Transnational Market Navigation: Living and Consuming across Borders

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Prior research has investigated global mobility through the lenses of consumer acculturation, identity, and possessions with a focus on consumers' socialization and identity management in the host consumer culture. It has neglected, however, the ways that globally mobile consumers simultaneously navigate the multiple, cross-border markets in which they are embedded. We adopt the social network perspective to investigate the transnational consumer lifestyles of people who live and consume simultaneously in two or more countries and sustain multiple relationships of a diverse nature (e.g., market, social, financial, professional) across borders. Through a qualitative study, we dimensionalize the transnational social space inhabited by transnational consumers and demonstrate how it shapes their consumption. We introduce the concept of transnational market navigation, defined as the process of strategically and pragmatically selecting and leveraging social networks to engage simultaneously with multiple cross-border markets. We identify three transnational market navigation strategies: clustering consumption, embracing commercial lock-ins, and developing cluster-based competency. By mobilizing a network perspective to examine consumption in global mobility, we show that globally mobile consumers are also motivated by ways of being (the actual social and commercial relationships and consumption practices with which consumers engage), in addition to the identities associated with their consumption.

Keywords: transnational market navigation, transnationalism, consumer mobility, social networks, global consumer behavior

I travel weekly between Paris and London because I have my home with my husband in Paris and I work in London. It's not that easy to manage the weekly commutes – I had to get used to living and sleeping in different places even within one week, and it requires a lot of planning. Like in December, I have my train tickets bought until May. The hotels I can book 2 months early. I usually reserve one evening a month to do this; but there are always surprises and last-minute changes. So, it takes a lot of management and

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> adjustment . . . but what's great is that I can keep all of my previous habits and hobbies regardless of where I am. Like, I kept all my doctors and medical stuffs in Paris; they have my history, and I know the best way to get treatment there – so I never tried to use the medical services in the UK even if it would be free. . .. But for my hobbies, I really take advantage of living in two countries. I do needlework and I buy materials and patterns from influencers and sellers all over the world online. So, I know where I can get the cheapest delivery: like from US sellers, it's best to get delivered in the UK but if you want something from Eastern Europe, it's cheaper and faster to get it to France. I always keep in mind my options when doing this kind of shopping. (Liana, 30, UK, France, Personal diary)

Global mobility, such as Liana's, represents a growing consumer lifestyle known as the transnational consumer lifestyle, which characterizes people who live and consume simultaneously in two or more countries across which they have developed and maintained multiple relationships (e.g., familial, economic, market, social, and organizational) (Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton 1992). Liana is a French citizen whose family and close friends reside in Paris, while she works full-time in London. Currently, she commutes weekly between London and Paris via the Eurostar trains, owns an apartment in Paris with her husband, and uses Airbnb and hotels when she works in London. In the last 10 years, Liana has shifted her primary residence four times, alternating mainly between France and the UK and once in Dubai. Her life is embedded in a transnational network of market, social, professional, and institutional relationships across these two or more locations. Thanks to this network, she has sustained certain consumption practices while developing new, typically complementary ones across borders. For example, Liana retains medical services in France even when living in London, despite having to pay for them compared to the free health care coverage in London, because of the trust and market knowledge resulting from her enduring embeddedness in the French health system. In many ways, she can continue to consume along her French tastes even when in London because of the many French restaurants, online supermarkets, and a French social network in London. Yet, by living in London, she also benefits from consumption and professional opportunities she could not achieve otherwise (e.g., cultural events, festivals, professional hubs) and accesses the best of market offerings across both countries (e.g., sales, variety, faster delivery). Her consumption is also embedded in global market networks on social media platforms (e.g., Etsy, Instagram). However, maintaining a transnational life is challenging, resource heavy, and precarious and demands advanced planning and much deliberation on relationships with places and people (Vertovec 2009). For example, Liana must often juggle the incompatibilities of maintaining consumption, social, and professional commitments in two countries. Transnational consumption is fragmented across borders and global spaces in ways that are not adequately addressed in global mobility studies focusing on consumer migration (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994), expatriation (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), and nomadism (Atanasova et al. 2022; Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould 2012). Indeed, research has paid little attention to consumers who sustain a simultaneous engagement in multiple, cross-border markets.

We study transnational consumer lifestyles from a social network perspective (Granovetter 1973; Scott 2011) to ask: How do globally mobile consumers navigate the multiple markets they simultaneously engage in across borders? With this study, we tackle three research gaps on consumption in global mobility. First, prior research has not paid much attention to how consumers' embeddedness and simultaneous engagements in multiple cross-border markets shape their consumption. Second, research has predominantly focused on home–host duality and consumer behavior in the host market when examining consumption in global mobility. Little is known about how consumption in one location shapes additional mobilities and associated consumption practices in another location, beyond sequential mobility in the pursuit of cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Third, prior research, anchored mainly in acculturation theory, has focused on the ways that globally mobile consumers exercise belonging to certain groups, consumer cultures, or ideologies by examining their socialization and identity practices. Here, studies often view consumption in mobility as either being driven by or reflexively signaling identity and belongingness to places or communities. Little is known about the many ways that consumers carry out everyday consumption practices across borders without being driven by a sense of belonging or identity. In this study, we mobilize the perspective of "ways of being"—that is, "social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than the identities associated with their actions" (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1010)—to examine how globally mobile consumers navigate consumption across a transnational social space (TSS).

Transnational consumer lifestyles where people are simultaneously embedded in multiple cross-border markets are prevalent. Here, "simultaneously" implies "living lives that incorporate daily activities, routines, and institutions located both in [multiple] destination country[ries] and transnationally" (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1003). Transnational consumers' lasting embeddedness in multiple societies differentiates them from traditional migrants (Askegaard et al. 2005; Peñaloza 1994); their sustained, rather than deterritorialized, connections with local networks differentiate them from traditional and digital nomads (Atanasova et al. 2022; Bardhi et al. 2012); and transnational mobility is not necessarily facilitated through

international institutions, making them distinct from professional expatriates (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Transnational consumers have grown and benefited from the globalization of markets, products, and services and the rise of digital technologies. This is a significant phenomenon that has become the living arrangement of a growing number of people and not only an elitist life choice (Lau et al. 2012; Rhodes 2002). Indeed, transnational consumers are important consumers of the global or regional travel and accommodation industry, sharing economy services, and global finance and taxation services while continuing to consume at the local level in their multiple places of residence.

First, we find that consumption under the conditions of transnational consumer lifestyles is best understood as being embedded in a TSS, a network of multiple cross-border ties with people, institutions, and marketplaces. We build on the sociological concept of TSS, which refers to "combinations of social and symbolic ties, positions in networks and organizations, and networks of organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places" (Faist 2000, 216). We empirically unpack and dimensionalize this concept by highlighting the key role of consumption in structuring, maintaining, and modifying the TSS. Doing so enables us to build a dynamic understanding of cross-border consumption that captures network reconfigurations, tie alterations, and cluster modifications in reaction to both individual challenges (e.g., job loss) and major societal disruptions (e.g., global health pandemic).

Second, we introduce the concept of transnational market navigation and identify its three strategies—clustering consumption, embracing commercial lock-ins, and developing cluster-based competency—that reveal how consumption is reciprocally shaped by consumers' participation in the TSS. Transnational market navigation enlightens how living in the TSS is complex, challenging, dynamic, resource-heavy, and often precarious.

We contribute to the literature on consumption in global mobility by highlighting a range of consumption that sustains consumers' everyday practices across different cross-border and global markets. We also contribute to the emergent conversation on consumption and social networks. Finally, we hope to bring more interest to global mobility as an increasingly prevalent lifestyle in need of more consumer research.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO CONSUMPTION IN GLOBAL MOBILITY

We identify four approaches to the study of global mobility in consumer research (Sharifonnasabi, Bardhi, and Luedicke 2020): (1) migration, (2) expatriation, (3) nomadism, and (4) transnationalism. These approaches vary in their assumptions about consumer mobility and the role of locality in consumer lifestyle.

First, the *migration approach* to mobility assumes that consumer mobility is primarily a unidirectional and permanent flow from less developed countries to more developed countries (Sheller and Urry 2006). It is mainly studied through the lenses of consumer acculturation and socialization (Berry 1992). The migration approach has dominated the study of global mobility in consumer behavior literature until recently, influencing not only the way scholars frame locality as a host nation-state but also their focus on acculturation. Consumer acculturation consists of a process of learning and developing market and cultural skills and behaviors necessary to function in a new consumer culture (Askegaard et al. 2005; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994). The consensus in consumer research is that migrants inevitably acculturate within a host consumer culture toward various identity outcomes, including assimilation, integration, segregation, and shattered identity (Luedicke 2011). Consumption of products and brands is symbolic, with migrants using them in purposeful ways to maintain and signal identity with and belongingness to their home country (Jafari and Goulding 2008; Mehta and Belk 1991). Given the assumed relatively permanent nature of migrations, this line of research predominantly explores the mechanisms under which migrants acculturate into the social and cultural norms of their host consumer culture (Peñaloza 1994) and manage the emotional and physical trauma of mobility (Üstüner and Holt 2007). A focus on migrants' behaviors mainly in the host country with limited attention to their ongoing connections with their home countries or the TSS is partly due to the heritage of colonial narratives (Bakewell 2007). Indeed, global mobility is motivated by the economic hierarchies and political arrangements between the more developed and less developed countries during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (De Haas 2012).

Second, the *expatriation approach* to mobility assumes that mobility is temporary and driven by the ideology of cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Vredeveld and Coulter 2019). Hannerz (1990, 243) defines expatriates as "people who have chosen to live abroad for some period and who know when they are there that they can go home when it suits them. . . . [They are] people of independent means for whom openness to new experiences is a vocation. . . . Nevertheless, the contemporary expatriate is an organization man." Consistent with this definition, prior studies portray an elitist picture of expatriates, often driven by high-cultural-capital and a masculine gender ideology of competition (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Expatriation is associated with a cosmopolitan orientation, "an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness towards divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz 1990, 239) that facilitates consumer mobility and acculturation in different consumer markets (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).

Similar to the migration approach, this approach also assumes that locality is bound by the nation-state, in which expatriate consumers' lives are arranged in a duality of home country and host country as they experience the "countervailing tensions deriving from emotional and interpersonal ties to home, desires for communal affiliations, and enduring preferences for familiar goods and places" (Thompson and Tambyah 1999, 214).

Third, the *nomadism approach* to mobility assumes that global mobility is nonlinear and noncircular. It captures a frequent and sequential form of global mobility and views consumer identity and lifestyle as deterritorialized from a single geographic location (Atanasova et al. 2022; Bardhi et al. 2012; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015; Gaviria and Emontspool 2015). This approach emerged from the rise of the global economy, digitalization, and fast-growing globalization (Sheller and Urry 2006). Bauman's (2000) theory of liquid modernity redirected the research focus from a single-locality approach and cultural assimilation to a view of mobility in which people, information, and objects are part of a system of movement. Such a global system has given rise to a new group of mobile professionals whose identities, tastes, and value propositions are deterritorialized (Bardhi et al. 2012; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015; Sharifonnasabi et al. 2020). Thus, with this approach, locality is deemphasized, with global nomads prioritizing global brands to ensure consistency and access when they travel from one consumer society to another.

Fourth, the *transnationalism approach* to mobility assumes that the circular movements of people among multiple consumer societies reflect mobility; occupations and livelihoods are sustained across borders in multiple locales (Faist 2000; Sheller and Urry 2006; Wessendorf 2016). This approach is broadly used to describe activities that are "initiated and sustained by non-institutional actors, be they organized groups or networks of individuals across borders" (Vertovec 2009, 643). The study of transnational practices surrounding human mobility conceptualizes a range of cross-border engagements with places, recurrent travels, and a process of network building, which reinforces social relationships across spaces.

Prior literature on transnationalism has, at times, used the term in conjunction with migration by proposing that mobility both depends on and creates cross-border social networks (Portes 1995; Vertovec 2003, 2009). In this study, we subscribe to a stream of studies that view transnationalism as an alternative to migration and a necessary analytical tool to study the life of a growing population of mobile individuals, at times referred to as transmigrants, whose "lives cut across national boundaries and bring two societies into a single social field" (Schiller et al. 1992, 1). From this viewpoint, transnationals "develop and maintain multiple relations—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political that span borders" (Schiller et al. 1992, 1). Prior literature has also, at times, used the term "transnationalism" interchangeably with other concepts such as cosmopolitanism (Woodward and Emontspool 2018). We argue that cosmopolitanism (as a way of thinking) is not necessarily an outcome, antecedent, or subcomponent of transnationalism (Beck 2000; Faist 2000). Transnationalism is not necessarily motivated by a pursuit of cultural capital like cosmopolitanism (Thompson and Tambyah 1999) but more often constitutes a form of transmigration where professional, economic, and/or political motives drive mobility.

The transnationalism approach allows us to focus on everyday consumption practices beyond those that are driven by a strong sense of belonging. For example, mobile consumers can reside and consume in a particular social field without feeling the need to engage with its politics or identify with it. In this sense, consuming ethnic food daily because of family background or familiarity may not necessarily imply a conscious identification with a particular ethnic identity or homeland (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Adopting this stance, we follow Levitt and Schiller (2004), who argue that transnational mobility demands a focus on ways of being and a view of locality as a border-crossing network of different geographic places.

Transnationalism, thus, abandons the focus on the home–host duality and pushes us to examine consumption in a TSS by emphasizing circular travel and the coexistence in multiple geographic locations. Analyzing the TSS as an alternative to the nation-state helps problematize the assumption that equates one's social space with national boundaries (Schiller et al. 1992). We can thus explore individual actions and practices taking place within and between nation-states simultaneously, as this approach argues that social life and consumption are not confined by national boundaries or host versus home dichotomies. Transnational consumers include middle-class professionals whose personal and professional lives spread across different countries (Bell and Ward 2000; Sharifonnasabi 2018; Sharifonnasabi and Bardhi 2019; Wessendorf 2016), seasonal migrants and domestic workers who work regularly in another country while remaining anchored to their home country (Li and Stodolska 2006; Parreñas 2015), foreign students studying abroad and planning to return home (Vredeveld and Coulter 2019), and health tourists and retired expatriates, all of whom are continuously embedded in a TSS of at least two local markets and a global infrastructure of travel, health, taxation, law, and accommodation.

In consumer research, transnationalism has just begun to generate interest. Research has used it as a regional macro lens (Chelekis and Figueiredo 2015), and a way to qualify migrants' social remittances and gift-giving (Appau and Crockett 2023). Nonetheless, the potential of the transnationalism approach to improve the understanding of globally mobile consumers' consumption remains unexplored. Vertovec (2009, 450) noted that "the connection elsewhere

makes a difference here." One such difference is the refusal of fixity in one locality in favor of setting up one's life to remain linked simultaneously to more than one country (Levitt and Schiller 2004). This approach denotes the importance of individuals' cross-border practices and creation of social networks (Vertovec 2009) that can complement the impact of transnational corporations and infrastructures. To explore consumption in transnational lifestyles, we adopt a network perspective and theorize how consumers navigate the multiple markets with which they simultaneously engage.

A NETWORK PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSNATIONALISM

We adopt a network perspective (Brass et al 2004; Granovetter 1973), which prior consumer behavior studies have also used to explore about consumers' brand-related communications on social media (Arvidsson and Caliandro 2016), group decision-making (Ward and Reingen 1990), and word-of-mouth referral behaviors (Brown and Reingen 1987), to name a few. We first introduce several necessary notions about social networks before explaining why this perspective is relevant to analyze transnational consumer lifestyles.

A social network consists of "people" (e.g., individuals, institutions, service providers, brands) that are embedded in interconnected relationships (i.e., ties) and can offer new possibilities for and constraints on behaviors (Granovetter 1973; Scott 2011). For example, actors in a social network can obtain resources from other actors in the network while being limited by what their networks offer (e.g., professional opportunities) (Brass et al. 2004; Tsai and Ghoshal 1998). Thus, a network can be both enabling (e.g., wider opportunities) and restricting (e.g., being confined to certain connections).

From a network perspective, each "person" represents a node linked with other nodes in the network through socially constructed relationships (or "ties") that can be altered over time (Granovetter 1973; Scott 2011). The relationship between nodes varies depending on the intensity of their connection, also known as tie strength (Granovetter 1973). Network actors may also attribute different benefits to each tie, known as tie content (Vertovec 2009).

Adopting a network perspective allows us to better understand transnational lifestyles by analyzing jointly how consumption activities belong "to a space of flows that links them up around the world, while fragmenting subordinate functions, and people, in the multiple space of places, made of locales increasingly segregated and disconnected from each other" (Castells 1996, 476). Networks emerge as the prime social morphology in transnationalism (Vertovec 2009) because transnationalism is underscored by "border-crossing contacts, coalitions and interactions that are not [fully] controlled by organs of government" or by other centralized institutions (e.g., firms) (Vertovec 2003, 642). Indeed, transnational networks are based not on a preexisting, collective set of ties, such as the diasporas and ethnic communities of traditional migrants, but on ad hoc, personalized networks (Vertovec 2009). Because transnational social ties are not fixed and may change, reproduce, and weaken as situations alter (Fuchs 2007), transnational consumers actively curate their cross-border ties to maintain their network (Sommer and Gamper 2018).

A network perspective also helps us rethink the social space to which transnational consumers belong. We build on and extend the concept of TSS, which is structured not simply by "physical surroundings of actors, distance between bodies, borders that create a system/environment-difference" (Fuchs 2007, 52) but also by networking processes (e.g., creation and continuous maintenance of ties based on transaction, travel, or communication) that permanently create and continuously recreate space. Indeed, transnational networks are built on frequently activated (e.g., through travels and virtual connections) and durable (i.e., reciprocal and emotionally intense) ties in multiple, dispersed locales. In summary, the network perspective provides a useful framework to examine adaptable, open-ended, and decentralized consumption patterns across several local and global fields underlying transnational mobility (Castells 1996).

STUDY CONTEXT: THE TRANSNATIONAL CONSUMER LIFESTYLE

Consumers who embrace the transnational lifestyle (hereinafter, transnational consumers) are people whose life takes place across two or more countries simultaneously. Rather than relocating permanently to another country, they travel on a weekly to monthly basis across the locations in their networks (Bell and Ward 2000; Wessendorf 2016). Being transnational implies two conditions: (1) the multiplicity of homes via cohabiting in multiple countries and (2) the interconnectedness between localities via extending family, work, and friendship connections across borders.

Transnational consumers' mobility can include frequent cross-border commutes to neighboring countries, such as between Hong Kong and mainland China (Lau et al. 2012) or within the European region (Sparrow 2010), as well as cross-continental arrangements (Green, Hogarth, and Shackleton 1999). These travels are circular in form, take place between a few fixed locations (vs. sequential relocations of global nomads), and are frequent (vs. the one-time, unidirectional, permanent relocation in migration).

Transnational lifestyles are growing from the rise in accessibility and affordability of means of transportation

and digital communication and the globalization of labor markets that resulted in the increasing demand to travel for work (Faist 2000; Kaufmann 2017; Wessendorf 2016). Many people pursue economic, political, and cultural interests that require a presence in multiple locations, including employees of multinational organizations, academics, managers, and consultants (Bell and Ward 2000; Lau et al. 2012; Rhodes 2002). These lifestyles can also be driven by personal choices (e.g., transnational retirees), career progress, and new opportunities in the global labor market (Hughes 2011). For example, many firms in the retailing, energy, construction, information technology (IT), manufacturing, and services sectors require their employees to travel, which may involve working away from home for weeks or months (Lau et al. 2012; Rhodes 2002). As a result, alternative family configurations are rising, including long-distance arrangements, in which family members work in one country and live in another, and dual-career commuter couples, in which couples live in separate geographic locations with frequent visits for the purpose of equal career advancement opportunities (Rhodes 2002). We examine a particular group of professionally driven middle-class transnational consumers (Sklair 2001). However, our analysis of their experiences with forming and maintaining a TSS and navigating markets across borders can be applicable to other transnational consumers.

METHOD

We followed an interpretive approach to investigate transnational consumers' consumption and market navigation. We combined multiple data sources (table 1) to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of our study and achieve a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and its social reality. These included 30 interviews with transnational consumers complemented by 10 home visits, a netnographic study of 7 blogs, 2 online forums for transnational workers, 4 online forums on long-distance relationships, and 2 consumer diaries.

Data Collection

Interviews. We conducted 30 in-depth interviews with transnational consumers (McCracken 1988). We used existing theories of consumption in mobility, consumer acculturation, homemaking practices, and relationships with material objects in mobility (Askegaard et al. 2005; Bardhi et al. 2012; McCracken 1988; Mehta and Belk 1991; Peñaloza 1994) to design an interview guide. After grand-tour questions covering the present and past mobility patterns of informants, we asked them to discuss in general and in each market their consumption practices, accommodation and home practices, possessions and ownership practices, and commuting and travel practices. To examine market navigation, we documented informants' consumption patterns with the aim to record "what" is consumed "where" in their network of places. Interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes and took place at the researchers' workplace, in public spaces (e.g., coffeehouses), at the informant's home, or via Skype. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

According to the literature on transnationalism (Lau et al. 2012; Rhodes 2002; Schiller et al. 1992), the hallmarks of a transnational lifestyle are the coexistence in two or more countries (e.g., familial and professional commitments in different countries), a sense of dependency on more than one country (e.g., conditions of employment, long-distance relationships, second home, part-time/contractual employment), and frequent travels between countries (ranging from weekly to seasonal commutes). In line with these criteria, we determined three sampling requirements (web appendix A). With these criteria, we selected informants who are socially and/or economically embedded in different countries in a manner that goes beyond casual visits or holiday trips. This allowed us to sample two major types of transnational consumers, as well as intermediary cases combining both types (e.g., Anka): (1) transnational commuters with multiple residences (e.g., Liana, Agathe) and (2) consumers who keep ties to two or more of their prior residences they still consider home in some way (e.g., Emma, Adam). We recruited informants through posts on relevant online groups and snowballing.

We used purposeful sampling to gain variety in age, gender, and extent of mobility (from border countries to different continents). Our final sample consists of 13 men and 17 women; 12 of the informants are single, 3 are in long-distance relationships, and 15 are married or in civil union relationships; 8 have children. Informants' ages range from 26 to 63 years. They regularly travel by airplane or train between locations and reside in at least two countries simultaneously. Twelve informants reside in 3 countries simultaneously, 15 reside in transcontinental arrangements, and the rest reside in and work across European countries. Informants spend at least 20% of their time in each location. They work in academia, real estate, consultancy, finance, aviation, and nursing. All have one nationality, except one informant. Informants have at least one university degree and are fluent in two to four languages (except one informant who speaks one language). Web appendix B provides the profiles of our interview informants. Our interview informants can be characterized as possessing high cultural capital due to their education, upbringing, and professions. We aimed to minimize this bias in our analysis by triangulating our data sources through netnography and personal diaries. Our netnography of blogs and forums on long-distance families and transnational workers, for example, reflects the lived experience of a broad range of educational levels and professions.

TABLE 1

STUDY DATA SOURCES

Dataset	Source	Purpose
Consumer interviews 1,086 pages	30 interviews with transnational informants.	Understanding the intricacies of the transnational lifestyle, consumption patterns, consumption routines, social relationships, and relationship with different markets
Transnational forums netnography 303 pages	4 forums on transnational and offshore workers in IT, oil and gas, finance, and healthcare industries (Over Clockers, Thai Visa, Digital Spy, and IOSH)	Gaining an understanding of different challenges and aspects of living as a transnational consumer that are often undisclosed in interviews (e.g., psychological pressures, job precarity, family life, work–life balance, financial decisions, health issues)
Long-distance netnography 471 pages	7 blogs and 2 forums on long-distance relationships and families (Modern Love Long Distance, Loving from a Distance, Charlie Star, Dating Talks, Survive LDR, The Dating Divas, Sending My Love, Loving From Distance, Let's Chat Love)	Understanding emotional ties, human relationships, friendships (including commercial friends), and family relationships in the transnational lifestyle; emphasis on the role of technology and objects in maintaining relations
Home visits 50 pages	10 home visit observations	Elaborating on the intricacies of maintaining multiple transnational residences and relationships that are often undisclosed in self-reported data
Consumer diaries 78 pages	2 personal diaries	Understanding the process of undergoing a transnational lifestyle through a reflexive account of everyday behaviors, routines, and relationships with the market

Home Visits. Ten of the interviews were complemented with observations during home visits. We gathered pictures and videos and recorded our observations with field notes (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). Home visits aided us in uncovering the intricacies, but also the mundane but complex details, of maintaining multiple relationships across multiple countries that are often undisclosed in self-reported interviews, diaries, and forums. They also helped us triangulate self-reported data on daily consumption routines, ownership and access practices, social relationship networks, and commercial friendships.

Netnography. In addition, we conducted extensive netnography (Kozinets 2010) of forums and blogs about transnational consumers, such as those who have transnational offshore jobs, long-distance relationships, and long-distance family arrangements. These online sources were instrumental in our efforts to familiarize ourselves with transnational arrangements across a broad range of professional domains and demographic groups. For example, offshore work forums provided access to workers in relevant sectors such as IT, oil and gas, finance, and health care. We also employed netnography to deepen our understanding of lifestyle aspects often undisclosed during interviews due to social desirability biases, such as psychological pressures, health and relational challenges, work–life balance, and job security. With the anonymity provided in forums, we observed these more problematic concerns emerging strongly online, which helped us refine our interpretation. Finally, given its more inclusive nature, netnography also helped us determine the boundaries of the transnational consumer lifestyle and uncover negative cases.

Consumer Diaries. Our last data source included two semistructured, solicited diaries (Bell 2012) each compiled by one informant, over the course of 2 months. We asked the informants to record their everyday experiences in and personal reflections on the process of managing a life in multiple countries with specific probes to cover relevant events, practices, and experiences (e.g., international commute challenges, [un]packing routines, consumption decisions, scheduling, logistics). We also encouraged them to compare their own experiences with those of other transnational consumers they knew, if applicable, and to take pictures when relevant. Diaries were handwritten, digitally recorded, or audiotaped depending on informants' preferences. These diaries provided a detailed account of transnational consumers' lives and behaviors toward the market and broader society. Diaries are also relevant tools to overcome recall and accuracy issues, especially as we encouraged informants to record reflections and experiences as soon as they occurred and to differentiate between descriptions of events and reflections (Siemieniako 2017).

Data Analysis

We adopted social network analysis to examine transnational market navigation as taking place within and across borders. We use social network analysis as an analytical tool rather than a measurement approach to contextualize our informants' social relationships and consumption

practices across and within multiple markets (Vertovec 2009). This approach is preferable when addressing the processes and meanings that lie behind actions and dynamics of networks, rather than purely structural matters based on measurements and quantified data (Jack 2005). Our analysis mobilizes the following social network terminology (summarized in web appendix C) to understand our informants' consumption across and within multiple sites of activities at the same time. Tie strength, or the intensity of relationships in networks, is a "combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal relations which characterize the tie" (Granovetter 1973, 1361). We refer to the benefits that actors derive from their network as "tie content," or the "meanings and values that actors attribute to each interaction" (e.g., economic exchange, friendships, political and religious cooperation) (Vertovec 2009, 34). Areas of a network with nodes that are more tightly and regularly connected with each other than with the network as a whole are known as "clusters" (Vertovec 2009). In our analysis, clusters do not necessarily overlap with countries/locations.

Our analysis involved both inductive and deductive processes. We built on sociological studies that have used social network analysis to analyze the impact of physical separation on the evolution of transnational networks (e.g., diasporas) within broad social, economic, and political contexts (Bilecen, Gamper, and Lubbers 2018; Sommer and Gamper 2018). We analyzed the data keeping in mind prior theories of transnationalism, consumer acculturation, consumer relationships with objects and places, and qualitative social network analysis to establish our a priori codes during a deductive analysis. This enabled us to build individual cases by documenting informants' transnational network of ties with people, institutions, and market actors and the reasons behind the formation and maintenance of their networks. We combined this analysis with an inductive analysis by examining our informants' narratives of how they form their personalized networks across borders, how they organize their consumption practices within and across borders, and the role they attribute to institutions and infrastructures. In an iterative process between our data and the literature (Spiggle 1994), we investigated how transnational consumers navigate the multiple markets with which they simultaneously engage across the TSS. This analysis led to three transnational market navigation strategies that our informants adopt to navigate their TSS. We provide details on our analytical procedures in web appendix D and examples of our analytical representations in web appendix E.

OVERALL FRAMEWORK

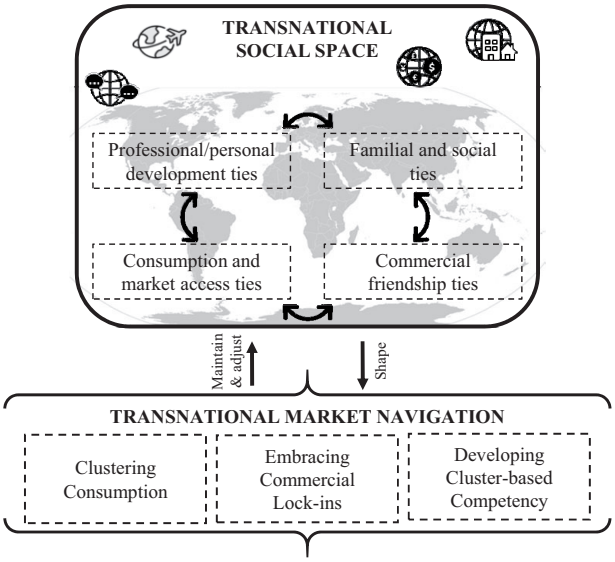
Our data suggest that the TSS emerges as a transnational network of social, market, and institutional ties characterized by three features: multistrength ties (i.e., a combination of weak and strong ties), multicontent ties (i.e., a combination of ties of different types and value, including familial and social support, professional and personal development, consumption and market access, and commercial friendship benefits), and translocality (i.e., the interconnectedness of ties in and between different localities globally). We show that the TSS shapes the nature of transnational consumption in two ways: by sustaining simultaneous engagements with multiple markets across borders and by enabling and constraining consumption.

We introduce the concept of transnational market navigation, defined as the process of strategically and pragmatically selecting and leveraging social networks to engage simultaneously with multiple cross-border markets. We find that such navigation allows transnational consumers to improve their consumption and well-being while minimizing the resources used to adapt to new local market conditions in transnational mobility. We identify three transnational market navigation strategies: clustering consumption, embracing commercial lock-ins, and developing cluster-based competency. First, consumers non-redundantly localize their consumption in clusters across their TSS to optimize access to and benefits derived from ties. These consumption clusters are shaped by the logic of efficiency and network maintenance. Second, consumers embrace the transnational path dependency of their networks to enhance their consumption (e.g., better market access, trusted commercial partners) and well-being (i.e., their optimal psychological condition; Ryan and Deci 2001) (e.g., greater happiness and life satisfaction, greater opportunities for self-development, sense of security). Third, transnational market navigation relies on developing cluster-based competency, by acquiring cluster-based knowledge and skills to engage with each cluster and transferable knowledge and skills to maneuver within the TSS (e.g., knowing when to extend a network and explore new clusters, switching skills to move between different cluster-based market logics). We also show that transnational market navigation strategies reciprocally affect the TSS by, for example, maintaining the multiplicity of tie strength and tie content, reinforcing dominant ties and flows between and within clusters, and enabling deeper engagement with selected network actors and clusters. Finally, we show that transnational market navigation is resource-heavy and involves temporal, social, financial, and opportunity costs. Figure 1 depicts our overall model.

In the next section, we first illustrate the TSS, its networked nature, and its characteristics. We, then, discuss our concept of transnational market navigation, delineate the strategies that serve to implement it, and explain their interactions with the TSS.

FIGURE 1

TRANSNATIONAL MARKET NAVIGATION



TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACE

Our findings reveal that transnational mobility takes place in a particular social space comprised of systems of ties, interactions, exchanges, and mobilities that occur across borders and globally. Following a social network perspective, we unpack the characteristics of the TSS and the ways its networked nature structures consumption and market navigation. We find that the TSS is a translocal social network that consists of ties to people (e.g., family, friends, commercial friends, colleagues), institutions (e.g., banks, hospitals, government agencies), and marketplaces (e.g., consumer and labor markets) across different geographic locations inhabited by transnational consumers. We also show that the TSS consists of a network of cross-border ties that vary in strength (i.e., strong vs. weak) and tie content (i.e., ties of different types and value, including familial and social support, professional and personal development, consumption and market access, and commercial friendship). We note that not all transnational social networks must include all types of ties (see web appendix F for representative quotes on ties in the TSS). Finally, the TSS is also dynamic and changes as the network expands or shrinks in response to various global and local macro or individual factors. Such changes lead to ongoing precarity and heavy demands on financial, temporal, and social resources.

We illustrate these aspects of the TSS with the prototypical case of Anka (age 34), whose TSS spreads across Sweden, Germany, and the UK (figure 2[1]). First, the TSS is a translocal network comprised of interconnected ties in and between different localities globally. Anka is a typical case among our informants as she lives across three countries and is also embedded in consumption and professional global markets. Anka was born in Germany and lived in Sweden for 8 years before relocating to the UK. Her transnational mobility began when she left Germany after her studies for Sweden, where she married and worked for several years, before moving to the UK 3 years ago to be closer to a professional hub (Castle 2011). Like many informants, Anka's main motivation to adopt the often-challenging transnational lifestyle is to gain access to better career opportunities.

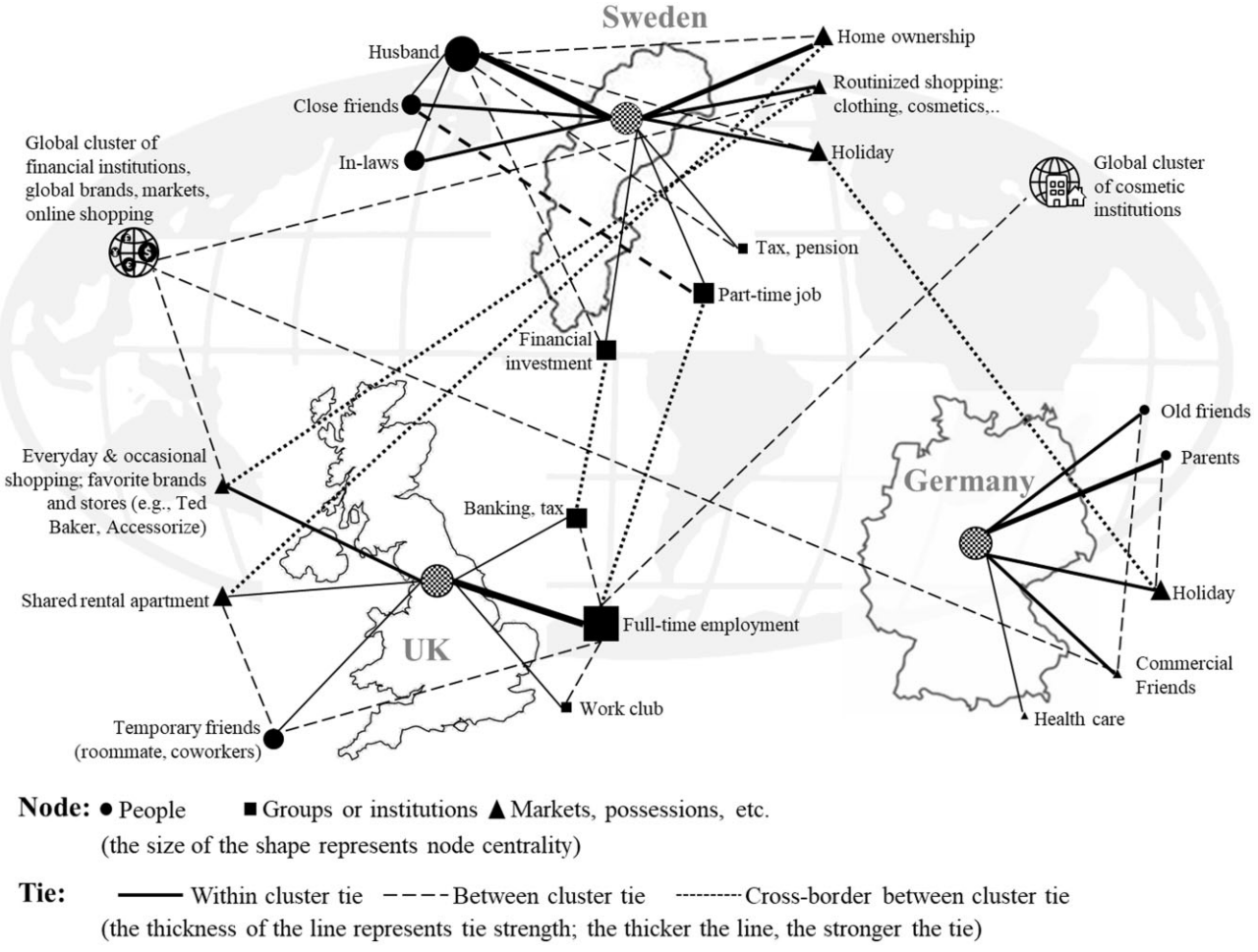
Second, the TSS is shaped by a combination of cross-border strong and weak ties (Granovetter 1973; Krackhardt 1992). For example, despite being a UK resident (for more than 3 years), Anka notes that her long-lasting, frequent, and affect-laden ties (Friedkin 1980; Krackhardt 1992) with her friends in Sweden and Germany have remained unchanged; she explains, for example, that she visits them "often" and that she considers her social ties in Germany and Sweden "close friendships." This is typical of our informants. Anka reactivates these strong ties regularly, given the growth of affordable and diverse transport and communication technologies. Despite her lengthy stay in the UK, Anka frequently travels to Germany and Sweden to visit her parents, husband, and friends. Her willingness to sustain her cross-border networks is also evident in the ritual of "Skype gatherings" that Anka and her friends religiously follow. In addition, she has maintained healthcare services in Germany, even though she has free coverage in the UK, because of the trust and knowledge inherited from her preexisting strong ties. She finds it challenging and time-consuming to learn about health care services in the UK and to trust the system there. She keeps close relationships with global brands, owing to online shopping, fast delivery, and global access, revealing the global dimensions of some of her ties. This is representative of the practices of our other informants.

Maintaining these strong cross-border ties seems to reduce Anka's need to immerse herself in the UK culture. Her ties with colleagues and acquaintances in the UK have

1 In figure 2, nodes are represented by circles (people), squares (groups or institutions), and triangles (markets, possessions). The shape's size represents the centrality of each node, that is, the number of ties that each node attracts. Ties, or connection between nodes, are represented by lines. Solid lines represent within cluster ties (e.g., Anka's tie with her close friends in her social circle cluster in Sweden), dashed lines represent between cluster ties (e.g., Anka's husband's tie [within her social circle cluster] with accommodation agencies [within her market cluster in Sweden]), and dotted lines represent cross-border, between-cluster ties (e.g., the tie between routinized shopping cluster in Sweden and shopping cluster in the UK). The thickness of the lines represents tie strengths; the thicker the line, the stronger the tie.

FIGURE 2

CLUSTER-BASED ILLUSTRATION OF TSS (ANKA'S CASE)



remained infrequent, weak, and distant (Granovetter 1973; Hansen 1999). Like Anka, our informants favor existing strong ties and do not invest in forming new social relationships as they relocate. This then affects their consumption decisions as to which new markets they enter and leads to the formation of multiple clusters with various levels of embeddedness. We show in the next section how clusters shape consumers' consumption.

The third characteristic of the TSS is multicontent ties; that is, the ties connecting cross-border nodes are of different types and values (Vertovec 2009), including providing familial and social support, professional and personal development, consumption benefits and market access, and commercial friendships. These ties can take place physically or via virtual copresence. Anka maintains two employments that represent organizational relationships with two institutions (UK and Sweden), financial ties in the form of tax payments (UK and Sweden), bank services and investments (UK, Sweden, and Germany), and property ownership and pension plans (Sweden), as well as a range of cross-border consumption practices across the three countries. Because of the strong and multicontent nature of her embeddedness in the Swedish cluster, several of her consumption routines have not changed despite residing in the UK, such as her commercial relationship with her hairdresser (Price and Arnould 1999) and shopping habits at her favorite clothing brands in Sweden. Multicontent ties allow our informants to maintain their established tastes and routines, while enabling them to engage in a range of solid and liquid consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) that fosters their access to multiple markets. Indeed, they can sustain their desire for material possessions (Belk 1988) in parts of their TSS (e.g., ownership of a property, a collection of stones in Sweden)

without hindering the flexibility and mobility achieved through liquid relationships with possessions when necessary (Bardhi et al. 2012; Mimoun and Bardhi 2022) (e.g., shared rental apartment with limited personal belongings in London).

Living in a TSS presents opportunities that could not be achieved otherwise, such as access to tested and trusted social and commercial friends, access to different markets and products, and an ever-expanding potential for professional and personal development. For example, Anka maintains a TSS to access more employment opportunities and to compensate for professional uncertainties. However, maintaining a TSS introduces new challenges, such as managing activities across borders (e.g., time, effort, money), learning about and socializing in the TSS (e.g., discovering which market to access for which products and services), and adjusting to the global and regional disruptions (e.g., global health pandemic, financial crises). Anka's case illustrates that living in a TSS is resource-heavy and requires a great degree of planning and scheduling of activities across borders. To save on resources, she plans her family visits, friends' reunions, doctors' appointments, and other commercial visits within the same trips. Anka also admits that her long-distance relationship with her husband, the lack of ongoing copresence with key others, and the responsibilities of multiple jobs are at times emotionally stressful and physically demanding. Finally, she notes institutional challenges, such as managing international taxation. Transnational consumers cannot fully deterritorialize and become liquid consumers as global nomads can (Bardhi et al. 2012) because of their multilevel embeddedness within and across multiple markets, social groups, and institutions across local and global spaces.

In summary, we find that the TSS is a system of ties, interactions, exchanges, and mobilities that take place across borders and globally. We show that the networked TSS better explains the structures shaping transnational consumers' consumption practices than prior models of global mobility based predominantly on a home–host duality. While transnational consumers benefit from the multiplicity of embeddedness in terms of the strength, numbers, and content of ties, as well as of multiple local or global clusters, they must also manage and invest in maintaining and strategically orienting their network. By allowing these differentiated and strategic investments in different areas of the network, the TSS helps consumers enhance their ability to balance mobility and liquidity with a sense of security and solidity. We emphasize that the notion of TSS highlights ways of being and doing (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Transnational consumers can be embedded in a social space without choosing to identify with it. Importantly, we find that the TSS shapes consumption and market navigation, on which we elaborate next.

TRANSNATIONAL MARKET NAVIGATION

We characterize transnational market navigation by three strategies that shape consumers' consumption in TSSs: clustering consumption, embracing commercial lock-ins, and developing cluster-based competency. We show that these strategies reciprocally maintain and expand the TSS (see table 2 for a summary).

Clustering Consumption

As a first strategy, transnational consumers non-redundantly localize their consumption practices in clusters across the TSS. From a network standpoint, clustering consumption is an intervention strategy—a set of "purposeful efforts to use social networks to improve performance and/or achieve desirable outcomes among individuals, communities, organizations, or populations" (Valente 2012, 49)—that helps transnational consumers optimize their access to and benefits from their TSS (e.g., efficient use of resources such as time and money, best consumption experience, widest choice, most fluent commercial relationship). Reciprocally, clustering consumption maintains the multiplicity of tie strength and tie content, thus reinforcing the TSS over time. Clustering consumption requires intense planning and scheduling of consumption activities across the network and is sensitive to external disruptions, which can be costly.

Transnational consumers' clustering concerns all consumption domains and decisions and aims to enhance consumption by optimizing access to multiple international markets and limiting redundancy between clusters. By clustering consumption, consumers disaggregate everyday consumption acts into smaller bundles of purposeful practices that can each be accomplished in a specific cluster within the TSS. For example, Cristina clusters her consumption across borders to ensure that she benefits from the best consumption experiences possible given her choices and access to three markets within her TSS:

> I do a lot of shopping in the US because I can find brands that I know. I buy a very specific makeup from there for example. I'm just very attached to my American makeup brand. I cannot find it anywhere else… For me, this is Boston. I do grocery shopping in Greece. I bring canned products and wine to my place in London. I haven't really made an attempt to search here [London]. It is just that shopping in Greece and in the US is much easier because I know what I want and I don't need to try so many things to find a good one. The only item [for which] I tried to try here [UK] until I found one we liked was meat, and only because it is hard to ship meat. (Cristina, 35, UK, Greece, US, Interview)

TABLE 2

TRANSNATIONAL MARKET NAVIGATION

TMN strategy	Definition	Impact of TSS on TMN strategy	Impact of TMN strategy on TSS
1. Clustering consumption	Non-redundantly localizing consumption in clusters across the TSS to optimize access to and benefits derived from ties.	Disaggregating everyday consumption acts into smaller bundles of purposeful practices that can each be accomplished in a specific cluster. Consumption clusters are shaped by the logic of efficiency and network maintenance to secure future access.	Maintaining the multiplicity of tie strength and tie content (to sustain the existing network). Ensuring network flexibility by allowing variations in investments leading to reinforcing or weakening certain areas in the network over time.
2. Embracing commercial lock-ins	Actively sustaining transnational path dependency of networks to enhance consumption and consumer wellbeing. Three forms of path dependency: chosen, routinized, and fully imposed by the structure of the TSS.	Securing commercial and financial benefits. Maintaining a sense of security by preserving consumption routines and ties spread across clusters. Imposing penalties when consumption practices deviate from established routines. Imposing the norm of reciprocity on consumption practices and tie frequencies	Reinforcing dominant ties and flows between and within clusters (to strengthen the existing network). Prioritizing some ties over others. This involves strategic decision-making, often to meet the expectations of other actors without forming strong shared ideas, beliefs, and identities.
3. Developing cluster-based competency	Acquiring cluster-based knowledge and skills to engage with each cluster and transferable knowledge and skills to maneuver the TSS.	Shaping learning resources and skills according to localized consumption cluster requirements that are often not transferable across clusters. Leaving consumers vulnerable when broader market knowledge is required (e.g., medical emergency).	Enabling deeper engagement with selected network actors and clusters via domain-specific learning efforts (to maintain tie strength).

NOTE.— TMN, transnational market navigation.

Cristina highlights a cosmetics cluster and a food cluster localized in different parts of her TSS. The proliferation of global online shopping has enabled our informants to retain consumption patterns without needing to fully engage in every market of their TSS. By clustering her consumption, Cristina maintains her embodied taste and does not feel pressured to interrupt her previous practices or to be nostalgic about them. This contrasts with what is usually found among migrants (Peñaloza 1994) or high-cultural-capital expatriates (Thompson and Tambyah 1999). Cristina also clusters the rest of her activities in specific parts of her TSS with a work-focused cluster and a leisure-focused cluster: "*I've established my life in the UK, but UK is mainly for work, it's actually only work. If I refer to home, I do refer to my flat in Greece. I work hard when I'm in the UK, and I have some good colleagues that I hang out with while I'm here, but most of my weekend-type activities are still in Greece*." In this sense, consumers' transnational market navigation differs both in degree and nature from migrants' and expats' consumption, in which a limited set of consumption practices (e.g., major rituals such as a wedding celebration) might be reserved for the country of origin (Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994). Transnational consumption also differs from the consumption of global nomads who disengage from prior local consumer cultures (Atanasova et al. 2022; Bardhi et al. 2012). Indeed, transnational consumers' understanding of markets is not only localized but also transnational in nature and shaped by the type of ties across borders. Transnational consumers mobilize the market knowledge they developed during past mobility experiences to make sense of and enhance present consumption.

Moreover, little repetition of consumption occurs across the clusters (i.e., nonredundancy), allowing for maximum complementarity between the different clusters. Cristina, for example, does not make any effort to duplicate her consumption activities across her TSS, except when cross-border purchasing is impossible (e.g., fresh meat). This also shows how prior mobility experiences in other locations and the nature of embeddedness in this network shape transnational consumers' current consumption. Cristina's example reflects clusters deeply embedded in local practices and norms (e.g., cultural socializing habits, professional values), but some clusters can also be transnational. For example, our academic informants cluster their work-related consumption practices within a transnational cluster comprising a professional network of academics and academic institutions that spreads across their TSS.

Reciprocally, clustering consumption helps transnational consumers sustain the TSS. It helps them identify, nurture, and regroup the nodes that occupy the same roles and purposes (e.g., professional, leisure, consumption) to optimize efforts and minimize the time and money required to learn new practices (e.g., testing new suppliers). That is,

clustering is a partition of the TSS according to the content of ties (e.g., consumption, work, leisure) and the possibilities offered in different parts of the TSS. As a result, clustering helps not only to maintain the multiplicity of tie strength and content needed to sustain the existing network but also helps to modify, expand, or narrow them when necessary. For example, Emma explains:

> The way I describe my relation with London is I'm happy here and I like my job. It's pretty much why I am here. But if some reason comes up, I might consider moving back to the US. . .. I still go there a lot and to be honest, I still do most of my shopping there. We either go there for work or to visit friends. Then we add another week for shopping. This year, for example, I had gone to a work trip in May, a wedding in June, another work trip and an extra week in July. Every time I go there, I bring an extra suitcase and extend my trip to do my shopping for the entire year. (Emma, 40, UK, Spain, Italy, US, Interview)

Emma explains how she maintains the strength of her connections in this specific professional cluster by regularly organizing multipurpose trips that always include a significant shopping component. By clustering her consumption and maintaining a significant part of it in the US, she regularly maintains this area of her network. For example, she admits that she plans almost all her clothing purchases during her extended visits to the US. Nonetheless, clustering consumption allows for any variation in investment in different clusters, which can either lead to reinforcing or weakening certain areas as needed. For Emma, this might mean further reinforcing her US-based work and consumption clusters at the detriment of her social London-based cluster.

Emma's example also illustrates that transnational consumers create a market portfolio of various cross-border and global clusters with specialized consumption preferences and tastes. In a way, they structure their lives to achieve optimal access to multiple markets. To do so, they engage in meticulous market evaluations (e.g., quality, price, delivery) and strive to create a balance between economic gains and efforts needed to create, cut, or reinforce ties (e.g., travel, planning). Emma emphasizes this trade-off: "*I know that I'm going to go to the States anyway to see ex-colleagues and friends. I do my shopping too because I know I can get them [at] a third of the price that I would get it in the UK, at an outlet kind of mall. For airline tickets, I get the best deals. I'm very good at it. So, the whole trip including the shopping is very cost-effective*." While clustering consumption across borders might seem to be an agentic practice, transnational consumers remain vulnerable to structural and market shifts. Despite all their planning and optimizing, frequent domestic or global disruptions (e.g., discontinuation of a market offering, disruption in transportation and market access) may force these consumers to reconsider and potentially reconfigure their clusters.

Embracing Commercial Lock-Ins

Embracing commercial lock-ins involves actively sustaining the transnational path dependency of networks to enhance consumption (e.g., tested and trusted commercial friendships, reciprocal benefits, network benefits) and well-being (e.g., comfort, familiarity, feeling of security) that can be threatened in precarious conditions such as frequent mobilities (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022). Path dependency in social networks refers to persistence in actions and being locked into certain pathways of actions determined by previous ties and mobility decisions (David 2007; Sydow, Schreyögg, and Koch 2009). In other words, transnational consumers end up actively and continuously sustaining some of their previously made social ties across borders by maintaining their cross-border consumption practices and routines. Paradoxically, we find that transnational consumers both *endure* commercial lock-ins imposed by the path-dependent possibilities and limitations of their TSS and *foster* them to enhance their consumption. Specifically, we identify a continuum of lock-ins sustained by transnational consumers that ranges from chosen (e.g., maintaining relationships with cross-border commercial friends), to routinized (e.g., sustaining social relationships with friends across borders through consumption rituals), to fully imposed by the structure of the TSS (e.g., upholding financial obligations such as paying taxes). While not all purchases and consumption decisions transnational consumers make are path dependent, they must maintain a trade-off between flexibility (e.g., moving between multiple markets within their TSS) and self-reinforcement (e.g., accepting the path dependency resulting from routinized cross-border consumption). Our informants benefit from this strategy but also struggle with its practical (e.g., money) and emotional (e.g., fear of missing out, loss of opportunities) costs.

We observe that the embrace of commercial lock-ins is driven by the norm of reciprocity in social networks—that is, the obligation to repay in kind what was done for them (Faist 2000). This is visible in the following quote from Emma, who maintains a commercial friendship (Price and Arnould 1999) with her favorite hairdresser (and other service providers) in Spain despite having moved abroad more than a decade ago. Since then, Emma has been traveling internationally for haircuts, including trans-Atlantic flights during the 8 years she resided primarily in the US and trans-channel flights during the 8 years she resided primarily in London:

> My hairdresser is in Spain and has been there [for] ages. My hairstylist is a funny guy and I like him, so why go somewhere else? I know the guys that run the shop, I would

> probably feel uncomfortable going to another shop. Whenever I'm in Spain, I give him a call and he would arrange a meeting for me very quickly. I don't go to hairdresser a lot anyway, so I can wait for a while. Because I want to go there, I did it even when I was in US. I would have waited or scheduled a trip for that. Because they know me and I know them, say hi, gossip kind of stuff. I don't need to book in advance. I call, can I come? They do that because they know me and I'm loyal. Same goes for the beautician. (Emma, 40, UK, Spain, Italy, US, Interview)

Preserving these commercial friendships helps transnational consumers secure commercial, financial, and social benefits, such as Emma's access to her tested and trusted commercial friends and a priority welcome without an appointment in exchange for her loyalty. Upholding the norm of reciprocity shapes how transnational consumers navigate markets and decide on which ties to maintain. Thus, consumption ties and their frequency may mean meeting the expectations of other actors without forming strong shared ideas, beliefs, and identities. Deviating from established routines (e.g., switching to a new provider) can result in penalties imposed by other actors (e.g., longer wait time) and losing network benefits (e.g., premium service, trust, local knowledge).

We observe that the decision to embrace commercial lock-ins and reproduce consumption actions across borders (e.g., Viviana's use of health care services in Italy instead of free coverage in the UK) is also driven by the desire to maintain a sense of security (Phipps and Ozanne 2017) by preserving consumption routines and ties spread across multiple international clusters. For example, Elena, who now lives in Luton, a suburb next to one of London's airports, has not made much of an attempt to find alternatives to her previously established routines in Italy, implicitly highlighting the costs of disrupting well-established routines:

> I live in Luton, but all my hobbies are still in Italy. I spend [the] majority of my free time tracking, climbing, skiing, whatever could possibly be done in the mountains. That is really the main reason why I haven't permanently moved to the UK. I spend most of my weekends in Italy. Living in Luton [near the airport] has created an easy, well not very easy, but a sustainable arrangement for me. (Elena, 38, UK, Italy, Interview)

Embracing commercial lock-ins maintains consumption routines, preventing their disruption, which is costly (e.g., long processes involved in rethinking each consumption decision anew), and the perception of a lack of order, meaning, and continuity (already weakened by the lack of a stable home) which might negatively affect well-being. Existing relationships and past familiar and successful experiences provide a sense of stability, security, and confidence (Phipps and Ozanne 2017) that facilitates the transnational lifestyle. This contrasts with chronically liminal consumers who embrace frequent mobility and cross-country relocations as ways to deroutinize their consumption and sustain their flexibility (Mimoun and Bardhi 2022). We note that paying to benefit from health care in one country, even when free coverage is provided in another country a consumer has more regular access to, is common (this includes routine checkups, elective and non-elective treatments, and ambulatory hospital stays and surgeries). This reflects our informants' significant path dependency, which is often voluntary as in the case of health care.

Reciprocally, embracing commercial lock-ins affects the TSS by reinforcing the dominant ties and flows between and within clusters; that is, it tends to strengthen the existing network. For Elena, her Luton location provides her easy and fast access to a European transportation system to sustain her transnational lock-ins and set priories between different sets of ties, thus choosing which to strengthen.

Nonetheless, embracing commercial lock-ins involves practical (e.g., money, time) and emotional (e.g., fear of missing out, loss of professional opportunities) costs, as transnational consumers must continue investing in the maintenance of their cross-border social ties. For example, after having invested in developing local commercial friendships (Price and Arnould 1999) for over a decade, Emma would lose significant network benefits, such as trust, local knowledge, and a local understanding of service quality, by switching to new providers. Thus, to maintain these commercial relationships, she schedules her trips around her needs for services, even if those choices are typically made on the basis of proximity and availability (Berry, Seiders, and Grewal 2002). Similarly, Cristina travels internationally, at times across continents, several times a year to shop for everyday goods and services.

As a result, transnational consumers attempt to find a balance between maintaining a diverse and adaptable TSS and embracing commercial lock-ins. By maintaining this balance, they prioritize certain clusters and shape their TSS. Indeed, maintaining ties requires investments, and investing in some clusters means risking losing others. For example, Celine (age 25), who lives between London, Paris, and Milan, explains how sometimes she feels an ambiguous sense of treachery when thinking of her multiple travels:

> I interrupt it [my life in London] to resume my Parisian life, which suddenly resumes its [own] course, which runs in parallel, and . . . there's a feeling of, well, I'm cheating a bit. I feel a little weird. (Celine, 25, UK, France, Italy, Interview)

Embracing commercial lock-ins can also require extensive sacrifices to maintain the TSS that are not necessarily recognized by others. For example, in her diary, Ilham emphasizes the considerable efforts and resources she expends to sustain her personal and professional

responsibilities. Yet, she feels discriminated against at work where her emotional and physical sacrifices are not recognized.

> I think that my boss doesn't realize all the effort that I put into this commute to actually work for them. I don't think they realize that for me it's a lot of effort doing all this commute between Paris and London and when I have less recognition [of] my work, I immediately think it's unfair. Because of that meeting with my boss that didn't go well, I started looking for jobs that appreciate my efforts. I'm sure that soon I will find one. (Ilham, 32, UK, France, Interview)

Ilham's efforts can be considered a form of consumer work—that is, productive activities merging consumption and production (Trujillo-Torres et al. 2023)—as she carries out a variety of tasks (e.g., planning trips, monitoring ticket rates, purchasing and reselling tickets, packing, maintaining two residences) to maintain her lifestyle. Ilham's consumer work allows her to afford her lifestyle by optimizing the value residing in the goods and services she purchases. For example, she must break even every year on her transportation costs while traveling weekly to meet her personal and professional obligations. To do so, she manages her income as "cash flow" to take advantage of sales, peak periods, and price variations that she seems to predict accurately given her extensive experience. She spends an extensive amount of time and effort on her travel plans, which require everyday attention. Yet, because she is not always copresent, her efforts are often dismissed.

Onkar, who works full-time in Canada while traveling regularly to care for his elderly parents in India, faces similar challenges:

> My father is ill and might need immediate help or hospitalization and I am expected to be there every time he needs something like a hospitalization that can happen once every couple of months as he is also developing dementia. Every morning I call [my parents], if they are OK my day goes on fine, if not, I have to book a flight. It is not easy since I use all my time off from work and lose money in case I need to stay longer. Last time, I stayed for a month, 10 days of which was in the hospital. I had to quit my last job because it wasn't flexible enough and my manager didn't understand me. (Netnography)

Onkar is in charge of his parents' medical needs, dealing with insurance and hospitalizations, arranging doctor appointments, and even monitoring weekly medical tests. Onkar is a typical case of transnational caregivers who must manage different cross-border responsibilities that require their ongoing and frequent presence. Their extensive commitment is much more significant than that of a migrant. For Onkar, this involves multiple daily calls and regular stays lasting from a week to a month. He even lost his job once because of his travels. Yet, transnational consumers' sacrifices to maintain the TSS are not always recognized by others.

These examples clearly reveal the challenges and opportunities of embracing commercial lock-ins. On the one hand, maintaining cross-border familial, social, financial, and professional obligations can be stressful and, at times, impossible to manage. For example, missing social gatherings with colleagues in the UK as a result of personal obligations in France has affected Ilham's relationships with her employer and caused emotional distress. On the other hand, the multilocal network of social ties constituting the TSS gives transnational consumers a sense of confidence and safety in case local situations become unfavorable. Despite its challenges, embracing commercial lock-ins is deemed critical to personal and professional development. It also offers a sense of empowerment and security that traditional migrants (Luedicke 2015; Üstüner and Holt 2007) might otherwise lack (at least until acquiring citizenship in their host country).

Finally, we note that this market navigation strategy is particularly dynamic; that is, consumers adjust it to narrow or widen the TSS in reaction to major disruptions (e.g., economic, political, and social crises) or personal life changes (e.g., illness, marriage). This dynamic capability increases the resilience of transnational consumers to external shocks and familial and personal developments. For example, Min (43, China, UK, Interview) extended his investment in his TSS to accommodate both familial and professional responsibilities. Specifically, to achieve what he believes are better academic opportunities for his children, he developed additional commercial lock-ins in the UK by renting a flat for his wife and two children in Oxford in addition to sharing a rental apartment in London (where they used to live together and he still permanently works). This change involved establishing new ties (e.g., strong social and financial ties in Oxford) and altering tie meanings (e.g., reducing the frequency with which he engages with his past strong social ties in London and refocusing this cluster on professional needs).

Developing Cluster-Based Competency

Developing cluster-based competency entails in acquiring (1) cluster-based knowledge and skills to engage with each cluster and (2) transferable knowledge and skills to maneuver the TSS (e.g., knowing when to extend a network and explore new clusters, switching skills to move between different cluster-based market logics, logistical know-how). This strategy allows transnational consumers to navigate cluster-based (vs. country-based) cultures to relate to smaller communities, places, or local marketplaces without having to adapt to an entire consumer society. It helps them optimize the time, effort, and money invested in each cluster by engaging selectively within clusters, as temporarily and narrowly as needed, and by adjusting to

different and, at times, contradictory, market logics across clusters. Nonetheless, this strategy does not fully eliminate the ambivalence, uncertainties, and challenges associated with living in different cultures at once. This strategy is evident in the following quote from Paola, who purposefully, narrowly, and occasionally adapts to the social norms of her work cluster in the UK while willingly refraining from exercising the general social and cultural norms of British society:

> Paola: I'm not a beer drinker, I actually don't like to go to pubs just to drink. I'm Greek, drink is part of [a] meal for me, but I do it [pub drinking] when I go out with my colleagues and my boss [in London]. I don't mind, it's only a few times a year.
>
> Researcher: How familiar do you think you are with the UK in general?
>
> Paola: Not much to be honest! Only things that I need on a daily basis, mostly work-related. I'm actually very good at those, but I don't know some very basic things like who do I call when I'm sick [or] how can I see a specialist. I didn't have the time to figure that out. I didn't have the necessity too. Or, I don't know social rules, economic rules, or housing in the UK. There is a cost associated with learning how the system works. To be honest, not knowing is sometimes scary, but I don't have the time to learn everything. I will learn when I need to. (Paola, 34, UK, Italy, US, Interview)

Paola purposefully adapts only temporarily and narrowly to her work cluster's drinking culture as a way to relate to her professional community in the UK. Her narrow and domain-specific engagement with the UK consumer culture is not due to her lack of capital or skills, as suggested in prior studies (Peñaloza 1994; Üstüner and Holt 2007). Instead, by strategically developing cluster-based competency, Paola adapts to living in a TSS. Transnational consumers must maintain multiple tie values (e.g., social, familial, professional) and tie frequency in such a way that engaging with one cluster does not constrain engagement needed in another cluster. For example, the time and efforts to learn and exercise the UK consumer culture could interfere with Paola's commitment to the other clusters in her TSS. Such cluster-based engagement across the TSS enables the strengthening of specific clusters but can also cause a sense of insecurity due to lacking broader market knowledge. Paola admits that her partial learning of British consumer culture (i.e., mainly work-related) can be problematic when an issue arises that requires market knowledge outside her cluster's domain (e.g., medical emergency).

Transnational consumers must also acquire transferable knowledge and skills to maneuver the TSS. They must learn and exercise a wide range of consumption practices (e.g., exercising liquid and solid consumption simultaneously across the TSS) and market knowledge and skills (e.g., the ability to be a renter in one cluster and a homeowner in another). This is due to resource limitations (e.g., financial limitations to exercise the same level of ownership in different clusters), the content of each cluster, and differences in each cluster's consumer culture (e.g., dominated by access-based consumption vs. ownership). For example, Adam, who maintains work clusters in Dubai and London and a family cluster in Berlin, highlights different ways that he deploys homemaking practices (e.g., home ownership, material possessions, domestic consumption practices such as cooking and grocery shopping) across his clusters:

> In Dubai, I stay in a hotel that I have a contract with. It is easier than owning or renting, also cheaper. Whenever I come here [Dubai] I stay in the same hotel. I have learned to live with basics here. I try to cook a little, but mostly grab something on the way home. . . In London, I'm in a rental flat with a nice kitchen. I like to cook. . .. I can afford [to do so] in London, not Dubai because I spend more time in London and it is my main place of work. I also brought some rugs to my place in London to make it homier. . .. In Berlin, the story is totally different. I obviously have my relatives and my wife and neighbors. It is a very different social life. I have a house that my wife and I built together 30 years ago. I have a huge library of DVDs and CDs of operas and all kinds of music and that is my entertainment when I'm there. I have two dogs that I enjoy. . .. I watch more TV when I'm in Berlin. Some comedy and late shows in London, but it's rare because I always have work to do. In Dubai, I have some of my entertainment with me thanks to the digital world . . . but reading besides work is mostly *Gulf News* and *Financial Times* that relate to my work. (Adam, 62, UK, Germany, UAE, Interview)

Adam has developed skills and knowledge that allow him to adopt seemingly distinct and contradictory styles and forms of consumption across the three clusters of his TSS, enabling them to coexist and be managed. In addition to becoming competent in some general aspects of each consumer culture to manage his daily practices (e.g., grocery shopping, transportation, housing) (i.e., cluster-based knowledge and skills), Adam has learned how to move between different consumption mindsets (i.e., transferable knowledge and skills). He exercises home ownership and traditional homemaking practices in his family cluster in Berlin and access-based consumption (i.e., rental and hotel apartments and basic material possessions) in his work clusters in Dubai and London. He needs to learn not only how to navigate each market but also how to switch between consumption modes (solid vs. liquid), manifesting different symbolic practices and values (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017). This finding extends Oswald's (1999) culture swapping practices by showing that mobile consumers engage in cultural code switching not only between ethnic codes as part of their identity but also between consumption mindsets as part of their everyday practices. A

transnational consumer frequently faces different, and at times contradictory, market systems that require changing a particular practice or routine (e.g., different homemaking practices, different approaches to material possessions). These pragmatic adjustments are due not to their postmodern identity position but to the need to manage and maintain the TSS.

These examples show that acquiring cluster-based competency can be motivated by the logic of ways of being (Levitt and Schiller 2004). In this way, transnational consumers can embed themselves in a marketplace without identifying with its culture or belonging to it. We observe that strategic and pragmatic motives underscore how our informants coordinate the social norms of various clusters in their network. We relate this to Ong's (1999, 137) finding that the citizenship choices and affiliations among Asian diasporas can be driven by economic reasons "as opposed to identifying with a community based on shared political rights." While our focus is not on our informants' citizenship behavior, their strategic and pragmatic stance to navigate complex, dynamic, multiple, and precarious embeddedness in the TSS follows a similar logic to that of Ong's flexible citizenship. For example, Jeff highlights the very pragmatic way he plans his routinized consumption across his TSS:

> For my work clothing, since I'm in Singapore, I would go to Vietnam or Malaysia and get everything tailored, because it's just much better, great quality, fits well, and cheaper or same price as Burton [British clothing brand]. It just makes sense for shirts and work trousers to do that rather than buying stuff in London [primary shopping cluster]. There also have the sizes that I fit in, unlike the one I find in Singapore that are often too small. (Jeff, 33, Belgium, Singapore, UK, Interview)

Jeff, like many other informants, coordinates market navigation practices by developing a combination of cluster-based knowledge and skills and transferable knowledge and skills. He has, for example, invested time and effort to find a suitable tailor, learn his preferred working arrangement (e.g., price, availability, style, contact procedures), and undertake a desirable process of transaction (e.g., travel arrangements, international shipment, delivery methods). He has developed extensive cluster-specific knowledge and skills without acquiring an extended knowledge of broader social and commercial norms. Developing cluster-based competency highlights the central role of clusters within the TSS that form the foundation of many contemporary mobility-based lifestyles. This contrasts with the country-based engagement and general learning view typical in prior studies on mobile consumers (Mehta and Belk 1991; Peñaloza 1994). This finding thus extends understanding of mobile consumers' consumption practices, which prior research has predominantly equated with country-based socialization and learning (Luedicke 2011).

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

A Networked Understanding of Globally Mobility Consumers

Building on studies on transnationalism and social networks, we expand prior research on the study of consumption in global mobility by adopting a focus on the ways of being. We move away from consumer acculturation and, instead, introduce and conceptualize the notion of transnational market navigation. We characterize transnational market navigation by three strategies: clustering consumption, embracing commercial lock-ins, and developing cluster-based competency.

Transnational market navigation is an important concept because it highlights how living in the TSS is complex, challenging, dynamic, recourse-heavy, and often precarious. Indeed, transnational consumers must acquire and manage plural and tacit market, professional, national, ethnic, and subcultural knowledge, relationships, and logics across a network of multiple local and global clusters. We show that adopting a transnational lifestyle can be challenging, and we do not intend to glorify this lifestyle in our study. The significant financial costs and logistical efforts involved in transnational mobility (e.g., arranging travel, communication, setup) are not provided by employers, as would be the case for professional expatriates. In this sense, transnational consumers are more similar to transmigrants who pursue mobility individually. We show that time and economic capital are essential in maintaining and optimizing a transnational network. Our informants testify to being stretched to the limit in terms of these resources, while also feeling at times fragmented across space. As we do not focus on the challenges of transnationalism, future research could explore the emotional and social toll caused by being in a TSS as well as the resources needed to facilitate this lifestyle. More specifically, we contribute to the study of consumption in global mobility in several ways on which we elaborate next.

A Networked Approach to Consumption in Global Mobility. Transnational market navigation advances the study of consumption in global mobility beyond the home–host duality and a focus on a nation-state by highlighting the crucial role of transnational social networks in consumption. We argue that social networks and specifically the strength and content of transnational ties must be taken into consideration to understand consumption in global mobility. A social network perspective goes beyond examining consumption in the host destination; it also considers how consumption in one place is anchored within a complex network of other local and global localities and clusters. For example, an acculturation study of Anka's case would investigate her socialization in the UK (i.e., her

current host country) and might conclude that Anka is segregated from the UK consumer culture as she rather sustains her German identity and acquired Swedish way of life. Thus, without adopting a transnational network perspective, a study of global consumer mobility would be incomplete.

Transnational market navigation can enlighten the consumption of other types of consumer mobility that are underscored by a network rather than a duality perspective. These may include, for example, the consumption of seasonal migrants (Li and Stodolska 2006), foreign students (Vredeveld and Coulter 2019), retired expatriates, and health tourists. For example, older British citizens who have lived their lives abroad used to return to the UK to benefit from its free health system. Yet, the crisis this system is currently facing (Colchester and Ettenheim 2023) might create new transnational patterns that could be explored with our model. Institutions can thus pressure and transform the TSS. Our study shows that when consumers engage in a TSS, their life will continue to remain embedded in it, even if one cluster or tie weakens, because of personal, market, or institutional path dependency.

Our model can also contribute to the understanding of consumption beyond global mobility by showcasing the role of clusters in how a single consumer can manage seemingly contradictory consumption. This is especially the case when consumers are simultaneously embedded in multiple markets with potentially contradictory logics, whether in mobility or not. For example, we observe that our informants structure their TSS in a way that allows them to optimize their flexibility through liquid consumption (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) in some clusters (e.g., typically in global cities where they work) while prioritizing solid consumption in other clusters to ensure their security (e.g., in a locality anchored in strong social relationships). For example, Adam engages in liquid consumption practices in Dubai and London by relying on sharing economy services for accommodation and transport while investing in home ownership in Berlin where his family resides. This is not because he is a liquid or solid consumer; rather, he strategically engages in these various modalities of consumption to respond to the nature and demands of his TSS. It is also not a case of a postmodern consumer identity (Firat and Venkatesh 1995), as our informants are strongly anchored in multiple local or global clusters. Our model complements prior studies on the co-existence of liquid and solid consumption (Rosenberg, Weijo, and Kerkelä 2023) by emphasizing not only the possibility of differentiated investments across consumption clusters but also the challenges and inherent fragility of such arrangements. For example, some countries and cities are increasingly challenging the legitimacy of some forms of liquid consumption (e.g., strict restrictions of Airbnb in Barcelona). This reveals how institutions' evaluations of liquid consumption practices' legitimacy might threaten TSSs that involve these areas. Thus, we believe that a networked approach can open interesting future research directions and help explain how consumers structure their social space in a way that lessens the damaging impact of contradictions.

Implications for Agency in Social Networks. The concept of transnational market navigation links an explicit focus on individual agency with the normative structural stance of the social network perspective. Our findings show that transnational market navigation relies on strategically leveraging social networks to benefit from opportunities and manage the challenges associated with maintaining such a transnational network. We observe that transnational consumers develop an enterprising self (du Gay 1995) as a way of being in the TSS. Similar to the entrepreneurial Asian diaspora in California, whose economic rationales rather than nationalistic loyalties underlie their citizenships (Ong 1999), our informants also view their transnational network strategically and often manage it with an entrepreneurial ethos (du Gay 1995). For example, we show that transnational consumers actively choose to sustain network path dependencies from prior relocations as a way to gain better market access and service quality. Distinct from the argument of Ong and du Gay, underlying their motivations are not only an economic rationale but also a desire both to nurture a sense of order and a feeling of security and well-being and to maintain strong social ties to people and places. These network lock-ins provide a form of social capital that can also be mobilized as social support. In a way, these lock-ins can empower transnational consumers to extend their transnational network in the pursuit of further opportunities thanks to the security provided by their network of social, commercial, and institutional ties in some clusters. At the same time, we find that transnational consumers are also often caught in path dependencies and must endure and carry the cost of such network structural consequences.

Moreover, we find that, because of their enhanced existential reflexivity (Thompson, Henry, and Bardhi 2018) developed from prior relocations, transnational consumers become more strategic about re-acculturating into a new consumer society and, instead, deploy purposefully and narrowly cluster-based learning. We identify two dimensions of cluster-based competency that facilitate living in the TSS and allow consumers to concurrently navigate both the cluster and TSS levels: narrow cluster-specific market knowledge and skills and transferable knowledge and skills that. This finding contrasts with prior works underscored by the assumption of acculturation as a socialization project. We show that transnational consumers perceive a degree of autonomy and resourcefulness in how they "strategically deploy marketplace resources to accomplish their identity goals" (Thompson et al. 2018, 572). Prior research has, at times, highlighted the strategic nature of consumption in global mobility for purposes of either

cultural capital accumulation (Kravets and Sandikci 2014; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007) or cultural swapping, in which migrants deliberately swap cultural identities by switching the goods that represent their home and host consumer cultures respectively (Oswald 1999). We find that cultural capital accumulation is not an underlying motivation of the strategic orientation characterizing transnational consumption. While the strategic flexibility developed by transnational consumers over time may also be part of an enhanced cultural capital that may emerge from their mobility, this is not their main focus or motivation. Rather, strategic flexibility results from having to navigate a complex transnational social field. At the same time, we show that a strategic and agentic navigation is not only a matter of identities, as Oswald (1999) argues, but also a matter of everyday consumption that represents an adaptation to living and managing one's life across a TSS.

A Dynamic Model of Cross-Border Consumption. Finally, our model captures the dynamic aspect of cross-border consumption in relation to major disruptions (e.g., economic, political, and social crises). The lasting global uncertainties and crises associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and the return of nationalism (e.g., Brexit), for example, have created new opportunities and challenges for consumers pursuing a transnational lifestyle. For example, European transnational consumers whose social space includes the UK could adapt their network in response to the impact of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic on borders (i.e., more complex to travel, increased taxes) in two ways. On the one hand, they could narrow down their TSS by investing more in their UK ties and solidifying their consumption, generally increasing their local embeddedness in this country. They might even withdraw from other parts of their networks if some cross-border ties become too difficult to maintain. On the other hand, they could further activate non-UK parts of their networks and create alternative consumption clusters to replace the UK-based ones to protect themselves if maintaining UK-based ties becomes unsustainable. This option might also lead to making the TSS even more transnational by investing in new locales, expanding cross-border ties, and adding more lock-ins. The first option is more feasible for those mobile consumers who must endure path dependencies to the UK either professionally (e.g., their job is highly customized to the local market and not easily transferable) or due to familial ties. However, if the UK market becomes highly undesirable, transnational consumers can pursue the second option.

In other words, transnational consumers can diversify political, economic, and health risks across geographic borders and reduce the uncertainty and anxiety associated with living in one country. Transnationalism provides a sense of agency and choice. During the COVID-19 lockdown, for example, many transnational consumers had the option to relocate temporarily to safer destinations within their network, and some elected to do so. Nonetheless, the crisis of mobility caused by the global pandemic (e.g., closed borders, health risks, fewer travel options) made transnationalism more difficult to maintain for a time. Temporarily, these consumers may have been limited to virtual travel or copresence with colleagues and family members via digital technology (e.g., Zoom). While things have to some extent returned to normal, future crises could question the feasibility of transnational consumer lifestyles if they make maintaining a TSS too challenging because of difficulties in border crossing, transportation, and legal systems. Having to constantly reconfigure one's TSS and remain in a state of open-ended mobility might create an enduring sense of liminality, as consumers must engage in repeated life transitions (Mimoun 2017). This may imply both the challenges (e.g., reduced sense of security, lasting ambivalence, high uncertainty) and the generative potential (e.g., sense of creativity, empowerment) of maintaining a TSS. Future research could further explore how consumers' market navigation evolves under the constant reconfiguration of the TSS and the challenges and opportunities associated with such reconfigurations.

Transnationalism as a Unique Approach to Consumer Mobility

We also contribute to the understanding of an understudied type of consumer mobility—namely that of transnational consumers. Prior research has mainly focused on the mobility of migrants (Askegaard et al. 2005; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994; Veresiu and Giesler 2018), expatriates (Thompson and Tambyah 1999), and global nomads (Bardhi et al. 2012; Figueiredo and Uncles 2015). We study a prevalent mobile lifestyle, the transnational consumer lifestyle, in which consumers inhabit two or more countries simultaneously. We argue that the transnational lifestyle is more widespread in contemporary globalization because of the structuring influence of transportation and communication technologies and of the globalization of markets, brands, retail, and media.

Transnationalism is a unique approach to the study of consumer mobility because it foregrounds the roles of place, locality, and social embeddedness in structuring consumer choices (Portes 1995). We show that our informants value their relationships with multiple locales and maintain them rather than substituting them with new relationships when they enter a new consumer culture. While they embrace a nomadic quest driven by the demands of the global and precarious job market, they also resist and counterbalance such nomadic and deterritorializing tendencies by maintaining strong anchors and roots to important homes, personal and commercial relationships, and brands. These findings contrast with the mobility experience and

consumption in global nomadism, in which consumers mainly establish an ephemeral and instrumental relationship with places (Bardhi et al. 2012).

We also contribute to the understanding of transnationalism by empirically unpacking the networked structure of the TSS and identifying its three dimensions (multicontent, multistrength, and translocality). The transnational social field is an important concept in transnationalism studies. However, related works have mainly been conceptual without much empirical exploration (Faist 2000; Levitt and Schiller 2004). We highlight the reciprocal interaction between consumption and the TSS and show how consumers cultivate, maintain, and adjust the TSS through their consumption practices and commercial relationships. Future research could further investigate the structure of the TSS and the role of power dynamics resulting from social class, gender, race, or geography in this social field and their influence on market navigation strategies, especially among underprivileged mobile consumers.

Finally, we contribute more broadly to the study of transnationalism in social sciences by examining a particular form of transnationalism: consumers whose transnational mobility is sustained by a range of modes of social organization, transportation, and communication. Prior research on transnational social formations has tended to focus on diasporas as the exemplary transnational community (Vertovec 2009). We find that contemporary transnational consumers have a different experience of mobility than diasporic consumers, whose experiences are characterized as traumatic, fractured, and nostalgic for an imaginary homeland. Although contemporary transnationalism is challenging, we do not find it to be perceived as traumatic, but rather as advantageous. However, our findings are limited as we examine a particular group of professionally driven transnationally mobile consumers. Nonetheless, research has at times referred to transnational mobility as "transnationalism from below" (Mahler 2017; Smith and Guarnizo 1998) to emphasize the counterhegemonic powers of non-elites, who ground their daily lives and activities in at least two countries by forming personalized coalitions and networks with people and institutions across borders. For example, transnational domestic workers engage in precarious contracts for caregiving, domestic work, and seasonal activities across borders while maintaining familial connections in their home countries (Parreñas 2015). Such nonelite transnational mobility may rely on different types of resources (e.g., social vs. economic capital), may involve different types of challenges (e.g., lack of legal entitlement in some areas of the TSS, long-distance parenting), and may lead to distinct consumption and market challenges that further contribute to the concept of market navigation that we introduced. Future research could explore how individuals' different social class backgrounds shape their transnational consumption.

Another fruitful direction for future research is the nature of consumer identity in transnationalism. We note that various relationships and roles can be performed in different countries. We find that transnational lifestyles are motivated by the logic of "ways of being" rather than "ways of belonging" (Levitt and Schiller 2004). Through their strategic and distinct identity anchors in different places, transnational consumers seem to take the position of a *stranger* in several of their localities. The stranger synthesizes nearness and distance in multiple places at the same time (Simmel 1908). Similarly, transnational consumers do not perform a fully deterritorialized identity, as a wanderer or nomad would do (Bardhi et al. 2012; Mimoun 2017), nor do they possess a fixed social position as a fully-fledged member of society. What are the identity outcomes that may emerge from a transnational consumer lifestyle? What "local" or "global" identities do these consumers enact? We leave these questions for future research.

DATA COLLECTION STATEMENT

The first author conducted the majority of in-depth interviews, home visits, and netnography data collection as part of her doctoral dissertation during 2015–2018. The second author conducted some in-depth interviews and home visits independently. More specifically, interviews and ethnographic home visits were conducted between 2017 and 2019 and netnography and personal diaries were collected between 2019 and 2022. All authors engaged in data analysis on multiple occasions using field notes, photographs, interview transcripts, and archived online data. The third author acted as a confidante throughout the process. Data were discussed and analyzed on multiple occasions by all three authors. The final article was jointly authored by all three authors. The authors followed the GDPR guidelines of data protection and data storage carefully. All notes, transcriptions, images, and data are currently stored in password-protected folders on the first author's university computer under the management of the first author and are only accessible to the research team. All informants' data are carefully anonymized. The netnographic data are currently stored in a project directory on the Open Science Framework.

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