

## ARTICLES

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# REINVENTING EVERYDAY LIFE: CONSUMPTION PRACTICES ANALYSIS UNDER CERTEAU'S OPTICS

*Reinventando o cotidiano: Análise de práticas de consumo sob a ótica de Certeau*

*Reinventando la vida cotidiana: Prácticas de consumo bajo la óptica de Certeau*

### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to understand how the frequency of attendance at outdoor exercise gyms by elderly people shapes their consumption practices and reinvents their daily lives. As a theoretical support, we adopted an interdisciplinary approach between postmodernism and consumer culture studies using Michel de Certeau's theory of everyday practices. Data for this qualitative study was collected through participant observation and interviews with elderly people who attended an outdoor exercise gym. Analysis followed the concept of interpretative research for organizing and categorizing information. The frequency of attendance at outdoor exercise gyms was shown to be a starting point for the reinvention of the daily life of elderly people. Reinvention of everyday life comes from new consumption practices that emerge by means of a new dynamic in their lives. Thus, we present a new possibility of theoretical investigation in consumer studies related to consumption practices.

**KEYWORDS** | Consumer Culture, post modernism, Michel de Certeau, Elderly, outdoor exercise gyms.

### RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é compreender como a frequência às Academias ao Ar Livre (AALs) por parte dos idosos molda suas práticas de consumo e (re)inventa o seu cotidiano. Como suporte teórico, adotamos uma abordagem interdisciplinar entre pós-modernismo e estudos de cultura de consumo com a teoria das práticas cotidianas de Michel de Certeau. A pesquisa é de natureza qualitativa, e as informações foram coletadas com idosos frequentadores de AALs. As análises seguiram a concepção da pesquisa interpretativista para organização e categorização das informações. A frequência à AAL revelou-se como ponto de partida para a (re)invenção do cotidiano dos idosos. Essa (re)invenção do cotidiano ocorre a partir de novas práticas de consumo que emergem por meio dos desdobramentos de uma nova dinâmica na vida deles. Ao final, indicamos nova possibilidade de investigação teórica em estudos de consumo relacionados com práticas, além da relevância apresentada no âmbito social.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE** | Cultura de consumo, pós-modernismo, Michel de Certeau, idosos, Academias ao Ar Livre.

### RESUMEN

El objetivo de este trabajo es comprender cómo la frecuencia de uso de los gimnasios al aire libre (GAL) por parte de los ancianos moldea sus prácticas de consumo y (re)inventa su vida cotidiana. Como soporte teórico, adoptamos un enfoque interdisciplinario entre posmodernismo y estudios de cultura de consumo con la teoría de las prácticas cotidianas, de Michel de Certeau. La investigación es cualitativa y las informaciones han sido recolectadas a través de observación participante y entrevistas con ancianos frequentadores de GAL. Los análisis siguieron la concepción de la investigación interpretativa para organizar y categorizar las informaciones. La frecuencia de uso de GAL se ha revelado como punto de partida para la (re)invencción de la vida cotidiana de los ancianos que ocurre a partir de nuevas prácticas de consumo que emergen desde de una nueva dinámica en sus vidas. Al final indicamos nuevas posibilidades de investigación teórica en estudios sobre consumo relacionados con prácticas.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** | Cultura de consumo, posmodernismo, Michel de Certeau, ancianos, gimnasios al aire libre.

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## INTRODUCTION

Consumption has a central meaning in our daily practices. It allows us to place ourselves in society, (re)creating, (re)appropriating, (re)inventing, and (re)contextualizing meanings (Wattanasuwan, 2005). This perspective is part of the conception and ideas of post-modernism that consider consumption as production (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Through this perspective, the consumer is understood to be a creator whose actions are carried out through a cultural process (Thomas, 1997). In this context, everyday micro-practices are regarded as the aspects that best define the human condition, including its discontinuities, pluralities, chaos, instability, constant changes, and paradoxes (Venkatesh, Sherry, & Firat, 1993).

Thus, it is imperative to consider consumption as practice (Askegaard & Linnet, 2011). Consumption is similar to other practices in an individual's routine that are carried over time and space, and add meaning to his/her life (Røpke, 2009). Warde (2005) points out that the practices involve the appropriation and use of goods, services, and spaces, which interfere in the individual's understanding of the practices with which they were previously involved when thinking about consumption.

From the consumer perspective, practices have been studied based on different works, particularly Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (2009), Reckwitz (2002), Shove and Pantzar (2005), Warde (2005), Shove, Pantzar, and Watson (2012), and Sauerbronn, Teixeira, and Lodi (2019). The predominant focus of these approaches is on everyday life. However, the literature does not discuss how a certain practice unfolds into other consumption practices from the perspective of individuals overlooked in the social structure. Considering this, we focus on Certeau's theory of everyday practices, which has not yet been explored in consumer studies. Using Certeau's approach toward the theory of everyday practices as a theoretical and analytical framework, we access the view of the ordinary individual to understand everyday practices of consumption.

Certeau (2014) draws attention to the creativity of ordinary individuals who invent everyday life for themselves. In this sense, there are analytical concerns regarding the different operations and ways of using products and services on the part of these individuals, and not with the products and services acquired and used (Giard, 2014).

Askegaard and Linnet (2011) point out that practices derive from external structures, but are transformed through actions that happen continuously, which are the result of symbolic exchanges, creativity, and subversion in a given social context. For Certeau (2014), socio-economic and political strategies occur at the city level and, although these are "the dominant theme of legendary politicians" (p. 161), they are not understood as a platform

where controlled and already programmed operations occur. In the face of ideological discourses, cunning and inseparable users are multiplied. It is in this scenario that daily life unfolds, which can be understood in two ways: the view from above—from urban administration and the economic and political strategies implemented—and the view from the ground, understood in the perspective of the ordinary man (Certeau, 2014).

Our investigation is motivated by certain issues—particularly, the issue of how the consumption of a certain public space (re)invents the individuals, their relationships, and their daily life. This is the starting point that we defined to establish our research objective, as presented below.

Guided by the understanding of consumption as production, appropriation, and transformation, we identified the outdoor gyms, which were developed based on the guidelines of public policy strategies in Brazil, to invest in actions for the promotion of health and preventive health, especially for the elderly. To this end, we sought the perspective of the individual to move beyond the representativeness of the increase in the number of elderly in society and attribute to them a certain consumption potential; we aimed instead to observe how they consume as a result of changes in their daily life. In this manner, we defined the objective of understanding how the use of outdoor gyms by the elderly shapes their consumption practices and (re)invents their daily lives.

The contribution of this work is based on four aspects. From a theoretical point of view, it advances the research agenda of consumer studies, specifically by innovating theoretically and building a dialogue with the theory of everyday practices based on Michel de Certeau's work. From the social perspective, we broaden the understanding of how society is organized in a given sphere, bringing academic interests closer to the interests of governments and society. From the empirical point of view, we look at a phenomenon whose dynamics involve subjects who face a condition of social invisibility, but who are able to undertake consumption practices that cause a (re)invention of their daily lives; further, we contributed to the understanding of the proposal of the space of the outdoor gym, since for its users, its social sense is evidenced before the biological sense.

## CONSUMER CULTURE AND EVERYDAY PRACTICE THEORY: UNDERSTANDING THE WAYS OF DOING

In the decentralized context of postmodernism, in order to consider their daily practices, the consumer is seen through a

unifying lens (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). Within this conception, studies of consumer culture emphasize fragmentation, plurality, fluidity and hybridization of consumption and lifestyle (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Firat & Shultz, 1997; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995).

Consumer culture studies start from a cultural orientation perspective, with cultural aspects noted in consumption relations since these occur through individuals and products and/or services full of meaning and value (Douglas & Isherwood, 1978). These meanings and values are attributed to products and/or services through the process of consumption by considering the individual as a consumer, but also as a producer of meanings within a culturally constructed world (Certeau, 2014; Douglas & Isherwood, 1978; McCracken, 1986). By using ideas, images and symbols, the individual as a consumer, through his symbolic consumption, (re)configures his identity (Schau, 2000) and life goals (Arnould & Thompson, 2005).

Thus, the essence is that the consumer searches for different experiences found not only through goods, but from the conditions of consumption practices, which can provide meaning, emphasizing interactivity and creativity (Cova, 1996; Firat, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1995). In post-modernity, a product or service will be increasingly less conclusive and increasingly more a process through which the consumer is able to immerse and provide *inputs*. This process is a continuous production and reproduction of symbolic images and meanings in which individuals employ their ways of doing from the understanding that the essential does not occur from the production, but from a specific production—the production of the manufacturer of the city, of services and objects (Certeau, 1985).

Consumption is seen as a daily activity that is the result of one's own production and creative appropriation, which is what some theorists postulate about the micropolitics of daily life. Daily life is understood as a way of knowing and analyzing social reality, highlighting the dynamics of the processes of accommodation and social change (Levigard & Barbosa, 2010). Its understanding occurs through “processes of interactions between subjects, artifacts and other material and symbolic aspects of society” (Oliveira, 2014, p. 33).

Certeau, Giard, and Mayol (2013) present daily life as “[...] that which is given to us each day (or which we share), pressures us day after day and oppresses us, because there is oppression in the present. [...] Daily life is what holds us intimately, from within” (p. 31). Certeau (2014) advocates discussing everyday life through its production by individuals, destroying their passivity towards society. Considering that the interactions between individuals constitute daily life and that the processes of production and appropriation occur in the spaces in these interactions, for

Certeau (2014), no social space can be installed in the certainty of neutrality.

In view of this, Certeau (2014) focuses on how, through his different ways of doing, ordinary man appropriates or re-appropriates what is offered to him—that is, his operations and his uses. It is a matter of “outlining a theory of everyday practices in order to extract the ways of doing from its noise” (Giard, 2014, p. 16). The ways of doing refer to the way in which the user re-signifies structures or models of consumption, modifying and creating his own daily life (Certeau, 2014, p. 33).

Daily practices are operations and manipulations that subvert the standard conceptual understanding about being a routine or regularity (Certeau, 2014; Leite, 2010). When Certeau (1985) argues that we should “view everyday practices as practices” (p. 2), he makes an argument that seems simple but is not, since the fundamental is not what the individual eats, walks, or watches, but what is done or manufactured with what is eaten, walked, or watched (Certeau, 1985). As claimed by the author, daily practices involve an effort to interpret this “anthropophagy practiced by the consumer,” who, through the act of consumption, uses a norm that is objectively imposed on him for his own interest.

To this end, Certeau (2014) distinguishes between two sets of formalities: tactics and strategies, since these practices are carried out through the relations of power and forces present in a space. Strategies are postulated in one place and refer to the ability to produce and impose an order to what is formally established, and thus, they have their own place that is delimited and stable. Tactics, on the other hand, are everyday practices that circulate between the gaps of strategic control over the space (Certeau, 2014). They are dependent on time and context, using a proper place to (re)invent a space for themselves, one that is practiced and produced, a product of the dynamics of the movements or operations of individuals or groups (Certeau, 2014).

Highmore (2006) points out that the essence of Certeau's daily practices is that they are built around acts of appropriation and re-appropriation, since the cunning, stubbornness and invisibilities of such appropriations characterize the operations of the individuals. According to Neubauer (1999), the clash between appropriation and what is imposed, whether by political, religious, or cultural authorities, represents the interface between tactics and strategies. The appropriation makes strategy understandable, humanizing the process of cultural transfer and restoring our historical understanding (Neubauer, 1999).

Thus, the practices of space are analyzed by Certeau (2014) based on the distinction that he establishes between place and space. For Certeau (2014), in the same way that place is fragmented, stability and material dimension are not necessarily

physical, since the society is also constructed by discourses materialized in language (Certeau, 1985, 2014; Oliveira, 2014; Oliveira & Cavedon, 2013).

## THE ELDERLY AND AGING: AN APPROACH TO THE ACTORS OF THE RESEARCH

The concept of aging is the universal course of life for human beings, which starts with conception and ends with death (Cortez, Cortez, & Costa, 2015). Theoretical concepts on the subject can be understood from two main positions (Dalmoro & Vittorazzi, 2016). One perspective highlights geriatric studies and associates the physical and psychological aspects of aging with the aesthetic devaluation of the body (Ballstaedt, 2007). This comprises various factors such as the physical limitations of aging (Barnhart & Peñaloza, 2013; John & Cole, 1986), the value of the individual to the labor market, as well as emotional vulnerability (Lee & Geistfeld, 1999), which include retirement, sons leaving home, and possible marital relationship burnout or widowhood, which deal with women to a large extent.

In contrast, the cultural view links aging to a social construction that seeks to dismantle the image of the end of life. Moschis (2012) emphasizes the adaptations in the life of the elderly that are influenced by the capacity for agency, novel life experiences, and the socio-historical context. These adaptations follow nonlinear patterns, inferred from determinism, stereotypes, and behavioral patterns associated with the age group (Debert, 2004). Contrary to the understanding of the life of the elderly as meaningless, from the cultural perspective, these same individuals are instigated to build new identities and social roles, maintaining lifestyles and their presence in the consumer market (Barnhart & Peñaloza, 2013; Dalmoro & Vittorazzi, 2016).

Our approach is close to the cultural perspective. Adopting this interpretation, we understand the plurality of experiences as we age, which takes place over time and in various ways for each individual, but which does not limit us in terms of recreating identities and lifestyles. For Logan, Ward, and Spitze (1992), the age, inherent to aging, does not refer only to the chronological concept, but also to the cultural meaning of that age, as well as to the apprehension of the self-image and the feelings of each individual.

We also emphasize the understanding of the elderly as an active agent in society with regard to the market and consequently, its consumption practices. Such practices chiefly constitute social

creation and maintenance of the elderly, as well as how they influence and are influenced by it (Dalmoro & Vittorazzi, 2016), and therefore our understanding of the subjectivation of the elderly as consumers, since the construction and affirmation of identity can be understood as a basis in consumption (McCracken, 2003).

Considering consumption as a complex and multifaceted social dimension, the construction of this theoretical and conceptual framework underlies the theoretical and analytical choices made here, the methodological orientation, as well as the findings that come from empirical research.

## METHOD

The qualitative approach used for this study followed the interpretive perspective (Dezin & Lincoln, 2006; Tadjewski, 2006; Vieira, 2013). The perspective of interpretivism guides this research because it allows us to move beyond what is consumed, seeking to understand how consumption practices occur in a given context, through interactions between individuals who create their own ways of doing (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Certeau, 2014; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). These individuals became active informants of the research, guiding the research process and providing information (Sauerbronn, Cerchiaro, & Ayrosa, 2011).

In the first stage, through the information material distributed by the City Hall of a city in the interior of the south region of Brazil, we carried out the documentary research to obtain information about the outdoor gyms. At the second stage, we carried out participant observation (Paterson, Bottorff, & Hewat, 2003) and interviews (Gaskell, 2002; McCracken, 1988). It should be noted that participant observation allowed us to understand the subtleties of everyday practices and the singularities of the ways of doing, since the latter are not possible to capture through interviews alone or by the usual models and formalizations that do not include individual operations and uses (Certeau, 2014; Highmore, 2006). All participants were approached during visits to outdoor gyms and selected based on two characteristics: they attended the outdoor gym weekly and were 60 years of age or older, according to the Brazilian Statute of the Elderly (Lei n. 10,741, 2003).

In the stage before the formal commencement of the fieldwork, we carried out an exploratory study in an outdoor gym in the municipality (see Guarnieri, Chagas, & Vieira, 2018) and visits to certain gyms. In both situations, we were able to get closer and interact with the elderly who attend the outdoor gyms, which contributed to better adaptation of the form of interaction

during the fieldwork and also provided greater knowledge of the field and easier access to the informants.

As our goal goes beyond the boundaries of the outdoor gym spaces, the observations also took place in different locations and events attended by the informants, such as circle dance classes; rosary prayers; bowling championships; visits to the asylum; third age's dances; hiking in the park; stretching exercise classes; meetings in a café and supermarket; and visits to the residences. By visiting these various locations and participating in the events, we had access to those who attend the outdoor gyms, and how they interact in the outdoor gym space, what they talk about, how they dress, how they form relationships with other people outside the outdoor gym space, what and how they consume, what activities they carry out, what desires and dreams they have, among other information. This whole framework of interactions involves the daily consumption practices of the elderly who attend outdoor gyms. We highlighted that participation in these events and places did not occur with all the informants, mainly due to issues of availability and authorization. These observations were recorded in a field diary, totaling 64 pages in electronic format, and a photographic archive with 130 images.

We conducted 24 interviews, of which all but one were recorded. The duration of the interviews was between 26 minutes and 1 hour and 37 minutes. We prepared a guide for conducting the interviews, but without the intention of establishing categories for the analyses beforehand. This guide was continuously adapted according to the development of the work. All interviews were conducted in person and later transcribed in full, totaling 291 pages of transcriptions. The names of the informants were assigned in a fictitious manner in order to maintain anonymity.

The process of analysis of the *corpus* of the research was based on the guidelines of some authors, such as Ryan and Bernard (2003), Moisander and Valtonen (2006) and Saldaña (2009), for the organization and categorization of the information. The *ATLAS.ti software*, version 7, was used to organize the transcribed interviews, notes, and reflections in the field journal. We adopted the classification system by codes—coding—that emerged from the *corpus* of the research and which met the proposed objective (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). When reading the materials, we looked for repetitions, similarities and differences, behaviors, feelings, contexts, meanings, absences, among other aspects that constituted the narratives of the interviews and the notes in the field journal. This codification resided in the demarcation of segments of the texts by codes, which were later grouped into subcategories, resulting in categories.

The categories were established as follows: the proposal for the outdoor gym, the period before the start of attendance

at the outdoor gym, consequences of attending the outdoor gym, new habits of consumption, new activities of consumption, relationships, and constant (re)invention. These categories constitute the *corpus* of the research on which we carried out the analyses, as explained in the next sections.

## RESULTS

The results show how the frequency of attendance at the outdoor gym introduces a new dynamic to the life of these individuals, providing opportunities for constant (re)invention in their daily lives, like the development of their consumption practices. Such practices resulted from the ways in which the elderly use and appropriate this space, acting before a proposed public policy strategy. Nevertheless, these strategies are “urbanized” through the movements taken by the tactics, which proliferate. Thus, prior to the understanding of the vision of the ground, that is, of the elderly who attend the outdoor gyms, we seek to understand the vision from above regarding public policy strategies. We do not wish to confront the two visions, since the discussion of public policy strategies demands the understanding of a macro approach. We seek to characterize the proposal of the outdoor gyms, because it is from these actions of implementation that the phenomenon of consumption studied here occurs.

### The Outdoor Gym proposal

The outdoor gym proposal emerged from the interest of representatives of the City Hall of a municipality in the interior of southern of Brazil, with the objective of reducing the high expenditure from public health demands, especially with medicines for chronic diseases. Based on this proposal, the first outdoor gym was inaugurated in 2006, which was initially called the Gym of the Third Age. As the name already suggests, the idea was meant for the elderly at first, as they were the part of the population that demanded the highest spending on the referred medicines.

Through the outdoor gyms, the City Hall defined the objective of “encouraging, especially among the elderly, the regular practice of physical activity, socialization, improvement of self-esteem and health in general” (information material). To achieve the proposed objective, public-private partnerships were made for the implementation of the outdoor gyms.

There are currently 62 outdoor gyms in the municipality, containing 10 pieces of gym equipment installed outdoors near basic health units, sports centers, squares, or parks, allowing the

user to perform stretching, strengthening, muscle development, and aerobic exercises. These benefits, as stated in the documents analyzed and proclaimed by the City Hall, are guaranteed for those who attend the gym weekly for at least 30 minutes per day.

Through the analysis of the results, the representatives of the City Hall point out that the outdoor gym achieves its goal, since the acceptance by the population, especially the elderly with chronic diseases, was positive and significant. Likewise, they affirm that the practice of physical activity contributes to the prevention of diseases and to improving the quality of life of the users, reducing social costs, hospital admissions, and mortality (information material).

## Consumption practices as (re)invention of everyday life

In seeking to understand who the elderly are that attend outdoor gyms based on a post-modern conception, we find that they are *bricoleurs* who mix their different daily practices prioritizing experiences, and are fragmented and decentralized regarding their lives and experiences, breaking with a unique reality, seeking to live the moments of their experiences linked to sensation and pleasure, building their own meaning. There is no single lifestyle associated with these elderly individuals, since they recontextualize what is given to them, making a bricolage, or even consumption as production, which can be characterized as the reversal of production and consumption, as described by [Firat and Venkatesh \(1995\)](#).

The elderly who attend outdoor gyms do so for their own benefit, appropriating the space and shaping its meanings according to their interests, which refers to their consumption practices. The benefits gained from attending outdoor gyms can be seen in two ways. Firstly, we observe that besides being a physical activity, the attendance to the outdoor gym works as an aid to overcoming some difficult situations, as a way of adapting to the difficulties faced, or, as in the case of a large number of widowed female informants, as a way to overcome the challenges of widowhood. Secondly, it concerns the benefits resulting from the attendance and the sociability in the outdoor gym. The benefits are not only related to the use of the gym's equipment, but mainly to the present of and interaction with people in this space. A set of observed aspects causes favorable effects on each of the informants, such as disposition. When they attributed "disposition" as the greatest benefit noticed by attending the outdoor gym, the elderly referred both to physical condition, such as vigor, energy, animation and resistance, as well

as to self-care, the desire to seek to learn something new, self-esteem, and the desire and need to leave home. The following excerpt illustrates the idea behind the term *disposition*:

Oh, I feel better. Even my daughter says I seem better... with more courage, more everything. [...] To be better is like that, more cheerful, like the depression is gone. So I feel very well. I used to sulk at home, mostly watching soap operas, but not now. Now I have better things to do ([Carmen, 79](#)).

The consumption activities of the elderly occur through meanings and values attributed to the benefits perceived after they started attending the outdoor gyms. It is in this sense that [Douglas and Isherwood \(1978\)](#) discuss considering the individual as a consumer and producer of meanings within a culturally constructed reality of their own. Thus, new habits and new consumption activities become the daily life of these elderly people, as a form of resistance and change regarding their daily lives and living. Given that elderly individuals act according to the circumstances of their daily lives, we emphasize the understanding of their daily practices when they are observed through a unifying lens, as indicated by [Firat and Venkatesh \(1995\)](#) and [Certeau \(2014\)](#).

The elderly began to change some habits and customs after they started attending the outdoor gym. Irrespective of whether they were harmful to health, they were habits and customs that were replaced by others, causing changes in the consumption practices of these elderly people; for example, giving up smoking and going out dancing. In particular, it is possible to identify changes in eating habits and new habits in terms of aesthetic consumption. Such changes occur due to the new way of life of these individuals. This aligns with [Certeau's \(2014\)](#) postulation of the ways of doing, since the elderly re-signify what is attributed to the outdoor gym space so as to (re)create and (re)invent their own daily life through the appropriation of a space and its interactions. These ways of doing are heterogeneous, stubborn, and tortuous practices that pass for invisible, as [Highmore \(2006\)](#) reminds us, but they are not.

Alongside the new eating habits, the fact of attending the outdoor gym, practicing physical exercise, and interacting with other people in that space produces an interest in healthy consumption. As observed in [Sauerbronn et al. \(2019\)](#), about the relationships between women's food consumption practices and their bodies, eating practices were altered considering their effects on body health. In addition to the concern with eating healthy, the change in this new habit also occurs through

instructions from nutrition professionals. We also observed that some informants became concerned about producing their own food, most commonly vegetables, which were planted and grown in spaces in the backyard of the house. The excerpt below reveals how the informants feel about the new eating habits:

It's changed a lot. Today I eat healthier... I eat vegetables, fruit, whole-wheat bread, stuff like that... low fat. I don't eat too much salt either and drink lots of water. You have to eat healthy stuff, because I'm how old? I'm 73 (Grace, 73).

Typical of most women, but not exclusive to them, aesthetic consumption is something present in their daily practices. When asked about it, they answered that they are vain and take care of their appearance. We noticed this interest and desire for self-care not only through what they reported, but also through the way they behave and how they dress—they give attention to aspects that include “being in fashion,” dressing in a harmonious way and matching different styles. They are concerned about wearing clothes that match their body type, and in a certain way, they also associate this with age. As attending the outdoor gym results in greater attention to appearance and aesthetics, we emphasize the importance of the symbolic consumption, through which the functional aspects end up being hidden since the aspects of the aesthetic dimension are emphasized, as argued by [Firat and Shultz \(1997\)](#). We highlight the testimony of an informant who exemplifies the changes regarding aesthetics and appearance:

It got better, because I had clothes that I didn't wear anymore and I started wearing them. I had pants put aside for a while. I lost weight and started wearing them. Then you feel an incentive. [...] Look in the mirror and say: “I'm prettier” (laughs). I'm feeling much better (Cristina, 73).

New consumption activities are also developed, such as taking trips, and new places are visited, such as dance clubs, diners, and bars. These new activities are related to entertainment, fun, and leisure. Besides associating new activities with practices of leisure and fun, other activities, such as those that complement the practice of physical activity, become part of the daily routine of some of the research informants. Even though they attend the outdoor gym, for the various reasons and benefits mentioned and stimulated by the practice of physical activity, these elderly individuals seek to practice physical activities in paid gyms and running clubs. The new consumption activities also include new

learnings, such as courses and classes. The following excerpt describes the realities mentioned:

Now I always go out, I go to the dance club. My grandson takes me there and picks me up. I like to go to the diner with my grandson and his fiancée. Sometimes he drops me off and then picks me up. I play games of pool. My daughter goes out with her friends, am I gonna be alone inside? No way. I tell my grandson: “I'll go along too, leave me at such a diner.” And I already like playing pool... and he drops me off there. I find my friends there (Carmen, 79).

Such activities occur as a form of production by the elderly, as ways of employing established norms regarding using the outdoor gyms. In this sense, it corresponds to [Certeau's \(2014\)](#) observation regarding the use of what is imposed—that is, the tactics of the elderly who attend the outdoor gyms, who take advantage of the opportunities and derive benefits from them, building their own reality.

For all the achievements and aspects that revolve around this daily (re)invention, we identify a feeling in the informants of being able to achieve something. This feeling of being useful and capable seems to be, in some moments, a reaffirmation that opposes the notion that old people are those who engage in activities without any meaning. On the contrary, they are proud of their age, seek to be informed and to be among family and friends, want activities that provide fun and pleasure, and are concerned about health and eating right. They retire from their professional activities, but not from their desires and dreams. No matter how big their ambition is, they set goals and life projects, (re)inventing their own daily life.

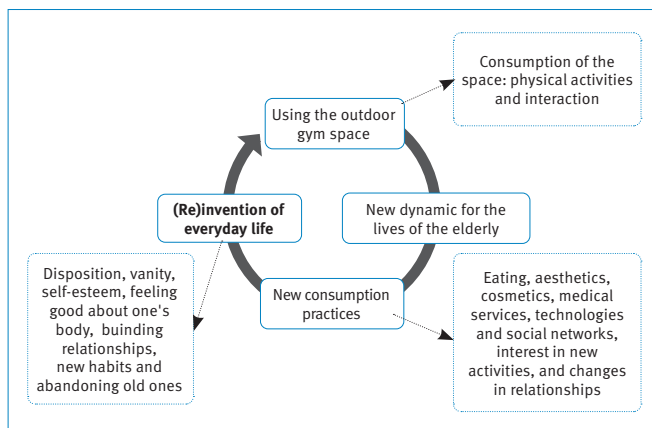
## DISCUSSION

From the understanding of the consumption practices of the elderly who attend outdoor gyms as a (re)invention of their daily lives, we observe the development of the attendance in those gyms. These developments indicate their consumption practices, and so we consider the attendance of the outdoor gym space as a vector of daily (re)invention, which is the starting point from where the consumption of a certain space develops and involves the lives of these elderly, initially produced through public strategies and thereafter appropriated through the tactics of its users.

As explained above, these elderly people are taking a new dynamic in their lives, which consequently implies their consumption practices. Considering the post-modern context, besides consumption of the gym space, the elderly look for different experiences performed through their consumption practices, with an emphasis on interactivity (Cova, 1996; Firat, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1995). Such practices include not only the consumption of the gym space itself as a place of physical activities or integration, but also new consumption habits and interest in new activities. This leads to the question of how the attendance in outdoor gyms develops.

The new consumption practices, services, and goods may or may not be directly linked to the physical activity, in the sense that they are not necessarily sports gear, such as footwear or clothing, but involve the deepest aspects of the lives of these elderly, modifying the body in a physical and mental way, such as vanity, self-esteem, feeling good with one's own body, and the building of relationships. Through a conceptual model (Figure 1), we represent the aspects that constitute this daily (re)invention.

**Figure 1. Conceptual model: attendance in the outdoor gym space as a starting point for the daily (re) invention of the elderly**



The practice of attending the outdoor gym space promotes new dynamics in the lives of the elderly. To deepen the current understanding, we showed that this new dynamic brings new consumption practices, (re)inventing everyday life. This reinvention occurs in the way the elderly experience changes in disposition, self-care, vanity, the search for new things and different occupations, establishing routines, defining commitments, practicing leisure activities, and constructing new habits and abandoning old ones.

We identified that this process, which constitutes the life of the elderly, is constant and comes from the appropriation

and re-appropriation of their attendance of the outdoor gyms. The conceptual model presented here reflects the ways of doing of the elderly, since they appropriate an organized space, inventing and reinventing their own daily lives. Further, this scenario emerges from the silent and heterogeneous uses of these individuals who combine their tactics in their own way (Certeau, 2014; Highmore, 2006).

From the understanding of the consumer as producer, creator, and practitioner (Certeau, 2014), we find the non-passivity of these elderly, affirming consumption as a process of production and transformation (Firat, Dholakia, & Venkatesh, 1995). Although their daily life is given, it is manipulated according to the interests of the elderly themselves (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). They are individuals who seek to be independent through a liberating process from what is pre-established.

As they build their reality, the elderly who use the outdoor gyms seek both the experience and the sensation, not only for mental aspects but also physical ones, as a way to communicate these sensations (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995). The concern with eating and appearance, associated with vanity and aesthetics, reflects this context, and are often associated with self-image. These forms and relationships are what Firat and Venkatesh (1995) attribute as the products of consumption.

With this understanding, we observe individuals who are the sum of all their life experiences, but who change their daily lives through their own practices. This creation and maintenance of identity emerges from their consumption practices (McCracken, 2003) in terms of the later routine of attending the outdoor gym.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this study, we analyzed consumption practices as a (re) invention of the daily life of the elderly after they started attending outdoor gyms. With the immersion in the field together with elderly consumers, whose population index is growing, we shed light on an empirical reality that refers to individuals who are on the fringes of society and of their own families, as in the case of older people, who are underestimated at different times and treated as invisible or non-existent.

We observe that old age, which, for many, is a gray period of life, is the opposite for these elderly consumers, not in the sense of “better age” as propagated by others, but in how this period of human life can be (re)invented in its own way. We offer a new vision for the phenomenon of consumption, exploring how everyday consumption practices can also be liberating and be resistance practices by the elderly.



Social integration is a major factor in the practice of physical activities, reinforcing the social dynamics versus biological dynamics that involve the elderly who attend the outdoor gym. It is not just the physical activity performed in the space of the gym, but mainly the integration and socializing that occurs in this space, with the friendship and companionship of other frequenters. This is exemplified by the dimensions of the experiences acquired through the consumption of the elderly.

We highlight four major contributions of this research. The first is a new possibility of theoretical research in consumer studies related to practices, through the optics of [Certeau \(2014\)](#) and [Certeau, Giard, and Mayol \(2013\)](#). The understanding of these practices is relevant for the production of knowledge in *marketing*, since the approach of these studies consists of theoretical perspectives on consumer actions, the market, and its meanings. The interdisciplinarity contributes to a dialogue between consumption practice studies and other areas of knowledge.

In the same direction, the second contribution is linked to the fact that the study is greatly relevant for society. In addition to academic and managerial contributions, we advance the understanding of how society is organized in a given sphere. We combine the theoretical framework used with the demands on population ageing to produce a different perspective of fragility, disease, and loss, thus aligning academic interests closer to the interests of governments and society.

The third contribution is related to how everyday life can be (re)invented through consumption, with this process being a means to the establishment of the consumer's identity and self-knowledge. This is because, through the consumption of space, the material consumption occurs, causing a symbolic consumption. In other words, the practice of the attendance of the space of the outdoor gym triggers other practices, more specifically consumption practices. To this end, we sought to deepen these understandings, emphasizing the consumption practices of elderly people who attend the outdoor gyms, as well as their subjectivities and identity affirmations.

The fourth contribution emerges from the outdoor gym space proposal. A space strategically designed with a focus on biological issues, as far as the health of the elderly are concerned, becomes a space that incorporates social issues and leads developments in the (re)invention of the everyday life of these elderly, which allows us to observe that such (re)invention, in the scope of tactics, moves towards a social sense, rather than a merely biological sense. In the social sense, it emphasizes the use, sociability, appropriation, and the social and collective relations of the elderly. Through what they represent in terms of

disposition, elderly consumers build the space of the outdoor gym and its meaning from their tactics, opposing and resisting what is attributed to them, especially regarding aging. The biological sense represents a discourse used in the context of these strategies.

We consider this research as the beginning of interdisciplinary engagements between consumer studies and the daily practice theory of Certeau. We suggest that future studies, especially regarding the theory of consumption practice, may appropriate this theoretical view. In the same sense, by showing that spaces can be produced by means of strategies and tactics, we demonstrate that external interventions in the public space can raise the possibility of ruptures in routines and rituals.

Finally, when we consider the material component of the practices of the equipment installed in the spaces of the gyms, we emphasize the possibilities of research based on object-oriented ontologies (OOO) or materialities like elements made of practices. Departing from our approach, future studies may not look at the gyms as the starting point for the analysis of everyday practices, but at how such gyms represent ruptures in the spatial construction of cities.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The authors declare that they participated jointly in the conceptualization, theoretical-methodological approach, theoretical review (literature survey), and finally the writing and final review. The data collection and data analysis were performed by the first author under the supervision of the second author.