

A Netnographic Study of the Virtual Interactions of Brazilian Fans of the National Basketball Association: A Perspective on the Extraordinary Experiences on Twitter

Abstract

The concept of experience in the consumer culture tradition it is a seminal theme since 1980. Over the last few decades, discussions have advanced to incorporate virtual ambiance, prosumption abilities, and interaction between peers. Likewise, the consumption of sports leagues has been reframed based on these three emerging themes. Thus, the present study seeks to understand the prosumption of Brazilian NBA fans' experiences through their virtual interactions. To this end, a netnography was carried out between 2018 and 2020 on Twitter. The results point to the overlapping media and sports aspects that allow Brazilian league fans to experience liberating or stochastic moments and produce their performances or live adventures with NBA broadcasts. Consequently, such findings endorse the ability of sports league fans to prosume extraordinary experiences aligned with elements that reflect sports business management efforts.

Keywords: Extraordinary experience; Fans; NBA; Netnography; Prosumption.

Introduction

The continuous growth of the digital ambiance in market relations achieved in recent decades has been pointed out as a context that encourages consumers to co-create their consumption experiences (Kolyperas, Maglaras & Sparks, 2019; Schmit, Brakus, & Biraglia, 2022). It is a broader movement when consumption experiences move from a passive act to consumers seeking to live experiences in which they act in a participative manner (Cova & Cova, 2019; Kumar, et al., 2022; Taheri et al., 2021).

Participatory culture characterizes fans' practices, a specialized consumer ethos interested in media products through interaction with their peers and, among other factors, intensifying their consumption experiences (Chen, 2021; Kozinets, 2001). Moreover, such interactions are considered prosumption practices since they are assimilated as productive to the managers of media products consumed by fans (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Sugihartati, 2020). Consequently, the understanding that the prosumer capacity legitimizes them as protagonists of their consumption experiences has been spreading among consumer culture research (Botorić, 2022; Daros, 2022).

The discussion on consumers' protagonism in their consumption experience used to rely upon some level as an adaption of seminal 1990s studies which characterize and proposes consumer experience as a cultural phenomenon. Arnould and Price's (1993) understands consumption experiences as an arrangement of individual characteristics and collective dispositions reformulated by consumers. Associated with this perspective, Hirschman and Thompson (1997) proposed two possibilities for consumer experiences that consider the cultural scope. First, ordinary experiences are lived in everyday life and easily reproduced or attainable. On the other hand, there is an emphasis given to extraordinary experiences in which it is possible to escape the routine, experience unusual sensations, and meet new situations and people. Thus, experiences that are considered extraordinary exceed ordinary consumption (Holmqvist, Ruiz, & Peñaloza, 2020; Skandalis; Byrom, & Banister, 2019).

More recently, the possibility of living consumer experiences through massively mediated products has been associated with the popularization of technologies in consumers' routine (Badrinarayanan, Sierra, & Martin, 2015; Miliopoulou, 2021). There is a current of researchers who point to continuous connectivity as a possibility for consumers to experience the unprecedented when they reach products and peer interactions (Kawaf, 2019; Orazi & van Laer, 2022). It is also possible to observe discussions about an escape from the digital to escape the routine, prioritizing the consumption of physical experiences and face-to-face relationships (Tumbat & Belk, 2011; Husemann et al., 2016). Both aspects are present in the consumption experiences of massively mediated sports leagues (Rundio, Dixon, & Heere, 2020).

Broadly, it reflects the possibility of associating sports consumption with two categories. Media sports are those considered relevant due to the space available in media vehicles, their transmissions' reach, and the audience's resonance. On the other hand, practice sports are highlighted by the representation and popularity achieved among their practitioners and their consequent ability to represent the cultural values of particular locations and ethnicities (Moura & de Souza-Leão, 2020; Whannel, 2014).

However, these categories tend to overlap in the consumption experience of globally disseminated sports leagues, as they reinforce the mediatization of sports and simultaneously stimulate their practice among their audience (Boehmer, 2016; Kolyperas & Sparks, 2018). No

wonder sports leagues are among the entertainment segments that move the economy the most (Drewes et al., 2021; Feng et al., 2018) due to their high cultural relevance worldwide (Liu, Baker III, & Leopkey, 2021; Vosgerau et al., 2006). Such characteristics were exponentiated from the modernization of practices and consumption tools that allow sports leagues to reach new audiences in globally dispersed markets, where consumers do not have the option of consuming in person through the global dissemination of television media (Drewes et al., 2021; Giulanotti & Numerato, 2018) and from transmissions broadcast on the Web (e.g., via streaming services) (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Ay & Kaygan, 2022).

A relevant example of this movement can be seen in the continuous market expansion of United States (US) sports leagues that have been adopting the strategy of expanding their audience by reaching international markets (Lee & Cottingham, 2020; Webber, 2018). Among the main leagues in this market, the National Basketball Association (NBA) is responsible for spreading one of the most popular sports in practice and audience worldwide (Liu et al., 2021; Salaga et al., 2020). Consequently, the league has been reaching increasing audiences in markets considered significant exponents of the entertainment industry (e.g., Australia, Brazil, China, India, and Mexico (Murray, 2019; Reed, 2019).

Brazil is one of the countries that provide the NBA with one of the largest audiences outside the US (Verotti, 2022), with simultaneous audience records on paid channels that broadcast league games (i.e., ESPN Brazil) and in interactions on social networks media on the subject (Falchetti, 2019). However, the league itself has carried out marketing actions in the country (e.g., NBA-themed house, promotion of players and teams from the local league to the Summer League) in order to increase the reach of its transmissions, but mainly to popularize experiences with its characteristics that differ from what sports fans in Brazil are used to experiencing (CSM Live, 2022). Thus, considering the consumption experience for sports leagues audience, the present study aims to understand how Brazilian NBA fans prosume experiences from their virtual interactions on the league broadcasts.

To answer this research question, present study adopts a netnographic methodology to understand the marketing relationships influenced by consumers inserted in virtual communities (Kozinets, 2020; Orazi & van Laer, 2022). The study seeks to contribute with interdisciplinary, emerging, and seminal discussions to the culturalist tradition of consumer research: fan consumption practices (Chen, 2021; Daros, 2022; Sugihartati, 2020), co-creation of consumption experiences (Cova & Cova, 2019; Taheri et al., 2021), consumer virtual interactions about mass-mediated products (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Cavalcanti, Souza-Leão, & Moura, 2021) and management of sports business products through digital market opportunities (Ay & Kaygan, 2022; Bond et al., 2021; Rundio, Dixon, & Heere, 2020).

Productive Consumer Experience

The relationship between culture, consumption, and experience occurs when consumers establish meanings to their practices to characterize lifestyles, determining what is or is not adequate or appropriate (Cova & Cova, 2019; Schmitt et al., 2022). Consumer experience is one of the most emblematic themes within consumer research, featuring several seminal discussions and continuous interest in understanding the factors that underlie it (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Carú & Cova, 2003).

Among the definitions attributed to the theme, that of Hirschman and Thompson (1997) became seminal for presenting the consumption experience based on the construction of meanings, cultural aesthetics, interests, or personal availability of consumers. Thus, personal values and feelings impact the perception of the experience when consuming cultural goods. In this perspective, consumers associate their consumption experiences with the context in which they live and with previous conditions they experienced (Husemann et al., 2016; Tumbat & Belk, 2011).

Thus, the experience is formed by subjective aspects intrinsic to individuals, not limited to a passive reception (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Hoang, Cronin, & Skandalis, 2022). According to Arnould and Prince (1993), consumers experience experiences beyond their routines or control, attributing as extraordinary those characterized by an experienced emotional intensity. Holbrook (2000), in turn, states that the extraordinary experience is based on the comparison in which consumers attribute exceptional values to what they consume while labeling as common what is consumed ordinarily by their community and context in which they live.

In both seminal perspectives, the understanding prevails that cultural relations between consumers are closely related to the ability to characterize an experience as ordinary or extraordinary (Jiang, Luk, & Cardinali, 2018; Kumar et al., 2022). Therefore, experiences considered routine for the consumer is classified as ordinary, while extraordinary experiences go beyond the usual (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Carú & Cova, 2003).

When approaching the subject, Lanier and Rader (2015) go beyond this understanding, establishing four types of extraordinary experiences, which vary according to how they are perceived. The liberatory is an experience that allows the consumer to detach himself from ordinary everyday life, existing structures, and human understanding. Performance experiences reflect how consumers reframe known social structures through their performance. The stochastic ones are characterized by the coexistence of the rational and the irrational to live more authentic experiences, the unpredictable result making it unique and more attractive. Adventure experiences result from inserting consumers into new contexts or interactions with elements that happen in a different way than usual, sometimes even inappropriate, illegal, or prohibited.

Such categories reflect how consumers assume what Addis and Holbrook (2001) call the function of co-creators of the extraordinary characteristic of their consumption experiences. Further, they produce both the enjoyment of individual consumption and influence the conception of alien and communal consumption. No wonder the interaction and sense of community when consuming give rise to the definition of these experiences as extraordinary (Cooney, Gilbert, & Wilson, 2014; Hirschman & Thompson, 1997).

Fans' Prosumption Experience

Consumers who live an extraordinary experience interact with each other spontaneously, which allows them to have this sense of community, through which they create a sense of belonging to the group of those who share habits or interests in consumer objects (Arnould & Price, 1993; Tumbat & Belk, 2011). No longer limited to passive consumption (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014), consumers act in a participatory manner that is often considered productive for managers of their products (Taheri et al., 2021).

According to Cova and Cova (2012), this is a broader movement that reflects the old logical change in the functioning of the market, with companies starting to rely on the collaboration of consumers, who are now seen as capable market partners to generate added value. The authors also state that this change in consumer behavior accompanied the technological increase in consumption over the last few years. These stages are not identified separately since the prosumer alternates between the roles of consumer and producer, co-occurring (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Sugihartati, 2020).

The way prosumers co-create their experiences can be greatly stimulated, justified, or justified by the intense relationship and loyalty that consumers have with what they consume (Huang & Chen, 2018). Among consumers who continually seek to maintain a deep relationship with cultural objects and who manage to act productively, fans stand out (Cavalcanti et al., 2021; Chen, 2021).

Kozinets (2001) introduced them in consumer research as a consumer subculture, gaining prominence for their collective and proactive behavior. The most emblematic fans characteristic as specialized consumers are both technological appropriation and cultural convergence that foster the spread of media products they consume. These characteristics became more pronounced as electronic equipment began to allow greater frequency and intensity of interactions (Burgess & Jones, 2020; Fuschillo, 2020), allowing fans to enhance the communal performance and co-creation of their consumption experiences (Canavian, 2021; Chen, 2021).

Among the spaces that allow such action, social networks emerge as the ambiance to foster socio-cultural spaces that bring fans together – i.e., fandoms – and that allow them to commune among peers or intensify their relationship with the media products consumed (Burgess & Jones, 2020). Moreover, the adaptation of events due to the evolution and increased use of social networks has made it possible for fans to feel included even if they are not present in person (Botorić, 2022; Min, Jin, & Han, 2019).

Nevertheless, globally known brands have realized the ability to create hedonic experiences for their fans and consumers through the virtual environment (Kefi & Maar, 2018). In sports prosumption, fans are naturally productive of the events surrounding the games of the teams they support, both in offline and online environments, generating monetary benefits for the sports leagues and franchises involved and also impacting the experiences of the fans themselves, who have unusual experiences (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Bond et al., 2021).

Methodological Procedures

This research was carried out through a netnography, an adaptation of the ethnographic model to the virtual environment, aimed at understanding how interactions carried out in this environment can represent consumption habits (Arvidsson & Caliandro, 2016; Cavalcanti et al., 2021). This methodology seeks to demonstrate the transformations and perpetuities of organizations and online cultures (Orazi & van Laer, 2022) in addition to reflecting on how meanings can be modified, reverberated, and incorporated into the behaviors of the analyzed members (Kozinets, Scaraboto, & Parmentier, 2018).

Kozinets (2020) states that it is of fundamental importance that researchers who adopt the netnographic method bring this model to the capture of characteristics and patterns of behavior existing in the consumer culture of online communities. Additionally, the aforementioned author establishes stages to carry out a Netnography, which are elucidated in Table 1, together with the details of its application for the present study.

Netnography stage	Stage Definition	Research application
Community Choice	For this stage, it is necessary to comply with some criteria, such as the relevance of the community to the analyzed theme, in addition to a considerable volume of interactions that prove to be heterogeneous and add value to the community, adding to the active participation of its members.	The community selected for this study was boosted by ESPN, the broadcaster broadcasting NBA games in Brazil, through the hashtag #NBAnaESPN.
Cultural <i>entree</i>	Stage in which the researchers are inserted in the studied community, becoming familiar with the theme, so that general and specific events become understandable.	For the present study, this step occurred naturally since the researchers have been following the NBA since 2012, and two interact with league fans through Twitter.
Data collection	It refers to a data organization and corpus research built when elements such as photos, videos, or text messages are collected. Interactions between community members are grouped and stored for later analysis.	Data collection was performed using Buzzmonitor, a Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) software that captures virtual interactions. In total, more than 100,000 pages of PDF files were stored, totaling more than 350,000 interactions between January 2018 and July 2020, during which four complete NBA seasons were held.
Data analysis	It is the research moment in which the stored data are investigated to elaborate the search results. This step should follow the steps of codification, reflection, abstraction, comparison, verification, refinement, theoretical generalization, and (possibly) theorization.	The analyzed data were classified into codes assigned to behavioral patterns. With the reflection of abstraction regarding the relationship between them, categories were determined that contemplate these relationships. Further, this stage was performed in a non-linear way, with researchers consulting the corpus whenever necessary. After exchanges between the researchers, there was a refinement of the results found and, after returning to the literature, the theoretical generalization of the results and the conclusion.

Table 1. Netnography' stage and its research application

Source: authors' elaboration

It is prudent to highlight that the present study seeks to meet the quality criteria for carrying out qualitative research through a triangulation of data analysis (Farquhar & Michels, 2016; Stavros & Westberg, 2009) and a detailed description of the results through a detailed, concise, and clear writing (Goulding, 2005; Stewart, Gapp & Harwood, 2017). Additionally, we follow the suggestion by Bond et al. (2021) to produce insights for sports management by observing the fans' prosumer activities through their Twitter discussions.

Furthermore, as a netnographic investigation, the present study adopted Kozinets (2020) suggestions about virtual ethnography quality criteria. Thus, present study meets the **rigor** of the methodology when familiarizing with the cultural context was carried out in detail through the stage of choosing the community and cultural *entree* and estrangement during the validation of data collection and analysis among researchers. **Resonance** and **verisimilitude** are represented in how the results are described, seeking to capture and elucidate the natural particularities of the members and the investigated community. **Coherence** and **background** are present in the effort to return to the literature to interpret and propose reflections on the research results. On the one hand, such reflections also meet the criteria of **instruction** and **practice**, as they point out contributions to managers of sports products. On the other hand, they support **reflexivity** and **innovation** arranged in the final considerations when the study establishes academic contributions and a future research agenda.

Results description and discussion

During the data analysis, eleven codes were identified associated with two categories that characterize unique aspects of the consumption experiences of the Brazilian NBA fandom. Table 2 was created to facilitate the relationship between codes and categories.

Codes	Categories
Brazilian NBA fans escape routine through consumed broadcasts	Media experience of Brazilian NBA fans
Brazilian NBA fans extrapolate to broadcasts and products accessible in the country	
Brazilian NBA fans value their familiarity with U.S. content.	
Brazilian NBA fans celebrate their entertainment events	
Brazilian NBA Fans Highlight Its Exciting Mediatization	
Brazilian NBA fans increases their excitement when watch iconic performances	Sports experience of Brazilian NBA Fans
Brazilian NBA Fans Emphasize Playoff Excitement	
Brazilian NBA fans discuss witnessing the most outstanding player in history	
Brazilian NBA Fans Value Players' Athletic Skills	
Brazilian NBA fans debate team sports strategies	
Brazilian NBA fans resonate behind-the-scenes team news	

Table 2. Codes and categories

Source: authors' elaboration

In the first context, aspects in which fans converge and interact were observed to highlight media aspects that make experiences with the sports league extraordinary experiences. In a perspective that complements the previous one, sports singularities and their consequent competitiveness clash as a theme that makes the league's consumption extraordinary for its Brazilian fandom.

Thus, to present the research results, this section was subdivided into three. The first two present the categories and their definitions, the codes to which they are associated, examples taken from the research corpus, and a brief contextualization of the quotes presented. In the third subsection, we elaborate on an interpretation and reflection of the results to propose an interpretation of the research findings aligned with the literature review and specific insights.

Media Experience of Brazilian NBA Fans

The first category identified deals with the **media experience of Brazilian NBA fans**. In it, tweets whose purpose is related to each other can be observed from the exacerbation of extraordinary experiences and the reference to materials provided through the media generated by the NBA. In this context, it is noted that the league's strategies are crucial to the brand's success in the country since the entire generation of NBA content sharpens the emergence, curiosity, desire, and attitudes of Brazilian fans of the association. Thus, the current category relating consumption to media production in the NBA comprises five empirical codes.

Brazilian NBA fans escape the routine through the broadcasts consumed when they reveal in their messages that watching the league's games is an opportunity to disconnect from tiring day-to-day. Here, NBA games are touted as a welcome escape from reality, either individually or when interacting with peers with similar interests. Both aspects can be seen in the highlighted example:

#nbanaespn I'm in the military, and I'm here in a border squad in the far north of the country, Surucucu-Alto Alegre-Roraima (4 PEF). The isolation is huge, and sometimes

it leaves us with low morale, but this wonderful double round helps a lot to raise morale. Hugs and good night (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the message sent on October 19, 2018, the fan expresses joy in enjoying the match between the Charlotte Hornets and Orlando Magic, in addition to the match between the Indiana Pacers and Milwaukee Bucks broadcast on ESPN on the day in question. It is a moment when the fan finds that NBA broadcasts allow him to escape his tiresome routine. Further, interacting with the ESPN Brazil channels team on Twitter and with other fans allows him to forget the isolation inherent to his work duties.

In the following observed code, **Brazilian NBA fans extrapolate to broadcasts and products accessible in their country**. It is common for the fandom to expand itself beyond the content transmitted by the channel they own to the official transmissions of the league in Brazil. Similarly, they express an interest in purchasing licensed NBA products (e.g., team jerseys, hats, and themed sneakers of famous players) that still need to be available in their country. We present three messages to exemplify this code.

#NBAnaESPN where are the GSW games? Why not broadcast more?
@romulomendonca
I just wanted a shirt like that from The Valley, but as my mom said, I support an abnormal team, and I can't find it to buy in Brazil #nbanaespn
I just wanted someone to pay NBA league pass for me, nothing else (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the first highlighted message, the Brazilian fan demands more content – i.e., broadcasts – to be distributed by the NBA in Brazil. In the example, published on January 10, 2019, the fan questions the main narrator Rômulo Mendonça from ESPN Brazil, regarding the lack of transmission of the games of the team he supports, the Golden State Warriors. The tweet is a justified complaint since ESPN Brazil – i.e., holder of the rights to broadcast the NBA on pay TV in the country – cannot broadcast several simultaneous games, ending up selecting specific games.

The other two messages highlight fans' interest in licensed NBA products to be purchased in Brazil. The tweet posted on January 21, 2021, deals with the difficulty for Brazilian fans to find products related to the league and the franchises that make it up, highlighting the difficulty of acquiring the themed shirt of the Phoenix Suns team launched in the 2020/2021 season. The tweet, dated February 8, 2019, highlights how the service of NBA League Pass was outside its purchasing threshold, so it needed to consume league games via television and not on the specialized platform that brings together all league content.

The following code is directly related to the previous one, the following code points how **Brazilian NBA fans value their familiarity with U.S. content**. It is about the effort of the Brazilian fandom to understand and appropriate NBA content or information produced for its US audience. Two examples were selected to illustrate this engagement:

I already left my vote for the All-Star Game 2019! #NBAXmas #NBAnaESPN
Everyone here on Twitter is waiting for Woj and Shams to say which one is Draymond
#NBAnaESPN (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the first message, it is noted that Brazilian fans adopt more popular consumption practices in the US context. In the highlighted example, we see a fan reporting about his vote for the All-Star Game, a widespread practice in the US but still needs to be more popular among sports leagues in Brazil. The case took place on December 25, 2018, when the fan shared an image with the list of players he voted to be selected for the event, which brings together the main stars of the league according to popular voting.

The second message is the appropriation that Brazilian NBA fans exercise in the face of information conveyed by US reporters. It is about how a fan who, on February 14, 2021, highlights the Brazilian fandom's wait for comments from two of the NBA's top on-the-ground sports insiders – i.e., Adrian Wojnarowski of ESPN U.S. and Shams Charania of The Athletic. The international NBA community recognizes both for their ability to provide first-hand, credible information.

Complementarily, the following code highlights that **Brazilian NBA fans celebrate its entertainment events**. Here, some comments contain an appreciative tone for the various shows they watch, whether from athletes in the sports league or from musical artists and celebrities who participate in the broadcasts they watch. We highlight one examples on the subject.

Now let's go to the most anticipated moment of the All-star game: The J Cole concert.
#NBAAIStar #NBAnaESPN (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the message, the fan celebrates one of his favorite moments of the season: the All-Star Game, an annual event that brings together the main stars of the NBA, on-site games whose intervals also feature special competitions between athletes – i.e., Slam Dunk – and mascots of the teams. However, the message published on February 18, 2019, attests to the audience's high expectations for the concert of the US rapper J. Cole, a musical attraction of the intermission of the game of stars held in 2019.

For the Brazilian fandom, an NBA game awakens peaks of emotion, either because of the competitive clash they watch or because of the management of the calendar in which they can consume broadcasts on dates of social gatherings. Thus, it is possible to observe the following code, which **reflects Brazilian NBA fans highlighting its exciting media coverage**. This code concerns how Brazilian fans are not used to following a league that reframes sports competitiveness and how they broadcast thematic events. Three messages exemplify this code.

#NBAnaESPN Basketball is an addictive sport, I'm going to sleep every 3 am watching NBA.

Merry Christmas watching NBA all day #NBAXmas #NBAnaESPN #NBAnaESPN
Happy New Year to you. Thank you for narrating and giving viewers an extraordinary experience of watching the best basketball league in the world! Thanks (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the first instance, Brazilian NBA fans express gratitude for continually following broadcasts of competitive and emotion-filled games that break their routine. The first of the highlighted messages – sent on February 21, 2021 – reinforces this instance, when the fan expresses his inability to return to his routine after watching the NBA game that night.

Another point associated with the exciting media coverage of the NBA for Brazilian fans concerns how they modify holidays to follow the sports league. The message published on December 25, 2020, exemplifies this aspect. In particular, they highlight the Christmas round – i.e., in which the NBA selects games between stars and rival teams to impress its audience – which has already become a reserved date in the calendar of league fans in Brazil.

The third message presents something common among tweets sent by Brazilian NBA fans: the report that they are experiencing transmissions of the best basketball in the world. The example occurred on January 3, 2020, during the match between the Memphis Grizzlies and Sacramento Kings, when the fan thanked ESPN presenters for their work on NBA broadcasts over the New Year's weekend.

Sports Experience of Brazilian NBA Fans

The other observed category deals with the **sports experience of Brazilian NBA fans**, when fans highlight the sporting aspects they witness as extraordinary, since the sports league presents aspects which they are not used to watch. In this perspective, the experiences of Brazilian NBA fans are intertwined with the enthusiasm of reverberating the athletic capacity of the players, the league's continued competitiveness, individual and collective performance records, etc. Consequently, the category is associated with six codes identified during the analysis of the research corpus.

The first code indicates that **Brazilian NBA fans increases their excitement when watches emblematic performances** when they comment on the aspects that led them to be interested in the league or what keeps them interested after so long following its broadcasts. In these messages, it is possible to observe that the continuous quality of the NBA games awakens the perception that they are seeing the history of the league being told. It also leads them to nurture unique relationships with certain team duels.

Suns at the conference finals already look like the 90s. Then the guys bring the TAG TEAM to sing their classic 'Whoop There It Is.' Pure nostalgia! #NBAPlayoffs #NBAnaESPN
#NBAnaESPN Hugs to Romulo and Zé Boquinha! I started to follow the NBA more closely last season, precisely in the bucks vs. raptors matchup (Translated by the authors from the research corpus).

In the first message, published on June 20, 2021, during the confrontation between the Los Angeles Clippers and Phoenix Suns, the fan celebrates the successful return of the Arizona team to the NBA playoffs. It is an understanding that, at that moment in the season, the Brazilian fandom could be witnessing history being made in the league when the Phoenix team in Arizona would again reach an NBA final and, who knows, the unprecedented title.

In another message, posted on November 2, 2019, another fan highlights the importance of following another match between Milwaukee Bucks and Toronto Raptors, valid for the Eastern Conference Finals of the 2018-2019 season. In his account, he claims that it was precisely the experience of watching that match the previous season that made him become a regular follower of the league.

Specifically, annually it is possible to see the excitement when **Brazilian NBA fans emphasize the excitement of the playoffs**. It is about how the Brazilian fandom considers the

knockout matches between the best-ranked teams to dispute the title as the apex of sports entertainment. We highlight a message to exemplify this code.

I'm rooting for Game 7 because my wife is confused about whom I'm rooting for.
#NBAnaESPN (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

NBA playoff matches are decided in a best of seven games. The winning team must achieve four wins, alternating between home and away matches. Consequently, Brazilian fans who do not specifically support any of the teams disputing the games usually publish messages reinforcing their interest in the dispute being extended until the last seventh game to watch as many transmissions as possible. It is the highlighted example when on July 14, 2021, a fan reports his support for the tiebreaker in the duel between Phoenix Suns and Milwaukee Bucks, which would define the NBA champion of that year.

Another emotion that drives the interaction is that **Brazilian NBA fans discuss witnessing the most outstanding player in history**. Because of the numbers achieved by some athletes – i.e., titles, individual and collective records –, the Brazilian fandom reverberates the proposed debate about who is the player who deserves the nickname of great of all time (GOAT) of the NBA. In addition to the stars of the past (e.g., Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant, Magic Johnson, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar) that are commonly cited by Brazilian fans, two stars that are still active in the NBA during the league are intensely pointed out as GOAT: LeBron James and Stephen Curry. Two tweets were chosen to highlight each side of this discussion:

Forget this GOAT talk. There has never been anyone like LeBron. There will never be anyone like LeBron. Enjoy the story. LeBron James, you are ridiculous. #NBAnaESPN
#NBAnaBand
FOR GOD'S SAKE, RESPECT THE GOAT CURRY IS A GOD #NBAnaESPN
(Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the first message, the fan publishes a fanart on October 11, 2020, in which LeBron James appears with the Los Angeles Lakers jersey and the NBA champion trophy – i.e., recently won that year and the athlete's fourth title – while sitting on a throne that alludes to one of his nicknames: the King. In another message, on March 7, 2021, another fan asks for respect for the Brazilian fandom who watched Stephen Curry score 28 points in just 22 minutes on the court during the All-Star Game of that season.

Additionally, it is verifiable how **Brazilian NBA fans value the players' athletic abilities**. In addition to being considered superstars of the sport they compete in, NBA athletes present individual performances – i.e., scoring records, assists, blocked shots – and collective performances – i.e., invincibility, titles – capable of exciting the interactions of the Brazilian fandom of the sports league. We highlight two examples to illustrate this fan movement:

Lakers v 76ers now on ESPN, 1st in the West vs. 6th in the East. The Game is very good! LeBron can still beat legend Kobe Bryant's points record for the team! #NBAnaESPN. Following along with @romulomendonca
The year Golden State broke a season winning record What was the winning streak for the team @romulomendonca @jrluxboquinha #NBAnaESPN (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the first message, published on January 25, 2020, a fan reiterates the historical performance of LeBron James, newly signed by the Los Angeles Lakers, but who could surpass one of the greatest players in the franchise during that night's performance: Kobe Bryant. In the other tweet, published on December 7, 2019, the other fan asks the ESPN Brazil narrator and commentator to point out to the audience the Golden State Warriors' record of victories, which, in the 2015-16 season, reached 73 wins in 82 played.

From another perspective, there is excitement with factors that make the sports league more competitive in addition to the athletes' performances in the code that reveals that **Brazilian NBA fans debate about the sports strategies of the teams**. This code is the arrangement of comments from fans discussing the actions taken by the coaching staff to change the outcome of matches and the performance of athletes (e.g., coverage that nullifies big stars, rotation of fouls) in a single matchup.

The collective game of the Raptors team is very, very absurd. #NBAnaESPN
#NBABrazil #nba
Does nobody talk about the rotation of booker fouls to get him out of the 3-point line?
#NBAnaESPN (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the first message, dated June 14, 2019, the fan comments on the collective performance of the Toronto Raptors team during the match against the Golden State Warriors. For him, how the players of the Canadian franchise managed, together, to overcome the team led by Stephen Curry – i.e., the player who was chosen as Most Valuable Player (MVP) of the regular season – and becoming champion was the result of a technical strategy commission. In the other post, on June 4, 2021, another fan highlights how the star of the Phoenix Suns team, Devin Booker, was nullified by the rotation of fouls committed by the Las Angeles Clippers team in the victory achieved by the California team that night.

In a complementary way, **Brazilian NBA fans resonate with behind-the-scenes news** about the teams, considering that the actions of general managers (e.g., signings, trades, draft picks) have a fundamental impact on the sporting performance of franchises. Such comments are based on fan opinions about the strategies and decisions made by the NBA behind the scenes. Additionally, fans often debate league executives' choices regarding rule enforcement and consequent punishments. An example of this code can be seen below.

#NBA The League considers rescheduling the start of Free Agency for before the Draft. As both depend on the conclusion of the current season, there are still no dates. Free Agency would start at 7 pm on 30/Jun. #nbanaespn #NBABrazil #nbanosportv #NBABrazil #nbatwitter (Translated by the authors from the research corpus)

In the message of May 29, 2020, the fan presents detailed information about important dates followed by the NBA fandom in Brazil. Free Agency is when players can be traded without incurring high fines; consequently, it is when the backstage of the league is busiest. In this sense, the fan informs his peers that, due to the stoppage of the COVID-19 pandemic that impacted the 2019-20 season, the Free Agency calendar should be impacted.

Extraordinary Experience of Brazilian NBA Fans

The categories identified among the interactions of the Brazilian NBA fandom about their consumption experiences associate two fundamental elements of the league's transmission in the country – i.e., mediatization and sportiness – as an opportunity for them to experience hedonic moments. Consequently, they reflect how hedonic elements are often highlighted as those responsible for legitimizing the extraordinary capacity of a consumption experience (Holbrook, 2000; Lanier & Rader, 2015).

Similarly, the codes observed at some levels are associated with interactions that evoke the imaginative and emotional capacity of the Brazilian NBA fandom. Thus, they can be associated with the understanding that the aspects that arouse strong and unusual imaginations and emotions through consumption are decisive for the conception that they are experiencing extraordinary moments through their consumption experiences (Holmqvist et al., 2019; Rundio et al., 2020; Skandalis et al., 2019).

Thus, the present study considers it possible to associate the experiences of Brazilian NBA fans as extraordinary. This association is based on the perception that the two categories present the four aspects highlighted by Lanier and Rader Jr. (2015) that characterize an extraordinary consumption experience.

On the one hand, the media aspects are liberatory and performance-oriented, as they allow Brazilian NBA fans to escape their routine and act in a participatory way to improve their own consumption experience. First, this aspect is noticed in the comments in which the fans are impressed by the league's particularities, mainly by aspects that go beyond what they are used to consuming. Second, we highlight the reports of fans seeking to extrapolate the experiences already delivered by the league in Brazil, demanding the offer of other artifacts and content. Third, there is an attempt to adapt the fans to the singularities of the association, which translates into a change of habits among avid league fans. Fourth, fans escape their routines with league broadcasts, demonstrating that fans enjoy pleasurable moments when watching association content.

On the other hand, the sporting aspects are stochastic and adventurous, as Brazilian fans point them out as random and continuously positive events in the competitiveness that they witness in the performances of athletes and teams, in addition to allowing surprises with the management of the league itself. First, there is a celebration at important moments for the league, through matches in which they cannot predict the winner. In addition, there are symbolic moments in watching players, matches, and strategies that will go down in the annals of sports league history. Moreover, they are continuously interested in knowing and debating details that guarantee the league's continued competitiveness on and off the court.

In this sense, it is visible that the media capacity and sportsmanship highlighted by NBA fans in Brazil characterize their consumption experience as extraordinary. Furthermore, while the media aspects are re-signified and subjectively valued, it is possible to observe that the emotions experienced in the consumption of the league are closely related to its competitiveness.

These findings reinforce how the exchange of experiences between different marketing agents establishes connections assimilated as extraordinary and with subjective values (Schmitt et al., 2022). Furthermore, they present what Cova and Cova (2012) indicate as an incentive for co-creating consumption experiences when they act as prosumers who choose to share their

experiences, seeking to be recognized and help other marketing agents. Thus, when looking for fun or personal joy in their consumption experiences, consumers use marketing and utilitarian functions to (re)produce socialization dynamics among peers (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014; Cova & Cova, 2019).

Final considerations

The results reveal an extraordinary consumption experience in the virtual interactions of Brazilian NBA fans. This extraordinary experience is based on the country's media and sporting aspects provided by the NBA. Such aspects are fed back to each other by the productive activities of the fans since they when consuming the media products of the NBA, produce content based on the experiences lived from it.

Through the league's media capacity and sportsmanship, Brazilian NBA fans highlight how consuming and interacting with the league's broadcasts allows them to experience liberating and stochastic moments and elaborate a participatory performance or venture into new content and knowledge. Thus, the present study reinforces how fans' consumption experiences tend to align naturally with the marketing strategies of the managers of the media products they consume (Fuschillo, 2020; Min et al., 2019). Specifically, it reflects that sports league fans are co-creators of their consumption experiences (Kolyperas et al., 2019; Rundio et al., 2020). (Andrews & Ritzer, 2018; Bond et al., 2021). Further, as these are extraordinary consumer experiences, even if feelings occur individually, productive exploration in digital media by fans and interaction with brands and other consumers occurs collectively (Cavalcanti et al., 2021; Daros, 2022; Lanier & Rader, 2015).

Additionally, it is worth noting that the study focuses on the active portion – i.e., those who seek to interact on social networks – among Brazilian NBA fans. In this sense, the results and proposed discussions represent the arrangement of observed human experiences, limiting the inferences to the particular scope of the ethos investigated when the research was carried out and can be generalized only to contexts of consumption with similar characteristics.

However, this limitation also presents unique contributions from the results of the present study. Despite being a netnographic study, the research findings indicate that the media aspect of a sports league is a means of escaping from everyday life. Thus, it extends to the context of the fans' participatory culture, the understanding of Skandalis et al. (2019) about the liberatory factor being one of the main motivations for characterizing a consumption experience as extraordinary. Additionally, it endorses other researchers' perception that mundane and structural elements are lit and resignified in the formatting of extraordinary consumption experiences (Tumbat & Belk, 2011; Husemann et al., 2016).

Aligned with the limits of the present study, it seems valid as a research agenda that future investigations address the consumption experience of fandoms of sports leagues through the netnographic methodology to expand the results discussed here. Additionally, studies that address the overlapping of media and competitive aspects as grounds for extraordinary experiences can provide continuity to the research findings. Thus, it seems interesting to investigate the elements that make the fan experience extraordinary beyond sports consumption, associated with performances and collective events that have been gaining ground in consumer research discussions.

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