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**Emotional Timescapes:  
The Temporal Perspective and Consumption Emotions in Services**

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**Abstract**

This exploratory study examines how the temporal aspect of service consumption impacts the emotions that are created within consumers during service encounters. The authors adopted mobile phone or ‘SMS’ diaries to capture the emotions that participants experienced at the very moment they were being felt or ‘in-vivo’. The study suggests that the temporal perspective is a dominant cause of consumption emotions in services, influencing consumers’ emotions from before the service encounter commences to its conclusion, and in some cases *beyond* the conclusion of the service event. Other antecedents of consumption emotions such as interactions with staff and the servicescape are influenced by, and interwoven with this temporal aspect. By capturing emotions as they were experienced, recall difficulties that might have been encountered had the emotions been measured retrospectively were eliminated, allowing the researchers to construct a comprehensive account of the chronology and contiguity of the emotions created within consumers during service encounters. While certain aspects of time such as the consequences of queuing and waiting have been addressed in the services marketing literature, a detailed understanding of how time impacts consumption emotions in services from the start to the conclusion of service encounters has not been undertaken to date. This research addresses that gap by examining how the temporal perspective influences not only consumption emotions in customers *per se* but how it also influences other causes of consumption emotions that customers encounter during service transactions.

**Keywords**

Services, Consumption Emotions, Temporal Perspective, SMS Diaries, Mobile Phone Diaries

## **Emotional Timescapes:**

### **The Temporal Perspective and Consumption Emotions in Services**

#### **Introduction**

Time has been said to both fly and crawl along, heal all wounds, mend broken hearts, tell and also explain (Jane Austen). It is unwilling to wait for any man and has been described as ‘an illusion’ (Albert Einstein) and ‘a game’ (Heraclitus). The notion of time has been discussed and debated in many disciplines including philosophy, economics, physics, sociology and history, and its importance to life and society is in no doubt (Jacoby *et al.*, 1976). Belk (1975) introduced a temporal perspective to consumer behaviour when he outlined the five situational characteristics that have a “*demonstrable and systematic effect on consumer behaviour*” (p.158). Time is considered to be a scarce resource in our ‘speeded-up society’ (Ackerman and Gross, 2003; Geiger, 2007). Temporal matters are particularly pertinent in the area of services marketing as service encounters take up a consumer’s time - time spent undergoing the selected service, plus any time expended in getting to and from the service provider. While spending time on a hedonic service such as in a restaurant or an amusement park may be an enjoyable experience and ‘time well spent’ (Anderson and Shugan, 1991), time spent at the doctors or on a purely utilitarian service such as a dry-cleaners is done out of necessity and potentially viewed as a ‘waste of time’ (Larson, 1987), particularly if these service encounters become protracted (Cogoy, 2010).

Consumers can experience a broad range of consumption emotions in a single consumption incident (Madrigal, 2003; Richins, 1997) and the passage of time in a service encounter provides ample space not just for a cognitive evaluation of the service received, but also for consumer emotions to develop at various stages from appraising the servicescape, to interacting with service staff, to experiencing the service delivery to the final outcome and departure from the service provider’s premises. Westbrook and Oliver (1991, p. 85) defined

consumption emotions as the “set of emotional responses elicited specifically during product usage or consumption experiences”. Many of the causes of consumption emotions are well documented in the services literature, such as the impact of the servicescape (Bitner, 1990,1992; Hoffman and Turley, 2002), service employees (Hennig-Thurau *et al.*, 2006; Price and Arnould, 1999) or service breakdowns (Folkes *et al.*, 1987; Swanson and Kelley, 2001). Emotions are also known to affect complaining behaviour, word-of-mouth (Nyer, 1997) and consumer decision-making processes (Luce, 1998).

However, the relationship between emotions and time is an aspect of services that is arguably under-represented in the marketing literature (Bitran, Ferrer and Oliveira, 2008). This is somewhat surprising given the experiential nature of the service transaction – indeed service encounters have been described as ‘*breeding grounds*’ for emotion (Grace, 2007, p.271). By treating time as just ‘*another variable*’ the way time is perceived and how it affects consumption habits and behaviour is not explicitly considered in consumer decision-making models, and yet time has been shown to be an important concept to consumers and their attitudes to certain products and services (Bergadaa, 1990, p.289). Accordingly, the objective of this research study is to explore the impact of the temporal perspective on consumption emotions during everyday service encounters. It does so via a research methodology that captures the consumption emotions that customers feel at the very moment they are experiencing them.

This ‘real time’ capture of consumption emotions is vital. Most previous research in the area of consumption emotions (e.g. Dube and Morgan, 1996; Mudie *et al.*, 2003; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991) has presumed an ability on the respondent’s part to accurately remember all of the emotions experienced during a service encounter but the possibility of memory errors in retrospective reports is now well established (Cowley, 2007; Walker *et al.*, 1997). There is evidence from the field of psychology of a non-linear relationship between the experience of

emotions and retrospective judgements (Dube and Morgan, 1998) and that capturing emotions retrospectively can be fraught with hazards (Skowronski *et al.*, 1991; Walker *et al.*, 1997). In memory tasks participants consistently overestimate the intensity of emotions and underestimate the frequency of positive emotions (Lench and Levine, 2010). By relying on memory consumers could potentially forget some of the emotions that they experienced early on in their service encounter, especially if the service in question was an Extended Service Transaction (EST).

The study thus makes two key contributions: One, by being able to capture these emotions in real time, as they are experienced, rather than relying on post hoc reporting, it provides new insights into the contentious issue of just how much emotionality there is in everyday services. And two, this real time capture allows us to paint a picture of what, leaning on Barbara Adam (1998), we call a ‘timescape’ of consumer emotions in everyday services, namely how emotions develop over the course of an everyday service encounter.

## **Literature Review**

### **Objective and Subjective Time**

As intimated in the introduction, humans have been contemplating the nature and passage of time since – well, times immemorial. However, only in the past 15 years has a more focused consideration of time issues entered management and marketing research. Through a renewed focus on process, organizational researchers in particular have made strong advances in researching how time affects human beings’ experiences and doings. Borrowing heavily from sociological and philosophical findings but also those emanating from theoretical physics, they distinguish, for instance, between ‘chronological’ and ‘kairotic time’, ‘public’ and

‘private’ time, or ‘clock time’ and ‘lived time’ (Chia, 2002; Czarniawska, 2004; Orlikowski and Yates, 2002; Hassard, 2002). Whatever the specific labels, they often point toward the difference between time as an objective measure and as a subjective experience (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002). As a subjective experience, time is seen by these scholars as being embedded in social interactions, structures, practices and knowledge, in artefacts, in the body, and in the environment; it is therefore deeply contextual (Adam, 1995; 1998).

From a services marketing perspective, these reflections are significant. On the one hand, service planners clearly deal with ‘clock time’ or time as a commodity, for instance when designing queuing systems, and some consideration has also been given to ‘event-based’ time trajectories (Hassard, 2002). On the other, the consumer herself will always be situated in a universe that knows clock time as well as lived time – subjective time perceptions are but one element of lived time that has penetrated services marketing research (Hornik, 1984). What really matters is how time is experienced by consumers, not how it passes according to some official measure. In these considerations, the ambiguous nature of *durée*, or time flows which cannot be parsed, has been highlighted in particular – time invites succession but also simultaneity (Chia, 2002), and both are significant in the service experience. While succession may lead to subjective time structuring by the patron (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002), simultaneity opens up the notion of flow, consciousness and imminence (Chia, 2002).

### **Time and the Service Encounter**

In its objective guise, time is a key dimension of service industries as it concerns opening hours, schedules, service duration and waiting time (Durrande-Moreau and Usunier, 1999). Time is considered to have value as it is a finite resource and exists in limited quantities (Berry *et al.*, 2002; Jacoby *et al.*, 1976). It cannot be stored or acquired (Feldman and Hornik, 1981) and is expended in one pursuit or another (Jacoby *et al.*, 1976). The phrase ‘time is

money' is very well known but this has in fact been shown to be untrue – time is less substitutable and less fungible than money (Leclerc *et al.*, 1995). Time is a fixed-supply resource, is perishable and cannot be stored for future use - it therefore has a 'value' or 'price' (Feldman and Hornik, 1981; Chang *et al.*, 2013).

This commodity perspective on time has given rise to many products and services that are designed to help consumers save or gain time, such as robotic floor cleaners that will vacuum without supervision and combination products such as shampoo and hair conditioner in one bottle designed to shave valuable minutes off time in the shower. Time can be a barrier to acquisition but it can also be used to encourage consumers to spend more money, such as paying for express delivery of an item in a bid to receive it faster ( May and Monga, 2014). However, despite developments in time-saving technologies, retailers and service providers struggle to keep up with this emphasis on speed. Queuing and waiting is still the norm – indeed Zhao, Hou and Gilbert as recently as 2014 stated that “*Customers often have to wait during the process of acquiring and consuming products and services*” (Zhao *et al.*, 2014, p. 296). A casual trawl through any consumer blog will reveal irate customers dissatisfied with waiting for service, for a repairman, or for delivery of an item, and this is despite the increase in self-servicing, online service provision and a drive to offer more efficient service. It is well known that waiting is particularly important for service providers to manage and minimize as it has been found that people overestimate waiting time by 36% (Durrande-Moreau, 1999). Firms lose money when customers leave a service premises before the service has been delivered (Bitran *et al.*, 2008) – phenomena known as ‘balking’ and ‘reneging’ (Wang *et al.*, 2014). This can occur because consumers feel under pressure to fit all of their work, leisure and family activities into their day – time deprivation is defined as “*the perception of having been prevented from devoting enough time to chosen pursuits*”,

(Ackerman and Gross, 2003, p. 22). Time pressure is strongly related to emotional experience (Teuchmann *et al.*, 1999), and hence any consideration of time as a commodity needs to also take into account time as a lived experience. However, while the commodity perspective of time has found ample take-up in services research, this lived or emotional aspect of time has been neglected. Our first research question, accordingly, is as follows:

*RQ1: How does the concept of time as lived experience influence consumption emotions in services?*

### **Emotions and Service Duration**

Services have been described as performances or experiences rather than objects, punctuated by many sub-experiences at each touch point the customer encounters within the organization providing the service (Berry *et al.*, 2006). This not only ties in with our previous discussion of time as subjectively experienced in succession and simultaneity, but it also signals that service experiences offer ample scope for eliciting many different consumption emotions. This is particularly true of ESTs, which can last for hours (for example, restaurants, hairdressers) or even weeks (such as holidays), but even ‘brief’ service encounters have been shown to facilitate the experience of numerous emotions (Mattila and Enz, 2002). It thus seems that during a service encounter, however brief or extensive, there is time for consumers’ emotions to change and adapt to the various events that occur – interactions with both employees and the servicescape, undergoing the service itself, such as a haircut, having to pay at the end etc.

Moreover, the use of time itself is a consumption experience (Ackerman and Gross, 2003) so it is possible that it impacts emotions in different ways throughout the service event depending on how it is encountered and experienced. Spending, experiencing, enjoying or indeed wasting time at a service creates consumption emotions, and these can impact with

consumption emotions caused by other elements of the service encounter in a variety of complementary or contradictory ways across the duration of the service encounter. Therefore, our second research question is:

*RQ2: (How) do consumption emotions change throughout a service encounter?*

### **Time, Emotion and Service Evaluation**

Consumption emotions have been shown to play a vital role in customer satisfaction (Dube and Morgan, 1998, Ladhari, 2007). There are indications that consumption emotions have an impact on behavioural intentions such as word-of-mouth (Bougie *et al.*, 2003) and customer loyalty (White, 2006). The post-purchase period may involve a variety of emotional responses (Westbrook and Oliver, 1991), and while it is generally accepted that customer satisfaction is a post-purchase/post-choice phenomenon (Giese and Cote, 2000), some researchers argue that satisfaction can vary widely over time (Cote *et al.*, 1989). This hypothesis was born out by research into product satisfaction; focus group participants discussed the issue of timing and satisfaction with 39.9% determining their satisfaction *before* consumption, 48.9% *during* consumption and 11.9% *afterwards* (Cote *et al.*, 1989). This finding could have particular implications for consumer satisfaction with services due to their longer duration which may lead to a higher emotional valence. Hence, we ask our third and final research question:

*RQ3: How does the temporal perspective influence a consumer's evaluation of the service experience?*

## **Methodology**

Given the above research questions, our interest clearly lies in what Desmet *et al.* (2000) refer to as the ‘total consuming experience’, and we emphasize the lived, as opposed to objectively measured, aspects of this experience. We therefore chose a semi-inductive, exploratory rather than confirmatory research method. Further, as pointed out above, both in-process consumption emotions and post-encounter emotions influence the consumer’s satisfaction with the service (Dalakas, 2005). For this reason it is important to measure these emotions *throughout* the service encounter and not just at the end or retrospectively.

This study utilises a novel form of qualitative diary research involving mobile phones to examine consumption emotions in services. Consumer memory can be unreliable (Dube and Morgan, 1998) and participants’ limited ability to recall can result in a “faulty retrospection” of events (Bolger *et al.*, 2003, p.585). This lack of accuracy when remembering emotions becomes particularly significant in service encounters, which give the consumer time to feel a diverse range of emotions from start to finish. Using SMS diaries to capture these emotions as they occur means that all of the felt emotions during the various service encounters are captured chronologically, allowing us to see the emotional trajectory that participants experience.

Diary research has found some uptake in consumer research to date for issues such as examining how people consume chocolate (Zarantonello and Luomala, 2011), experience surfing weekends or a classical music concert (Caru and Cova, 2008), and how students live their daily lives (Patterson, 2005). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has recently been an increase in electronic forms of data collection, such as using the Internet and PDAs (Personal Digital Assistants). Electronic diaries overcome some of the limitations of the traditional

paper and pen method, such as providing time stamps so the researcher has a record of when diary entries are made.

Researchers who employed mobile phone diaries in social science research noted that they were an excellent way of capturing the dynamics and emotions of life and that participants' familiarity with their phones meant their use in a research context did not impose additional stress (Ronka *et al.*, 2010). Up to now this method has however remained underutilised in a marketing or consumer behaviour context (Andrews *et al.*, 2011), which is somewhat surprising given the mobile phone's ubiquity in modern life. Its unobtrusiveness as a research or diary device gives this technology considerable potential in consumer self-reporting (Hein *et al.*, 2011).

Text messaging, a particular feature of modern mobile phone technology, is of great importance to consumers' daily lives and is one of the main reasons that mobile phones have become so popular (Downes, 2006). The immediacy of texting is one of its attractions to consumers (Patterson *et al.*, 2003). This immediacy makes SMS diaries a logical and significant extension of the qualitative diary method for capturing consumption emotions. Asking volunteers to text the researcher how they are feeling, at the very moment they are feeling it directly from a service setting, means that the emotions are captured instantly, using a medium that respondents are comfortable with. Andrews *et al.* (2011) evaluated the use of SMS diaries as a research method in terms of the quality of data collected, and it was found to be both a valid and reliable approach for collecting consumers' affective experiences. In comparison with Andrew *et al.*'s study, we expand the use of this method from their product use context to service consumption as we feel that this is the area for which the method has

most to offer in terms of capturing the immediate causes, the chronology and the duration of consumption emotions.

### *Research Design and Sampling*

The research presented in this paper was conducted in the Republic of Ireland between 2006 and 2007. Irish people are among the biggest texters in Europe, sending approximately twelve billion texts annually (Burke, 2012) which is double the European average. While non-probability sampling results in samples that are not necessarily generalisable to the population at large, it can be used very beneficially in exploratory research for generating deeper insights and novel ideas (Malhotra and Birks, 2007). In the first part of this study, a class of twenty-nine students who were taking a Masters Degree in Marketing at an Irish University was used in the study. While concerns about doing research using convenience samples of students have been raised (Liefeld, 2003), the outright rejection of the use of student samples has been questioned (James and Sonner 2001) and if college students are the population of interest their use may be appropriate (Peterson and Merunka, 2014). Importantly, for a study involving the use of text messaging, the student/youth demographic has been posited as ideal (Patterson, 2005). However in order to compare and contrast this student sample with a broader demographic, in a second research phase twenty-eight non-students were recruited through a local newsletter and added to the study, making a total of fifty-seven participants ranging in age from nineteen to sixty-seven years old.

In their totality, services account for over 60% of production and employment in most developed nations (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011) and comprise a very wide and diverse range of industries, which creates challenges for research aiming at a representative sample of services. We based our sampling of everyday services on Iacobucci's (1992) list of services, removing services that are highly specialised – for instance catering - are considered private,

such as psychotherapy, or those that do not occur regularly and / or are of extremely long duration, such as ‘vacation’. Theatre, which was not included in the Iacobucci (1992) list, was used in Mudie *et al.*’s (2003) research examining consumption emotions in services, and was therefore added to facilitate comparisons, resulting in a list of thirteen sample services included in the study, as Table 1 shows.

### *Data Collection*

Field work was carried out in two phases from January to April 2006 and from February to May 2007; the gap between the two field phases allowed the researchers to do a preliminary data analysis and to evaluate and refine the methodology. The fifty-seven research participants were given the list of thirteen services and asked to select one that they planned to use or were likely to use in subsequent weeks. It was considered important to let the participants choose a service that they would ordinarily use in the course of their daily lives. Participants selected a service and emailed one of the researchers with the date (and time if possible) that they planned to undertake the service. All thirteen types of services were used several times by the research participants. (See Table I).

=====*INSERT TABLE 1 HERE*=====

Participants were instructed to send SMS messages to the researcher before, throughout and immediately after the service encounter they were partaking in, stating how they were feeling whenever they noticed that they were experiencing an emotion related to the service experience. Psychologists believe that human beings know when they are experiencing an emotion (Beedie *et al.*, 2005; Plutchik, 1994,) and no participant asked for clarification of this instruction. If participants were not experiencing any emotion it was suggested that they send a text to that effect. This measure aimed to circumvent the risk that respondents would

fabricate emotions simply so that they could send a text and take part in the study. It was also emphasised that it was important to send a text just before the service started to gauge their initial mood, and immediately after the service encounter was over with their concluding emotions. All respondents were offered full reimbursement for the text messages that they sent in order to encourage them to send as many texts as was warranted under the circumstances of their chosen service.

It took approximately four months for all twenty-nine students to undergo the services they had selected (January-April 2006) and three months (February to May 2007) for each of the 28 non-students to partake in their chosen service. A total of 226 texts were received from the 57 participants.

The number of texts sent depended on the service situation, as some services lend themselves to generating emotions more easily than others. For example, a trip to a restaurant or hairdresser can cause a wide range of emotions due to the length of time involved in the service encounter. Certain services proved more challenging for sending texts than others - during both the dental and medical procedures it was difficult for respondents to send texts as they were being examined or undergoing a consultation. Due to the exploratory nature of this study the researchers used the technique of 'descriptive analysis' (Frijda, 1986) whereby research participants were given the freedom to express their emotions, along with the context or circumstances of these emotions in their own words at whatever juncture they occurred within the service encounter.

### *Follow-up Depth Interviews*

Within a maximum of 48 to 72 hours of each service encounter, a depth interview was carried out with the relevant respondent to discuss their experience in person. Interviewing respondents in this research study in order to probe more deeply into the emotions they experienced was considered to be of particular importance due to the restrictions placed on the SMS diaries by the character limits and circumstances of texting. Carrying out the interviews as soon as possible after the service encounter aided respondent recall and ensured that the experience was still fresh in their minds. This has proven to be critically important to avoid mis-remembering events due to the influence of post-encounter information (Cowley, 2007) or rationalization of negative feelings through ‘emotion-focused coping’ which can include denial or a positive reinterpretation of events (Baker and Berenbaum, 2007).

The interviews also allowed the authors to check the validity of diary entries, to get participants to discuss the phenomenon of interest and to corroborate or expand upon the diary narratives by explaining events in more detail. Background and context were provided in the interviews, which helped to ‘set the scene’ for the experiences, with respondents’ text messages serving as ‘autodriving’ cues (Heisley and Levy, 1991). This means that interviews are ‘driven’ by a material artefact such as a photograph, which is used to remind informants of their own behaviour. In our case, we showed respondents their own SMS and asked them to recall and talk to us about the situation and context in which they were written. As per qualitative interviewing guidelines (Thompson *et al.*, 1990) the researchers tried to allow interviewees to freely discuss their service experiences, concentrating on their feelings and emotions during the service encounters, with an emphasis on ‘how did you feel?’ probes as opposed to ‘why?’ questions, which may lead respondents to post-hoc rationalization.

Psychologists have long held that humans remember emotions inaccurately, and this was confirmed in the interviews that followed the text diaries when some interviewees confessed to being quite surprised at their emotional experiences when they re-read their own diaries. They had forgotten much of what they had felt even though at times these interviews were within just twenty-four hours of the service encounter. If the research had relied on post-consumption reports only, this would have led to significant gaps in the emotional journeys elicited.

### *Data Analysis*

All of the SMS messages were typed out to facilitate chronological reading and to try to build a narrative out of each respondent's texts to construct a picture of each service experience and the emotions that had been experienced. All of the interviews were also transcribed, anonymised and labelled with a pseudonym, age and the type of service used.

In its broadest sense the purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how the temporal perspective impacts the consumption emotions experienced during service encounters, with particular emphasis on any variations or changes in emotions that may occur throughout the duration of the service and on any impact of these emotions on service evaluations. With these questions in mind the data was analysed using the 'template' approach, which is well suited to studies where specific research questions are to be answered (King, 1994). Each respondent's transcripts were examined in their entirety, i.e. the text messages and interview transcripts for each respondent were collated and read as one transcript. Iterative readings of the transcripts, that is reading through the transcripts numerous times, going back and forth within and between the texts looking for themes, helped to identify the causes, context and consequences of consumption emotions in services and their relationship to time and chronology of events. Both authors analysed the text

messages and interview transcripts separately. Where disagreement occurred discussions were held over the meanings of the texts.

## **Results**

The SMS diaries and subsequent depth interviews demonstrated that every service encounter in the study, even those that were brief and could be described as fairly mundane such as a trip to the dry-cleaner's, created consumption emotions in the research participants. This is an important finding because previous research by Price *et al.* (1995) as well as Mudie *et al.* (2003) concluded that consumers did not experience consumption emotions in services. It is important to note that both of these studies asked consumers to *remember* the emotions they experienced during the service encounter *after* the encounter was over (albeit immediately after in the case of Price *et al.* (1995), whereas this present study examined emotions as they occurred. The SMS diaries were particularly useful for documenting how the temporal perspective influenced consumption emotions as participants were able to communicate brief 'flashes' of emotion such as frustration at the sight of the length of a queue before the emotions were forgotten or dissipated. Some of the emotions created by the temporal perspective *were* extremely short-lived so the SMS diaries ensured they were recorded *in vivo* whereas a post-service encounter interview alone might have resulted in those momentary emotions being forgotten. In this Section, we will present the results of our study in 'event time', that is sequentially as experienced by the research participants. The subsequent Discussion Section will then draw these results together in relation to the three research questions posed.

Consumer emotions were apparent before the service encounter commenced and throughout the experience, right up until and beyond the final moments of the encounter. The research

participants had been asked to send a text message to the researchers before the service encounter commenced, and these particular texts demonstrated that prior to the service encounter participants experienced *mixed* emotions. The SMS messages sent before the service encounter contained at times two, or three different emotions in the same sentence, indicating that the uncertainty that exists before a service commences can cause consumers to experience various emotions simultaneously.

*“Just about to go into the dry-cleaners – feeling quite happy but a little anxious because am handing in a good pair of trousers. Also worried about money – do I need to pay upfront? Hope not cos am broke”* (Mark, 21 yrs, Dry-cleaners)

The issue of time was referred to unprompted by a wide number of participants across a variety of services. There were thirteen different services used in this research study (see Table 1) and some of them, such as doctors, dentists or hairdressers, required participants to make an appointment to be seen, whereas others, such as banks or dry-cleaners for example, did not require specific appointments, and participants tried to undertake these services when it was convenient for them. As a result customers with appointments believed they knew what time they would be attended to by their service provider and arrived armed with this expectation – they ‘time budgeted’ (Hornik, 1982; Tsai and Zhao, 2011). Those without appointments could not predict how long it would take for them to be dealt with by their service provider but previous experience helped to inform their expectations. However if this expectation was not met by the service provider, the very first in-service emotion felt was typically one of annoyance or frustration:

*I wanted to get this done really quickly and I knew that around lunchtime from previous experience that it’s usually quiet and I was on my way to training and the bank is literally on the way but I went in and I saw the queue and I was surprised and pissed*

*off cos I thought 'I'm never going to make training now'” (Jack, 21 yrs, Financial Institution)*

Despite the fact that some participants had appointments with their service providers sometimes they were forced to wait for service. Respondents who attended the service provider regularly, such as for a course of treatments (doctor, dentist) anticipated the wait and brought books or work for them to occupy their time more productively, which somewhat tempered their frustration. The servicescape at times also served as a distraction during this pre-process wait period; on the other hand if the servicescape did not provide such distraction or worse, when ‘idle’ staff aggravated the perception of being neglected by the service provider, waiting created particularly strong negative emotions.

*“So I was sitting waiting and it was really frustrating cos there were no magazines for men and the ones that were there were like two years old and my appointment was for 4pm and I didn't go in til like 20 past and by then I was just...a bit agitated I suppose”  
(George, 24 yrs, Medical Procedure)*

*“So I saw a short queue and thought 'this is great' but then nothing was really happening and the queue wasn't moving and I couldn't understand it. I was getting a bit more anxious because I was going to be late for class and I saw these other cashiers not open for customers. I mean, what were they doing? Could they not see us?” (Philip, 23 yrs, Financial Institution)*

While queuing or waiting for service was regarded by research participants in this study as being frustrating, the converse, or *not* having to wait or being served immediately by the service provider was spontaneously reported by respondents as being a source of positive consumption emotions.

*“They led me to the basin, put a gown on me and put the colour in almost immediately, am delighted” (Linda, 67 yrs, Hairdressers)*

*“On way in, quick wait! Wasn’t even five minutes, am in good form now” (Helen, 22 yrs, Medical)*

Once the service encounter commenced, participants reported feeling emotions such as ‘relieved’ or ‘delighted’ that the service was now starting. However, once the various services were underway, in-process waits were often the reason to flip this sense of relief into a negative valence. Delays were experienced by participants between courses in a restaurant, or at various stages of a hairdressing appointment, such as between getting one’s hair washed and getting it cut, or the leisure centre was busy and respondents had to wait until a particular exercise machine was free. A sense of powerlessness was particularly palpable when participants described such in-process waits:

*“We were chatting and she was cutting and then suddenly she disappeared. I think she went to check on someone else, they do that. They gave me another coffee but I was just sitting there and I didn’t know where she was. She must have been gone about ten minutes. I felt like I should say something cos I was pissed-off” (Sarah, 22 yrs, Hairdressers)*

The various waits that were encountered by research participants in some cases resulted in the creation of time pressure, causing feelings of annoyance, frustration and upset. Other participants were already under time pressure as a result of their busy lifestyles or careers.

*“When I got to the garage, I was fairly stressed. I don’t think it was the puncture, I think it was more having to go get the nut, getting back...all of a sudden, I’d lost an*

*hour and a half. I was conscious of having to get back to work...*" (Richard, 39 yrs, Garage)

A general lack of time due to busy schedules meant that respondents were constantly aware of how much time a service was taking and made them impatient and quick to find fault with even the shortest of delays, slow service or other service lapses. The pervasive feeling was one of 'wasting time' that could or indeed according to some respondents *should* have been used on other activities:

*"Yeah, like I'm in the gym and I'm constantly looking at the clock because I'm thinking 'I could be in the library'" (John, 22 yrs, Leisure Centre)*

When things fail to go to plan and delays occur, the ensuing time pressure creates 'anxiety', 'worry', 'annoyance' and 'panic', in the participants' own (texted) words. In some service situations the delay was the research participant's own fault as they had arrived at their service appointment late creating scheduling difficulties for the service provider or the respondent had miscalculated how long a service encounter would take and scheduled a subsequent appointment for too soon afterwards. This however did not lessen the negative consumption emotions created by this subjective time pressure.

Some participants were subjected to a 'post-process wait' (Taylor, 1994) whereby the service encounter was technically over but the research participant could not leave as they were waiting for their bill or for their coat to be brought to them or indeed for a final gesture on the part of the service provider:

*"He went to get a mirror to show me the back of it. I got fed up waiting. I was thinking 'I could just get up and leave' but then that's the whole final part of the service – you*

*can't just get up and leave. And I was kind of waiting to get home because I had to go somewhere else in the afternoon. If I had been in a major hurry, I would have been really pissed off. (Jackie, 22 years, Hairdressers)*

After various emotional outlays the service encounters came to their respective ends. Research participants sent a final SMS to the researchers sharing their concluding emotions. Many participants were 'relieved' that the services were over so that they could pursue the rest of their day's tasks. As discussed, time is a finite resource and there is no conceivable way to create more time, all consumers can do in cases of time pressure is to *re-allocate* time from one task to another (Chang *et al.*, 2013). It appears that when time is 'taken' by someone else this causes particularly negative feelings, even when the rest of the service encounter had proceeded flawlessly. This interviewee for instance felt that she got such care and attention from her hairdresser that the appointment took too long and made her late for her next appointment:

*"They're obviously trying to show that they give a good service, but in relation to that, I think they're probably not thinking of time. Like, they should be thinking of it but their focus is obviously on trying to make you have a lovely experience but I was getting a bit anxious about the time" (Chloe, 22 yrs, Hairdresser)*

In contrast to this experience stand the emotions experienced by some participants because their service encounter was too *short* or over too *quickly*. Yeung and Soman (2007) showed that consumers of some services believe that the duration of a service is linked to its value, especially when price is considered in the equation, creating a duration-to-cost ratio. Research respondents in this situation complained that for the money they were spending, they had hoped for a longer service experience. Again, this perspective was not at all

influenced by the results of the service experience i.e. there was nothing wrong with the *core* service – the meal was delicious or the doctor delivered good news about an illness, the issue was simply that not enough time was spent by the service provider in serving this delicious meal or giving this good news. Participants frequently discussed this aspect of the service experience in terms of what it cost them financially or from a lack of enjoyment of the service encounter due to a feeling of ‘being rushed’.

*“The waitress came over and we were like, right, we want this, and she said ‘ok’ and came back literally almost immediately with the starters. I was delighted cos I was starving but then literally, she cleared off the plates and came back with the main course. I mean, you need a gap! We were a bit disappointed, I mean we’d just sat down! We wanted to make an evening of it but we were in and out within an hour. We were a bit pissed off” (Gaelle, 31 yrs, Restaurant)*

*“I was in the waiting room and I was really apprehensive because I had a pain in the right side of my chest. But then he diagnosed me and it was a very simple thing so then I felt a bit ripped off – sixty euro! I came out like, a minute later and I was annoyed with myself and I just felt, ‘why did I do that?’” (David, 52 yrs, Medical)*

This illustrates just how important the context of time is to the experience of human emotions – consumption emotions were caused by having too much time as well as having too little, service encounters taking too long and also being too short – indeed these diametrically opposed situations caused participants to feel the *same* emotions, such as anger and disappointment.

## **Emotional Experiences of the Servicescape across Time**

These ‘primary’ aspects of the temporal perspective discussed in the previous Section (in-process waiting, time pressure, delays etc.) were interwoven with other causes of consumption emotions, such as interactions with service staff and the quality of the service itself, to create an emotional journey from the start to the conclusion of every service experience – or what we call the ‘emotional timescape’ of service encounters, as illustrated schematically in Figure 1.

=====INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE=====

The initial text message that respondents sent highlighted the emotions they were feeling as they made their way to their service provider or outlining the ‘mood’ they were in – this was at times unrelated to the imminent service encounter with for example, respondents reporting that they were in a good mood because it was Friday. Following these *pre-service* encounter text messages, the first *service-related* emotion experienced was often created as a result of being left waiting (negative) or conversely, being served right away (positive) and linked to this *temporal* source of consumption emotions were other non-temporal antecedents such as an interaction with a staff member or an initial assessment of the servicescape.

The use of SMS diaries highlighted the duration of the consumption emotions as every SMS message contained an emotion, or sometimes more than one, and the immediacy of this technology demonstrated how quickly emotions change and are replaced by other emotions, although there may of course be lingering sentiments such as being slightly mollified by being offered a coffee during a wait but nonetheless remaining somewhat annoyed at the delay. Over the course of a meal or a hair-cut, or even a short service transaction such as a trip to the dry-cleaners, participants went from being happy to being annoyed to being embarrassed, back to happy and ultimately ending on being frustrated, for example.

Depending on the service in question once it started there were opportunities for in-process

waits as well as further interactions with staff and at this point respondents could also begin to assess the competence and ability of the service provider, all of which had emotional consequences for the respondents. For some customers in-process waits or indeed a service simply being delivered at a slower pace than expected caused time pressure which created negative emotions such as *anger*, *anxiety* and *panic*.

As a service moves towards its conclusion further interactions with staff or indeed other patrons can create more emotional episodes, which may also be influenced by the aforementioned time pressure or indeed concern about/admiration for the service provider's skill levels and competence. The concluding emotions of the service encounter are influenced by a now rather complex and varied mix of residual emotions that have been created by the elements of the temporal perspective along with other causes such as staff, servicescape and the final outcome of the service transaction such as whether the participant likes their haircut or enjoyed their meal, for example.

## **Discussion**

Overall, our results show just how difficult it is to maintain a continuous level of positive emotions throughout the duration of even the most mundane service encounter. The consumption emotions created by the various primary temporal aspects such as waiting times were punctuated by consumption emotions caused by other events that occurred during the service encounters, creating quite an emotional journey for participants, or '*emotional rollercoaster*' as one research participant described it. In the previous Section, we have modelled this 'emotional rollercoaster' schematically in Figure 1 as an emotional timescape of a service encounter. This Section will briefly relate our research findings to the research questions posed in Section Two before highlighting this study's conceptual and practical implications.

*How does the concept of time as lived experience influence consumption emotions in services?*

The temporal perspective was pervasive and evident throughout the entire service encounter, and we illustrated the interplay of emotions and time through tracing what we called the emotional timescape of service encounters. The influence of the temporal perspective on consumer emotions begins from the moment the service encounter commences, or indeed *before* it commences, and impacts the customer throughout the experience, right up until after the encounter has ended. In comparison to previous research, predominantly quantitative in nature, our exploratory ‘real time’ investigation of consumption emotions demonstrated that even the briefest of service encounters creates emotions, and these emotions can be amplified by the many ‘events’, both temporal and non-temporal that occur during the service experience.

Time is a subjective experience, much dependent on for instance the emotional setup with which the consumer enters a service encounter or the subjective importance she accords to the service in question, and co-dependent on other elements of the servicescape such as the number of service staff on duty or the distractions offered. As Czarniawska (2004, p. 775) put it: “Whereas Chronos measures time in mechanical intervals, Kairos jumps and slows down, omits long periods and dwells on others.” Clearly, judging by their emotional reactions, for our respondents time was experienced in a very personal way and was of significant import to them which means that even momentary lapses in attention to a patron’s time sensitivities can negate much positive service effort. On the basis of these exploratory findings, we posit the following:

*P1: Subjective time experiences create consumption emotions in everyday services that both add to and amplify emotions cause by other elements of the servicescape.*

*(How) do consumption emotions change throughout a service encounter?*

This study showed that consumers can experience various and diverse emotions both simultaneously and successively during an everyday service encounter. The Westbrook and Oliver (1991) definition of consumption emotions quoted earlier in this paper refers to consumption emotions as occurring *during* consumption however this research evidenced consumption emotion in participants from before the service encounter commenced, throughout the experience as per the Westbrook and Oliver (1991) definition, right up until the final moment of the encounter and immediately afterwards. Before the encounter, the uncertainty that exists in consumers before a service encounter commences can lead to the consumer experiencing conflicting or mixed emotions; this is also sometimes described as consumer ambivalence (e.g. Penz and Hogg, 2011). There has been some discussion over whether ambivalence means the *simultaneous* or the *successive* experiencing of emotions (Otnes *et al.*,1997; Carrera and Ocejja, 2007). The fact that our process oriented investigation of emotions in service encounters demonstrates both simultaneity and succession ties in with the theoretical work on subjective, lived time we presented in Section 2. The SMS diaries demonstrated that there is in fact an important difference between the two definitions of ambivalence as both were evidenced at different stages of the consumption experiences. While simultaneous emotions were particularly salient prior to the service encounter, they did not seem to occur as often after the various service experiences had commenced. What participants did experience however were mixed *sequential* emotions, which their text messages attributed to specific events, such as being left waiting or a poor meal. Thus, in contrast to previous studies on the subject using retrospective rather than real time methodologies, our data indicates that typically the more recent emotional responses ‘overlay’ but not completely wipe out earlier ones. We therefore propose:

*P2: During service encounters consumption emotions change rapidly, cause overlay and incomplete recency effects.*

*How does the temporal perspective influence a consumer's post-encounter evaluation of a service experience?*

In the past decade, research has started to answer calls for customer satisfaction research to include emotional factors more prominently (e.g. Dube and Menon, 2000; Wong, 2004; Martin *et al.*, 2008); these studies however have mainly focused on the emotional impact of the patron-employee relationship. Our data shows that while consumption emotions may (at times rapidly) change, consumers' sensitivity to time passing remains acute throughout, and it is not only related to cognitive appraisal of the service but also to emotional valence. Though previous research found that delays have different consequences in terms of repatronage intentions and service evaluations depending on when they occur (Dube-Rioux *et al.*, 1989), our study indicates that delays create at times quite significant negative emotions *regardless* of when in the service encounter they occur. It appears that subjective perceptions of time pressure play a particularly strong role in sensitizing individuals to the passage of time. The difference between 'lived' and 'objective' time is salient in this regard, as even short waits seemed to have a (sometimes disproportionately) large impact on patrons' emotional make-ups and thus likely also on their post-service satisfaction. While previous studies have shown that customers routinely overestimate waiting time (Durrande-Moreau, 1999), the impact on emotions has hitherto not been demonstrated as clearly. We propose:

*P3: Consumer emotions mediate between subjective time experience and customer satisfaction.*

### *Practical Implications*

The value of time has been demonstrated to the extent that it is arguably *more* precious than money as it is less fungible and substitutable (Okada and Hoch, 2004). Some people use money to buy themselves time; indeed, entire service industries such as cleaning, valeting or gardening exist mainly because consumers perceive themselves as ‘time poor’. Yet, it would appear that many service providers have a tendency to be supercilious when it comes to budgeting their customers’ time. In 1984 the first field study on waiting in the retail industry was published (Hornik, 1984) and incredibly, thirty years later the waiting continues. It has been suggested that waiting is linked to the perceived value of the service, in that consumers are more willing to wait for some services than others if they perceive the expected utility or benefits from the service to be worth waiting for (Yan and Lotz, 2006). This research found little evidence of this distinction: in our study, waiting for service across *all* of the everyday service encounters sampled resulted in frustration and annoyance. Queues were regarded as being a measure of service providers’ incompetence and disregard for the customer, which fuelled consumers’ anger, as respondents felt disrespected and undervalued by the service provider. In one instance what was supposed to be a research participant’s quick trip to the bank to pick up an information leaflet ended in anger and frustration because it took so long and it wasn’t ‘worth his time’. Given just how emotionally charged waiting appears to be, it is vital for service providers to monitor their hourly footfalls electronically, informing them of busy periods that could be addressed with extra staff.

Potentially complicating matters however, it is important to note that consumers of certain services may equate time spent with value received and a service that is over too quickly or abruptly (based on consumer expectations and perceptions) may create negative consumption emotions as they may feel they did not receive value for money. Respondents were annoyed

and angry when service delivery took too long or when they were made to wait, however the same emotions were created in those whose service experience was too *short* or where they were served a little too efficiently. In the latter cases, it is important not to make consumers feel rushed. Clearly the context within which time is experienced has very different emotional consequences. This topic that has been almost completely neglected in the marketing literature (see Yeung and Soman, 2007 for the exception) yet has important implications for service providers of hedonic services such as spas, beauty parlours, restaurants etc. Service providers need to be fully in tune with customer expectations surrounding the duration of their service experience. It is critical for service providers to learn and understand through customer research exactly what customers are hoping to experience in terms of the service encounter's timescape.

Overwhelmingly, being under time pressure created negative consumption emotions in research participants and therefore their perception of the service suffered greatly. Our study found that even when the service was considered to be excellent customers under time pressure may not appreciate the service as much as could be expected. If a customer is feeling time pressure it may not be the fault of the service provider – as noted sometimes research participants had underestimated how long service delivery would take, but regardless of the cause, time pressure has negative emotional consequences for consumers who may not necessarily attribute this to themselves. Information may be key here, where possible staff should inform customers at the time of booking an appointment how long it is expected to take and then keep to the timeframe given. Organizations such as Disneyland that subject customers to long queues erect 'signposts' or 'milestones' at intervals in their queues informing customers of how much longer they will have to queue from that point, which may

go some way to helping customers to budget their time better and also prevent time misperceptions.

This study also showed that the uncertainty that exists in consumers before a service encounter commences can lead to the consumer experiencing conflicting or mixed emotions, which may lead them to avoid the service situation in the future. Relatively recent research shows that people tend to react negatively to mixed emotions unless they have acquired the necessary skills to cope with them (Lau-Gesk *et al.*, 2011). It is important therefore that service providers attempt to minimize the pre-service ambivalence that consumers experience. Providing as much information as possible to consumers in advance of the service and perhaps even going as far as offering customer testimonials and refund guarantees if a service unsatisfactory could go a long way to reducing pre-service encounter mixed emotions, resulting in a more positive initial emotional valence.

In sum, service providers need to develop a greater respect for their consumers' time if they hope to create positive consumption emotions thereby possibly leading to repatronage and ultimately customer loyalty. Time is a limited resource, and as society continues to become ever more fast-paced and time becomes scarcer, service providers who acknowledge the importance of this resource to their customers will triumph. We therefore urge services marketers to design and maintain their service timescape as meticulously as they design the physical servicescape.

### *Research Implications*

The impact of the temporal perspective on consumption emotions in services has not previously been examined in detail by marketing researchers, especially not in relation to ‘lived’ or subjective time. While the issue of waiting *has* received a great deal of research attention and has been found to have important consequences for customer satisfaction, it is important that research provide a more complete picture, including further insights into time pressure, time deprivation and duration heuristics. This study has shown just how complex the influence of time on consumption emotions is. Service encounters can be emotional ‘rollercoasters’; even services that are considered to be rather mundane such as those used in this study create a myriad of consumption emotions that one might situate more readily in the realm of hedonic experiences like river rafting (Arnould and Price, 1993) or sky-diving (Celsi, Rose and Leigh, 1993).

While the results of this exploratory study are evidently limited in generalizability, future research should endeavour to quantify the relationship between time and emotions; the propositions provided in this paper may guide such research. For the reasons laid out in this paper we would strongly encourage future research into service consumption emotions to utilize research designs that allow researchers to capture consumer emotions in real time. Portable neural imaging devices may be a promising way of doing so, though the disruptiveness of such devices should not be underestimated, and contextual elements also need to be considered. Future research should also ascertain the extent to which the emotional timescape laid out in this paper influences service evaluation and customer satisfaction – the question to be answered is whether all the little changes in consumer emotions traced through our SMS research method have an impact on customer satisfaction and evaluation or whether it is only the *post*-service emotion that prevails.

## **Conclusions**

Time is a scarce resource and its value is increasing as it becomes even more precious for consumers. Living in a service economy means that this resource will often require trade-offs and that consumers will be particularly sensitive to its 'use' in one service pursuit or another, with significant consequences on the service emotions experienced. The influence of temporal aspects on service encounters would appear to be both complex and context dependent and thus makes for a rich area of study. Previous services marketing research has demonstrated the importance of the servicescape, employees, the quality of the service delivery, and how the presence or absence of other patrons can influence service experiences, but to date the influence of the temporal perspective on consumer emotions has received little research attention. In this study, capturing emotions as they were experienced allowed us to build a chronology of the emotions experienced and what triggered them at various intervals in the service experiences, thereby tracing an emotional timescape and research propositions that we would hope will provide future impetus to both service marketers and researchers.

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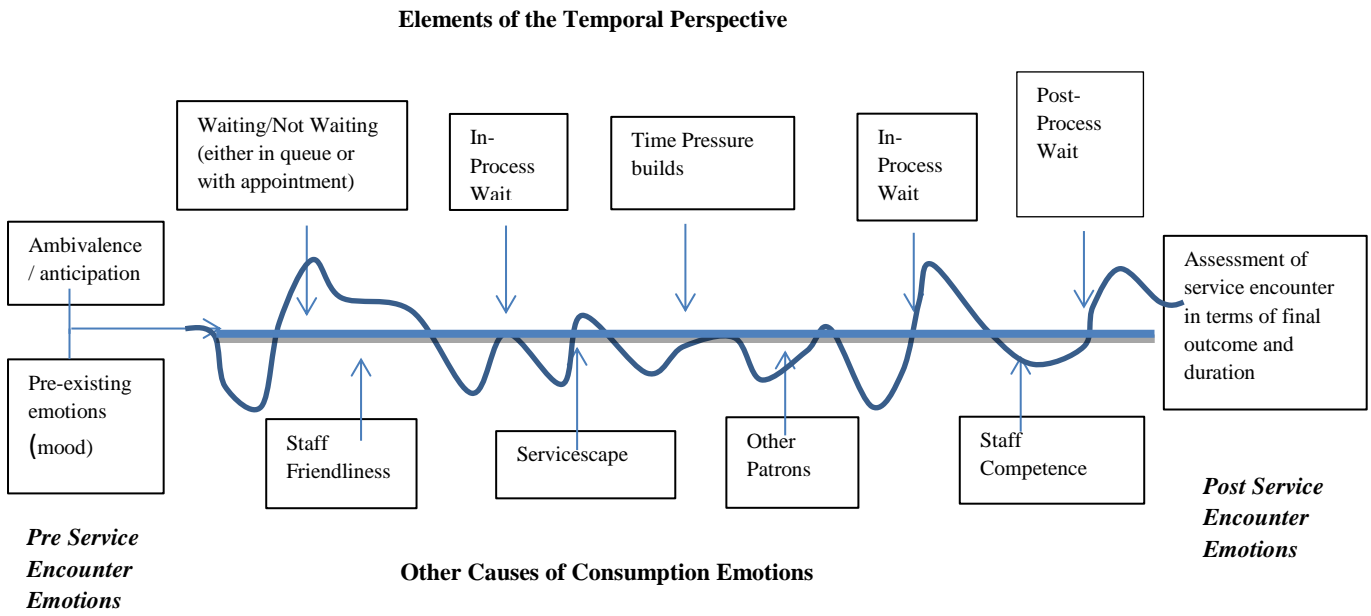
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**Figure 1: Emotional Timescape of Service Encounters**



**Table I: List of Services by Number of Participants**

<b>Service Used</b>	<b>Number of Participants</b>
<b>Restaurant</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Hairdressers</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Leisure Centre/Health Club</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Creche</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Financial Institution</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Car Repair</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Dry-Cleaning</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Medical Procedure</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Hotel Room</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Tailored Clothing</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Theatre</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Travel Agents</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Dental Examination</b>	<b>3</b>