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**Working Paper**

## Sustainable consumption and hedonic event experiences: A conceptual framework and future research agenda

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Sustainable Consumption and Hedonic Event Experiences: A Conceptual Framework and Future Research Agenda.

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# **Sustainable Consumption and Hedonic Event Experiences:**

## **A Conceptual Framework and Future Research Agenda.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*This paper proposes a novel conceptual framework to address the lack of sustainable consumption behaviors during live hedonic event experiences, such as music concerts or football games. The framework's rationale is founded on principles from the theory of planned behavior, theory of cognitive dissonance, affect heuristic theory and dual process model. It suggests an inversely directional flow of affective and cognitive responses throughout the stages of an event experience (experience anticipation, experience consumption and co-creation, and post-consumption). Further, it posits that the higher the consumers' affective response during a hedonic event experience (and consequent decline of cognitive evaluations), the lower is the likelihood to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors. Also, it includes multiple intrinsic, extrinsic, and situational factors that moderates the framework's rationale. Finally, the paper presents an agenda for future research to test and validate the theoretical rationale proposed in the framework.*

### **KEYWORDS:**

*Sustainable consumption, hedonic experiences, leisure, live events, theory of planned behavior, theory of cognitive dissonance, affect heuristic theory.*

**JEL Classification: M31 (Marketing).**

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## 1. Introduction

Live hedonic event experiences, such as music concerts, festivals or football matches, are a form of casual leisure characterized by a short period of intense pleasure, enjoyment, or delight (Stebbins, 2001; O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2002). Such responses are triggered by multiple factors, such as a multi-sensorial stimulation from the servicescape, products that are consumed, and emotional connection among attendees and experience providers (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). However, the consumption of such experiences often poses a significant negative impact to the natural environment (Collins et al., 2019).

According to the Greener Festival Report (2019), the dire environmental consequences of music festivals, for example, are largely due to inefficient organizations and unsustainable operational practices. Unfortunately, such an unsustainable scenario is not limited to the music sector and is also found in other contexts of live hedonic experiences, such as sports (Jenkins, 2012; Cerezo-Esteve et al., 2022).

In response to the challenges posed by this scenario, various events have adopted a sustainable positioning and implemented novel sustainable practices. Examples in the music sector include "We Love Green" festival, "Burning Man" (implemented the "leaving no trace" initiative), "Splendour in the Grass" (included tree planting sessions), "DGTL" (which intends to become the first circular festival), REVERB.org, Climate Music, Music Climate Pact, Music Climate Revolution, Music Declares Emergency and Sound Future. In professional football, some examples are the "Game Zero" initiative by the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, Ajax's Johan Cruyff Arena implementing 4,200 of the solar panel devices, and the "Forever Green" initiative by Real Betis.

Yet, the consumption behavior of attendees is also largely to blame for the environmental impact of such events. Individuals also have the responsibility to perform eco-friendlier behaviors to ensure more sustainable events (Wang, 2017). One relevant example is waste generation and disposal. Managing the

vast amount of waste produced during all phases of the consumer journey during hedonic events (before, during and after) represents a major challenge for organizers. One music tour alone, for example, generates 18,720 plastic bottles on average per year (Forbes, 2022). Moreover, beyond waste disposal, consumers engage in various other decisions and behaviors that may cause negative environmental impact during hedonic experiences. This may include modes of transportation, food and drink choices at the venue, ticketing types, energy use and purchase of merchandise (Jones, 2017). Moreover, the hedonic and social escapist nature of such events often induces individuals to overconsume, which also poses serious harm to the social and natural environment (Perreira and Sloan, 2001).

Interestingly, such unsustainable behaviors conflict with the positive attitude often held by hedonic event attendees towards sustainability, and sustainable actions (e.g., zero waste, carbon offsetting or sustainable mobility). In fact, a survey published by Ticketmaster in 2019 with 3,987 respondents identified that waste reduction (62%) and being eco-friendly (57%) represented two of the main priorities for consumers for live events (Ticketmaster, 2019).

Yet, as well-documented in the consumer behavior literature, positive attitude towards sustainable practices does not often translate into actual sustainable consumption behaviors (Carrington et al., 2014; McNeill and Moore, 2015; Park and Lin, 2020). And such contradiction is also found during hedonic live events (Malhado, 2014). Consequently, different theoretical perspectives have been applied to explain such behavioral inconsistencies, including the theory of planned behavior (Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018), theory of cognitive dissonance (Thøgersen, 2002) and affect heuristic theory (Pham, 1998; Slovic et al., 2007). These theoretical views are discussed later in this paper.

However, the premises of such theories to explain human behavior vary according to the context to which they are applied. Consequently, scholars have called for further research in this field (Gupta and Ogden, 2009). So far hedonic experiences have been analyzed mostly in the tourism realm. For example, tourists' emotional experiences toward hedonic holiday destinations (Hosany and Gilbert, 2010). Also, researchers investigated the general consumer value derived from hedonic experience and engagement (Higgins and Tory, 2006). Consequently, scholars such as Alba and Williams (2013) defend the need for further research of hedonic consumption behaviors across various contexts.

## 2. Theoretical Background

To present a conceptual framework, which proposes a rationale that explains unsustainable behaviors of consumers during hedonic event experiences, it is necessary to first discuss relevant theoretical perspectives associated with it. Next, four theoretical perspectives, which are often applied to explain sustainable consumption behaviors and their connections to emotions during hedonic event experiences, are presented: *theory of planned behavior*, *theory of cognitive dissonance*, *affect heuristic theory* and *the dual process model*.

### 2.1 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) has been widely adopted to investigate and explain sustainable consumption behaviors (Bamberg et al., 2003; Chen and Tung, 2010; Fielding et al., 2008; Kalafatis et

al., 1999). In short, the theory posits that attitudes, social norms and perceived behavioral control impact individuals' intentions to behave in ways which, in turn, lead to actual behavior (Ajzen, 1985).

Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of the behavior and its expected outcomes. In the context of sustainability, it can manifest as individuals' perceptions of environmental impacts, personal benefits, and convenience associated with their consumption choices, for example (Ajzen, 1991). Also, negative attitudes towards sustainability, such as perceiving sustainable practice as costly or inconvenient, can equally contribute to unsustainable consumption behaviors or choices (Wu and Chen, 2014). Subjective norms denote the influence of social factors, such as perceived social pressure and norms, on an individual's intention to engage in a particular behavior. Thus, it plays a crucial role, as it encompasses the influence of social groups, reference groups, and cultural norms on an individual's consumption decisions (Ajzen, 2020). For example, if unsustainable consumption is widely accepted or encouraged within an individual's social network or society, it may weaken their intention to adopt sustainable alternatives. Finally, perceived behavioral control reflects an individual's perception of their ability to perform the behavior successfully and overcome any barriers or constraints (Hrubes et al., 2001). For example, it examines the individual's perception of the ease or difficulty in engaging in sustainable consumption behaviors. For example, barriers which may impede sustainable choices and hinder behavioral change include, for example, could include limited product availability, high prices, or lack of information (Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018).

In view of its relevance, the TPB has been applied to explain sustainable consumption behavior across various contexts. For instance, to illustrate customers' decision process to pay conventional-hotel prices for a late-model of green hotel (Kim and Han, 2010) or while buying sustainable fashion apparel (Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018). It has also been used successfully to explain various environmentally friendly behaviors, such as the recycling behavior or composting behavior (Fielding et al., 2008). Moreover, scholars have applied the TPB to examine the relationship between environmental attitudes and environmentally friendly behaviors. For example, Han et al. (2016) investigated the process of travelers' decision formation for bicycle touring as a form of sustainable tourism activity.

In the context of sustainable consumption during live events, such as live music concerts, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control play a significant role in shaping the behavior of consumers (Bamberg et al., 2003). Ajzen and Driver (1992), while investigating leisure activities, identified that individuals hold attitudes that encompass both emotional and practical perspectives, and observed that mood influences the emotional component but not the practical one. Also, it has been identified that consumers' perceived control over their behavior influences their sustainable behavior (Ajzen, 1985). If consumers believe that they have control over their behavior and can make sustainable choices, they may be more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors during live events, such as using refillable cups (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014).

Finally, it is also important to consider that critics of the TPB posit that consumers' behavioral intentions do not necessarily translate into actual behavior, as previous empirical studies have shown that the link between both constructs is indeed rather weak (McKercher and Tse, 2012). Criticism has also emerged from studies investigating environmentally sustainable behaviors. For example, in the tourism realm, Prillwitz and Barr (2011) have demonstrated that "green attitudes do not influence tourist travel significantly" (p. 1595). Nevertheless, despite its criticisms, the TPB remains as one of the

most relevant theories to explain sustainable consumption behaviors, and factors that lead to its avoidance.

## **2.2 THEORY OF COGNITIVE DISSONANCE**

In addition to the theory of planned behavior, the cognitive dissonance theory also provides an important perspective to the understanding of the contradiction found between positive attitudes towards sustainability and unsustainable consumption behaviors (Thøgersen, 2004). It argues that humans do not always behave in line with their values and beliefs, particularly when this involves experiencing discomfort or making sacrifices (Zientara et al., 2019). Furthermore, according to Sweeney et al., (2000), people react incomprehensibly when feeling anxious, uncertain or doubtful.

The cognitive dissonance theory also posits that individuals experience psychological discomfort when they experience an inconsistency between “cognitions (e.g. attitudes, beliefs, values, opinions, knowledge) about themselves, about their behavior and about their surroundings” (Festinger, 1957, p. 9; Bouwman, 2022). This dissonance is found and can be manifested in many ways. Festinger (1957) describes it as frustration, while Davidson and Keisler (1964) suggest that the feeling of dissonance makes people equivocal, confused, unclear or oblique. For example, if an individual holds a positive stance towards environmental protection and sustainability initiatives but often engages in wasteful or resource-intensive behaviors (e.g. excessive plastic use or energy consumption), they may experience cognitive dissonance.

Thus, for cognitive dissonance to happen, consumers must have the desire to pursue a certain outcome, attitude or behavior and value it. The bigger the dissonance, the bigger the scope of the action to reduce the dissonance, and the bigger the avoidance of situations that increase dissonance. And as defended by Soutar and Sweeney (2003), “cognitive dissonance is not a specific condition, but it rather exists from lesser to greater extent, at various stages in decision-making” (p. 231).

Often, consumers respond to cognitive dissonance by modifying either their beliefs or behaviors (Harmon-Jones and Mills, 2019). This can be achieved either by changing their behavior to align with their beliefs or by changing their beliefs to align with their behavior (Zientara et al., 2019). In some cases, individuals may search for information or engage in behaviors that help them confirm their existing beliefs in order to alleviate the dissonance.

Thus, cognitive dissonance represents a valuable perspective to understand consumers' unsustainable behavior during hedonic event experiences, such as live music concerts or festivals (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014). For example, consumers who value environmental sustainability are likely to attend festivals (although feeling uncomfortable) which cause a significant negative environmental impact, despite it going against their values. This inconsistency may create a psychological discomfort and motivate individuals to change their behaviors (Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014). To reduce this cognitive dissonance and the mental discomfort it generates, consumers may engage in several actions. For instance, planning to apply sustainable practices (e.g., bring reusable items, such as reusable bottles) to reduce waste during the festival (Wu, 2018). By consciously taking actions to reduce cognitive dissonance and to avoid unsustainable behavior during such experiences, consumers can better align their behavior with their values.



## **2.3 AFFECT HEURISTIC THEORY AND SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION**

Emotions play a pivotal role in human cognition and behavior. For this reason, it has captured great academic attention across disciplines, such as moral judgment (Haidt, 2007), consumer behavior (Pham, 1998) or ecotourism (Sarac et al., 2019; Yang, 2022). One of the main theories to address the influence of emotion on consumers' decision making and behaviors is the affect heuristic theory (Slovic et al., 2007).

In short, the affect heuristic theory posits that individuals often rely on affective responses to rapidly make evaluations and choices. For example, to assess risks and benefits associated with a particular product, cause, or service (Pachur et al., 2012). Thus, the affect heuristic theory defends that emotions influence the development of attitudes and choices, often nudging individuals towards decisions that align with their emotional states at the moment of the decision. For instance, if individuals have positive feelings towards a given product or service, they are more likely to perceive it as beneficial and make a favorable purchasing decision. Contrarily, negative emotions might lead to the development of negative judgments, thus influencing one's decisions to avoid a given behavior.

Also, the theory also posits that emotions operate outside human conscious awareness. Emotional responses often influence judgments and behaviors before one has the chance to consciously evaluate a given scenario. They represent a mental shortcut that allows humans to make efficient decisions based on our immediate emotional reactions, without applying great cognitive effort (Kahneman, 2011). Nevertheless, there are serious constraints to relying solely on emotions for decision-making. By doing so, one may overlook important objective information or lead to inconsistent judgments. Additionally, individual differences in emotional experiences and responses often influence the impact of affect on decision-making, highlighting the subjective nature of this heuristic.

In the case of sustainable consumption, this implies that when highly influenced by their emotions, consumers are often not aware of the environmental consequences of their behavior. In view of the context of this paper, the affect heuristic theory also helps explain why consumers may not engage in sustainable consumption behaviors during live hedonic events (Kazeminia et al. 2016). During such moments, they tend to be primarily focused on the environmental cues that lead to emotional responses and enjoy the hedonic feeling of the affective response. For instance, listening to the music played at a concert. Thus, this may explain why consumers engage in behaviors that are not sustainable, as they might prioritize the emotional responses over the potential environmental impacts of their behaviors and decisions (e.g., Yen, 2022).

For example, at a live event, consumers may prioritize their desire for convenience, comfort, or entertainment, over the potential environmental impact of their behavior. They may purchase single-use items, such as disposable cups or plates, rather than reusable options, as it is easier to handle. They may also drive alone to the event rather than opting for public transportation or carpooling, due to comfort or familiarity (Jones, 2017).

## **2.4 DETERMINANTS OF PLEASURE IN HEDONIC EVENT EXPERIENCES**

As previously discussed, hedonic events are characterized as moments in which consumers experience high emotional responses in a short period of time. Such intense journeys occur as organizers

purposefully design experiences to elicit multiple, simultaneous, pleasurable sensations, and induce various affective responses. The overall aim is to intentionally create and deliver memorable and, potentially transformative, experiences for consumers. As high affective responses, and pleasurable sensations, are pivotal for hedonic experiences, the existing literature on experience design discusses multiple intrinsic and extrinsic factors, which can help elicit them (Alba and Williams, 2013). For example (but not limited to), expectation, physical effort, consumption, social interaction and physical setting, as shown on Figure 1.

The first affective responses of consumers towards hedonic event experiences are triggered in the stages of awareness (knowledge that the event will take place), consideration (evaluation) and purchase (Hamilton and Price, 2019). All these three stages of the consumer journey are characterized by intense expectation towards the future affective responses that will happen during the experience (e.g., watching attractions, meeting and socializing, and discovering and experiencing the environment). These moments of expectation, prior to the event, activate the brain's reward system, releasing dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure, happiness, satisfaction, and motivation (Zurawicki, 2010). Pleasure of expectation is also elicited during the event, for example, prior to a band entering a stage or before a penalty shot in a football match.

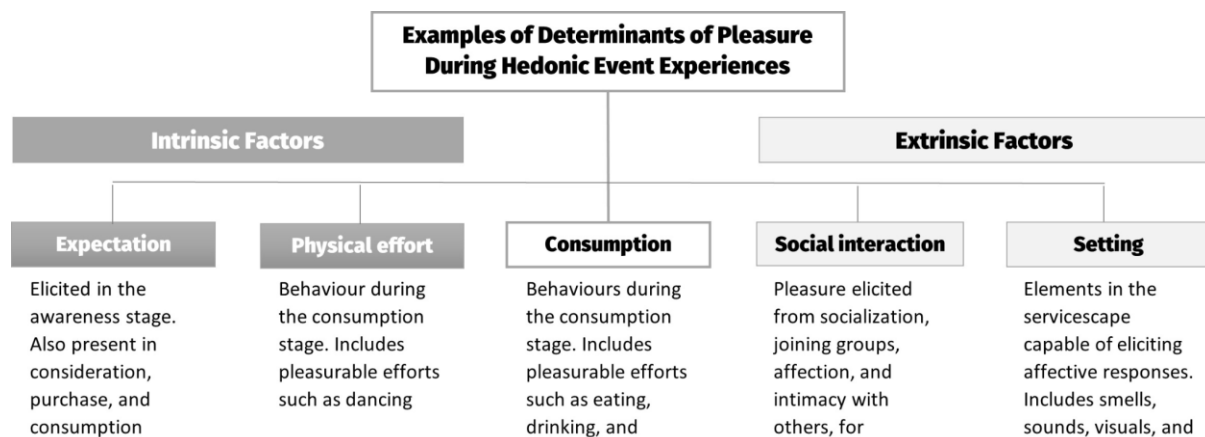


Figure 1: Examples of determinants of pleasure during hedonic event experiences.

Moreover, physical effort is also an important intrinsic factor, which elicits pleasure and affective responses during hedonic events. The act of dancing or jumping during a concert or a game, for example, can trigger the release of endorphins, a hormone known to relieve pain and boost positive mood and affective state (Gurusathya, 2019). Thus, endorphins also create a sense of happiness, elation, and comfort (Moreno and Ramalheira, 2022). Also, the consumption of products during hedonic events, such as drinks, foods and merchandise, also contributes to sensations of pleasure. For example, alcohol and unhealthy foods rich in sugar and saturated fat (which are common at live events) have been shown to alter dopamine levels (Coccurello and Maccarrone, 2018; Hartmann, et al., 2019).

Furthermore, various extrinsic factors also induce affective responses during hedonic events. Social interaction (or engagement), for example, is an important factor of pleasurable responses (Alba and Williams, 2013). Oxytocin is a hormone released in the body in response to stimuli such as socialization,

affection, and general human interaction. In specific, oxytocin is released during socialization behavior which includes physical touch, such as hugging, holding hands, and kissing (often experienced during hedonic events). In addition to physical touch and affection, general human interaction can also stimulate the production of oxytocin. For example, the simple act of attending social events, participating in group activities, and engaging in conversations with others. Finally, the setting or servicescape (venue and surroundings), for example, is also a determinant factor, which contributes to the overall pleasure of an experience (Lockwood and Pyun, 2019). Servicescapes are described as physical environments where a service or experience takes place and are carefully designed to elicit desired responses in consumers (Bitner, 1992). Examples of stimuli designed for pleasure include symbols and artifacts (e.g. style of decor and visual designs) and ambient conditions (e.g. temperature, odor, noise and music). Music for instance, often consumed during hedonic event experiences, has also been found to activate the brain's reward and pleasure centers, leading to feelings of enjoyment and happiness (Blood and Zatorre, 2001).

## **2.5 THE DUAL PROCESS MODEL INVOLVED IN ECO-FRIENDLY BEHAVIOR**

Scholars have long defended that not all behaviors are intentional (e.g. Fazio, 1990). There are often two types of decisions that may cause the attitude behavior gap in consumer sustainability: a) intentional decisions, and b) unintentional decisions (e.g., Gibbons et al., 2004). Intentional decisions are associated with cognitive evaluations and planned choices, whereas unintentional decisions rely on affect and emotions (Menzel, 2013). Additionally, Ohtomo (2004) revealed that the disparity between holding eco-friendly attitudes and exhibiting corresponding behavior can be attributed to situational factors that influence the acceptance of eco-unfriendly actions. Thus, to explore the inconsistency between eco-friendly attitudes and behavior, it is crucial to not only emphasize intentional decision-making processes that encourage eco-friendly conduct, but also to investigate unintentional decision-making processes that inadvertently endorse eco-unfriendly (unsustainable) behaviors.

In response to this concern, Ohtomo and Hirose (2007) have proposed a model that elucidates sustainable consumer behavior as a result of a dual-process framework. This framework comprises an intentional process characterized by intentional (rational) decision-making that directs individuals towards sustainable behavior, as well as an unintentional (emotional) process encompassing unplanned or inadvertent decisions that lead to the acceptance of unsustainable behavior. Within this dual-process model, the promotion of sustainable behavior hinges on the relative strength of intentional decisions favoring sustainability, or conversely, the dominance of unintentional decisions endorsing unsustainable behavior. (Ohtomo and Hirose, 2007). This theory will be referred to in the theoretical rationale we present later in this paper. To summarize, the key assumptions defended in each of the four theoretical perspectives are presented in Table 1.

Theory	Theoretical Rationale	Selected sources related to sustainability
Theory of Planned Behavior	Subjective norms and perceived behavioral control play a significant role in shaping the behavior of consumers. Also, subjective norms that consumers perceive from their peer groups during events can impact their behavior. If consumers' peer groups place a high value on sustainability and environmental protection, consumers may be more likely to engage in sustainable behavior during live events as well. Also, consumers' perceived control over their behavior can influence their behavior during events. If consumers believe that they have control over their behavior and can make sustainable choices, they may be more likely to engage in sustainable behaviors during events (e.g., using refillable cups).	Kalafatis et al., 1999; Fielding et al., 2008; Kim and Han, 2010; Chen and Tung, 2010; Prillwitz and Barr, 2011; Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014; Han et al., 2016; Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018.
Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	Consumers may experience cognitive dissonance when their behavior contradicts their beliefs or values about sustainability and environmental protection. They may feel uncomfortable or conflicted about participating in a live event that harms the environment. This consumer inconsistency can create psychological discomfort and may motivate the consumer to change their behavior in order to reduce the dissonance.	Thøgersen, 2004; Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014; Tanford and Montgomery, 2015; Zientara et al., 2019; Schrems and Upham, 2020; Bouwman, 2022.
Affect Heuristic Theory	The affect heuristic theory suggests that consumers may not always be aware of the environmental impact of their behavior as they are primarily focused on their emotional responses to the event. Consequently, attendees might neglect the rational, cognitive evaluations they hold towards sustainability related issues.	Haidt, 2007; Kazeminia et al., 2016; Sarac et al., 2019; Yang, 2022; Yen, 2022.
Dual Process Model in Sustainable Behavior	The dual process model assumes that there are two decision processes: an intentional (rational) process and unintentional (emotional). This might explain why consumers behave unsustainably during hedonic live events.	Ohtomo and Hirose, 2007; Menzel, 2013, Kazeminia, 2016.

Table 1: Summary of behavioral theories that relate to this research.

Next, we propose a novel conceptual framework to explain the factors that influence consumers to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors and choices during the journey of an hedonic event experience.

### 3. Rationale of the Conceptual Framework

In view of the theoretical contextualization presented in this paper, we now propose a novel rationale that helps elucidate the underlying factors which influences unsustainable behaviors and decisions of consumers during a specific context: hedonic event experiences. The framework posits that the extreme modulation of emotional responses experienced by consumers in a short period of time has a direct influence on sustainable consumption decisions and behaviors. In short, the rationale posits an

inverse flow of affective and cognitive responses during the journey of a hedonic event experience. Also, that the intensity of affective responses imposes a decline of cognitive evaluations. Consequently, the higher the consumers' affective responses during a hedonic event experience journey, the lower is the likelihood to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors and decisions. This rationale is supported, for example, by the theoretical premises defended by the dual process model presented in the previous section, as consumers who decide unintentionally and emotionally often choose unsustainable options (e.g., Menzel, 2013). However, we argue that various intrinsic, extrinsic, and situational factors moderate the proposed theoretical rationale. The conceptual framework is discussed next, in light of each stage of the experience journey.

### 3.1 PRIOR TO THE EVENT: EXPERIENCE ANTICIPATION PHASE

The emotional journey of a hedonic event experience begins upon one's awareness of and decision to participate (Arnould and Price, 1993; Höpner et al., 2022). During this stage, consumers begin to mentally project future pleasurable experiences, which is enhanced once the purchase is made, and the confirmation of the future attendance is assured. As the start of the event nears, affective responses steadily increase due to the expectation towards future pleasurable rewards (Sapolsky, 2017). For example, expectation towards the score of a football match or how a music band will perform during a concert. However, although anticipation creates a gradual increase of affective responses, during this stage, cognitive evaluations are still expected to be high, due to the geographical distance to the event and time until the start of the experience, as shown in Figure 2. This implies that the relatively low affective responses (although increasing), and high level of awareness (cognitive responses), makes consumers more likely to engage in consumption decisions which are rational, logical, conscious, and less emotional (Wang and Ruhe, 2007; Kazeminia, 2016). Thus, potentially being more susceptible to making sustainable decisions or engaging in sustainable behaviors (e.g., Ohtomo and Hirose, 2007).

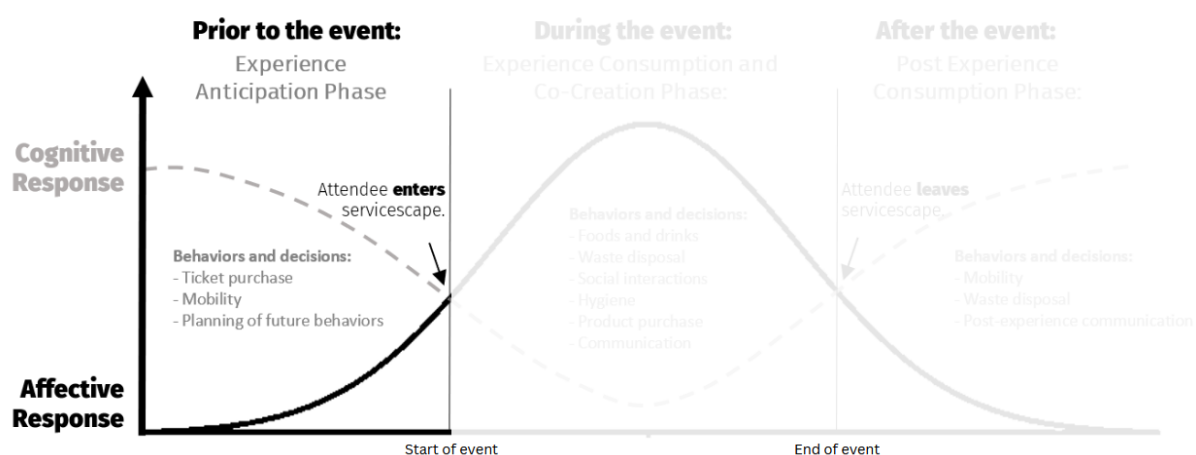


Figure 2: Overview of the experience anticipation phase.

For example, during the experience anticipation phase, consumers frequently engage in decisions related to products, services and behaviors where there are sustainable options: ticket purchase (e.g., digital ticket), mobility (e.g., public transport, carbon offsetting, electric transportation, car sharing or

bicycles), and planning of future behavior (e.g., to take a reusable bottle, food planning). Thus, given that during this stage of the experience cognitive responses are expected to outweigh affective ones, we argue that consumers are expected to be more inclined to accept or choose sustainable solutions in comparison to unsustainable ones. This rationale is in line with both the affect heuristic model and the dual process model, as both models suggest that cognitive responses can lead to more sustainable consumer behaviors (Slovic et al, 2007; Ohtome and Hirose, 2007). Moreover, we defend that this rationale is expected to be less effective the closer the individuals are to the servicescape where the experience will take place (e.g., concert hall or football stadium) and the lower the time comes to the start of the experience, as affective responses are expected to gradually outweigh cognitive ones.

### 3.2 DURING THE EVENT: EXPERIENCE CONSUMPTION AND CO-CREATION PHASE

The emotional journey of hedonic event experiences continues the moment consumers enter the venue of the event, and affective responses intensify. There, consumers are exposed to multiple cues in the servicescape, intentionally designed to create a pleasurable, multi sensorial experience that, typically, lasts a few hours. For example, visuals, lights, temperatures, sounds and aromas are often nudged in concert halls, clubs, football stadiums and racetracks. Moreover, apart from cues in the servicescape, consumers engage in various forms of pleasurable endeavors, such as social interactions (e.g. conversations, match-making, displays of affection, group interactions) and active participation (e.g. sing along and dance choreography), which are crucial for the co-creation of the experience and are also largely responsible for inducing high affective responses (Lin, 2004; Srivastava and Kaul, 2014; Campos et al., 2018). Also, during this stage, consumers often opt for pleasurable unhealthy foods and drinks (Biswas et al., 2019), largely influenced by experiential cues such as sound levels (Guéguen et al., 2008). Therefore, we argue that the result of these multiple and simultaneous pleasurable stimulation is a high emotional state, characterized by intense affective responses for a period of hours (Higgins, 2006), as shown on Figure 3. This can again be supported by the affect heuristic theory as emotions guide consumer behavior. Importantly, it represents the focus of attention and the main motivating factor for the consumption behavior of consumers.

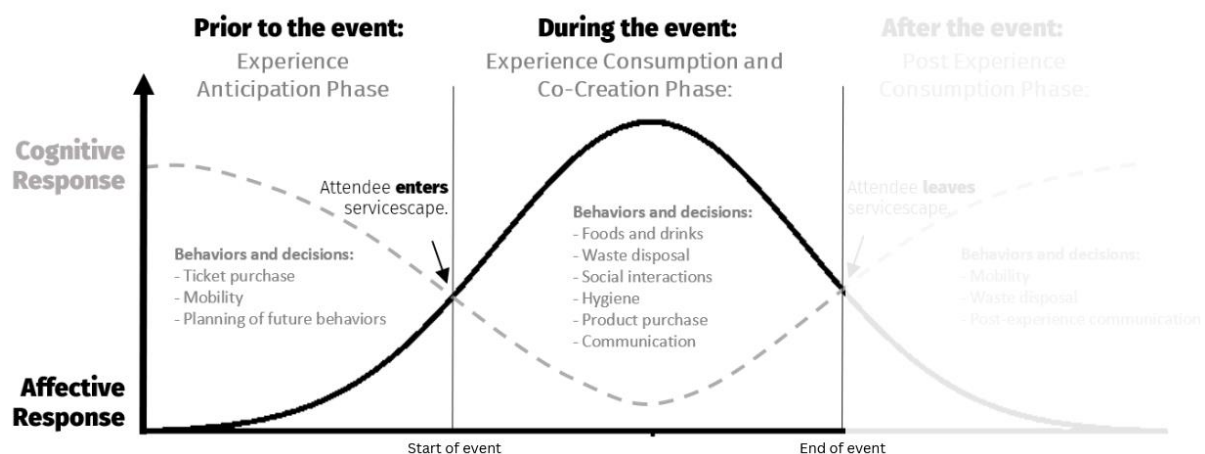


Figure 3: Overview of the experience consumption and co-creation phase.

Additionally, during this stage consumers engage in most decision making, or consumption behaviors, that may cause negative environmental impacts. These involve, for example, choice of foods (plant based, meat based or organic) and drinks, disposal of personal waste, social interactions (influence on others to behave sustainably), hygiene behaviors associated to physiological needs and types of product purchase (circular or recyclable merchandise).

However, during these hours of intense emotional responses, behavioral responses are followed by a lost sense of time and space, and exceptional sense of enjoyment (Walker, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013). Even though such responses may fluctuate in magnitude during the experience (e.g., breaks during concerts at a festival or halftime of a football match), the high emotional flow tends to last until the experience is over and/or the consumer leaves the servicescape. Therefore, consequently, consumers' cognitive evaluations are expected to be lower during this entire stage, in comparison to before and after it.

Thus, we argue that, as a consequence of the prolonged affective responses and low cognitive responses (consequent to the high emotional flow), individuals reflect less on the impacts of their consumption behaviors and the nature of their choices. And that this represents the main explanation as to why consumers are less likely to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors during such experiences, as they neglect the negative impact that their consumption choices and behaviors may cause to the natural and social environments. Finally, this explains the contradiction between positive attitude towards sustainability and unsustainable consumption behaviors, commonly found during hedonic event experiences which can be supported by the theory of cognitive dissonance (e.g., Juvan and Dolnicar, 2014).

### 3.3 AFTER THE EVENT: POST-CONSUMPTION PHASE

The journey of a hedonic event experience concludes at the post-consumption stage. As the core hedonic event experience ends, consumers tend to leave the servicescape and are thus exposed to gradually less hedonic stimulation. Consequently, they face a gradual decline of affective responses and emotional flow. As depicted in Figure 4, such a trend is simultaneously followed by a gradual increase of cognitive evaluations in the hours and days that follow.

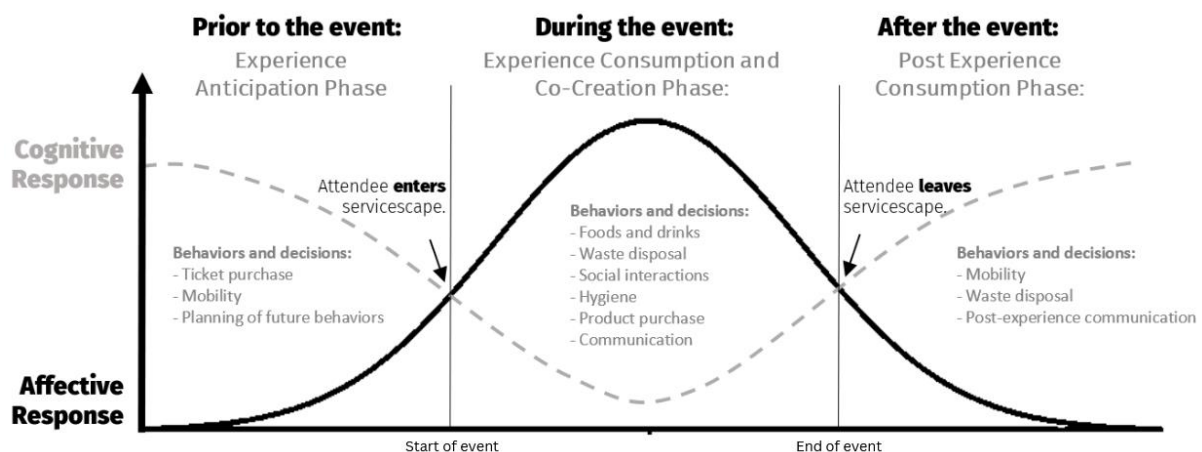


Figure 4: Overview of the post-consumption phase.

During this stage, consumers engage in fewer decisions and behaviors (compared to the anticipation and experience consumption and co-creation phases), which may cause negative environmental impact. For example, mobility to leave the venue and disposal of waste (e.g. bottles, product packages). Also, after the event, consumers often communicate their experience to others (e.g., offline or online) to enhance their self-image, recollect memories and project to others the core value of the experience (Munar and Jacobsen, 2014).

Nevertheless, the final stage is also characterized by consumers' physical and psychological fatigue, caused by the effort (physical and cognitive) applied before and during the experience and consumption (e.g., alcoholic drinks). Such a condition is expected to be highly influential on consumers' decision to engage in sustainable consumption during this stage. Thus, we defend that there are multiple factors which are expected to moderate the likelihood of attendees engaging in sustainable consumption behaviors, before, during and after the experience. These are discussed next.

### 3.4 MODERATING FACTORS OF SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION DECISION-MAKING

Finally, we propose that there are multiple intrinsic, extrinsic, and situational factors that are expected to moderate the theoretical rationale presented in the conceptual framework. These factors are expected to influence sustainable consumption decisions and behaviors in all three stages of the hedonic event experience. A few examples are shown on Figure 5.

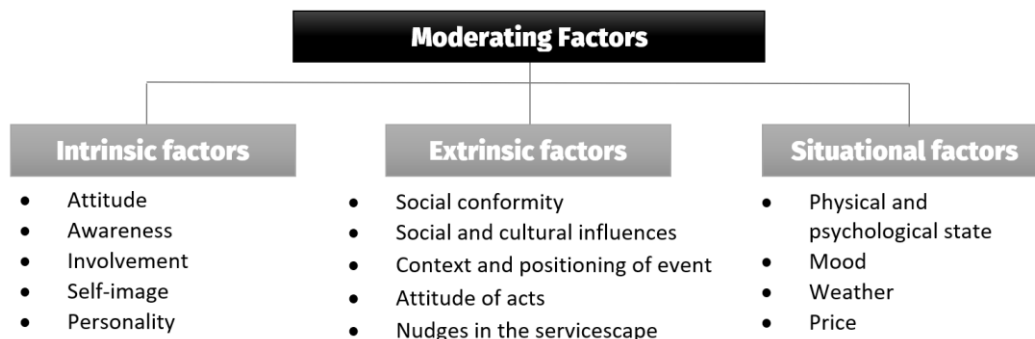


Figure 5: Examples of factors which moderate sustainable consumption behaviors during hedonic event experiences.

Intrinsic factors include consumers' previous attitude towards sustainability and sustainable consumption (Passafaro, 2020) and how aware consumers are of environmental challenges, sustainability goals and actions (Galbreth and Ghosh, 2013). Moreover, involvement with sustainability related issues is expected to play a pivotal role in consumer decision making (Carmelli, 2017), along with perceived self-image of sustainable consumption behaviors (Legere and Kang, 2020). Finally, the likelihood of adopting sustainable behaviors has been found to be moderated by personality traits (Hopwood et al., 2022).

Moreover, multiple extrinsic factors relevant to hedonic event experiences are expected to impact the likelihood of consumers engaging in sustainable consumption decisions. For example, social conformity towards the sustainable or unsustainable behaviors of others (Zhu and Liu, 2021) and social



and cultural influences of one's personal group or of the dominant group in the destination or servicescape (Gifford and Nilsson, 2014). This can be related to the theory of planned behavior as social norms guide consumer choices (e.g., Wiederhold and Martinez, 2018). Likewise, the context (e.g., genre of art or type of sport) and positioning of the event towards environmental causes (reflected in servicescape cues), and the attitude of acts (e.g., musicians or athletes) towards sustainability (Tölkes and Butzmann, 2018) might also impact one's willingness to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors.

Finally, situational factors also are expected to play a crucial role in sustainable consumption decisions during hedonic event experiences. For example, and as previously discussed, one's physical and psychological states (e.g., tiredness, mood, hunger, thirst, intoxication), which are expected to worsen throughout the experience journey and may reach its highest levels during the post-experience consumption stage. The intensity and influence of these factors are expected to be associated with the characteristics of the event (e.g., length, number and profile of attendees, service quality), one's mood (Gear, et al., 2017), weather conditions and prices (Ross and Milne, 2021) of services and products.

### **3.5 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE BEHAVIORS DURING HEDONIC EVENT EXPERIENCES**

Thus, after concluding the debate or the basis of the theoretical rationale, Figure 6 depicts the full conceptual framework that guides the understanding of (un)sustainable behaviors during hedonic event experiences. As previously discussed, it is grounded on principles from the theory of planned behavior, theory of cognitive dissonance, affect heuristic theory and dual process model. Moreover, it defends that the inverse direction of affective and cognitive responses of attendees before, during and after hedonic event experiences, explains the likelihood of attendees engaging in sustainable consumption decisions and behaviors.

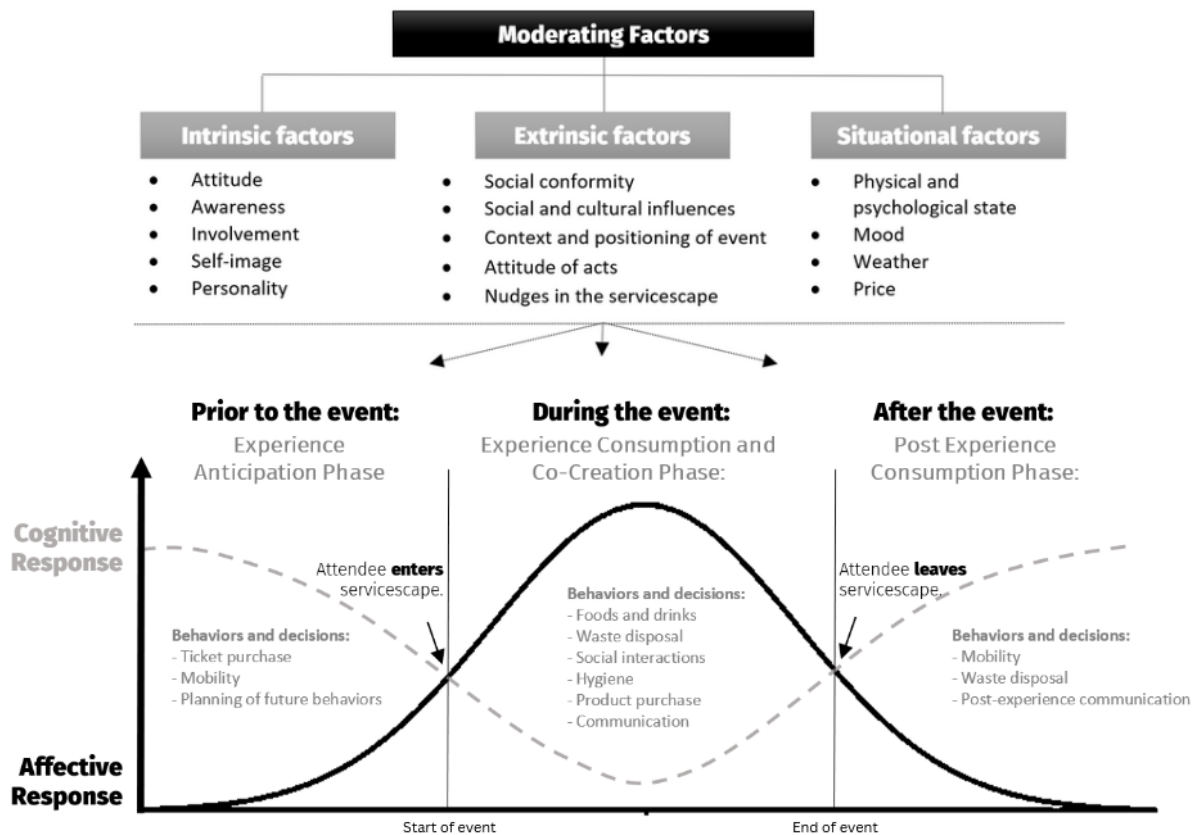


Figure 6: Conceptual framework for sustainable behaviors during hedonic event experiences.

We also defend that the theoretical rationale of the framework applies to all types of hedonic event experiences. Although the magnitude and influence of the rationale (inverse flow of effective and cognitive responses and impact of sustainable decisions and behaviors) is expected to modulate depending on contextual factors which characterizes each event (e.g., duration, location, profile of attendees). Thus, as long as an event aims to create a memorable experience, in a short period of time, through simultaneous multi-sensorial stimulation in the servicescape, induce social interaction and experience co-creation, build expectation and the consumption of hedonic products or services, the rationale of the framework is expected to stand. For example, such divergent directions of cognitive and affective responses are expected to be found in sports events (e.g., football matches or motor races) and in music events (e.g. concerts and short festivals).

Nevertheless, this is different, for example, from factors which influence sustainable consumption decisions and behaviors during a leisure tourism experience (Seeler et al., 2021). Although, there is strong evidence of sustainable behavior of tourists during leisure and business motivated trips (Riasi and Pourmiri, 2016; Weaver, 2017; MacInnes et al., 2022), a leisure tourism experience, although also being hedonic in nature, is not characterized by a specific emotional peak, experienced within a few hours (as a concert or football match). Contrarily, leisure tourism experiences may last days or weeks. Such prolonged time allows for longer pauses after affective responses (e.g., visiting an attraction or eating at a restaurant), enabling more often cognitive evaluations. For this reason, the rationale proposed in this paper may not stand in such scenarios.

## 4. Future Research Agenda

This paper proposes a novel theoretical framework and rationale to help elucidate factors which lead to unsustainable consumption decisions and behaviors during hedonic event experiences. The theoretical rationale was developed based on principles from the theory of planned behavior, theory of cognitive dissonance, affect heuristic theory and dual process model. However, given its conceptual nature, it still requires future research to test and validate its assumptions and propositions. Thus, we now raise key points to be addressed in future studies, framed as research questions (RQ) and, when appropriate, also with hypotheses (H).

### 4.1 THEORETICAL RATIONALE

First, future research must validate the main rationale of the framework, which posits that there is a negative correlation between affective and cognitive responses during the different experience stages (anticipation, consumption and co-creation, and post-consumption phases). Also, that such negative correlation is the underlying reason influencing the choice of attendees to engage or not in sustainable consumption behaviors and decisions during hedonic event experiences.

Also, the framework suggests that the intense affective responses during the experience consumption and co-creation stage influences consumers to significantly reduce their likelihood of engaging in sustainable consumption behaviors, in comparison to before and after. This assumption must be investigated. Also, future studies should investigate how alterations of intensity of affective responses during the consumption and experience co-creation phase (e.g., breaks between acts during a music festival, or half-time of a football match) impacts cognitive evaluations, and thus, influences consumers' likelihood of engaging in sustainable consumption behaviors and decisions. This calls for the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** *To what extent do high affective responses during a hedonic event experience lead to lower cognitive evaluations?*
- **RQ2:** *To what extent do high affective responses, and consequent lower cognitive evaluations during the experience consumption stage, influence consumers to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors during hedonic event experiences?*
- **RQ3:** *How does the likelihood of engaging in sustainable consumption decisions and behaviors alter, when contrasting the three different hedonic experience stages (anticipation, consumption and co-creation, and post-consumption)?*
- **RQ4:** *How do alterations in intensity of affective responses during the consumption and co-creation stage of a hedonic experience influence attendees' likelihood of consuming and behaving sustainably?*

### 4.2 MODERATING FACTORS

Second, the rationale of the framework must also be tested in light of the proposed moderating factors. Intrinsic (e.g. attitude, awareness, involvement, self-image and personality), extrinsic (e.g. social conformity, social and cultural influences, context and positioning of event, attitude of acts and nudges in the servicescape), and situational factors (e.g. physical and psychological state, mood, weather conditions and price) are expected to pose different influences on consumers' likelihood to engage in

sustainable consumption choices and behaviors according to the different stages of the hedonic experience journey (anticipation, consumption and co-creation, and post-consumption). Thus, it is important that future research addresses the influence of moderating factors in isolation, but also in respect to their interchangeable relationships and simultaneous influence on sustainable behaviors. This will allow for the understanding of sustainable consumption behaviors in multiple different possible scenarios along a hedonic live event experience journey. Consequently, the following research questions arise:

- **RQ5 (Intrinsic factors):** *To what extent do intrinsic factors, such as attitude, awareness, involvement, self-image and personality, moderate sustainable consumption behaviors before, during and after hedonic event experiences?*
- **RQ6 (Extrinsic factors):** *To what extent do extrinsic factors, such as social conformity, social and cultural influences, context and positioning of events, attitude of acts and nudges in the servicescape, moderate sustainable consumption behaviors before, during and after hedonic event experiences?*
- **RQ7 (Situational factors):** *To what extent do situational factors, such as physical and psychological state, mood, weather conditions and price, moderate sustainable consumption behaviors before, during and after hedonic event experiences?*

#### 4.3 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Third, to support the assumption that the rationale of the proposed conceptual framework is valid across different contexts of hedonic event experiences, it needs to be tested in such light. For example, contrasting different event industry contexts (e.g. sports matches and music concerts), results of events (e.g. fans of a winning or losing team of a sports match), sub-groups (e.g. hip-hop fans, jazz fans), organizational characteristics (e.g. number of hours, number of attendees), time of day and year (e.g. weather season), location (e.g. urban or in nature) and across cultures (e.g. individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, as posed by Saracevic and Schlegelmilch, 2022). For example, religion (Minton et al., 2015) and cultural subjective norms (Minton et al., 2018) have shown to influence sustainable consumption behaviors differently across cultures.

Such investigations will allow a thorough understanding and possible generalizations of elements presented in the framework and its overall rationale across contexts, enhancing its external validity. Thus, future studies should address the following research question:

- **RQ8:** *To what extent do contextual factors (e.g. type and result of events, sub-groups, location, religion and duration) alter the influence that affective responses have on the likelihood of attendees to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors and decisions during hedonic event experiences?*

#### 4.4. MANAGERIAL SOLUTIONS

Finally, event managers face immense challenges to develop solutions aimed at motivating (or nudging) attendees to adopt sustainable behaviors during hedonic event experiences. After all, as the conceptual framework posits, the intense emotional responses during hedonic event experience consumption and co-creation stage is the underlying factor reducing the likelihood of attendees to

consume sustainably. Consequently, managerial solutions must induce the adoption of sustainable behaviors without disrupting the intense emotional flow and sense of enjoyment. This is of great relevance as the feeling derived from intense affective responses represents the core value of hedonic experiences. Thus, it leads to the following research question:

- **RQ9:** *How should organizers develop managerial solutions to nudge consumers to engage in sustainable consumption behaviors and decisions during hedonic event experiences, without compromising affective responses, or perhaps even enhancing them?*

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