacity for venturing toward inter-subjective wellbeing and shared contentment.

Both levels reflect a significant shift in the logic underlying conventional activism, from unconditionally oppositional and antagonistic stances toward approaches that are less

emotionally charged, more empathetic, and oriented toward unity and togetherness in wellbeing rather than one-sided gain. This shift frees the consumer from victimhood, as a position often assumed and internalized in conventional activism, and repositions them in relation to others, as well as to themselves. Consequently, it facilitates a more nuanced and realistic understanding of complex interplays inherent in consumer activism in the contemporary marketplace.

The following section examines how contemplative engagement aligns with and informs an activism agenda when situated within the organizational and systemic structures of the marketplace.

6.2.3 System-Level Change: Transformation in the Consumer`s Connection to the Consuming System

System-level change encompasses cognitive and behavioural transformations in the way that the consumer contemplator engages with broader systemic structures, by both shaping and being shaped by them. In this context, `the consuming system` refers to the aggregate of structures that exert influence on marketplace tendencies and practices. These influences range from overt regulations and systemic enforcements to subtle indoctrination and nuanced interventions that condition consumer adherence to established norms, rules and acceptances.

Akin to the prior argumentation for inter-consumer change, system-level change draws on the market system dynamics perspective, which highlights the strategic role of co-constitutive interactions between actors, institutions and culture in shaping marketplace reality (Giesler and Fischer, 2017). The perspective informs the system-level change dimension of Contemplative Consumer Activism by challenging the micro-level bias prevalent in conventional marketing, which tends to reduce the influence of larger systemic forces to narrowly defined contextual variables (Thompson, Arnould and Giesler, 2013). In contrast, the market system dynamics perspective posits that markets undergo continuous reformation through discursive negotiations (Giesler and Fischer, 2017) and market contestations among diverse stakeholders operating across both micro and macro levels (Giesler, 2008; Giesler, 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Martin and Schouten, 2014).

System-level change in Contemplative Consumer Activism is intrinsically linked to the intra-consumer and inter-consumer changes occurring across cognitive and marketplace domains. In line with the market system dynamics perspective, this interconnectedness situates Contemplative Consumer Activism within the ongoing reconfiguration of consumer

interactions and market structures that are shaped through negotiations and contestations among multiple stakeholders. Parallel to the preceding modes of change, system-level change emerges through two interrelated processes, namely, *System-centric Conversions*, which operate at the cognitive level, and *Reframing Systemic Consumption*, which manifests in behavioural marketplace engagement. The processes are explored in the following sections.

6.2.3.1 System-centric Conversions

System-centric conversions refer to contemplation-enabled cognitive reorientations concerning how the consumer contemplator perceives, relates and responds to broader systemic structures that influence thought and behaviour. Although they engage with macro-level interactional processes, these conversions remain in deeply rooted in the texture of the everyday life. While they may not create immediate, direct alterations in the functioning of systemic structures, they can recalibrate the everyday by reshaping how existing power relations are recognized, interpreted and enacted within society (Martin, Hanson and Fontaine, 2007).

In this context, system-centric conversions encompass profound meaning making, transfer and exchange between the consumer contemplator and the surrounding systemic structures, achieved through the reworking of social conditionings, power relations, ascribed roles and practices. Unlike many overt forms of conventional activism, these conversions within Contemplative Consumer Activism manifest as a subtle form of everyday activism rooted in cognitive shifts, yet they carry significant implications for marketplace dynamics.

System-centric conversions are explored through the subtopics of *Expanding Epistemic Awareness*, *Reterritorializing the Self*, and *Cultivating Embedded Self*. Each builds on the processes of authenticating, responsibilizing and healing the self in relation to the consuming system.

Authenticating the Self`s Relationship with the Consuming System: Expanding Epistemic Awareness

Expanding epistemic awareness refers to transcending the constrains of socially conditioned knowledge and knowing processes that limit the consumer contemplator`s capacity to form an authentic relationship with the consuming system. It primarily builds on an intra-consumer self-authentication, which enables recognition of normative socialization without eliciting confrontation or overwhelm in the face of adverse circumstances. The process is

further reinforced through the development of multivocal understanding toward others, extending self-authentication into shared social spaces.

At the system level, self-authentication expands in scope, encompassing collective social spaces that influence the thinking and behavioural patterns of large consumer groups. Contemplative engagement in this context fosters consumer insight into the `context of the context` (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) that structures consumer-system relationships. Tony, a 38-year-old mentor for entrepreneurs, reflects on how his mindfulness-based contemplative engagement liberates him from the constrains of social conditioning;

> *You can recognize that how constructed and formulated this matrix is, that's just social indoctrination. And you recognize that all these rules, concepts and things we think we have to live by aren't actually true at all. It's just a fabrication. And it's like, `Wait a second! Things don't actually have to be this way!. That's just something that I`ve followed because I thought that was what I had to do. And so, once you can kind of disconnect from this societal conditioning, then it's like I can actually do things differently. I can express myself differently. I can experience things differently because there's no actual rules here. Everything is just made up.*

For Tony, the socio-cultural norms imposed by contemporary life dynamics propel individuals into a fabricated reality perceived as obligatory. This view aligns with the notion of liquid modern darkness, which frames personal troubles as public issues arising from structural processes as the “unruly forces of contemporary societies” (Hewer, 2022, p. 293). The idea of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), on which the view rests, underscores that liquidizing powers have shifted from operating solely at the systemic level to permeating society itself by transitioning from macro-scale formal politics to personal-life policies embedded in everyday experiences (Bauman, 2000). This pervasive liquidation erodes self-authenticity as individuals navigate both overt and subtle systemic enforcements, creating a rift between the consumer and external world. Tony observes that contemplative engagement helps him bridge this disconnection, reframe the fabricated reality, and cultivate a more authentic, seamless relationship between the self and all else;

> *It's like, `Well, what am I actually disassociating from here in this, in like what's triggering me to go to only back into my internal world, and abandoning the physical world because it feels unsafe for whatever reason may be`. Then you start to have more of this seamless experience*

between the internal and the external. So it's almost like you have the split attention between here [pointing towards outside] and then what's happening here [pointing towards his heart]. So it's not a separation between the two, but it's a dance between the two.

To Tony, social conditioning and indoctrination subtly induce a dissociation from reality, creating a rift between the individual and the surrounding world. Contemplative engagement, in contrast, promotes awareness of these external influences and their impacts on both internal and external relationships, cognitively opening the consumer contemplator to multiple realities. Within this framework, contemplation functions as a counterforce to the dynamics of liquidation by authenticating the epistemicity of the external world (Brown and Ryan, 2003) and reuniting the internal with the external.

Within Contemplative Consumer Activism, Tony`s contemplation-enabled awakening to socially constructed reality, his intentional disconnection from it and the seamless reunification of the internal and the external evolve into an activist stance, grounded in the conviction that "I can actually do things differently". Rather than manifesting as an antagonistic uprising against established norms, contemplative activism unfolds as a silent yet deliberate liberation from the constrains of pseudo-realities and an authentic reconnection with the consuming system. This process facilitates the reterritorialization of the self within the consuming system, which is explored in the following section.

Responsibilizing the Self`s Relationship with the Consuming System: Reterritorializing the Self

Reterritorializing the self refers to the process of active repositioning and repurposing of the self within larger systemic structures that overtly or subtly influence everyday thought and practice, thereby shaping their relationships with the consuming system. It builds on voluntary responsibilization of the self by the self (Bajde and Rojas-Gaviria, 2021; Cherrier and Türe, 2023; Eckhardt and Dobscha, 2019) to counter the systemic co-victimization view, that is, the perception of collective victimization by systemic forces as a common fate (Subašić, Schmitt and Reynolds, 2011). Reterritorializing the self also relies on the dissemination of contemplative insight by the responsibilized self through social interactions.

The reterritorialization of the self both within and as part of the collective system is central to understanding the system-level of Contemplative Consumer Activism and its associated change dynamics. Olivia, a 29-year-old PhD student, raised in Algeria`s Islamic atmosphere, where religiously infected expectations and sanctions often shape social

relationships, as well as individual acceptances, reflects on how her mindfulness-informed contemplative engagement has enabled her to reconfigure her identity and life practices within this system;

> *It did immensely change how I view my religion. Just before I got into mindfulness and stuff, I was thinking some really crazy things about my religion […] When I was younger, I used to believe that a woman should be servant to her husband. This is what they taught us when we were children. If I see dad screaming at mom for not making dinner for him, I'd be like `Mom, it's your fault. In religion, you should be making dinner for him`. But then, after I get into mindfulness and studied it a lot, practiced myself, I realized the equality between everyone regardless of gender, race, whatever else, language, whatever. And when I realized this, I was like, `Huh! There is no way that`, because mindfulness is extremely related to religion [Islam] in a way that both of them go for the focus on the present moment, focus on surrender, the oneness, the one consciousness which a lot of people can call God […] Therefore, all of these sexist ideological thoughts and all of these, gosh!, endless misconceptions are not real. This is what it taught me, and not because I just knew it, I felt it logically! […] So, I was like it felt wrong that I was telling my mom that she's a servant to my dad just because she's a woman. There was no absolute way that this is natural, absolutely! Just so. When I'm mindful, I forgot I'm a woman, I just am myself, and that's it! I'm just present as like the power. You`re closing your eyes, how do you even see who you are, or anything? Really! And then after that, it allowed me to read more about my religion, and I did realize that there wasn't such a thing in original Islam. It just people's cultures and traditions going into it, making these misconceptions about women and some other things. And I realized, okay, so it's the people's ego that has been ruining religions. And thankfully to mindfulness, I could see that. Because imagine if I was still that person today, Oh God! […] First it helped me see myself for who I am, before I was a woman, or before my brother was a man. As a soul, I call it. We say `E ruh` in Arabic, but as a soul. That's how I first, I was like, what am I most primarily before I was this or that? I was a soul and my brother is, too. We come from one consciousness. How is he any better than I am? How is he not washing dishes? Not doing chores? Not getting scolded for it but I am?*

Contemplation plays a dual role in reterritorializing Olivia`s position within the large religious system and its enforcements. It creates space for heightened socio-cognitive discernment by enabling recognition of systemic impositions on personal and social relationships in everyday life, and empowers the contemplator to counteract and reappropriate these influences in alignment with their life purpose. Contemplation facilitates Olivia to realize that religious indoctrination perpetuating the stigmatization of femininity and the domination

of masculinity constitutes socially constructed preconceptions that reinforce specific power dynamics and gender hierarchies, and thus can be reversed (e.g. Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013). Echoing Tony`s earlier reflections on social indoctrination, Olivia`s recognition of such forces on her (and other women`s) life extends to understanding how such systemic forces permeate everyday individual practices and shape both individual and collective perceptions of the external world.

Contemplation enables this realization through an initial dissociation, and thus deterritorialization, of the self from morality appraisals, directly or indirectly imposed by the broader system (Barnhart, Huff and Scott, 2024). This is reflected in Olivia`s conviction that her mother`s unquestionable subservience to her father has no basis in original Islam. She arrives at this view by identifying commonalities between mindfulness and Islam, as two distinct systemic structures, both emphasizing "the present moment, focus on surrender, the oneness, the one consciousness", leaving no space for superiority, dominance, or disparity (Bechwati and Baalbaki, 2011). This conviction is further consolidated by her belief that religious norms that shape Olivia`s household relationships represent an excessive stretching of religious teachings to uphold masculine-centred ascendancy (Dhandra and Park, 2018), thereby standing in direct opposition to the very ideology from which they derive.

Contemplation fosters such conviction by enabling the self to assume responsibility for deconstructing conditioned perceptions of `systemic` reality and creating space for alternative possibilities, even when they sharply oppose common acceptances. In doing so, it brings the consumer closer to the workings of colossal systemic structures, often perceived as unachievable (Clarke, 2015), resituating them within reach and enabling their engagement in new, empowered ways. Narrowing the gap between individual agency and systemic enforcement thus acquires an activist dimension by reclaiming the right to determine the extent to which the system`s endemic indoctrination is allowed to shape thought, emotion and behaviour in systemically sanctioned ways.

In addition, mindfulness-enabled contemplation and the conviction it fosters regarding socially constructed religious ideology help Olivia restore her long-lost self-confidence by reconstructing her identity within both individual and collective spaces. The question, "what am I most primarily before I was this or that" reflects an active re-evaluation of the social inequalities imposed by her socially ascribed roles. Rather than stemming from cruel optimism based on self-surveillance and self-discipline (Cappellini *et al.*, 2019), this self-reformation is grounded in realism, based on negotiation and reconciling. In doing this process, Olivia affirms

her presence through the concept of the `soul`, which functions as a leveller that bridges social hierarchies across gender, race, language and other distinctions without negating them. This repositioning allows all sides of the contestation controlled freedom (Pellandini-Simányi and Conte, 2021) where boundaries are redrawn and the existence of one perspective does not nullify the other.

For Olivia, territorializing the self does not entail estrangement from religion by viewing it as the source of her subordinate social position or unjust responsibilities imposed on her. Rather, it provides an opportunity to renegotiate and reconcile her relationship with Islam in a more realistic and just manner. Contemplation, particularly mindfulness, thus rejuvenates Olivia`s commitment to the faith by reinforcing the view that an Islamic lifestyle cannot rest on misconceptions and gendered appropriations. This insight is both heart-felt realization and logically grounded, which helps to sustain and reinforce her repositioning and repurposing within the collective. This stage also allows for the internalization of the new self-perception.

This shift of responsibilization from the institutional to the individual indicates a voluntary and rationalized transition from victimization to empowered agency, which reconciles the self`s commitment to the system in an impartial and equitable way by considering multiple perspectives rather than resisting individual responsibilization (Jones and Arnould, 2024; Cherrier and Türe, 2023). Unlike forceful and conditioned antagonism or victimization, as often seen in conventional activism, reterritorializing the self occurs through peaceful, constructive negotiation between the consumer contemplator and the system. In this way, it mitigates the sense of social inequality experienced by the consumer (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014, p. 854) without despising the system, and instead reconfiguring the relationship with it. The process ultimately lays the foundation for a new mode of self-healing, which is explored in detail in the next section.

Healing the Self`s Relationship with the Consuming System: Cultivating the Embedded Self

Cultivating the embedded self denotes fostering a resilient and assured orientation that recognizes the self as integrally situated within the compelling influences of systemic structures in everyday life. This process resists binary oppositions, such as privileging or victimizing conflicting perspectives, and instead promotes integrative engagement with how these perspectives emerge and are negotiated. It fosters an intentional shift in the rationale of contestation, protecting the right of each side of the conflict to advocate for its perspective

without creating excluded subalterns (Süerdem, 2013). In this regard, it enacts a subtle moral critique of conventional activism`s capabilization (Giesler and Veresiu, 2014), which often generates or relies upon divisional blocks within its own frameworks.

Cultivating the embedded self unfolds as a mode of healing in the consumer`s relationships with the surrounding system and its everyday influences. This healing emerges through depolarizing the reactional self, which allows for more inclusive and impartial interpretations of conflictual dynamics. Olivia, a 29-year-old PhD student, illustrates how her resituated self within these conflicts leads to a form of activism;

> *The thing about activism that I have been thinking about recently is, seeing, because I'm a fan of a lot of artists, Western, Korean artists, and seeing them do some sort of activism about whether it be it women`s rights or LGBT or anything, I see them do it from an anger point of view […] For example, one of my favourite artists just recently, in America, I'm sure you're probably heard of it, but they're going through that voting thing in Florida. And there is this one of the elected presidents called `DeSantis`, I think that's the name. Yeah, that's his name. So one of my favourite artists, she's Hayley Williams from Paramore, she at her concert venue was telling the fans, `If you vote for him, you're all dead to me`. And I was like, `Wait, my mindful self is not agreeing on this`. I do know that he's done a lot of harm to the LGBT community over there, and she has a lot of friends who are like that, and I see where she's standing from. I know that she's trying to be empathetic and stuff. But not like that! And it's really made me reflect on myself that, `Hey, if you wanna stand up for something, better stand up from a point of realness, not of a victim or an authority. No! Just as everyone is equal, everyone is fine, everyone is peaceful. Not in a way that you guys are villains, and we are victims here because a lot of people tend to pull into that sadly. And she did. She was making them into villains, into the Other. And I feel like, `No, if anything, you should not separate us. No!` No, that's not how you do activism […] If you want to be an activist, you have to start with yourself first. Change yourself first, stop seeing them as the Other, as the Enemy. And then from that point, it will show up to you almost how to behave, how to act, what actually you take next.*

Olivia`s response to anger-driven conventional activism is guided by two principles, namely, realness and interconnection. She describes realness in activism as addressing the perceived causes of conflict from a genuine and legitimate standpoint, but “not of a victim or an authority”. This allows her to establish her position and boundaries in the face of power relations and their impact on everyday encounters. Interconnection emphasizes countering the structured polarity inherent in conventional activism, which frames dynamics as `me versus the

Other, the Enemy`, thereby drastically separating the contesting party from the contested one. Emerging through firm, self-assured, yet non-defensive and even quiet dynamics (Bayat, 2000), both processes for Olivia rest on cultivating performative solidarity between opposing parties by viewing them as a unified whole (Bechwati and Baalbaki, 2011), rather than within one group that legitimizes itself on the basis of exclusion, marginalization or alienation. This contrasts with conventional activism, where solidarity often reinforces collective identity within the same group (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021; Nardini *et al.*, 2021), positioned in opposition to the Other (Baka and Garyfallou, 2011). The following two excerpts from my researcher diary, recorded at different stages of my contemplative engagement, reflect an initial sense of disconnection, followed by a renewed hope for interconnection in response to similar systemic challenges encountered in the everyday life;

> *I know this will never get better. It`s ingrained in all of us now. We even forget that another way is possible. Almost impossible to escape. We are all stuck. Oh, this feeling of being trapped…really killing…I try to think of a way out. But it`s too big, too overwhelming. Intimidating. (Researcher Diary, 14.08.2018)*

> *I know blaming the system is the easiest way to feel okay, gives me some sort of ease, almost comfort. Just point at it, say it`s the reason for everything I don't like, and keep doing that whenever I need to comfort myself, now knowingly though. But easy […] But then, aren't I part of this system? Didn't it shaped how I think, act, feel? Maybe I have even contributed to where it is now. Well, yeah, I haven't really done much to make it better. Just criticised. That`s it. So can it even be undone? Can we just start over – new me, new others and new everything? Probably not. Still, I`m not the only one feeling this dissociation, alienation. It`s everywhere. But the thing is it`s getting exhaustive. Not as comforting as before. And there`s no point in feeling so! Really, maybe we can start again. Maybe that`s not such a crazy idea. I know there are others out there, who feels this too. Maybe we can actually make it work. At least we can try. Together. (Researcher Diary, 25.11.2024)*

The initial excerpt comes from my early years of contemplative engagement, when feelings of disconnection and entrapment were particularly discomforting. I recall the loneliness I experienced in the face of systemic defects that I could neither address nor change. At that time, I was unaware that others might feel same, alienated, lost and adrift. The following excerpt, by contrast, reflects a profound transformation, both cognitive and behavioural. The belief that alternative ways are possible has become empowering, motivating meaningful action in life.

This motivation is neither defensive nor oppositional. It is grounded in the awareness that I am not alone in all this. It also builds on the acceptance of my own role within the system, including my potential contribution to its flaws. This acknowledgement fosters a sense of connectedness to everybody and everything else through a sense of self-responsibility. This ultimately supports a form of healing in my relationship with the same systemic defects.

For both Olivia and myself, achieving a sense of interconnection facilitates to moderate and reframe presumed categorical divisions, such as those between the prioritized and the excluded that often drive antagonism in different forms (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013). This reframing through repositioning the embedded self fosters a form of epistemic healing against the epistemic violence, commonly enacted in conventional activism, as the consumer embraces the Other and creates space for diverse voices to be expressed, heard and acted upon voluntarily (Khan and Naguib, 2017, p. 91). Olivia highlights that this repositioning of the self begins at an individual level and subsequently disseminates into social spaces through consumer interactions.

It is important to note that the form of activism described by Olivia takes place amid strict religious constrains and normative expectations prevailing her everyday life, rather than within a more equalitarian context that facilitates self-expression. Despite such constrains, her mindful, embedded self remains resolute in pursuing its purpose, ultimately fostering a sense of equanimity (Anālayo, 2021). This equanimity is grounded in self-assured attentiveness to one`s own positionality, while remaining mindful of others` perspectives in conflictual situations (Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021). Within this framework, Olivia observes “everyone is equal, everyone is fine, everyone is peaceful”.

This mode of activism may seem idealistic in today`s highly polarized landscape, where activism often asserts one-sided rightfulness amid diverse ideological standpoints, amplified through social media. Yet, this nuanced activism is enabled by a cultivated cognitive capacity to maintain equidistance from both extremes of the contestation, which is made possible by the emotively stabilizing effects of contemplative practices (Brown, Ryan and Creswell, 2007). This ability transforms conventional acceptances of activism through contemplative reframing that embraces diverse voices without concern for being right or wrong, or for achieving victory or defeat. Within the Contemplative Consumer Activism framework, the pathway of conventional activism, typically structured around the cause of unrest, resource mobilization and drive for change (Handelman and Fischer, 2018) remains, yet the logics guiding its enactment across both personal and public contexts undergoes a radical shift.

The next section explicates how contemplation-informed system-centric conversions interact with marketplace behaviour at a systemic level.

6.2.3.2 Reframing Systemic Consumption

Reframing systemic consumption refers to a process by which the consumer contemplator reinterprets and reconfigures their everyday relationships with the consuming system, which is understood as the aggregate of systemic structures that influence marketplace tendencies and practices concerning large consumer groups. This process is informed by cognition-based system-centric conversions, which transform the self`s position relative to these structures. Occurring across personal and social contexts, reframing systemic consumption is closely intertwined with reinterpretations of consumption concerning the self and others.

The context of the context perspective within Consumer Culture Theory provides a fertile ground for understanding systemic structures and the consuming system. Accordingly, the micro-social context occupied by the individual consumer is embedded in larger socio-historical contexts, which are understood as "systemic and structuring influences of market and social systems that is not necessarily felt or experienced by consumers in their daily lives" (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p. 381). These larger contexts include ideological and mythological forces shaped by systemic structures (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010), as well as post-humanist influences, defined as "poststructuralist and non-anthropocentric theoretical aspirations", which challenge humanist-modern restraints (Botez, Hietanen and Tikkanen, 2020, p. 1392).

The interplay between micro-social and socio-historical forces in consumer markets underlines the close relationship between agency and structure, particularly through the lens of market systems dynamics (Jafari, Aly and Doherty, 2022). From a consumer activism perspective, these forces play a critical role in shaping confrontational dynamics that can transform existing markets (Choi and Burnes, 2022) or give rise to new ones (Giesler, 2012).

Within Contemplative Consumer Activism, reframing systemic consumption is explored through three dimensions, namely, *Transformative Critique*, *Nurturing Consumption Stewardship* and *Undertaking Regenerative Contentment*, each addressing a systemic reconciling with, revisitation and reclamation of consumption in everyday encounters. These dimensions are examined in detail in the following sections.

Reconciling with the Consuming System: Transformative Critique

Transformative critique denotes a constructive evaluation of prevailing marketplace structures that exert influence on large-scale consumption through normative discourses and practices. It is transformative in that it promotes reflective reframing of the logics underlying such behaviour, thereby inspiring systemic change in broader marketplace practices.

The process begins with an initial reconciling with the consuming self, which allows consumption to be aligned with an individually critical agenda. This is followed by mitigating consumption antagonism, which helps neutralize the often-adversarial outlook on consumption across both personal and public activism contexts. Rather than exploiting the system`s inherent weaknesses or contradictions to undermine it, transformative critique encourages a nuanced, non-judgmental evaluation of the system, creating space for its transformation toward more sustainable, effective social outcomes. In doing so, it advocates for progressive and constructive improvements in the system`s functioning and its impacts on marketplace behaviour, without rejecting or fundamentally opposing the underlying mentality. Alicia, a 46-year-old photographer, reflects on how the logics governing marketplace behaviour can be transformed through transformative evaluation;

> It's the fashion system linked with the celebrity system linked with the media system. And they're all, you know, interconnected and a lot of people don't question systems […] Maybe the question there is how do you get society to be more contemplative so that we can be part of a society that promote social change, that is stronger and more powerful, more empowered or liberated […] I've definitely changed my shopping habits from being, you know, the self-confessed shopaholic then to becoming, you know, knowledgeable […] I've kind of, haven't looked back ever since then. And I suppose, you know, part of that story, and part of that struggle is how'd you be sustainable? You know it's the girls, you know, we love, we love well, I mean fashion, it's part of, it's part of the clothing is part of life. And you know, there's lots of different ways to do that which obviously we would all benefit of being more mindful. But that doesn't mean like, you know, one thing or the other, which is in the way that it's kind of presented to us. Oh, you know you`ve got fast fashion, or you've got Prada, and hey, go figure which one you're gonna choose! So where is the mindful process in there, that is gonna contribute to change? That's I guess, that's a form of activism.

To Alicia, fashion exemplifies a context, wherein individual marketplace orientations are shaped by the interplay of systemic structures (Sandikci and Ger, 2010; Zanette and Pereira Zamith Brito, 2019), particularly the consumption system, the celebrity system and the media.

Often beyond individual scrutiny, these influences undermine the strength, liberation and empowerment inherent in individual marketplace preferences. This perspective aligns with Foucauldian notions of alienation, emerging from the dissociation between the individual and the broader system (Mikkonen, Vicdan and Markkula, 2014). This alienation incapacitates the individual`s free choice by extending the system`s unquestionable domination over it, thereby obscuring the distinction between systemic and individual responsibility in large-scale issues, such as sustainability.

Olivia argues that sustainability within a fashion context cannot be reduced to binary oppositions, as it is often framed. For instance, the decision to purchase a consumerism-driven Prada item, rather than a mass-market fast fashion product, is typically associated with greater resource depletion and environmental damage, as well as reinforcing social stratification across levels of wealth ownership. For Olivia, activism extends beyond the simplistic framing of "go figure which one you're gonna choose!" amid discourses of non-consumption (Nixon, 2020), anti-consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2013) or moral condemnation (Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010) regarding contested products. It is not merely about choosing one product or brand over another or abstaining from purchase in a confrontational public context. For Olivia, real activism involves developing a reflective capacity to recognize tensions between individual choices and systemic impositions (Shaw and Duffy, 2022) and to discern what serves the public good. Such critique redefines self-responsibility in public consumption while fostering the improvement of systemic weaknesses, rather than antagonizing or othering systemic forces, and thereby exacerbating the issue beyond resolution. Instead of estranging the consumer from the consuming system, this approach focuses on transforming the system through reshaping its underlying logic, without rejecting, despising or refusing it.

In Alicia`s view, mindfulness-informed contemplation consolidates the individual consumer`s position and responsibilities within the larger system by fostering heightened awareness of how personal choices can actively contribute to solutions through careful selection of personal preferences. At the system level, Contemplative Consumer Activism entails constructive engagement by the consumer contemplator in the functioning of the system by embracing responsibilization for the confrontational issue in its entirety, rather than selectively accepting or rejecting portions of it (Barnhart, Huff and Scott, 2024). This approach enables an important shift in the understanding of value-based consumption, which is explored in the next section.

Revisiting Systemic Consumption Patterns: Nurturing Consumption Stewardship

Nurturing consumption stewardship refers to adopting a responsible, value-based behavioural approach to the consuming system, prioritizing accountability and sustained effort in attaining collective welfare. Its focus on behavioural transformation within the consumer`s engagement with the system complements the reflective evaluation, fostered by transformative critique. This process extends the revisitation of consumption habits across both personal and interpersonal contexts to a systemic level, concerning large consumer groups both within and beyond national borders.

Stewardship is defined as "the responsible use (including conservation) of natural resources in a way that takes full and balanced account of the interests of society, future generations, and other species, as well as of private needs, and accepts significant answerability to society" (Worrell and Appleby, 2000, p. 263). Building on this conception, nurturing consumption stewardship promotes *accountability* for consumption across personal, intersubjective and systemic levels by prioritizing the collective good in everyday consumption practices.

It further rests on *sustained effort* to safeguard collective good (Barrios, Blocker and Upadhyaya, 2023) through active engagement in transforming systemic weaknesses to contribute to broader wellbeing. In this sense, nurturing consumption stewardship involves developing consumption wisdom, as previously discussed, by intentionally re-evaluating consumption patterns in relation to the self and others, and consistently striving to make meaningful choices for the greater good. Isabella, a 44-year-old accountant, describes how her contemplative engagement has transformed her existing consumer role into that of a steward;

> The more in touch I am with my spirituality and so religious thoughts, it might even impact what companies I might buy from. I regard some companies as unethical and I`m not buying from them, and I think being more mindful increases, coz then you're not numb, you're not just following what you're seeing on advertisement boards. You're able to create a space, I guess, between advertisement and what's being thrown at you through social media. You are able to step back, coz you've got the tools to do that because you're a mindful person, or you`re like contemplating. And you're able to question what sort of companies do I want to buy from, what sort of activities do certain companies do? Like you might actually buy things more from companies you perceive as charitable. I know I do that. If I think a company is, or somebody's fundraising, I'm more likely to buy like, I recently went to a charity dinner because I know that I'm gonna have a good time. I'll meet my friends, I'll create a good relationship and build

> relationships with my friends. But at the same time everything we're consuming will actually go to charity. That's a good way of channelling that money into a good cause, as well […] I would say politics come into it too. And I do agree that the more mindful you are, or the more aware, self-aware you are, it would affect your consumption, or how much you buy from certain companies or goods made from certain countries or just produce of certain nations that you don't agree with their politics. So yeah, I think that`s true. And also sustainability, again, you might not like the ethos of certain companies. Maybe they've shown that they don't care at all about the environment, whereas some of them are better. You know, you know that they're sort of against cruelty to animals or their packaging is, you know, recyclable. So yeah, all of these things are affecting me more and more, I guess, as I'm becoming more aware of the issue.

Isabella, who practices contemplation within her Islamic faith, experiences consumption stewardship as a complex interplay of religious and secular interpretations (Worrell and Appleby, 2000). Her everyday encounters with the consuming system, such as purchasing from companies attentive to sustainability or charitable causes, are often guided by secular interpretations that prioritize shared human welfare over religious considerations. Yet, Isabella highlights during the interview that her contemplative engagement also involves a sense of duty to God within Islam, which involves ongoing reflection on consumption patterns and their impacts across personal and collective domains, with accountability and perseverance aimed at promoting common good.

The accountability dimension of Isabella`s consumption stewardship involves an initial awakening from market anaesthesia, as a growing awareness of the impact of systemic forces, particularly the media (Rauf, 2020) on everyday consumption practices, and “not just following what you're seeing on advertisement boards”. Described as a state of numbness by her, this market anaesthesia desensitizes consumers to social and moral consciousness (Bogaczyk, 2017) in their market behaviours. Contemplation counteracts this numbness by increasing market discernment and evoking a sense of psychological ownership over the motivations behind her market behaviour (Peck *et al.*, 2021). At this stage, Contemplative Consumer Activism for Isabella includes actively ensuring that her consumption behaviour contributes to socially and ethically positive outcomes.

The sustained effort dimension of Isabella`s consumption stewardship involves a behavioural orientation toward continuous moral decision making in everyday consumption. She explains that her contemplative engagement, framed within an Islamic mindfulness, creates a space of heightened discernment, enabling her to differentiate between the real use-value of

a marketplace product and the systemic embellishment applied to it. Contemplation serves as an empowering mechanism for making value-based and responsible market decisions, independent of systemic pressures. In this regard, practicing contemplation constitutes a form of activism oriented toward moral decision making (Gunia et al., 2012) and value co-creation (Barrios, Blocker and Upadhyaya, 2023) among consumers pursuing shared goals. This orientation promotes increased consumption wisdom, allowing consumers to navigate system-serving impositions in the marketplace. Isabella notes that, through her deepening contemplative practice, she has developed increased sensitivity to the ideological positions of the companies from which she purchases.

This growing sensitivity to responsible consumption counters common marketplace tendencies, such as focusing solely on higher quality or lower prices (Lai et al., 2018), thus fostering a broader concern for collective welfare. Rather than rejecting purchases from ideologically misaligned companies, this form of Contemplative Consumer Activism encourages increased discernment in making market choices that serve the greater good. Systemic impediments to such behaviour are expected to diminish as this sensitivity spreads across larger consumer groups. For Isabella, nurturing consumption stewardship does not entail overlooking the harmful effects of the consuming system, which she upfront recognizes as flawed in many respects. Instead, it situates the consumer within the consuming system by responsibilizing them (Hensen et al., 2016) for countering its numbing impact, rather than holding the system responsible (Nicol and Thompson, 2007) for inspiring common good and then accusing it for failing to do this. Within this framework, the consumer voluntarily acquires the role of a steward, as an active agent working *with* the system to improve its weaknesses, rather than *against* the system to dominate or dismantle it.

Assuming a steward role in everyday marketplace practices expands into fostering collective contentment within a prosumption context. The topic is explained in the following section.

Reclaiming Prosumption: Undertaking Regenerative Contentment

Undertaking regenerative contentment refers to contemplation-enabled engagement in creating micro-market systems that offer alternatives to resource management by addressing prevailing systemic weaknesses and fostering a sense of collective, sustained satisfaction. It seeks to strengthen community spirit through shared responsibility in preserving natural resources across generations. Similar to the previously discussed notion of shared contentment, it emerges as an entrepreneurial endeavour oriented toward collective benefit and orchestrated

system-level transformations. Unlike shared contentment at an intersubjective level, regenerative contentment involves multiple stakeholders working toward sustained collective good, thus blurring the conventional distinction between production and consumption, and rendering the marketplace more inclusive, multi-vocal and purposeful. Within this framework, it represents a reclamation of consumption in its capacity to prioritize trans-generational welfare over individual interests. Lesley, a 63-year-old primary school teacher, describes how she engages with and transforms the consuming system through her joint sustained efforts to achieve regenerative contentment for all;

> *I'm very concerned about the environment, very concerned about climate change for good reason. And, as I say, sometimes I will write to my MP and so on about it, and never get any responses that I find at all helpful, but I feel it needs to be done sometimes. I don't do that nearly as much as a lot of people do. I find it very draining. But I I feel, one of the things that I have been called by God to do is to do local stuff. So with the church, I mean, we've set up, it's just recently, in the last few months, set up the beginnings of a community garden where we are wanting to grow fruit and vegetables with local people, get the community involved, all ages, you know, anyone who wants to come and just grow stuff together and share it, and develop that sense of community, this, you know, helping people to have more of a passion for the earth, you know, literal earth that they are digging and handling and understanding of how things grow and the importance of caring for the, I don't like calling environment, because that sort of puts us in the centre, and yeah, I think we are part of the environment. From my Christian perspective, God is at the centre of the world. God created it. And all of us are part of it, and but all of us are a community with other people, and with the created world, with the plants and the bees and the, you know, that sense of community. I think that the world we live in is driven by consumerism, it's an isolating thing because it's an individualistic thing. It's, you know, I want this, I want that you know, it's a competitive thing. And I feel the whole, the mindset that I'm coming from is that let's do this together, you know, let's build our wellbeing together, together with the precious earth on which we live, and valuing each other.*
>
> [The doorbell rings. Lesley returns after a few minutes, saying;]
>
> *Sorry, that was my next-door neighbour. She's brough a garden trough which they're getting rid of, and she said, `Would you like?` I said, `Yes, for our church community garden!` [laughs]*

For Lesley, for whom contemplation represents her deep commitment to the Christian faith, the systemic dysfunctions in responding to citizens` needs concerning societal problems,

such as timely and adequate action on climate change, are both unproductive and frustrating. Her Christian faith compels her to act on issues affecting the world, yet limited resources can create a sense of entrapment. Daily contemplative practice mitigates this tension between the religious urge to act and the inability to do so by motivating her to take meaningful action, even if it is "to do local stuff", guided by a heightened sense of duty toward all elements of the world including people, plants and even bees (Gunia *et al.*, 2012). By counteracting the often divisive `us and them` perspective in everyday societal matters, contemplation grounds this sense of duty in a deep concern for communal benefit. It expands the drive for action beyond individual limitations by fostering an empowered sense of skilfulness and potentiality toward helping others and being good together (Bahl *et al.*, 2016). Thus, contemplation creates conditions for latent everyday activism to manifest as extraordinary collective commitment (Kozinets and Seraj-Aksit, 2024). Within this sense of skilfulness and potentiality, contentment continuously regenerates through a sense of infinite connection to all that extends beyond the finite individual. Accordingly, contemplation intervenes in the phenomenology of the social world (Schutz, 1972) by facilitating the formation of shared consciousness among those working toward common goals.

The contemplation-informed call for action manifests in a community garden established by Lesley and local community members, which functions as a micro market system, operated by multiple stakeholders and serving multiple purposes. First, the community garden acts as a small-scale market where volunteers grow fruits and vegetables to share with those in need. This model challenges the established market logic centred on commercial exchange and profitability, while simultaneously blurring the boundaries between production and consumption, exemplifying a form of prosumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017; Daros, 2022).

Second, the community garden engages community members of all ages in producing and sharing, thereby developing a sense of collective purpose. It also cultivates heightened awareness and appreciation for the earth, "literal earth that they are digging and handling and understanding of how things grow", as Lesley describes. This practice embodies genuine concern for sustainability, while anchoring it on a tangible, experiential connection with nature, reinforcing pathways for more meaningful and embodied sustainability. Consequently, the voluntary creation of a micro-market system within the broader market ecosystem brings to life new marketplace cultures and consumer ideology (Patsiaouras, 2022) without necessarily following the confrontational trajectories, often inherent in conventional activism (e.g.

Kozinets and Handelman, 2004). In this approach to sustainability, contentment regenerates with every effort to care for the environment, fostering a symbiotic connection between the individual and all other beings and non-beings, in line with Lesley`s Christian perspective. Regenerative contentment thus functions not only as a remedy for activism fatigue (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019) but also as a catalyst for a `fresh start mindset` (Price *et al.*, 2018), grounded in the belief that a new start is always possible, much like nature`s own regenerative processes.

Lastly, the community garden as a micro-market system brings together diverse stakeholders including those directly involved in growing, producing and sharing, as well as those indirectly engaged, such as Lesley`s neighbour who offers a garden trough no longer in use. The garden thus embodies principles of a circular economy and sustainability, where production, consumption, sharing, lending, borrowing and disposal are valued insofar as they serve collective purposes and contribute to public welfare, while generating contentment for all participants at the same time. As Lesley notes, this approach also counterbalances the individualistic, competitive and isolating tendencies of consumerism by liquidising consumption as ephemeral, access based and dematerialized (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017) and even instrumentalizing it as a means of aestheticizing social space (Desmond, McDonagh and O'Donohoe, 2000) within everyday activism.

6.2.3.3 Section Conclusion

The system-level change section examines how contemplative engagement informs the consumer contemplator`s responses to external influences exerted by systemic structures and their constituents in everyday life, across both cognitive and marketplace contexts. Building on the intra-consumer and inter-consumer change dimensions within the Contemplative Consumer Activism framework, it extends the positionality of the consuming self, enacted in individual and social spaces, into a systemic sphere, wherein the consuming self is situated as an active constituent of the broader consuming system.

This section foregrounds the interactional relationship between agency and structure. While grounded in the market system dynamics view (Giesler and Fischer, 2017) to understand market creation through discursive negotiations, it also draws on Consumer Culture Theory (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) to illuminate the meaning systems that shape consumption behaviour. Distancing itself from an agonistic stance, often associated with activism

frameworks, the section repositions the consuming self both within and in relation to the indoctrination of the consuming system, rather than in opposition to or despite it.

The three sub-sections on change across intra-consumer, inter-consumer and system levels (i.e. Sections 6.2.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3) collectively address the third and fourth research questions concerning the creation of social change within an activism framework and its manifestation within the marketplace. First, findings reveal that contemplative change manifests as a multi-layered process of cognitive and behavioural transformations, restructuring the consumer contemplator`s relationships with the self, other market actors and broader systemic structures. Across all three levels, such change operates as a form of cognitive conversion that is reflected in marketplace behaviour.

Second, contemplative change manifests within the marketplace through the processes of framing self-consumption, others` consumption and systemic consumption. Each process entails reconciling with existing consumption patterns, revisiting them through a multi-perspectival lens and reclaiming consumption in ways that contribute to collective contentment and welfare.

6.3 Chapter Conclusion

The legitimization of any form of activism is contingent on the emergence of change as a natural outcome of resistive behaviour (Handelman and Fischer, 2018). In the context of Contemplative Consumer Activism, this change unfolds across three levels, namely, *intra-consumer, inter-consumer* and *system-levels*, depending on the actors with whom the consumer contemplator engages in everyday encounters. Each level accommodates a twofold conversion process informed by everyday contemplation. The first-stage cognitive conversions operate at a non-behavioural dimension across all three levels, involving transformations that occur as the consumer contemplator deepens their contemplative practices within diverse faith-based or secular mindfulness contexts. These cognitive conversions lead to transformative outcomes in consumers` everyday interactions, which emerge through the processes of *authenticating*, *responsibilizing*, and *healing the self*. The second-stage marketplace conversions unfold in the domain of market interactions, encompassing engagement with various market entities and practices surrounding consumption. Marketplace conversions manifest through the processes of *reconciling* with the consuming entity, *revisiting* related consumption patterns and

reclaiming consumption, each assuming distinct expressions across the different levels of consumer interaction.

Within the Contemplative Consumer Activism framework, change departs from the dominant modes of conventional activism in several key respects. First, it emerges through slow, gradual transformations, capable of generating long-lasting outcomes. This change follows a fluid and continuous trajectory, deconstructing and reconstructing the consumer`s positionality within everyday encounters. Second, contemplative change extends the externally visible, public spatiality of conventional change into a cross-spatiality that integrates private, public and systemic domains. Third, it is enacted through the accumulation of micro-level, everyday practices that can create pervasive and profound impacts in life. Rather than conforming to a linear model of territorial shifts, often demanded from the Other, it rests on the transformative potential of internal shifts that expand from personal to systemic spaces through everyday interactions. Fourth, contemplative change reconfigures the prefigurative orientation of conventional activism by unfolding instead as fluid, continuous and co-created transformations taking place in the here and now. These transformations are shaped by and simultaneously shape ongoing negotiations between cognitive and marketplace dimensions across personal, inter-personal and systemic levels.

Taken together, contemplative change represents a quiet yet far-reaching counterpoint to the immediacy, publicity, radicalism and pre-enactment imperatives of change logics in conventional activism. It does so by foregrounding intentional perspective taking and voluntary empathy development, while simultaneously centring the transformative potential of the self and the everyday in generating profound change.

Chapter 7 CONTRIBUTIONS and CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to investigate the role that contemplation plays in driving consumer activism. Specifically, it seeks to explore the ways in which contemplation is conceptualized and enacted within the context of consumer activism and to examine the role of contemplative engagement in shaping social change. This concluding chapter outlines the key theoretical contributions of the study to consumer activism and consumer spirituality research, followed by managerial implications. It closes with a discussion of the study`s limitations and directions for future research.

7.2 Theoretical Contributions

The primary contribution of this study lies in its broadening the epistemological foundations of consumer activism through the conceptualization of *Contemplative Consumer Activism.* Contemplative Consumer Activism (CCA) is defined as a form of everyday activism that entails consumers` reflective and empathetic engagement with socially conditioned and personally ingrained thoughts and conduct, fostering subtle and processual social change that originates at a deeply individual level and unfolds across intra-consumer, inter-consumer and systemic domains of marketplace interaction. It emerges as a continuation of conflictual, collective, competitive and immediate forms of conventional activism by positioning itself at the quieter and more mundane end of the activism spectrum.

CCA rests on the conceptualization of *consumer contemplation* as a state of reflective and empathetic engagement with the self and others, oriented toward developing new and deep insights into the lived realities of everyday experiences through perspective taking and understanding. Prior to discussing how the conceptualization of CCA advances consumer activism research, Table 7.1 presents an overview of research aim, objectives and questions, indicating how they are addressed in the study, and the ways in which they contribute to consumer activism research.

Table 7.1: Mapping Research Aim, Objectives and Questions to Theoretical Contributions

Aim, Objectives and Questions	Findings	Theoretical Contributions to Consumer Activism Research
Research Aim: To investigate the role that contemplation plays in driving consumer activism.		
Research Objective 1: To explore the ways in which contemplation is conceptualized and enacted within the context of consumer activism		
Research Question 1: How do consumers conceive of contemplative engagement?	✓ Contemplation is conceived of as both an everyday routine, grounded in deep awareness, reflection and ethical orientation, and a rupture from routinized associations within the everyday.	✓ The study conceptualizes Consumer Contemplation as a state of reflective and empathetic engagement, oriented toward developing new and deep insights into the lived realities of everyday consumer experiences through perspective-taking and understanding.
Research Question 2: How is contemplation practiced and mobilized within activism contexts?	✓ Contemplative Orientation – Contemplation motivates the consumer contemplator to adopt critical reflection on the established ways of thinking and behaving regarding the source of unrest through the processes of internalization, externalization and habituation. ✓ Contemplation as Resource – Contemplation emerges as an internal, common, non-competitive resource.	✓ It rearticulates adversarial and collectivist logics of activism participation by juxtaposing them with emerging politics of negotiated settlement and shared individuality. ✓ It reframes resource mobilization by redefining activist resources, traditionally seen as rare, explicit and competitive, through the notion of contemplation as a common, quiet and non-competitive everyday resource that offers a nuanced perspective on essentialist assumptions and contextual rigidity of conventional activism.
Research Objective 2: To examine the contribution of contemplative engagement in shaping social change in and around the marketplace		
Research Question 3: How do consumers relate to change within an activism framework?	✓ Contemplative Change – Activism-driven social change emerges as a multi-layered process of cognitive and behavioural transformations, restructuring the consumer contemplator`s relationships with the self, others and broader systemic structures.	✓ It reconceptualizes activism-driven social change by moving beyond assumptions of immediacy, dramatization and externality to highlight processual, subtle and deep-seated transformations that unfold across diverse cognitive and behavioural contexts and multiple levels of everyday consumer interaction.
Research Question 4: In what ways does contemplative change manifest within the marketplace?	✓ Contemplative change manifests through the processes of framing self-consumption, others` consumption and systemic consumption, each involving dynamics related to reconciling with existing consumption patterns, revisiting them through a multi-perspectival lens, and reclaiming consumption in ways that contribute to collective contentment.	✓ It decouples marketplace change from the constrains of brand, market, industry or system-level transformation, reframing it as an ongoing process that is inherently individual yet socially connected, directed toward self-reconciliation, empathy development and collective welfare.

The conceptualization of CCA advances three contributions to consumer activism research across *activism participation*, *resource mobilization* and *change*. First, it rearticulates adversarial and collectivist logics of activism participation by juxtaposing them with emerging politics of negotiated settlement and shared individuality. Second, it advances the current understanding of resource mobilization by redefining activist resources, traditionally seen as rare, explicit and competitive, through the notion of contemplation as a common, quiet and non-competitive resource embedded in everyday practice. Third, it reconceptualizes activism-driven social change by moving beyond assumptions of immediacy, dramatization and externality to highlight processual, subtle and deep-seated transformations that unfold across diverse cognitive and behavioural contexts and multiple levels of everyday consumer interaction.

Taken together, the first two contributions address the study`s first research objective on the conceptualization and enactment of contemplation, while the third pertains to the second objective concerning the creation of social change.

Furthermore, the conceptualization of CCA offers valuable insight into emergent forms of consumer activism intersecting with contemporary spiritualities, particularly those associated with New Age movements (Possamai, 2003; Redden, 2002). Within this framework, the study makes a critical contribution to consumer spirituality research by offering a novel perspective on the therapeutic focus of New Age spiritualities and illustrating how consumer contemplation can connect private consumption with public concerns by fostering marketplace engagement and social change.

The following sections provide a detailed discussion of how the thesis contributes to consumer activism and consumer spirituality research.

7.2.1 Contributions to Activism Participation Research

Through the conceptualization of Contemplative Consumer Activism, this study broadens dominant adversarial and collectivist logics of activism participation by juxtaposing them with emerging politics of negotiated settlement and shared individuality. Activism participation delineates the orientations, motivations and underlying mechanisms that drive individuals to engage in activist behaviour. It has been examined from three key perspectives within the existing scholarship. The first line of research, often drawing on (neo)classical formulations of social movement theory (Romani *et al.*, 2015; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012b; Legocki, Walker and Kiesler, 2020), conceptualizes activism participation through a rational perspective,

emphasizing *cost-benefit* analyses. Within this framework, consumer grievance and consumer interest perspectives are often employed to explain why individuals engage in activism. The second line of research highlights alternative motivational factors, such as *consumer identity* (Papaoikonomou, Cascon-Pereira and Ryan, 2016; Cronin, McCarthy and Collins, 2014) and *consumer affects* (Johnson, Matear and Thomson, 2011; Hoffmann, 2013), in shaping activist engagement. The third line of research, often drawing on new social movement theory, approaches activism participation through a *consumer ideology* perspective. This perspective situates activist engagement within a larger social, economic, cultural and political framework, frequently grounded in collective ideals (Fernandes, 2020; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

These three distinct approaches, namely, consumer rationality, consumer identity, affects and consumer ideology, suggest that research on activism participation has evolved along two foundational axes, one concerning the individuality-collectivity dimension, and the other involving the antagonism-reconciling dynamic. The conceptualization of CCA contributes to research on activism participation by addressing the former through the notion of *shared individuality* and the latter through the conceptualization of *negotiated settlement*. Both conceptualizations extend dominant adversarial and collectivist understandings of consumer activism by positioning CCA at the more negotiable and individual pole of the activism continuum.

The following two sections elaborate the theoretical contributions of the study along these dimensions.

Shared Individuality

The conceptualization of CCA advances collectivity logics prevalent in conventional activism by introducing the notion of shared individuality, which is defined as a form of communality that preserves individual identity while fostering connection with others. It constitutes the first distinctive dynamic through which contemplation functions as a way of orientation for action. Shared individuality offers a nuanced perspective into the taken-for-granted collective ethos embedded in the conventional logic of activism participation. Prior research often approaches activism participation as a collective phenomenon by problematizing the role of collectivity in consumer movements (Bossy, 2014), collective counter conduct (Döbbe and Cederberg, 2024), collective action frames (Kates, 2004), subcultures (Holt, 2002) and neotribes (Brouard *et al.*, 2023). Within this domain, the consumer identity perspective argues that activism participation, and its maintenance, relies on a full alignment between

individual identity with collective identity, which is fostered through socially-shared beliefs, concerns, norms, ideals (Rowley and Moldoveanu, 2003; Sherif, 1958) and self-deprecation (Kozinets and Seraj-Aksit, 2024). More individualized forms of activism, such as donation or petition-signing (Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley, 2003), similarly operate on an underlying logic of eventual collectivity, positioned against the source of unrest.

Further to this, the consumer affects perspective emphasizes the strong association of individual affective states and collective orientations with broader ethical concerns (Fernandes, 2020; Kalliny, Minton and Benmamoun, 2018). While seeking to liberate the consumer activist from the confines of an overly individualistic and excessively rational perspective, both lines of research tend to overidentify individual orientations underlying activism participation with collective goals. Although such goals represent significant motivational forces, equating activism participation solely with them may risk overlooking more subtle, tacit and everyday aspects of participation.

Similar to both perspectives, the consumer ideology perspective foregrounds a sense of collectivity, wherein shared ideology often reflects the common goals, aims and ideals of the contesting group (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004). Prioritizing collectivity over individual involvement in activist behaviour not only promotes a `serviceable agent` view of consumer activism but also predicates the sustainability of social movements on their interrelations with other movements – whether directly related ones (Yates, 2015a) or seemingly unrelated ones (Briscoe, Gupta and Anner, 2015). In doing so, it risks subordinating the autonomy of the individual consumer agent and the specificity of consumer movements to an often-unconditional notion of collectivity. Moreover, an overemphasis on the role of structural and contextual forces in shaping movement dynamics may obscure the potential influence of individual-level factors, which may operate independently of, or only loosely in relation to, these broader dynamics.

In comparison, the CCA approach rests on a shared individuality perspective, as a more nuanced understanding of contestation, wherein the fought-for solution is not contingent upon numerically collective empowerment. More specifically, the sense of individuality it builds on is both personal in maintaining one`s subjective identity and communal in expressing and sharing this subjectivity with others in the pursuit of collective welfare. The shared individuality perspective is akin to Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 521)`s conception of intersubjectivity, wherein “each one of us must be both anonymous in the sense of absolutely

individual, and anonymous in the sense of absolutely general". This entails the enactment of a relational self that remains distinct while being meaningfully connecting to others.

Also drawing on Bobel (2007)`s view, which decouples the individuality of *being* an activist from the collective ethos of *doing* activism, CCA juxtaposes shared individuality with the notion of relational plurality, wherein individuals with common aims and ideals coexist in relation to one another, rather than acting as members of a strictly defined group. Beyond recognizing plurality among individuals with shared yet diverse commonalities, the CCA approach also posits relational plurality within sites of contestation, that is, among groups positioned in opposition to one another. Within this framework, relational plurality is constituted through a continuous process of forming experiential reciprocity between contesting and contested actors, that is grounded in participatory, causally interdependent and relational dynamics. This perspective extends established views of activism, which typically position the sides of the contestation as complete opposites in belief, attitude or behaviour, by reframing them as components of a relational plurality. While their standpoints may not be identical, they are capable of engaging collaboratively in the pursuit of resolution.

In addition, the notion of shared individuality grounded in relational plurality draws insights from the concept of fluidarity, as conceptualized by McDonald (2002, p. 125). In contrast to the solidarity- and collectivity-driven telos of traditional social movements, the fluidarity view emphasizes the value of a shared struggle rooted in personal experience, rather than in the construction of a collective identity as the basis for developing and maintaining the social action. While foregrounding personal experience in activism participation, it simultaneously acknowledges the significance of the public outcomes of private experiences across various market encounters. In doing so, it problematizes how consumer contemplative engagement leads to behavioural negotiations that are "continually being produced, reproduced, disrupted and realigned" (Yates, 2015a, p. 243) within contentious contexts.

Taken together, shared individuality in CCA represents a form of relational communality grounded in interconnectedness and mutual empowerment, oriented toward shared collective goals, rather than merely the individualistic enactment of agency. Its strength derives from internal dynamics, such as the interrogation of the consumer`s positionality in relation to the source of the unrest and the cultivation of constructive modes of reconnection. Although internally focused, this process is simultaneously socially engaged, insofar as the quality of social engagement rests on the extent to which the consumer contemplator reconnects

with an authentic sense of self. These internal dynamics of relating are subsequently externalized through consumer interactions in the marketplace.

In this configuration, collectivity emerges not as numerical majority but as individuals relating to one another in ways oriented toward understanding and negotiating with the contested side. Rather than mobilizing through collective criticism, resistance or accusation, within a frustration-based framework, often described by many participants as leading to disillusionment, CCA fosters a form of engagement rooted in mutual recognition and negotiated understanding. This reconfiguration of unrest and of the consumer`s positionality helps mitigate concerns regarding the absence of explicit mechanisms of collectivization, particularly with respect to the formation of collective consciousness or shared affective states typically seen as sustaining the momentum of the activist behaviour.

Negotiated Settlement

The conceptualization of Contemplative Consumer Activism offers an alternative understanding to opposition and antagonism logics that characterize established activism (Watkins, Aitken and Mather, 2016; Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019) through the notion of negotiated settlement, defined as intentional perspective taking and the voluntary cultivation of empathy in and around a consumer sphere. Constituting the second distinctive dynamic by which contemplation facilitates a way of orientation for action, the notion of negotiated settlement reconfigures how consumers perceive the sites of contestation and how they internally process and externally respond to them.

The (neo)classical views of social movement theory often draw on consumer grievance and consumer interest perspectives, wherein consumers, positioned as being victimized by dominant structural forces (Handelman and Fischer, 2018) respond to various forms of oppression through adversarial and confrontational acts (Bröckerhoff and Qassoum, 2021; Lee, 2023). This framing of consumer victimization legitimizes agonistic and revenge-driven orientations underlying activism participation, while simultaneously rendering the victimized consumer a heroic activist figure. In that regard, conventional forms of activism frequently assume anti-, counter, non-, despite- or post-capitalist character (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010). Such an oppositional stance is also evident in more recent studies intersecting activism and contemplation, where contemplative activism is understood to “use spirituality and in particular contemplation as a form of protest” (Klein Schaarsberg, 2025, p. 293). While providing important insights into activism participation, this perspective neglects the influence

of non-adversarial consumer orientations in driving individuals to act. Moreover, this antagonistic orientation inherent in conventional activism implies a scale of effects that privileges a hierarchy of actions, wherein more dramatic or disruptive acts are presumed to yield more effective outcomes (Lee, 2023). This tendency not only risks producing solutions that prioritize one group at the expense of another but also exacerbates social polarization by reinforcing the dichotomous, Cartesian logic of `me versus the other`, on which much of established activism builds (Handelman and Fischer, 2018).

As an alternative to conventional antagonism logics, Cherrier and Castilhos (2025) have recently conceptualized `compliant resistance` as a non-confrontational form of consumer activism, grounded in creative dynamics. However, despite its norm-abiding orientation, this approach still acknowledges spatial appropriation that may carry connotations of forceful action. Likewise, Denny and Ostbergb (2025) investigate a consumer group who is un-antagonistic towards, and open to negotiation with, power asymmetries in the marketplace. Although offering an all-benefitting approach to antagonism, this framework positions this engagement within a legitimacy exchange model, rather than explicitly within the domain of activism negotiation.

First, in comparison to prior work that often relies on a one-sided victory logic, the negotiated settlement approach advances a conception of justice that prioritizes broader communal interests within the wider social context over personal interests of the parties directly involved in the conflict. That said, its orientation toward consensual resolution does not preclude contemplative participation from engaging in a careful and intentional formulation of strategic responses to conflict that skilfully address both its internal and external dimensions. Grounded in the cultivation of interdependent thinking, the reasoning capacity it entails challenges the overly self-centred orientation of many forms of activist behaviour (Handelman and Fischer, 2018), particularly those rooted in the consumer interests view, by introducing an empathetic and collaborative mode of engagement. This engagement involves both perceptual transformations and behavioural reworking across three levels of consumer interaction, namely, the personal, interpersonal and systemic levels. Within this framework, negotiated settlement, guided by contemplative insight, entails an intentional initiative aimed at achieving intersubjective agreement among parties, rather than being driven by a desire for absolute victory on behalf of one side.

While the multi-vocal and conciliatory guiding principle of the negotiated settlement perspective broadens the overly rationalist and restrictive assumptions of neoclassical models

of activism participation (e.g. Legocki, Walker and Kiesler, 2020), such as a rigid cost-benefit perspective, it nonetheless remains grounded in *critique* as is inherent in every form of activism, whether as a challenge to hegemonic structures or as a rupture from cognitively normative frameworks embedded in the everyday (Rebughini, 2010). Yet, unlike much of the activism research that builds on normative forms of critique (Brice *et al.*, 2022; Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler, 2010; Martin, Johnson and French, 2011), the contemplative critique embedded in the negotiated settlement perspective is anchored in a constructive deconstruction. It advocates meaningful transformation in the motivations and acts of the contested side, while promoting an inclusive communal-gain approach, in contrast to the unilateral and biased benefit approach of conventional activism. This heightened sensitivity introduced by the contemplative critique aligns with the Foucauldian understanding of critique, not merely as a mode of judgment but as an intentional effort to propose alternatives to existing realities.

Lastly, conventional activism derives its legitimacy from the public sphere (Rebughini, 2010), where visibility and publicity are typically achieved through direct external interventions or performative acts of resistance (Fernandes, 2020; Klein, Smith and John, 2004), media (Branchik, 2007; Brandão and Popoli, 2022), or more often a combination of both (Friedman, 1999). In contrast, the negotiated settlement perspective does not rest on external validation or public legitimacy for the development of its advocacy. Instead, it advances through an ongoing process of negotiation, disruption and re-negotiation between private and public spheres. The private sphere involves a cognitive sense-making of the conflictual situation, guided by internally sourced contemplative insight. This insight often prioritizes wisdom of silence and remains largely unbiased, as it minimizes the disruptive influence of external forces by maintaining the initial sense making process at a deeply personal level. This provides a new insight into many established forms of activism, which often rely on externally sourced information, typically by comparing the conflictual situation to similar contexts of oppression. For instance, many social movements depend on the visibility and momentum of other movements to maintain their position (Collins, 2000; Mohanty, 2003). The public sphere, by contrast, concerns the extension of this internally guided sense making into a broader social context through consumer interactions in the marketplace. In this regard, negotiated settlement draws on a nuanced form of publicity that is informed by personal insight and critical evaluation, rather than seeking legitimacy through entirely externalized voices and alignment with preexisting activism models.

Taken together, by privileging perspective-taking and mutual understanding, the negotiated settlement perspective repositions activism participation in CCA as a constructive transformation, rather than a rejection, of the adversarial and combative logics embedded in many forms of conventional activism.

7.2.2 Contributions to Resource Mobilization Research

The study reframes resource mobilization by redefining activism resources, traditionally seen as rare, explicit and competitive, through the notion of contemplation as a common, quiet and non-competitive resource embedded in everyday practice that broadens essentialist assumptions and contextual rigidity of conventional activism. Resource mobilization within an activism context involves how consumers acquire, allocate and utilize varying types of resource to advance activist behaviour. Largely informed, either explicitly or implicitly, by resource mobilization theory, (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Klandermans, 1984; Cress and Snow, 1996), prior research on consumer activism posits that resistive behaviours stemming from varying degrees of consumer dissent are often advanced through the mobilization of pre-existing resources (Den Hond and De Barker, 2007; Buechler, 1993). The type of resources investigated to date include platformization (Kozinets, Ferreira and Chimenti, 2021; Brouard *et al.*, 2023), consumer discourse (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a; Kozinets, 2019), networking (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Parigi and Gong, 2014), arts (Drewett, 2008; Patsiaouras, Veneti and Green, 2018) and the self in various forms (Kravets, 2021; Zanette and Pereira Zamith Brito, 2019).

Despite adopting different approaches to activism mobilization, these studies often converge in framing resources as valuable, scarce and inimitable, thus positioning them as competitively significant in facilitating collective action. In this framework, resources are strategically exploited by the opposing party, often at the expense of the contested side, to achieve aims, such as establishing hegemony (Bertuzzi, 2022), redefining agency and power relations (Bröckerhoff and Qassoum, 2021) or exercising freedom (Daros, 2022). Accordingly, the established resource mobilization view builds on a restrictive zero-sum logic wherein the success of activism is predicated on weakening, disadvantaging or subjugating the oppositional front.

In comparison, Contemplative Consumer Activism offers a nuanced perspective on the competitive resource mobilization logic by demonstrating that activism resources need not be legitimacy-subversive or competitive to foster meaningful change at both individual and social

levels. It does so by reframing contemplation as a common, non-competitive resource, extending the essentialist assumptions and contextual rigidity prevalent in conventional activism. Within this context, contemplation emerges as a particular point along the broader continuum of activism resource forms, by functioning through quieter, non-competitive, flexible and mundane consumer affordances. The topic is elaborated in the subsequent sections.

Non-Competitive Everyday Resource

Reconceptualizing contemplation as an activism resource contributes to conventional views of resource, typically framed as competitive, scarce, and embedded within hierarchies of authority, by advancing a novel conception of an innate resource that is abundant, commonly shared and accessible to all. In Contemplative Consumer Activism, contemplation constitutes the sole internal resource that is mobilized by consumers in navigating everyday activist encounters within both individual and collective domains. It rests on two interrelated mechanisms, that is, non-competitiveness and its embeddedness in everyday practice. First, regarding non-competitiveness, extant research on activism resource tends to romanticise dramatic, iconic and highly visible forms of activism that are often enacted through the mobilization of explicitly or implicitly competitive resources (Horton and Kraftl, 2009; Lee, 2023). Likewise, scholarship at the intersection of spirituality and activism, whether focused on New Age spiritualities (Leggett, 2022; Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021) or more institutionalized forms of religion (Suddaby, 2019; Swimberghe, Flurry and Parker, 2011), frequently conceptualizes spirituality as a distinctive and inherently competitive resource.

Within this framework, the perceived competitiveness of an activism-mobilizing resource is attributed to various factors, including its capacity to unite geographically-dispersed people (Rauf, 2020), to cultivate affective states such as solidarity (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021), to deploy a confrontational discourse (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a) or to reinforce collective identity through humour and shared laughter (Kravets, 2021). Informed by a logic of power asymmetry, both lines of research largely overlook the mobilizing potential of non-competitive and uncontested forms of resource. Moreover, they tend to disregard models of resource allocation, in which collaborative and reciprocal benefit is prioritized over unilateral or zero-sum gain.

By comparison, within the CCA framework, contemplation is rearticulated as an innate resource that is inherently abundant and universally accessible, irrespective of existing power hierarchies. The findings further reveal that consumers conceptualize this resource as an

internal asset that confers enabling capacities for initiating and sustaining transformation across both individual and social spheres, rather than as an external resource offering a specific advantage to be leveraged at the expense of the contested side. This framing of contemplation as a non-competitive and more egalitarian activism resource also reflects in participants` discourses, which consciously avoid language that might evoke notions of competition. For instance, expressions that could otherwise be perceived as extreme are often tempered through dialectical juxtapositions of seemingly opposing terms, such as `empathetically radical`, `realistically utopian` and `universally individual`.

The second characteristic of CCA lies in its embeddedness in everyday practice, setting it apart from many forms of everyday activism in alternative ways. This differentiation rests on five key features. First, the everyday is often associated with routinized and habitual practices enacted with little or no conscious effort (Vivienne, 2015). This routinization situates the everyday within an impulsive and inhibited choice mechanism (Foxall, 2010). In comparison, contemplation in CCA remains constituted by effortful engagement, cultivated through, although it becomes routinized through quotidian mind-body practices, deliberation. In this regard, contemplation within the CCA context is grounded in deliberate intellectual labour, coupled with embodied awareness.

Second, the lack of choice and deliberation inherent in routinized practices confines the everyday to relatively fixed spatial and temporal contexts, positioning it as a practice enacted within specific places and time frames. In comparison, contemplation operates as a fluid and continuous resource that transcends such spatial and temporal constrains, and can inform cognitive and behavioural orientations on an ongoing basis within and across everyday practices. What renders contemplation particularly meaningful in this context is its capacity to function as a non-depletable and enduring resource that can be cultivated across diverse times and settings.

Third, many forms of everyday activism imply a mode of commitment or processes of legitimacy exchange (Denny and Ostbergb, 2025) that ultimately orient toward conventional activism, such as political mobilization (e.g. Horton and Kraftl, 2009), even when the mechanisms underpinning this commitment remain implicit or negotiable. By contrast, contemplation does not presuppose engagement with an activism model structured by hierarchical logics of power. Rather, it becomes socially engaged through everyday consumer interactions across individual and social spaces. In this form, CCA is detached from legitimacy-

seeking frameworks or claims of superiority; instead, it operates through processes of mutual negotiation oriented toward collective welfare.

Moreover, unlike certain forms of everyday activism in which resistance is rendered `quiet and internalized` in response to an external, often contested, party, which renders it an externally driven characteristic of consumer activism (e.g. Bayat, 2000), contemplation in CCA arises as an internally informed resource, inherently constituted by quiet and unpretentious affordances.

Finally, research on consumer spirituality, particularly mindfulness, often approaches contemplation and related practices as forms of therapeutic everyday engagement that heal, stabilize and emotionally regulate, thereby dissociating them from an explicitly activist context (Hoyez, 2007; Niemiec *et al.*, 2010; Hülsheger *et al.*, 2013). Other strands of research similarly frame contemplation as therapeutic, yet highlight its potential to energize social movements, open discursive spaces (Stein, 2011), and foster consumer resistance (Thompson, 2003). Contemplation, by contrast, represents a conscious and deliberate mode of engagement in meaningful action that is oriented toward collective welfare by bridging the individual and the social spaces. This quality distinguishes it from low-effort resource forms that emphasize ease, comfort or positivity, and are thus often critiqued as effortless or grounded in common sense reasoning (Rebughini, 2010).

Taken together, CCA differs from many others forms of everyday activism by privileging internally informed yet socially engaged, deliberate and effortful forms of engagement that is oriented toward collective welfare, rather than routinized, intuitive, low-effort and legitimacy-driven modes of everyday activism. The following section discusses the embodied nature of contemplation as a resource within the CCA framework.

Mind-Body Informed Practice

Advancing contemplation within the consumer activism framework contributes to resource mobilization research by extending the dominant essentialist view, which assumes that resource value derives from pre-existing power asymmetries (e.g. Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a; Zanette and Pereira Zamith Brito, 2019), and thus overlooking more performative and practice-based conceptualizations of resource mobilization. In contrast, contemplation constitutes a practice that can be intentionally cultivated through sustained engagement with the internal dynamics of the mind and body. It offers a mode of cognitive reasoning that enhances the

efficacy of subsequent decision-making processes. It does so by activating a felt experiential domain and generating multiple cognitive framings of the issue at hand.

First, prior research predominantly emphasizes the pragmatic consequences of activism resources. In contrast, contemplation facilitates a felt experiential domain by integrating mind-body dynamics, in which consumers develop cognitive reasoning around the source of unrest, accompanied by physiological responses, such as altered breathing patterns, heartbeat fluctuations, somatic tensions or relaxation. In this way, contemplation provides early embodied cues (Veer, Herpen and Trijp, 2016) that can inform subsequent activist behaviour. This understanding of contemplation stands in contrast to prior approaches that prioritize the body over the mind (e.g. Kuuru, 2022), the mind over the body (e.g. Pagis, 2010), or rely on external interventions to drive mind-body transformations (e.g. Hemetsberger, Kreuzer and Klien, 2019).

Second, the mind-body practice of contemplation brings the experience of unrest, its appraisal and potential resolution into the immediacy of the present moment by generating real-time cognitive scenarios. This cognitive engagement effectively temporalizes activism behaviour by situating it in the here and now. Such embodied enactments of individual response are significant, as social problems are not only cognitive or emotional in nature; they are material and spatial as long as they concern economic violence, hunger, pollution and the regulation of bodies through practices, ideologies and structural arrangements that shape both bodies and lived spaces (Doetsch-Kidder, 2012, p. 6).

Contextual Fluidity

Introducing contemplation within the consumer activism framework advances the contextual rigidity of conventional activism through the notion of contextual fluidity, which refers to the contemplative resource`s capacity to transcend and adapt to seemingly contradictory or incongruent contexts. It does so in four ways. First, quotidian forms of activism are typically associated with contexts where opportunities for political action are constrained or insufficient (Yates, 2022). These contexts are often characterized by a sense of social obligation and may take place physical (Fontenelle and Pozzebon, 2021; Bröckerhoff and Qassoum, 2021), online (Parigi and Gong, 2014; Legocki, Walker and Kiesler, 2020) or hybrid spaces (Discetti and Anderson, 2022). In contrast, the resourcing potential of contemplation transcends simplistic spatial or temporal contexts. Rather than being confined to contexts marked by the absence of alternative resources, contemplation is often mobilized

in response to the perceived dysfunction and ineffectiveness of existing resources in facilitating inclusive and sustainable change. In addition, mobilization through contemplative resource emerges voluntarily and spontaneously within the mundanity of everyday life, independent of external obligations or legitimacy-conferring conditions.

Second, everyday activism is often attributed to consumers in societies where basic needs are largely met, enabling engagement in more symbolic or expressive acts (Zamwel, Sasson-Levy and Ben-Porat, 2014; Alexander and Ussher, 2012; Cherrier and Murray, 2007). In contrast, contemplation functions as an enabling resource across diverse contexts, irrespective of affluence, income level or the stage of societal development. Most participants, ranging from a Turkish mindfulness teacher to an American university professor, describe it as a means of fostering greater objectivity in navigating life`s challenges and cultivating purposeful action in their relationships with self and others. Several participants further equate daily contemplation with a basic necessity, likening it to nourishment. Within this framework, Contemplative Consumer Activism resists reductionist classification within traditional hierarchies of basic versus non-basic needs.

Third, the everyday is often associated with ordinariness, which can distance it from critical reflection (Felski, 1999). Consequently, everyday practices, particularly repetitive routines, are frequently linked to common sense, taken-for-granted assumptions and a sense of security (Phipps *et al.*, 2017). This view of the everyday precludes the possibility of simultaneous reflective inquiry and introspective engagement within its ordinariness. In contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism emphasizes that everyday engagement and critical reflection are not mutually exclusive; rather, routine involvement can foster the impartial stance necessary for thoughtful critique. By distancing reflection from the polarization inherent in agonistic activism, contemplative critique facilitates a more unbiased, multi-perspectival understanding of conflict complexities, thereby enabling nuanced and inclusive approaches to conflict resolution.

Fourth, spirituality often receives limited attention in secular activism and political change due to its religious rhetoric (Doetsch-Kidder, 2012). Consequently, emerging studies on New Age spiritualities within activism frameworks frequently adopt a Westernized interpretation of Eastern faith-based practices (Salmenniemi, 2019; Chari, 2016). That is, the activism-initiating (New Age) spiritualities often reflect a secular character. This aligns with the broader tendency to view the everyday as secular, as “it is no longer connected to the miraculous, the magical or the sacred” (Felski, 1999, p. 16). This narrow understanding of

spirituality and the everyday results in the commodification of activism-related spirituality, by framing it within popular market-mediated discourses, such as compassion, self-care, healing and holism that align more closely with secular and democratic market dynamics, particularly those in Western contexts. In addition, the unconditional secularization of activism-related spirituality often associates it with leftist (Rowe, 2016) or countercultural ideologies, rooted in the social movements of 1960s and 1970s (Redden, 2002), which ultimately marginalizes diverse expressions of spirituality (and non-spirituality) across other political or non-political contexts.

In contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism introduces a novel contextual approach to everyday activism that harmoniously bridges spiritual and non-spiritual, religious and non-religious, as well as political and apolitical realms, without imposing a specific ideology. Findings reveal that contemplation shapes cognitive and behavioural dynamics across diverse faith-based and secular contexts, including Catholic, Islamic, Jewish, Buddhist and non-faith ones. Consumers within these contexts also embody complex, multifaceted identities with varying political orientations, from highly engaged to voluntary apolitical within the current political climate, yet remain motivated toward social action and change that transcend rigid ideological expectations.

Taken together, Contemplative Consumer Activism advances a nuanced understanding of resources that transcends variations in resource ownership, affluence and religious or political ideologies. It facilitates relatively impartial judgment, fosters empathetic responses, and provides adaptive flexibility in addressing both internal and external challenges, even when these challenges diverge from prevailing norms or expectations. In this regard, CCA offers new insights into rigid and contextual distinctions prevalent in established activism frameworks, which often polarize resources, thus rendering them accessible to one side while inaccessible to the other. By transcending such boundaries and integrating diverse perspectives, contextual fluidity within this framework facilitates dynamic negotiation across ideological differences, fostering more equitable resource allocation and collaborative social transformation, rather than confining outcomes to a zero-sum contest within fixed contextual factors.

7.2.3 Contributions to Social Change Research

The conceptualization of Contemplative Consumer Activism reframes activism-driven social change by moving beyond assumptions of immediacy, dramatization and externality to highlight processual, subtle and deep-seated transformations that unfold across diverse

cognitive and behavioural contexts and multiple levels of everyday consumer interaction. Social change in consumer activism involves outcomes generated through activist efforts and affects multiple stakeholders involved in the conflict. Prior research has predominantly approached social change as contextually-bounded, focusing on firms (e.g. Kähr *et al.*, 2016), markets (e.g. Dolbec and Fischer, 2015), industries (e.g. Giesler, 2012) and systemic structures (e.g. Zamwel, Sasson-Levy and Ben-Porat, 2014), contested by consumers for various reasons. In contrast, this study reconceptualizes activism-driven social change as a continuum, which integrates transformations taking place within the individual sphere with those unfolding at broader societal levels across both cognitive and behavioural domains. In doing so, it contributes a novel perspective on social change, namely, *Cognitive and Intra-personal Pathways to Social Transformation*, highlighting how everyday contemplative engagement fosters change across multiple levels of consumer interaction.

Moreover, prior research often frames activism-driven social change as immediate, externally driven and dramatic (e.g. Kuehn, 2017; Sandikci, Jafari and Fischer, 2024) in emphasizing systemic interventions while overlooking subtler modes of change. This study addresses this issue by introducing the notion of *From Performative Activism to Quiet Social Evolution*, which captures subtle and gradual forms of change in activist behaviour. Both concepts are discussed in the following sections.

Cognitive and Intra-personal Pathways to Social Transformation

Contemplative Consumer Activism primarily contributes to research on activism-driven social change through the conceptualization of cognitive and intra-personal pathways to social transformation, which introduces a multifaceted view of change as a continuous and evolving dialogue across individual, interpersonal and collective domains. This integrates internally focused cognitive capabilities with outward behavioural engagement.

Prior research on consumer activism frequently adopts a deterministic vision of change, characterized by linear, non-reciprocal and dramatic transformations. These transformations are typically expected from external entities, such as the contested brands/firms (Kähr *et al.*, 2016), markets (Sandikci, Jafari and Fischer, 2024), industries (Gollnhofer, Weijo and Schouten, 2019) or broader systemic structures (Zamwel, Sasson-Levy and Ben-Porat, 2014). This perspective reinforces a conception of change vision that is externally driven and rests on asymmetric power relations between contesting sides.

By contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism offers a novel understanding of social change by relocating the locus of confrontation from the external to the internal. It emphasizes the role of consumers` cognitive assessment in deconstructing and reconstructing their relationships with the source of unrest. This initial shift in the cognitive locus of confrontation initiates behavioural changes at the intra-consumer level, which then extend into the social domain through consumer interactions. Accordingly, unlike traditional models emphasizing direct and externally driven change, contemplative change emerges at the intersection of cognitive and behavioural reframing, thereby bridging the individual and social levels of change.

The conceptualization of change within the CCA framework contributes to existing activism research in two main ways. First, prevailing understandings of social change tend to emphasize behavioural outcomes, namely, changes in how the externally contested side acts or fails to act (Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; El Jurdi and Ourahmoune, 2021; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012a), while largely overlooking the complementary role of cognition in initiating change. In the extant literature, cognition is usually framed in terms of its function in facilitating activism participation and/or legitimacy, rather than its contribution to social change itself (Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard and Kristensen, 2011; Culiberg *et al.*, 2023; Fernandes, 2020). Contemplative change addresses this gap by centring consumer cognition while simultaneously emphasizing its behavioural expression (Rebughini, 2010). This cognitive-behavioural entanglement reworks conventional views of extraordinary change by situating change in everyday life.

Second, conventional views of change often assume that transformation occurs outside the consumer`s lived space. For instance, within this perspective, self-responsibilization is framed as socio-politically-bounded (Cherrier and Türe, 2023), empowerment is achieved primarily through the collectivization of affective states, such as solidarity (Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman, 2021) and a sense of togetherness (Nguyen et al., 2020), and identity restructuring within deviant consumption contexts is contingent on the development of a collective identity (Cherrier and Murray, 2007; Nixon, 2020). This view lacks a perspective on the role of individual involvement in shaping the dynamics of contestation. In contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism relocates the change process from a purely external framework to an internally situated space, enabling consumers to engage in an independent and complex dialogue with their consuming selves. Within this orientation, critique remains socially mediated but is not unconditionally driven by external causes. The consumer thus

emerges as both a protagonist and an antagonist, who enters the contestation by first questioning their own positionality in the contested behaviour before confronting that of others.

In contrast to the linear and externally driven contestation logics of conventional activism, Contemplative Consumer Activism introduces a dynamic process grounded in a perpetual interplay between the internalization and externalization of contestation. This interplay unfolds within both cognitive and behavioural dimensions of everyday life, thereby enabling a more holistic and realistic vision of social change. By highlighting the initial role of consumer involvement with its capacities and limitations, alongside external influences, this approach offers a more balanced understanding of contestation. It further broadens the power asymmetry inherent in conventional activism by advocating for a more equitable distribution of agency between the contesting sides.

From Performative Activism to Quiet Social Evolution

Contemplative Consumer Activism contributes to research on activism-driven social change by reconceptualizing it as quiet social transformation, which refers to a more comprehensive form of change that is achieved through the enactment of subtle and gradual shifts. In contrast, the performative model of activism, common in prior research, envisions change as immediate, dramatic, external and enforced (Lee, 2023), enacted by activists within exclusionary identity structures (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010) and specially designated activist spaces (Discetti and Anderson, 2022). The meaning ascribed to this form of change is often conveyed through collective interpretation and sense making. However, limited research has explored the potential of more subtle and everyday forms of change enacted by consumers who do not necessarily possess a privileged activist identity (Colli, 2020; Murrey, 2016; Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010; Bayat, 2000; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). While emerging research acknowledges these alternative expressions of activism, they tend to highlight their personal and small-scale nature, thus overlooking their capacity to create broader social transformation (Horton and Kraftl, 2009; Wilkinson and Ortega-Alcázar, 2019). This study redefines the established understanding of performative activism and its reliance on an extraordinary change view by opening space for a more nuanced and communal form of transformation that could reconfigure not only the meaning ascribed to change but also the very processes through which change is made meaningful. It does so by offering novel insights into conventional understandings of time, space and scale in the enactment of social transformation.

First regarding time, unlike a vision of immediate change enacted in response to the cause of unrest, Contemplative Consumer Activism rests on a view of change that unfolds gradually over an extended period, beginning with self-confrontational moments and evolving into socially mediated forms of confrontation, as the consumer engages in reciprocal relationships with the external environment. While this perspective parallels Murray (2016)`s conceptualization of slow dissent as a long-term struggle against uneven power relations, it differs in framing change as a horizontal, internally initiated process rather than an externally imposed hierarchical shift. Equally importantly, in conventional activism, resistance is often framed as a temporally reactive response to prior oppression, which establishes a clear casual order. Unlike this linear temporal framing, contemplative change follows a more fluid and ongoing cycle of deconstructing and reconstructing the consumer`s positionality within everyday experience, often independent of a specific triggering source of oppression. Therefore, the contemplative activist is better described as an "activist-becoming-activist" who navigates multiple temporalities in their everyday life (Chatterton and Pickerill, 2010, p. 478), rather than a fully formed activist acting within a fixed, performative time frame.

Regarding space, conventional change views often assume that social transformation must originate in the public sphere (Thomas, 2017), where visibility and collectivity are essential for legitimacy. In contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism reconfigures this spatial logic by advancing cross-spatiality that bridges private, public and systemic domains. This detaches change from the need for externally conditioned public validation and emphasizes its integration across such domains over more public recognition. This perspective also transcends the limitations of spirituality-driven change that is confined to the private-only (Gesler, 1996) or community-only spaces (Schmid and Taylor Aiken, 2021). Instead, contemplative change unfolds interdependently across multiple layers of consumer interaction within the ordinariness of everyday life, rather than being restricted to singular, performative activist arenas.

Regarding scale, conventional views of consumer activism tend to idealize social change as grand, immediate and outcome-driven, reinforcing a linear and externalized model of transformation. In contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism emphasizes that the accumulation of micro-level everyday practices can actually have pervasive and profound impacts in life (Dolbec and Fischer, 2015, p. 1447), by situating the social dimension of change within individual consumer experiences. Moreover, conventional view of large-scale shifts in legitimizing activist behaviour often rests on territorial shifts (Sandikci, Jafari and Fischer,

2024) that are demanded from the `other`. Contemplative change, by contrast, recognizes the transformative potential of internal shifts that gradually extend into broader social dynamics. Furthermore, it introduces a cyclical understanding of transformation which facilities ongoing shifts in both perceptual and behavioural states across all parties involved in the contestation. In this sense, contemplative change aligns with a Foucauldian notion of critique as "a way of existing and describing reality in an alternative way" (Rebughini, 2010, p. 468). Rather than reinforcing a biased stance toward the contested, it fosters more foundational reconfigurations of how contestation itself is perceived and enacted.

In addition, activist change is often understood as prefigurative, that is, it is framed as a future event contingent on anticipated shifts at the source of unrest in both conventional understandings of activism (Laamanen, Forno and Wahlen, 2022; Yates, 2015b) and contemplation-based ones (Klein Schaarsberg, 2025). Contemplative change is, by contrast, fluid and continuous, being co-created by all parties involved. It involves ongoing navigation between cognitive and behavioural dimensions, by emphasizing co-constructed immediate realities rather than normative futures anchored in uncertainty. This approach is adaptive and hopeful, fostering sustained communal improvement where weaknesses, imperfections and mistakes are acknowledged, understood and collectively addressed.

As a result, contemplative change constantly oscillates between theoria and praxis in a subtle manner, drawing lessons from everyday contemplative rhythms and applying them to the everyday life. Unlike conventional activism, its efficacy stems from actionable insights that inform external responses, fostering a widely accessible resource, and enabling micro-level changes by individual agents to contribute to broader systemic transformations that are aimed at collective welfare.

7.2.4 Contributions to Consumer Spirituality Research

The conceptualization of Contemplative Consumer Activism provides a new perspective on the therapeutic focus of New Age spiritualities by illustrating how consumer contemplation can connect private consumption with public concerns, fostering marketplace engagement and social change. New Age spiritualities are often linked to a therapeutic ethos (Hoyez, 2007; Madsen, 2014; Salmenniemi, 2019), which is frequently associated with individualization, depoliticization and inaction (Carrette and King, 2005; Cloud, 1998) as outcomes of contemplative engagement. Such externally imposed market interventions are criticized for promoting consumer disengagement by numbing marketplace behaviour. In

contrast, Contemplative Consumer Activism demonstrates how contemplative practices can transform consumers responses to internal and external challenges, thereby positioning consumer contemplation as both a motivational force and a resource for marketplace engagement and activism.

Beyond their therapeutic dimension, New Age spiritualities are criticized for creating neoliberal subjectivities, wherein consumers are responsibilized for self-management by the regimes of a therapeutic industry (Davies, 2015; Purser, 2019; Wilson, 2014). Consumers compelled toward self-management are distanced from engaging in broader social change, as social problems are privatized through heightened individualism and vulnerability (Rieff, 1966; Lasch, 1991; Furedi, 2004). Consequently, they are encouraged to adapt to systemic deficiencies rather than transform them.

These discussions are often accompanied by concerns regarding individualistic and even narcissistic tendencies in consumer spirituality, particularly in the marketed forms of New Age ones (Rindfleish, 2005). In contrast to such strictly individual orientations, CCA is inherently relational and socially engaged. This relational orientation is evident in instances where participants, following their contemplative engagement, undertake initiatives aimed at improving the lives of others, such as building a community garden as an alternative micro-production system, developing a free mindfulness app to support individuals experiencing similar life challenges, despite financial and reputational risks, and organizing free workshops, seminars, teachings and broadcasting in both physical venues and on social media to reach wider audiences while personally the associated costs.

A second line of research highlights the politization dimension inherent in social change by arguing that the therapeutic industry can politicize consumers through self-governing practices (Rimke, 2000; Daniel Nehring, 2016; Foster, 2016), the Foucauldian care of the self (Thompson, 2003), the exercise of transnational power (Askegaard and Eckhardt, 2012) and the empowerment of previously marginalized or silenced consumer groups (Stein, 2011; Wright, 2008). Yet, this research offers limited insight into how New Age spiritualities can be enacted to create tangible change across diverse domains of consumer interaction. Similarly, emerging research on therapeutic politics (e.g. Salmenniemi, 2019; Stein, 2011) explores the intersection of spirituality and political engagement by focusing on how contemporary therapeutic cultures shape diverse forms of engagement, including their consolidation into lifestyle movements. However, this research often falls short of explaining how private consumer spaces are interconnected with public domains in ways that foster social change at

the nexus of spirituality and politics. Moreover, the political potential of spiritualities has been revisited with the emergence of New Social Movement Theory (SMT) (Bowman, 1999; Lindekilde and Kühle, 2014; Redden, 2011; Suddaby, 2019). Yet, research on SMT primarily focuses on how new spiritual movements arise and develop in response to broader social, political, cultural and historical conditions, often overlooking the role of individual spiritual engagement as a catalyst for meaningful social transformation.

A third line of research (e.g. Klein Schaarsberg, 2025, p. 291; Leggett, 2022), by contrast, highlights that while alternative spiritualities can drive social change, the change they envision remains largely prefigurative; that is, they emphasize the creation of future possibilities of change or modes of being, rather than concrete action. In contrast to these discussions, the CCA approach extends current understandings intersecting New Age spiritualities and social change by demonstrating how contemplation can transform personal, intersubjective and systemic dynamics across individual and social domains. While linking these domains, it further emphasizes a form of change with real-time implications that is initiated in the present and extends into the future, rather than a merely prefigurative one.

Taken together, the conceptualization of Contemplative Consumer Activism invites a revisit of established assumptions and approaches to activism participation, resource mobilization and social change through the lens of consumer contemplation. Table 7.2 provides a comparative summary of CCA and conventional activism across these three dimensions.

Table 7.2: Comparison of Contemplative Consumer Activism with Conventional Modes of Consumer Activism

MODES of ACTIVISM	RADICAL	CONFRONTATIONAL	CREATIVE	PROFESSIONAL	OCCASIONAL	EVERYDAY	CONTEMPLATIVE
Activism Participation	High-risk, militant engagement based on strong ideological commitment	Disruptive, aggressive engagement based on visibility and collectivity	Artistic, expressive and participatory engagement based on indirect messaging and symbolism	Systematic, knowledge-based advocacy based on strong institutional networking and relationship building	Situational, flexible and low-commitment engagement based on individually ideological stances	Small-scale, habitual, inter-personal advocacy based on accessible participation	**Shared Individuality**: a sense of communality without losing individual identity – individuality that is personal in keeping its subjective identity and communal in sharing this subjectivity to attain collective welfare. **Negotiated Settlement**; intentional perspective taking and voluntary empathy development around an individual space by recognizing the concerns of all the parties involved in the conflict.
Resource Mobilization	Intense, strategic, often underground organizing through both legal and illegal networks	Highly visible, adversarial tactics based collective solidarity and supported by online, offline, (non)institutional networking	Blend of individual and cultural tools such as imagination, arts, humour, storytelling, performances	Strategically designed, formal institutional structures such as national and international alliances, collaborations and partnerships	Loosely organized spontaneous volunteers, civic participation, small-scale donations, crowdfunding and ad hoc supporting from cause-related individuals or institutions	Daily routines, low cost and personal practices, which can develop into locally mobilized networks and financing	**Non-competitive everyday resource**: internal resource base facilitating the creation and maintenance of a foundation of tools which are abundant and accessible to everyone, independent of power superiority, explicit or hidden hierarchies of authority. **Mind-body informed practice**: a practice of decision-making and cognitive reasoning capacity that is cultivated through the integration of individually worked mind and body dynamics. **Contextual Fluidity**: a capacity which can permeate across seemingly contradictory contexts such as those with insufficient resourcing, affluence, repetitive routines and diverse (non)spiritual perspectives.
Change Creation	Deep, systemic and status quo-challenging collective reforms and strong ideological shifts	Direct, visible, bold (sometimes marginalized) disruptions to existing institutional or systemic structures	Artistic reimagining, new visioning and alternative forms of future	Organized, systemic transformations starting with incremental shifts, formation of strategic, sustainable alliances and networks	Symbolic changes in public perceptions, awareness creation, ad hoc alliances, media exposure, can also be performed as part of broader activism	Changes in lifestyle choices, heightened individual responsibility, personal habits of change and mindset sharing	**Cognitive and Intra-Personal Pathways to Social Transformation:** multifaceted change perspective that includes constant and progressive dialogue across a three-levelled everyday context ranging from the individual to the collective through the integration of a cognitive and behavioural capacity. **From Performative Activism to Quiet Social Evolution:** communal change emerging from shared cognitive and behavioural perspective taking within the mundanity everyday experiences and by individuals without a privileged activist identity.
Main Logic	Violence	Disclosure	Symbols	Lobbyism	Numbers	Do-It-Yourself	Actionable empathy development
Typical Activities	Militant Demonstrations	Civil Disobedience	Public Spectacles	Campaigns and Meetings	Peaceful Demonstrations	Local Solution-oriented Projects	Daily contemplative practices
Intended Goals	Revolutions	Open Procedures	Individual Reflection	Reformation	More Direct Democracy	Immediate and Tangible Results	Multi-dimensional communal welfare
Sayings	Disruptive slogan	Challenging slogan	Critical questioning	Campaign suggestion	Cause slogan	Note in cooperative	Critical silence
Dominating Perception of Framing Agents	Troublemakers (very tense relationships)	Challengers (somehow tense relationships)	Entertainers (uncertainty frames the relationship)	Cantankerous Experts (relationship is appreciated, but often ignored)	Voters (fairly respectful relationship)	Heroes (highly regarded, but rarely listened to)	Collaborators (Individually pluralistic)

* Adopted from the study by Harrebye (2016, p. 83)

7.3 Managerial Contributions

The conceptualization of Contemplative Consumer Activism offers marketing managers a novel perspective that broadens prevailing assumptions on consumer activism. It demonstrates that consumer activism need not always manifest through external, dramatic and confrontational acts but may also unfold in quiet, unpretentious and constructive ways within consumers` everyday practices. This reconceptualization offers an alternative pathway to the legitimacy of conventional consumer activism by aligning it with non-doctrinal and contemplative values that can also produce meaningful outcomes. Such a shift from performative consumer activism to Contemplative Consumer Activism holds several implications for marketing managers, as elaborated below.

Consumer activism does not necessarily involve grand issues of contestation; rather, mundane and everyday consumption practices can equally serve as catalysts for consumers` activist engagement (Kozinets and Seraj-Aksit, 2024; Yates, 2015a). Marketing managers are therefore recommended to proactively recognize and monitor these everyday consumption experiences as potential sites of consumer activism, rather than responding only to their belated market consequences. In this regard, careful monitoring of consumers` everyday discourses (Mansbridge and Flaster, 2007), particularly through effective social media management, can provide valuable insights into how consumer orientations both shape and are shaped by marketplace dynamics. Furthermore, as consumer activism may not always unfold as collective and orchestrated action (Garcia-Bardidia, Nau and Rémy, 2011), marketing managers are encouraged to develop strategies for identifying and interpreting unorganized, individually shaped and everyday orientations that gradually converge into collective responses. Continuous monitoring of online consumer communities and organizing regular focus groups with existing consumers may be especially valuable for tracking shifts in consumer sentiments and responses, thus enabling timely organizational interventions.

In addition, consumer activism does not necessarily operate through an antagonistic logic (Horton and Kraftl, 2009), wherein consumers oppose firms` actions perceived as harmful, unsatisfactory or unexpected. Within contemplative consumer activism, activism often involves an intentional effort to cultivate understanding and empathy toward all parties involved in the unrest, aiming for sustained and multi-perspectival resolution. Marketing managers are encouraged to establish multiple channels, both physical and digital, through which consumers can engage in dialogue with one another and with the firm to achieve long-term resolutions. In doing so, firms should foster relational responsiveness, employ

constructive understanding as a strategic tool for managing consumer-company relationships and maintain transparency in their actions.

Furthermore, consumers may respond to marketplace practices with which they do not fully identify in deeply internalized and personalized ways. Consumer contemplation, conceptualized in this study as a form of internalized consumer engagement oriented toward new insight development, emerges as an important yet often overlooked practice that can facilitate marketplace action. While marketing decision makers already employ personalized strategies, such as targeted advertising and customised brand experiences, consumer contemplation differs from most forms of individual consumer behaviour due to its highly internal and secluded character, which makes it difficult to predict. Managers are therefore recommended to employ hyper-personalized techniques, such as micro segmentation (Funk, 2002), sentiment analysis (Fan, Che and Chen, 2017) and predictive analytics (Zihayat *et al.*, 2025) to better understand how contemplation shapes consumer dynamics across personal and social domains. In addition, marketing strategies should be designed to resonate with contemplative consumer values, such as internalization, insight development, empathy and compassion.

Alongside this, contemplation is often interpreted through a faith-based perspective (Badrī, 2000; Faesen, 2023; Chattopadhyay, 2022), which may discourage marketing managers from adopting a contemplative focus on consumers due to concerns about perceived market segregation or accusations of political advocacy. However, contrary to such assumptions, the findings of this study reveal that consumer contemplation transcends faith-based distinctions and can be experienced across religious, secular and hybrid contexts. Adopting a diverse and multi-perspectival approach to understanding consumers through the use of multiple in-store and online strategies may therefore enhance consumer-based market equity by enriching consumer experiences and fostering satisfaction.

Additionally, unlike conventional forms of activism, where change is typically expected from the side perceived as the source of unrest (Bradford Lightfoot, 2019; Kozinets and Jenkins, 2022), Contemplative Consumer Activism generates social change through a series of interactional processes that shape consumers` relationships with themselves, their marketplace behaviour, other market actors and the broader systemic structures. In this sense, contemplative consumer activism fosters incremental, everyday transformations that are meaningfully integrated into consumers` lived experiences rather than abrupt and radical external shifts. For marketing managers, this implies the need to respond effectively to multi-level marketplace

change by closely monitoring how consumers` marketplace relationships evolve over time. Since contemplative change also involves deep cognitive transformations that may not immediately manifest as observable behaviour, external engagement and behavioural responses may be insufficient. Facilitating platforms where consumers could reflect and share experiential changes in their market attitudes is therefore strategically valuable. Designing individually focused relationship marketing strategies can further enhance timely understanding of consumer needs and expectations.

Moreover, as contemplative change reorients transformation from firm-, market- or system-level change expectations to intra-consumer processes, managers may support consumers` self-development through initiatives, such as complementary self-care subscriptions or personal growth workshops offered alongside consumer purchases. When structured to encourage both self-reflection and social interaction, such initiatives not only align with the principles of contemplative change but also empower consumers in the face of broader marketplace influences. They can further promote consumer wellbeing and psychological resilience, thereby contributing to the firm`s broader sustainability and social responsibility goals.

Equally important, contemplation-enabled change emphasized in the existing research is often conceived as prefigurative, that is, oriented toward the imagination of a future change (Klein Schaarsberg, 2025). In this view, contemplation represents `a state of being` rather than `a state of doing`, therefore it lacks an immediately action-oriented dimension. By contrast, contemplative change, while unfolding over time, occurs in real-time and spans from internalized, secluded conversions to broader social transformations that may influence large-scale market assumptions and practices. Therefore, marketing managers are encouraged to focus on subtle yet real-time transformations that may evolve organically from past experiences and extend into future possibilities, rather than concentrating solely on grand, future-oriented change narratives. In doing so, they should emphasize collectivity in their communication strategies, ensuring inclusivity across diverse stakeholder groups and the existing consumer base.

7.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While this study offers valuable insights into consumer activism, it also entails several limitations that would open diverse avenues for future research. First, this study draws on the emerging literature on contemporary spiritual movements, often referred to as New Age

spiritualities (Redden, 2016), in its treatment of contemplation. It examines contemplation within the specific context of mindfulness (Bahl *et al.*, 2016) as one form of such spirituality. Future research could expand this scope by examining consumer contemplation within alternative spiritual traditions, thereby enriching the theoretical diversity of contemplative practices in consumer activism.

Moreover, within this mindfulness framework, contemplation is positioned along a sacred – secular continuum. While this approach allows for a broader understanding of how consumers integrate contemplative practices, it may also limit the depth of analysis within either domain. Future work could adopt a more focused approach by exploring contemplation within a single conceptual framework, either spiritual or secular, to generate more targeted theoretical and practical insights. Alternatively, they could explore contemplation beyond spiritual contexts to broaden its conceptual and practical relevance in activism. Furthermore, comparative studies could examine how varying sacred and secular interpretations of spirituality (Cova *et al.*, 2019; Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry, 1989) influence activist behaviour and shape consumer responses in the marketplace.

Second, this study draws on participants from diverse professional, sociological and economic backgrounds. While this approach allows for a broader and more inclusive understanding across diverse consumer groups and country contexts, this may limit context-specific interpretations. Future research focusing on contemplation may benefit from adopting a more targeted sampling strategy within a specific spiritual tradition, country or region. For instance, studies examining spirituality as an extension of Christian or Islamic faith could focus exclusively on Christian or Islam-identifying participants, thereby enabling a more nuanced understanding of contemplation`s role in shaping activist behaviour within a particular doctrinal context. Some key contributions include The Meccan Revelations by Ibn Al-Arabi, Systematic Theology by Paul Tillich and the scholarship of Michel Chodkiewicz. Similarly, although the study spans multiple countries, it does not offer a comparative analysis of contextual similarities and differences, as such analysis falls beyond its scope. Future work could adopt comparative approach to examine how Contemplative Consumer Activism is shaped by diverse sociocultural settings.

Third, this study conceptualizes Contemplative Consumer Activism as a form of everyday activism (Mansbridge and Flaster, 2007; Vivienne, 2015), which could limit its potential for fostering other forms of consumer activism. Future research could explore how contemplation intersects other forms of market behaviour. In particular, discussions around

lifestyle choices and lifestyle movement (e.g. Alexander and Ussher, 2012) may provide fertile ground for expanding the scope of CCA. While this study primarily focuses on micro-level and individual contemplation practices, future work could examine how such practices inform broader social activism. For example, public meditations and yoga sessions organized in response to the Black Lives Matter movement illustrate how individual contemplative practices may serve as a mode of collective engagement. Examining how contemplative practices shape perceptions of social justice could yield valuable insights for activism research. Additionally, future research could extend this inquiry by exploring the role of contemplation in more confrontational forms of market response, such as boycotts, buycotts, public demonstrations, marches and sit-ins. Furthermore, this study approaches contemplation through an interdependent lens of mind-body politics. Future research could comparatively examine how the cognitive and corporeal dimensions independently inform contemplative practice, thereby offering alternative considerations for CCA.

Lastly, this study conceptualizes the decision-making dimension of consumer activism as a two-way process involving conversions at both cognitive and behavioural levels. Future research could explore additional factors that may influence this process within and beyond an individual consumer sphere. A potential area of research could be the intervening role of emotions and normative influences, such as social conditioning in motivating change. Moreover, the study examines how this interactional process unfolds across three levels of consumer engagement, that is, the consuming self, the consuming other and the consuming system. Further inquiry could deepen this understanding of processual social change by exploring these dynamics in underexplored domains. For example, investigating the role of prefiguration (Yates, 2015b; Barboza and Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2022) and its relationship to meta-cognition could yield valuable insights into overlooked aspects of social transformation. Additionally, this study investigates how contemplation drives activism and fosters social change through the perspectives of participants who identify with alternative modes of activist identity, which diverge from conventional activist frameworks. Future research could extend this inquiry by examining consumers with differing forms of identity, which could offer deeper insights into the extent to which contemplative engagement may foster activist orientations and behaviours.

7.5 Chapter Conclusion

This study explores the role that contemplation plays in driving consumer activism. Within this broader aim, it specifically seeks to explore how contemplation is conceptualized and enacted within the consumer activism framework, and to understand how consumer contemplation contributes to the creation of change in both individual and collective spaces. This study advances a novel theorization of Contemplative Consumer Activism by adopting a threefold analytical structure, encompassing activism participation, resource mobilization and change. In this theorization, CCA is defined as a form of everyday activism that entails consumers` reflective and empathetic engagement with socially conditioned and personally ingrained thoughts and conduct, fostering subtle and processual social change that originates at a deeply individual level and unfolds across intra-consumer, inter-consumer and systemic domains of marketplace interaction. Through this theorization, the study contributes to extant consumer activism research in three key ways. First, it offers a new theoretical perspective of shared individuality, which reframes activism participation through a collaborative logic that privileges plurality and fluidarity over conventional notions of collectivity and solidarity. Additionally, it introduces the notion of negotiated settlement, which reorients the legitimization of activism away from antagonistic and oppositional logics toward intentional perspective-taking and the voluntary cultivation of empathy that are embedded within everyday encounters.

Second, the study extends resource mobilization research, which often emphasizes direct, immediate and dramatic change through the employment of competitive resources, by reframing contemplation as a non-competitive, abundant and everyday resource. This resource is grounded in the interplay of mind-body practices that are anchored in micro-level and real-time experiences. Additionally, it supports contextual fluidity, enabling more impartial and inclusive forms of resource allocation and utilization across divergent settings.

Third, the study offers a novel conceptualization of change as a continuous and evolving dialogue across a three-tiered everyday context, beginning at the individual consumer level and extending into the systemic domain. This transformation is achieved through the alignment of internal cognitive capabilities with external behavioural responses, which contrasts with deterministic and linear modes of change. Moreover, unlike the dominant view of change as externally imposed and driven by exclusive activist identities, contemplative change offers a more nuanced and inclusive account of communal transformation by rethinking conventional assumptions regarding time, space and scale in consumer activism.

Taken together, this study offers a more inclusive and enriched understanding of how consumers engage in activist behaviour, mobilize resources and contribute to social change. While building on established activism frameworks, it extends their conventional acceptances by introducing Contemplative Consumer Activism that bridges spirituality and activism, to explore new possibilities for activist engagement. The proposed framework presents an individually unifying, inexhaustibly resourceful and perpetually transformative approach to consumer activism by transcending rigid categorizations of anti- consumption, non-consumption, and counter-consumption. It marks a paradigmatic shift from socially contingent, competition-driven epistemologies of antagonistic market reactions to an internally anchored, pluralistic mode of inter-relational market response. Emerging from the microspaces of everyday life, this response within the CCA framework acquires broader social significance through the ongoing construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of both contestation and the contested.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Notice

Hello,
I am a PhD researcher at the University of Strathclyde conducting a study on contemplation and its relationship to activism and social change.

I am inviting individuals who are interested in mindfulness and practice it either as amateurs or as professionals to participate in an interview for this research. Interviews are expected to last approximately one hour and will be conducted over Zoom.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Participant anonymity and privacy will be strictly maintained throughout the study.
Your participation would make a valuable contribution to understanding this social phenomenon and would be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in participating, please contact me at:
betul.cal@strath.ac.uk

Thank you in advance for your contribution to this research.

All the best,
Betul

Appendix B: Interview Questions

Participants` engagement in contemplation

- How did you develop an interest in mindfulness?
- What does contemplation mean to you?
- Can you describe how you practice contemplation? / Are there any specific methods, routes, principles or guidelines that you follow during this practice?
- When and under what circumstances do you usually engage in contemplation?
- How would you describe your experience with contemplation? / What kind of states, feelings or emotions do you typically encounter during contemplation?

Enactment of contemplation in an activism framework

- Do you perceive any connection between contemplation and activism?
- Does your contemplative practice support or influence your activist endeavour?
- If so, in what ways does contemplation shape or contribute to your activist experiences?
- How does the relationship between contemplation and activism differ from other ways through which you engage with or attain an activist stance in your life?

The relationship between contemplation and social change

- Do you think that contemplation can contribute to change?
- What kind of change, if any, do you think contemplation can facilitate? / How is this change manifested or experienced?
- How does your contemplative practice contribute to achieving this state of change?
- In what ways does the change associated with contemplation differ from changes brought about through other means in your life?

Marketplace reflections of contemplative change

- Do you think that your engagement in contemplation influences your marketplace behaviour, including your consumption decisions?
- Have you noticed any changes in your marketplace behaviour before and after engaging in contemplative practice?
- If so, in what ways does this change take place?

- What forms of marketplace activism, if any, do you think that contemplation contributes to? / How do these forms of activism differ from more conventional approaches?
- Is there anything that you would like to add about your experience of contemplation and its relationship to activism?

Demographic Questions

- Age
- Education
- Occupation
- Marital Status
- Country/city of residence
- Engagement in contemplative practice over time