Collective Value Co-Creation in Service Experiences:

*Dance the night away*

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Abstract
This study analyzes how consumers engage in a service experience to collectively co-create value. Building on a three years ethnography including in-depth interviews and participant observation, the paper details how consumers can co-create value by engaging in a service experience, dancing salsa, for a temporary escape from everyday life. We adapt a framework consisting of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage, exclusivity to a service context. Drawing upon the service literature to extend our understanding of customer value, we analyze how consumers come together in a service experience to create ‘moments of luxury’, a brief and enjoyable service interaction. The paper offers two main contributions to service research: (1) Analyzing how consumers collectively co-create an intense, hedonic but brief service experience, and (2) Detailing and analyzing characteristics of consumer enjoyment in service contexts. The findings help managers understand how to design consumer experiences in order to facilitate consumers’ collective value-creation.
1. Introduction
The service experience is a cornerstone of service research to understand how consumers engage in services (Helkkula 2011; Zomerdijk and Voss 2010). The concept goes back to the role of consumer experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) to refer to hedonic experiences, expanded in later research to focus on hedonic and extraordinary service experiences (Arnould and Price 1993). The service experience can thus be a source of pleasure for consumers, but what is the role of customers’ value creation in service experiences? In this paper, we argue that consumers can engage in the service experience in ways that allow them to co-create value in the form of extraordinary moments in services; we term these intense service experiences moments of luxury.

The service literature has long emphasized that the consumer ultimately decides the value of a service experience (Grönroos and Voima 2013; Payne, Storbacka and Frow 2008; Vargo and Lusch 2004), but understanding how consumers actually interpret value in service experiences is notoriously difficult (Helkkula, Kelleher and Pihlström 2012; Holmqvist, Guest and Grönroos 2015). The topic of defining value is outside the scope of this paper, but we posit that moments of luxury could represent one aspect of value as it provides consumers with a pleasurable experience.

Moments of luxury refer to small pleasures in a limited time span (Hemetsberger et al 2013), but the current literature on these moments remains product-focuced. The current service literature has largely ignored how consumers could perceive a sense of luxury in their service experiences. Building on calls for more interdisciplinary perspectives in service research (Ostrom et al. 2010) we draw upon the stream of service research to extend it with insights from luxury research in order to advance our understanding of the consumers’ enjoyment as a form of value in the service experience. Extant research recognizes that most luxury definitions include the product characteristics of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity (Kapferer 2010). We adapt these four characteristics to analyze how they look in the service context and how they combine with the temporality of services (cf. Lovelock and Gummesson 2004) to facilitate customers’ value creation.

In order to understand value creation in a shared experience, we posit that service research needs to pay attention to how consumers interact with each other. Extant service research largely focuses on the role of individual consumers and the role of the individual in the interaction with the service provider (Bitner 1990; Bitner et al. 1997; Surprenant and Solomon 1987). This emphasis on the role of the individual within the service experience is understandable, as each service interaction is unique and context-dependent, and the outcome of the service experience is interpreted by the individual consumer in interactions with the service provider (Grönroos and Voima 2013; Helkkula et al. 2012; Vargo and Lusch 2008). In recent years, however, a growing body of service research has argued that the individual’s service experience needs to be extended; the service experience itself may be individual but consumers may co-create their experience in interactions with other consumers (McColl-Kennedy, Cheung and Ferrier 2015; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012).

Recognizing that service experiences can be individually perceived but collectively performed, this paper agrees with recent service research arguing that the service experience depend on the context (Akaka, Vargo and Schau 2015; Helkkula et al. 2012). Service experiences can be co-created by several actors (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2015) and service research would need to focus more on collective services (Carù and Cova 2015). We extend this understanding of the service experience by showing how key characteristics of luxury can combine with characteristics of the service
experience to become moments of luxury for consumers. In line with previous service research, we define hedonism as personal enjoyment and a desire for pleasure (cf. Berry, Seiders and Grewal 2002; McGinnis, Gentry and Gao 2008).

To address how the service can facilitate consumers’ value creation, we analyze a service experience in which consumers interact closely with other consumers to co-create their experience: participating in salsa events. Using ethnography and qualitative in-depth research methods, we detail how salsa dancers collectively co-create value in their service experience. In line with Helkkula et al. (2011), we build on Hart’s (2005) typology of characterizing concepts to ask the following questions: a) What is the role of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity in the service experience?; b) How can the temporality of services enforce the service experience? Building on the methodology of previous studies analyzing extraordinary experiences (cf. Arnould and Price 1993), our manuscript is driven by the findings of an ethnographic study in which we elaborate how hedonism, aestheticism, heritage and exclusivity come together in a temporal, fleeting moment.

In the following sections we review the literature on the service experience, before describing elements of luxury research to extend the service experience by analyzing moments of luxury. The findings elaborate key dimensions of the service experience, which allow consumers to engage fully in the interaction.

2 The service experience
The concept of the service experience goes back to consumers’ active involvement in their consumption experience (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). While the consumer’s role in the service context has been an integral part of service research from its very beginnings (Eiglier and Langeard 1976; Grönroos 1978; Shostack 1977), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were the first to talk about the experience. They define this experience in terms of the consumer’s subjective impressions, building on “hedonic responses and aesthetic criteria” (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982, p. 132). From the start, the marketing literature thus emphasizes hedonism and aesthetics as key aspects of the experience. Later research further develops these aspects of the service experience, focusing on how an intense service experience such as river rafting can be hedonic (Arnould and Price 1993). Building on this understanding, Carù and Cova (2003) highlight the service experience as a key mechanism in the transformation of the consumer.

With the development of the service dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2004; 2008) and the service logic (Grönroos 2008), the emphasis shifted towards the consumers’ roles in their own, individual value creation. However, even though this understanding of the service experience as a co-created interaction between the consumer as and the service provider emphasizes the importance of consumers (Grönroos and Voima 2013; Payne et al. 2008; Vargo and Lusch 2004), the focus of analysis is still on the interaction between two parties. Challenging this focus on consumer-firm interaction, recent service research has started to shift the focus towards the collective service experience (Carù and Cova 2015). In this view, the service experience no longer depends just on interactions between customers and providers; instead, consumers come together in the service experience to co-create value among themselves (McColl-Kennedy et al. 2012; Vargo and Lusch 2011).

Looking at salsa dancing, we explore its hedonic dimension (cf. Arnould and Price 1993; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), co-created in interactions between consumers (cf. Carù and Cova 2015; McColl-Kennedy et al. 2015). In order to further understand
the service experience and to analyze how consumers can engage in the experience to co-create value, the paper adapts key characteristics from the luxury literature

2.1 Value as a ‘moment of luxury’
How does value in the service look from the consumer perceptive. At its core, value is about being better off, and could take many different forms. In this paper, we focus on value in the form of enjoyment. One recent stream within the luxury literature focuses on the notion of moments of luxury (cf. Hemetsberger et al. 2012). We posit that this concept is closely related to customer value, as it considers how luxury could enrich everyday life by providing something special in the form of indulgence (Hansen and Wänke 2011); the moment of luxury thus provides the customer with value in the form of enjoyment. Atwal and Williams (2009) extend the understanding of indulgent hedonism by combining it with aesthetics and a form of escapism to suggest that consumers search for a hint of something special to break the routine. We further draw on their understanding that luxury needs to have a “high degree of both involvement and intensiveness” (Atwals and Williams 2009 p. 343) to allow consumers to break their routines, through an escapism in which consumers can reconstruct their identities. How would hedonism look in a service context, and could consumer create together through escapism by breaking their everyday routine? In the following, we analyze these characteristics in salsa dancing, a service experience rich in both involvement and intensiveness.

Hedonism is the quest for pleasure in which enjoyment motivates individual action; in psychology, hedonism refers to the strategies (approach and avoidance) that people use to reach desired goals and mitigate undesirable experiences (Mees and Schmitt 2008). In the service experience, a hedonic experience is “intense, positive, intrinsically enjoyable,” merging action and awareness in such a way that experiencing pleasure is all-encompassing (Arnould and Price 1993, p.25). The extant service literature emphasizes that the consumer’s moods and emotions in the service experience are crucial to how consumers evaluate the service (Mattila and Enz 2002), underlining the importance of consumer enjoyment and pleasure when engaging in a service experience. The luxury literature, albeit in a more goods-centered context, echoes this importance of consumer hedonism, emphasizing that luxury needs to be pleasurable (Atwal and Williams 2009; Hansen and Wänke 2011). Thus we posit that hedonism is an integral part of the consumer's moment of luxury.

Aesthetics refers to perceptions and appreciation of the beautiful, sublime, and elegant. The extant literature distinguishes between product quality as utilitarian and functional, and aesthetics as the sensory and experiential aspect (Smith and Colgate 2007; Tynan et al. 2010). Comparing luxury with art, Kapferer and Bastien (2009, p.35) argue that aesthetics is an indispensable condition of luxury.

Atwals and Williams (2009) use aesthetics to describe an element of the experience that is visual and intense yet passive, as in the design of a Prada luxury store where the aesthetics influence consumers’ experiences but without taking center stage. For salsa dancing, the appeal of aesthetics is seen in the combination of the dancer with aesthetically crafted clothing and accessories, departing from the conventional, mirroring the luxury literature’s focus on how person and dress combine (cf. Wilson 2007). This combination of dancer and dress is mirrored in Warwick and Cavallaro (1998 p. xvi) asking “where does the body end and the dress begin?” blurring the distinction between the natural (body) and artificial (dress) in
seamless aesthetic integration. We posit that a hint of aesthetics could play a part in the service experience.

**Heritage** We define heritage in terms of the myths and traditions that distinguish a luxury offering from other offerings that can be also functional and prestigious. To understand what sets luxury apart from ‘just’ good quality, the extant literature emphasizes that luxury brands have a history, a heritage, even founding myths (Bastien and Kapferer 2012). For example, the brand myth of Givenchy focuses on role of the aristocratic founder Count Hubert de Givenchy, whose iconic designs for Audrey Hepburn remains an important aspect of its brand heritage and history. In this understanding, an important characteristic of the luxury brand originates from the founder of the brand and the brand history (Beverland 2006). The origins, traditions and history are an important part of luxury brands, as they help to set luxury apart from ‘premium’ and to give deeper meaning to the luxury brand (Beverland 2006; Kapferer and Bastien 2009). Luxury brand often capitalize on their traditions and heritage to make the brand feel authentic to the consumers (Beverland 2006), and we posit that service providers could use heritage to foster moments of luxury.

**Exclusivity** The notion of exclusivity refers to an offering that is available to a limited number of people. The concept of exclusivity is another important characteristic of luxury (cf. Berry 1994), even called the *sine qua non* of luxury (Kapferer and Bastien 2009). In the current literature, exclusivity comes from limiting access to the offering by multiple means, of which a high price is the most visible and most common (Han, Nunes and Drèze 2010). In order to adapt and understand the service experiences, exclusivity could play a role in the consumer’s experience. However, this is a markedly different role from how the luxury goods literature usually treats exclusivity, emphasizing brands that are exclusive due to the price (Han et al. 2010). We extend this focus on exclusivity by price to the service experience, as dancing salsa is an affordable practice, but a practice requiring skills that it takes time and effort to acquire. We thus posit that acquired skills, rather than high prices, define exclusivity in this particular service experience. In this use of exclusivity, we draw upon Cova and Cova (2002) who look at how consumers can come together collectively, in consumer ‘tribes’, around shared passions that link the consumers within the group and delimit them from others. This exclusivity from others is ephemeral (Cova and Cova 2002), thus the exclusivity found in a collective service experience does not extend to other aspects of life, but rather centers on the shared passion of the consumers collectively engaging in the service.

**Temporality** One defining characteristic of services is that they are limited in time and inseparable from the consumption of the service (Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry 1985). The service experience only exists for a given time, leading Lovelock and Gummesson (2004) to talk of consumers only being in temporary possession of the service rather than owning it. We use the temporality of the service to analyze how consumers can ‘stop time’, how they co-create value by engaging in a service that lets them forget everyday worries, even take on a different role for a brief moment. The extant literature argues that luxury should provide consumers with something extraordinary (Atwal and Williams 2009; Hansen and Wänke 2011; Kapferer and Bastien 2009), and at the same time offer the consumer enjoyment, a personal hedonic aspect (Kapferer and Bastien 2009). In their understanding, luxury should never be mundane. The problem is that if the extraordinary becomes the norm, then
even the extraordinary eventually will revert to ordinary. Atwal and Williams (2009) address this problem by arguing that luxury could include an element of temporary escapism to allow consumers “to create new identities and realities for themselves” (Atwals and Williams 2009, p. 343), allowing them to temporarily change their own reality. This understanding of temporality is in line with Cova and Cova (2002) who argue that consumers come together in ephemeral groups where a shared passion temporarily connects consumers together for a short moment of time.

Adapting this understanding of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity to the service experience, we posit that they may come together in a temporal, fleeting service experience to allow consumers to co-create value. The following sections consist of an analysis of the salsa practice that reveals how hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity combine in the service experience of dancing salsa, and how temporality is key to transforming these elements into value.

3. Method
The study focuses on a community of salsa dancers, using participant observation and in-depth interviews during salsa parties and festivals. The study analyzes salsa parties as these events provide insights into a service experience outside daily routines; people meet to dance and to enjoy themselves wearing carefully selected outfits, interacting in codes of their own.

In this ethnographic design, the first two authors carried out fieldwork for three years immersed in a salsa community. Ethnography is a widely used research method in marketing (Cayla and Peñaloza 2012; Cayla and Arnould 2013) in which researchers take on a role as participants and observers (Jorgensen 1989). The field of marketing uses participant observation to study value creation in communities (Schau, Muñiz and Arnould 2009) and previous ethnographic studies establish a significant impact to the field of marketing by documenting the social significance of consumption (Arnould and Price 2006). The authors’ immersion consisted of combined participation both in salsa classes around three-four times a week in different dance schools in Canada, Finland, France and Italy, and in more than 75 salsa parties. Two of the authors participated in international salsa festivals in London, Berlin, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Helsinki. In-depth interviews with sixteen salsa dancers complement the participant observations (Lofland and Lofland 1995). The authors selected interviewees to increase diversity in terms of professional and cultural backgrounds. Respondents represent both genders and eight countries: China, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Russia, Sweden and Ukraine. The age group range from 24 to 37 years old, representative of the salsa community. Four of the informants perform salsa on stage and the rest dance only in salsa socials. The authors further interviewed two respondents who are not dancers but have attended salsa events; these interviews provide insight into how people who interact with the salsa community, attend its events, but who lack the required skills perceive the service experience. Table 1 provides an overview of the respondents in the study; all names are pseudonyms.

| Table 1 here |

4. Findings
In the following sections, we analyze the four key characteristics of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage adapted to the service context. We then present the findings on the temporal characteristic of the service experience and combine it with the other
four characteristics. We show that while the former describe how consumers engage in the service experience, temporality helps us understand how these characteristics come together in the experience to facilitate the brief change from everyday life that the moment of luxury represents.

4.1 Hedonism
The emphasis on hedonism is evident in the service experience of dancing salsa. The first impression when entering a salsa event is usually of fast-paced Latin music and lots of people seemingly enjoying themselves together in a highly intense, joyful atmosphere. Sofia remembers her first impression ever of a salsa event and the collectively co-created experience she found there.

“I guess that the atmosphere, was the first, people are happy. For some reason, people are happy and smiling on those classes. I guess that it is the music, that makes you feel happy, it is a happy music, it is not sad or dramatic, or anything like that, it is very joyful”

The combination of the music and happy smiling dancers creates the atmosphere of the salsa experience. As Sofia’s narrative reveals, all the participants co-create the atmosphere, and the setting influences her perceptions, echoing service research on how the setting of the service experience influence consumers (Bitner 1992). The salsa experience is about value as enjoyment; Alexander illustrates how coming together with other people enjoying the same service experience enforces his value creation.

“Everybody needs like eight hugs a day to stay happy and in dancing you get them automatically. Plus, the people who go dancing actually are into actually having some fun, and it is nice to be around people who are fun and to have fun yourself.”

The emphasis on personal enjoyment permeates the interviews with all dancers, most of whom see the hedonic aspect of the salsa dancing as the main reason they chose to engage in this particular service experience, as evidenced by Anna’s response to what she considers the essence of salsa.

“For me, it [dancing salsa] is about complete enjoyment of music and company.”

The findings show that the hedonic element of the service experience (Arnould and Price 1993; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982) is a key aspect of salsa dancers’ enjoyment of the moment. Engaging in salsa dancing allows the consumers a moment of personal enjoyment, and this appears to be one of the main reasons for why most dancers take part in salsa events. In line with recent service research on how shared experiences foster hedonism (Carù and Cova 2015), the quotes from Sofia, Alexander and Anna all emphasize their personal enjoyment, but also how sharing the experience with others is a cornerstone in their own enjoyment. Our observations of the salsa dancers in action support this view, as their enjoyment is evident when observing the dancing couples filling the dance floor. Moreover, the observations also confirm that dancing salsa is very much an intense and involving service experience, allowing consumers to indulge fully in the moment. The music and the rhythm are fast and engaging, and the dancers are completely absorbed in living the experience, matching Atwal and Williams’s (2009) definition of luxury as involving and intense. As an intimate, passionate dance, salsa also brings the dancers closely together, which
further contributes to the atmosphere. Both the interviews and the observations thus show that consumers co-create the service experience together with other consumer to construct this hedonic aspect.

4.2 Aesthetics
The movements of salsa are designed to be aesthetic and sensual; even though there is usually no dress code, most dancers do dress up for the salsa parties, and quite a few also dress up for the salsa practices as salsa clothing is an integrated part of the dance. By combining beautiful clothes with harmonic dance moves, both the male and the female dancer emphasize masculinity and femininity combined in their dance. Hanna's description after watching a performance at a salsa festival encloses an appreciation of the beauty in the dancers' skills and appearances, which transforms an archetypical illusion of masculinity and femininity.

“I wish that I could be like them one day. He must be like super strong because he was lifting her so easily, and she looks so beautiful and feminine almost floating in his hands. They really make it look so easy and beautiful”

Hanna refers to the ability of the lady to gracefully float in the air and the apparent strength of the male dancer, feats appearing almost magical to those new to the dance, and yet feats that Hanna wants to achieve.

Salsa practices echo the combination of body, clothing and accessories to achieve an aesthetic service experience, as dancers use their bodily expressions, their clothes and their accessories to materialize an aesthetic sensuality into their dance. In line with the Latin origins of salsa, the clothes and accessories emphasize masculinity for male dancers and femininity for female dancers. Figure 1 illustrates the importance of aesthetic femininity where salsa dancers spice up daily life. The analysis of the picture follows Peñaloza and Cayla (2006) in situating place and time while identifying artifacts and bodily positions. The photograph captures a moment of lady styling, a technique in which female dancers integrate body postures emphasizing femininity and aesthetics into the dance.

Figure 1 here

One of the dance schools we observed uses Figure 1 as part of a marketing campaign in social networks. The caption “Come to be a star on the dance floor” evokes an ephemeral celebrity status, and fits the elegantly crafted cocktail dress the lady wears. The focal point of the picture is the sophisticated attire of the female dancer, the easy rapport and the combination of her clothing and her movements, captured in her smile and her hand styling.

One ubiquitous artifact of the salsa experience that makes the service experience of salsa dancing aesthetic is the dancing heel for female salsa dancers, illustrated in Figure 2, and playing an important role in performing the aesthetic salsa moves.

Figure 2 here

The female dancing shoe is a special kind of footwear that embodies the expert craftsmanship that consumers integrate into their service experience. The dancing shoe needs to combine aesthetic elegance and femininity with functionality to facilitate participation in the service experience of salsa. The salsa shoe features an elevated heel that permits rapid graceful spins yet maintaining appropriate balance.
on the ball of the foot, a feat that ordinary heels made for walking simply cannot attain. Wearing dancing heels enables effortless and gracious dancing, and objectifies desired attributes such as assertiveness and femininity. Natalya explains how the dance shoe becomes part of the value in her experience.

“When I have my heels on [I feel] very feminine, heels make your movements feminine, makes your body look nice.”

Thus appearance relies on crafted artifacts to achieve the observable and desirable aspects of dancing, forming a crucial aspect of this service experience. In the same way that a long scarf symbolizes the style that Audrey Hepburn wore, dancing heels enable female dancers to embody the imaginary of how a female salsa dancer should look. Freja reflects on the importance of crafted dancing heels to embody the desired attributes, saying

“Physically [Dancing heels] give the appropriate posture but they also allow me to enter into the role of what a cross-body dancer should look like.”

Through the use of crafted artifacts, sensual clothing and elegant dance moves, the salsa dancers incorporate all of these elements into their dancing, making the service experience seem highly aesthetic and visually pleasing.

4.3 Heritage
Adapting the understanding of heritage and authenticity to the service experience, our analysis of a Cuban salsa school shows how its service strategy explicitly builds on both the foundational story of salsa dancing in Cuba, and their personal ties to the island to reinforce the consumers’ experience. Even though this school is located in Northern Europe, it makes every effort to connect to its Cuban heritage. The founder and main teacher of the school is Cuban, and he has recruited several other Cuban dance professors to the school. Furthermore, in order to access the large facilities of the salsa school (four dance halls) one enters through the unassuming door of a little restaurant called La Habana that is Cuban owned and functions as a meeting place for the Cuban community in the city. Students at the dance school often stay in the restaurant after classes for a meal or just a mojito together. The cooperation with the Cuban restaurant helps the school give the service experience an authentic flair that brings the heritage of salsa to mind even at this Northern latitude.

Recognizing the importance of traditions, the dance school makes an effort to connect to its Cuban origins. Even when speaking English to the students, the teachers use Cuban slang for all the dance moves, and between themselves the dance teachers all speak Cuban Spanish. Several of the salsa students in the school tell us that they are learning Spanish themselves, to get a deeper feel for the salsa tradition. Anna explains how learning Spanish became part of her wish to discover the origins of salsa.

I realized that parts of the real salsa culture were also present here [at the school] as the teachers are Cubans. I learned more about the culture behind salsa by getting to know them. And I started learning Spanish, I felt it would help me understand this whole thing better.

The strongest sign of the school’s efforts to connect its services to the origins and traditions of salsa is its annual salsa trip to Cuba. The dance school offers its students the possibility to travel to Havana with two of the school’s Cuban teachers to discover the history and heritage of Cuban salsa where it first developed, and to
connect with the local Cuban salsa community. Anna explains why she decided to take two weeks off to go with the salsa school to Cuba.

“I wanted to go on this trip [the salsa trip to Cuba] because I wanted to discover the roots of the dance. And there in Havana we met and danced a lot with local dancers and learned more at a deeper level. My image of salsa took on a deeper meaning, I felt I could understand it better.”

The findings show that connecting to the origins of salsa and its Cuban heritage seem to contribute to a feeling of authenticity in the service experience, and that this feeling of enjoying an authentic Cuban experience facilitates the consumers’ value-creation by invoking the heritage of the service.

### 4.4 Exclusivity

Echoing Cova’s and Cova’s (2002) description of ephemeral groups distinguished from others by a shared passion, the dance skills and the codes of the salsa community serve to include dancers and exclude outsiders for the duration of the collective service experience. Two non-dancers who join salsa-dancing friends to salsa events help illustrate how the dance skills and the codes of the salsa community give the service experience an aura of exclusivity to outsiders. John joined a salsa-dancing friend for a salsa party after hearing the friend comment on how welcoming the salsa community is. However, instead of finding an open and welcoming atmosphere, John found the community exclusive.

“I felt handicapped not knowing how to dance salsa. Besides, anybody can come and ‘borrow’ the lady that you were talking with.”

John felt excluded both by his lack of the required skills and by the codes of the community which dictate that dancers accept dance invitations even in the middle of a conversation. A similar view concerning the exclusivity of the salsa experience comes from Lena, who sometimes joins her salsa-friends for salsa parties. Lena, a tall and blonde girl who attracts attention admits that

“When I first came to the parties, many guys immediately asked me to dance.”

However, she notes that her lack of the required skills effectively excludes her from enjoying the service experience.

“Nobody asked me to dance twice, never! And after the guys had seen me dance, or try to dance, with other guys, they all stopped asking me.”

These experiences of non-dancers show how the required dancing skills and the codes of the community make the service experience exclusive, yet also interesting and appealing. Ling explains how salsa first attracted her when she saw friends dance; the skills of the dancers made her intimidated yet determined to learn the same skills.

The first time that I went to a salsa party was quite intimidating [I felt that ] I am not good enough to go, I felt quite intimidated, but I saw that people had fun when they can dance, so I have more motivation to learn more […] I saw my friends enjoying so much that I wanted to feel like that too”
Sofia, an accomplished dancer who came third at the 2013 World Salsa Championship at the Hong Kong Salsa Festival, and whose performance is illustrated in Figure 3, echoes Ling’s feelings.

Even though Sofia now is a world-class amateur dancer, she recalls the first salsa party she attended, after she had taken some salsa classes, and how she experienced the exclusivity.

“Everybody else appeared to be so much more skilled. I was terrified.... and I sat there in the corner the whole evening thinking that I cannot do that. And I did not dance even one song. My sister was dancing and I was feeling petrified [...] It was not pleasant at all in the beginning, I was very nervous every time”.

Yet in three years Sofia went from feeling that her lack of skills excluded her to becoming a world-class dancer. This transformation underlines how this exclusivity is dynamic. Enjoying the full experience of a salsa party right away is inaccessible for someone who has never learnt the dance, but enjoying salsa is not unattainable; not everyone can become a world-class dancer, but anyone prepared to invest time and practice can attain the goal of being able to take part in the service experience and enjoy dancing salsa.

4.5 Temporality
This far, we have described four common characteristics of luxury products and analyzed how they can look in a service experience. While these characteristics are all part of value of engaging in the service, we believe that it is the temporality of the service that enables consumers to briefly escape the everyday routines for a different reality, even a different and temporal identity. By temporality, we mean that consumers can lose a sense of time and de-emphasize or ignore normally ascribed social classifications to just engage fully and intensely in the service for the moment. Part of the value of the ephemeral service experience is that the participants are just salsa dancers who interact with each other for the duration of the practice, before returning to their daily lives when the salsa ends. Lotta, an assiduous salsa dancer uses salsa as a way to step out of her routines.

“I like that when I go to salsa parties I am only Lotta. Nobody knows anything else about me, except that I am a good partner to dance with, or not. I can leave all the problems at the door since nobody is going to ask me how I am dealing with my divorce.”

Lotta leaves her personal and financial worries behind for a few hours, and salsa provides a temporal service experience apart from daily responsibilities, an interlude from ordinary life. This view is echoed by Emma, who explains how she perceives her weekly temporary escape from her daily routines

“Thursday is my day, it is Emma’s day. I go to my salsa class, and I dress up because after the class we have a social event in the same place”.

Salsa dancing provides Emma with an opportunity to reassert a short space in time for herself, far from the responsibilities of daily life. This is what her value in the service is: salsa becomes a temporary space to display her fashionable dresses,
shoes and accessories bought specifically for salsa and to transform herself. This transformation is particularly striking in winter: salsa dancers arrive to salsa events in ordinary winter clothes, but before starting to engage in the event, they completely transform themselves. The transformation is most obvious for the female dancers who exchange coats and winter boots for exquisite dresses and high-heeled shoes, but many male dancers also bring special dance shoes, tight shirts and accessories such small gold chains to “latinize” their appearance. This transformation is part of the value in the service experience for the consumers as it allows them to integrate the service in their life, even if just temporarily as Emma explains.

“I like to dress up for salsa because I normally have to gear up for the weather every day because of my work. It is good to leave the jeans behind and wear a cute dress for a change.”

This temporal transformation in the service experience further enables the construction of ephemeral identities, which helps explain parts of the value-in-use that the salsa dancers experience. In consumer literature, identity projects mean that consumers deploy marketplace resources to construct personal and collective identities to overcome limitations from ascribed categories of gender, class and demographics (Thompson 2014). In line with Atwal’s and Williams’s (2009) view on luxury as a way to take on a new identity, salsa dancing is a service experience where participants are able to temporarily construct an alternative identity and embody the dance tradition for their own enjoyment; an otherwise timid person can take the lead on the dance floor. Ari explains

“When I am dancing salsa, I pretend to be a dark and charming Latino, although I am nothing like that at all [laughter].”

Ari thus uses the service experience to take on a new identity, an identity very different from his own persona, just for the duration of the service. This temporal taking of a new and different identity is mirrored in another interview, this time from the perspective of a female dancer. Lotta, emphasizes how the salsa experience becomes a temporal transformation, allowing her to replace the ordinary life for a short while by engaging in her service experience.

“I negotiate my own identity with myself and I express it outwards, like in a fantasy world, like in a film, or a TV program, you negotiate who you are through characters and you can be someone else through media and detach who you really are... and in dancing.... I am a diva, or I am a really sexy foxy lady if I want to be. So it is about taking up different roles and having fun being able to be whatever you want on the dance floor.”

Salsa dancing allows dancers to temporarily step out of their ordinary ascribed identity as anchored in those around them and instead produce and experience themselves anew. Lotta’s story emphasizes both the temporal transformation and the hedonism it allows, showing the role of the temporal in creating moments of luxury in the service experience. Observations of the salsa dancers reveal that similar temporarily transformations are common in the salsa parties; people who otherwise usually go for beer when going out with friends now instead sip mojitos at the salsa parties, and Spanish terms can be heard interspersed in several conversations, all underlining how the consumers use the salsa event as a temporary transformation.

Salsa parties become temporal moments because they offer an intermediate social structure where the cumbersome worries of daily life are set aside for a brief
time of enjoying a hedonic, aesthetic service experience with hints of heritage and exclusivity. The problems, chores and routines of everyday life remain, but for the duration of this fleeting moment, the service experience permits an out-of-ordinary escape.

5. Discussion
The case of salsa illustrates how consumers come together to co-create enjoyable service experiences. In this service, the four characteristics of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity are present, but take on a different role in the service context to create an intense moment that lets consumers create value for themselves by temporarily breaking their own routines.

In order to understand how consumers create value for themselves as well as co-creating value with the consumers, service researchers need to appreciate the complexity of the consumer’s enjoyment. This complexity is evident in the findings; even though the four characteristics of hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity all contribute to the experience, the findings also indicate that none of these are enough in themselves for the service to become a moment of luxury. Instead, the findings extend the existing literature on the service experience by incorporating the importance of the temporal aspect. Only by fostering a temporary transformation in which consumers can leave daily life behind to engage in an intense experience can hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity in the salsa come together in a fleeting moment to make the service a moment of luxury. We thus agree with Carù and Cova (2003) that service experiences can be transformative, and further extend this understanding of transformation by analyzing how it facilitates consumers’ value creation in temporary, intense experiences.

In describing moments of luxury in service experiences, we recognize that these moments, even though collectively co-created, are still to some extent individual in the sense that what constitutes a moment of luxury is different for different consumers. Value in a moment of luxury cannot be a standardized as it ultimately depends on the consumer’s perception of the moment. Extant service research recognizes that value perceptions are individual and differ between consumers even in the same service context (Helkkula et al. 2012; Holmqvist et al. 2015); we extend this understanding of the individual evaluation to recognize that what is a moment of luxury for some consumers may not be so for others. This distinction is relevant to understand the case of salsa; not all salsa dancing is automatically a moment of luxury. Taking part in a regular salsa class or taking part in the final party at a major international salsa festival are two very different service experiences even though both relate to salsa. As seen in the interview with Emma, her weekly salsa event is already a special moment for her as it allows her to take some time for herself, wear a nice dress and break the ordinary routines. For others, practicing salsa during the week may not be a special moment, but the weekly salsa party during the weekend could become a moment of luxury, while still others may have even higher requirements and perceive only an international salsa festival or a salsa trip, such as Anna’s salsa trip to Cuba, as a moment of luxury.

Throughout this paper, we argue that the salsa practice is a collective and co-created service experience. However, our respondents talk mainly about their own individual experience, rather than about the collective experience despite the fact that dancing salsa is very much a shared, collective service experience. This lends the question why we define this service experience as collective? Partly, this builds on our own observations encompassing three years of immersion in 75 salsa parties,
observing how the atmosphere and the participants’ enjoyment varied from event to event. In addition, our interviews with non-dancers who took part in salsa events show that they clearly observed the collective experience. While they felt excluded due to their lack of skills, they observed how the salsa community interacted together in a closely shared experience. Furthermore, describing their early experiences, before having become experienced dancers, Sofia and Ling both portray themselves as outsiders who felt excluded and had the feeling of watching a close-knit community of dancers interacting together with superior skills. Yet when talking about their current experience, Sofia and Ling, just like our other respondents, focus on their own moments of luxury that the dancing experience gives them.

This distinction is relevant for service research in a wider sense, as it indicates that consumers immersed in enjoying the service experience see it in terms of their own individual value and do not reflect on the collective co-creation of the experience, even when this collective co-creation of value is very much apparent to outside observers. This contradiction between how the service experience appears to outside observers and to consumers engaged in the service poses a challenge for service research where the extant literature has tended to focus on individual experiences (cf. Cova and Cova 2002). Our findings show that this focus is understandable, as an individual focus is likely to emerge if asking consumers about their experience. This may be particularly true in Northern countries, as in our study, where the individual focus tends to be stronger (Cova and Cova 2002). We argue, however, that service research should not limit itself to asking consumers about their experience, but also take a step back and engage in participant observations. Our findings contributes to service research by showing that even what it perceived as individual value can be very much part of a collective value in a co-created service experience.

Contributions
Our findings contribute to the field of service research by analyzing how moments of luxury help us understand value facets in the consumer’s service experience. Previous service research recognizes that firms are value facilitators and consumer value creators (Grönroos and Voima 2013). The broader topic of defining value is outside our scope, but our findings go some way towards extending previous research by analyzing how consumers create one form of value, their moment of luxury, in one particular service. Consumers use characteristics normally associated with luxury products to create their experience. They use aesthetics in the form of elegant dresses and dance moves to feel stylish, they display their skills in front of others for a feeling of exclusivity, and they engage with the heritage of the dance to feel part of the tradition. They do this in an intense involving and hedonic experience that they collectively co-create, and which lasts for only a brief time during which they use this hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity to enjoy a brief moment of luxury. In describing and analyzing the characteristics of this experience and how consumers use these characteristics to create their moment of luxury, we contribute to the service literature by presenting a detailed description of how one form of consumers’ value creation looks in practice.

A secondary contribution concerns how service research could approach consumer experiences. The findings show that consumers asked about their experience tend to focus on their individual role even when engaged in a collective service experience such as a salsa event. For future service research, this implies that researchers should continue to interview and survey consumers, but could also
benefit by taking a step back from the consumer perspective to observe the larger picture of the service experience.

Managerial implications,
Our findings represent one way in which consumers co-create an enjoyable service experience, and our findings could help managers facilitate enjoyable service experiences in new ways. We believe managers could approach this challenge by understanding that managers can never produce a moment of luxury, but they can facilitate for consumers to co-create the moment with each other.

In this paper, we adapt four classic characteristics from the extant literature, hedonism, aesthetics, heritage and exclusivity, to analyze how these characteristics look when applied to a service context rather than the product context in which the literature has traditionally used them. For service managers, a key implication is that each of these characteristics remain relevant in service contexts, but in a rather different form. This may be most evident in exclusivity, described in our distinction between exclusivity by price for luxury products and exclusivity by practice for services. Managers do not necessarily need to price a service to make it exclusive, they can facilitate exclusivity by enabling consumers to display their skills and expertise.

Another key managerial implication concerns the role of temporality. The four classic luxury characteristics all play a part in making moments of luxury special but they are not enough. The moment of luxury represents a short break from routines, a fleeting moment of a different reality. All of the luxury characteristics shape this moment, but the temporal aspect of services is required for the moment to exist. Consumers know they will return to their everyday lives after the brief service, but for a temporary space in time, they can lose themselves in the experience.

Managers need to remember that they cannot produce value as such; experiences of the moment differ between consumers. The consumers’ own engagement is crucial to the experience, as seen in how some respondents manage to make even their weekly practice a special moment by dressing up (aesthetics), socializing afterwards in the Cuban restaurant (heritage), displaying their skills (exclusivity) to indulge (hedonism) in their short break (temporality). Managers can facilitate such experiences by adapting classic luxury characteristics from their traditional goods focus to a service setting. For example, providing an aesthetic service environment complete with some discrete hints of the heritage could serve as a background setting in many different kinds of services where hedonism is a part of the service outcome. This is already the case for classic luxury service providers such as high-end restaurants and hotels, but our findings show that managers could use the same characteristics even for relatively inexpensive hedonic services to facilitate the customer feeling that the service is something special and truly represents a pleasurable break.

Conclusions, limitations and future research
This paper introduces the concept of moments of luxury to analyze how service experiences can be hedonistic and aesthetic (Holbrook’s and Hirschman’s 1982) moments where consumers come together to co-create value. We argue that the temporal aspect of the moment of luxury holds the key to understanding how service experiences can become hedonic and extraordinary despite being integrated into consumers’ everyday lives. As this paper is limited to one service, future research
could analyze to what extent moments of luxury represent a desirable form of value for consumers, as well as analyzing this moment in other service contexts.

We believe that the concepts of value creation and value definitions are of immense importance, but defining what value is would be a monumental task outside the scope of this article. In analyzing how consumers co-create their enjoyable moment, we contribute to service research by examining one form of value, and how it looks in practice from a consumer perspective. While enjoyment is an important part of value in salsa, future service research could extend these findings by analyzing characteristics of different forms of value in other service contexts.

Looking at salsa dancing, our paper addresses a situation in which regular people break their routine by temporarily escaping into a hedonic service experience. We believe future research might benefit from turning this situation around. The unique must never feel tired, so could consumers experience similar moments by engaging in service experience that are less luxurious than their everyday life? Just like salsa dancers, consumers who take part in hiking or trekking also engage in a service experience that is temporal, intense and involving, but which is marked by an absence of many comforts of everyday life. These experiences are also extraordinary, as Arnould and Price (1993) illustrate by looking at river rafting as a service experience, but more research is needed to establish if breaking the routine in the opposite direction also entails the same value perceptions in the service experience.

References
Hart, Chris (2005), Doing a Literature Review. Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination. London, UK: SAGE.


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<tr>
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