Marketing Science Institute Working Paper Series 2021

Report No. 21-127

Cultivating the Green-Tea Moustache: Defining, Delineating and Delivering Marketplace Tranquility

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Date of Submission: March 25, 2021

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Abstract

Despite rapidly growing customer demand for marketplace offerings that can foster tranquility (feelings of peace, calm, and serenity), and empirically supported positive linkages between tranquility and well-being, no research examines this topic from the perspective of marketing practice. The present research addresses this gap. Through interviews with 34 practitioners and analysis of archival data, we empirically explore and introduce the construct of marketplace tranquility (MT). We define MT as *feelings of peace, calm, or serenity that customers ultimately experience through marketers' strategic delivery of unordinary goods, services, or experiences, and that frees customers from the demands of goal impingement and induces focused attention.* We next identify strategies in three categories—environmental, temporal, and social—that practitioners leverage when engaged in delivering MT. We also explore three challenges practitioners identify in striving to achieve this goal, and how they address these challenges. We discuss implications for academics and practitioners, and suggest avenues for future research.

Keywords: tranquility, emotions, customer well-being, marketing practice

Statement of Intended Contribution

Despite customers' increased demand for commercial offerings that can facilitate tranquility (or synonymously, peace, calm, and serenity), few studies explore linkages between low-arousal positive affect and consumption, or how marketers deliver products, services, and experiences that help foster customers' tranquility. We address this gap by examining three research questions: 1) What is "marketplace tranquility (MT)? 2) What components do practitioners believe are strategically salient in facilitating MT? 3) What challenges do practitioners face when delivering MT, and how do they manage these challenges? Leveraging interviews with 34 practitioners and archival data analysis, we first introduce and define MT as *feelings of peace, calm, or serenity that customers ultimately experience through marketers' strategic delivery of unordinary goods, services, or experiences, and that frees customers from the demands of goal impingement and induces focused attention.* Second, we delineate the strategies practitioners leverage when striving to deliver MT. We identify three categories of strategic components—environmental, temporal, and social—and unpack the specific strategies practitioners use within each. Finally, we discuss the challenges participants face when striving to facilitate MT, and the strategies they deploy in addressing these challenges. Our research makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, our findings shed light on the dynamics involved in facilitating tranquility in the marketplace. We also bolster work in psychology that explores the cognitive and behavioral aspects of tranquility. In addition, we contribute to research on customer well-being by identifying MT as one way marketers can meet customers' needs to escape and detach from an increasingly hectic world. Practically, our work can inform for-profit firms, non-profit organizations, and even public policymakers engaged either in offering commercial aspects of MT, or in conserving resources and designing non-profit initiatives that could enhance consumers' experience of tranquility.

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> "I had thought…to do a…PR series that says, "Got Tranquility?," and then [run a photo of someone with] a green-tea moustache and invite people to Tea Ceremony, and to sell it and market it in different ways….It is something people yearn for…why not try to capitalize on it?" [Jessica, Director, Japanese Cultural Center]

The global marketplace is experiencing a rapid increase in customers' demands for products, services, and experiences that enable them to escape from and cope with hectic, often highly urbanized lifestyles. Consider the commercial successes of adult coloring books, Bose noise-reducing headphones, Amtrak Quiet Cars, and yoga—now over a $27 billion industry (Gregoire 2013). Recent articles in the business press (Brooker 2019; Graham 2013; Pressman 2015) affirm customers' increased reliance on commercial options to facilitate tranquility—a term recognized as synonymous with calm, peacefulness, quietude, and serenity (Oxford English Dictionary 2019). Importantly, in helping people manage myriad physical, social, and emotional stressors, such options offer significant and positive potential for enhancing customer well-being (Dambrun, Desprès, and Lac 2012; Lee et al. 2013).

Despite the fact that practitioners (like Jessica quoted above), recognize that people now "yearn for" tranquility, little to no understanding exists of how marketers deliver products, services, and experiences that help foster this affective state among customers. In fact, the marketplace focuses heavily on delivering sensory-laden experiences that induce high-arousal positive affect (HAPs; e.g., happiness, joy, and surprise) stimulating customers (Fulberg 2003;

Wakefield and Baker 1998), in line with the strategic paradigm of the "experience economy" (Pine and Gilmore 1999). In addition, consumer research also favors understanding HAPs over LAPs (low-arousal positive affect) within customer contexts. Yet as both an increasingly urbanized world and invasive, pervasive technologies fuel the "age of incessancy" (Prochnik 2011, p. 12), it becomes even more critical to understand how marketers can become vital partners and contribute to customer well-being through facilitating experiences of LAPs.

Rooted in an empirical study of 34 practitioners and an analysis of archival data, this paper introduces the construct of "marketplace tranquility," and explores three research questions. The first two derive from MacInnis's (2011) framework for developing conceptual papers. Specifically, we ask: 1) What is marketplace tranquility (hereafter, MT)? (*identify/define* the construct) and 2) "What components do practitioners believe are strategically salient in facilitating MT?" (*delineate* the construct). Our last question asks 3) What challenges do practitioners face when delivering MT, and how do they manage these challenges? Our empirical analysis supports the definition of MT as *feelings of peace, calm, or serenity that customers ultimately experience through marketers' strategic delivery of unordinary goods, services, or experiences, and that frees customers from the demands of goal impingement and induces focused attention.*

In addition to unpacking this definition, we offer insights to practitioners by identifying how our participants deliver tranquility by leveraging strategic components that fall into three broad categories. We also unpack the challenges our participants face when delivering MT, and how they choose to address (or not address) these challenges.

We structure this paper as follows. First, we discuss current understandings in the literature of LAPs in general and tranquility in particular, and highlight their importance to

individual well-being. We then detail our methods and mode of analysis. We organize our findings around our three research questions. Our discussion then delves deeply into our contributions, and offers implications for academics and practitioners, as well as avenues for future research.

Background

Emotions are adaptive responses to a situation that reflect people's interpretation of their surrounding environment (Frijda 1988; Smith and Ellsworth 1985). Such responses can have significant implications not only for judgment and behaviors (Schwarz and Clore 1983; Wyer, Clore, and Isbell 1999), but also for well-being (Fredrickson 1998; Frijda 1988). Importantly, emotional experiences can map onto two fundamental dimensions—valence and arousal—that vary along a continuum (Russell and Barrett 1999). While valence ranges from highly positive to highly negative, arousal ranges from calming/soothing to exciting/agitating (Russell 1980). For instance, although both excitement and calmness are positive emotions, excitement is high in arousal, whereas calmness is low in arousal.

Emotions and Well-Being

A wide range of prior work examines how valence and arousal can influence cognition and behavior, which in turn can influence people's well-being. For example, HAPs are associated more with hedonic values of consumption (Babin, Darden, and Griffin 1994; Chitturi, Raghunathan, and Mahajan 2008), while LAPs relate more to customer comfort (Spake et al. 2003). Scholarship consistently supports linkages between people's experience of LAPs and their well-being (Fredrickson 2001). People in LAP states are more likely to report greater life

satisfaction, as well as lower levels of anxiety, depression, and health distress (Kreitzer et al. 2009). Therapies intended to induce LAP states through meditation, deep breathing, and relaxing music also seem to reduce stress and benefit health (Brown and Ryan 2003; Kaspereen 2012).

LAP states also induce cognitive and social benefits; for example, they may encourage a broader, more contemplative form of thinking (Pham, Hung, and Gorn 2011), which can further enhance performance on cognitive tasks such as creativity (Hershey and Kearns 1979). LAPs also can enhance feelings of attachment and social connections, which enhances one's self-assessment as a worthy individual (Roberts and Cunningham 1990). Studies in neuroscience also find that the neural system that underlies feelings of calmness and social connectedness facilitates social exploration, sharing, and caring (Depue and Morrone-Strupinsky 2005). Work in social psychology suggests LAP states significantly decrease self-criticism and anxious attachment, and enhance one's reliance upon and intimacy with others (Gilbert et al. 2008).

Tranquility

Prior research in psychology and environmental science suggests tranquility stems from both internal feelings (e.g., calmness and peacefulness) and external environments supporting the experience of these feelings. Researchers argue people experience tranquility when they feel at peace with their current situation and feel free from external demands on their time and resources (Berenbaum et al. 2016; Ellsworth and Smith 1988). Yager (1982) finds that in decision-making contexts, tranquility manifests as a state of emotional and psychological ease stemming from their ability to choose a preferred option without having to worry about alternatives. With respect to the external environment, contexts that provide quiet, peaceful places to escape from the demands of everyday life, such as open and natural landscapes, can optimize tranquility (Eliovson 1971; Herzog and Bosley 1992; Hunter et al. 2010). Combining natural features and

soundscape components can help create spaces people assess as tranquil (Pheasant et al. 2008), and that can evoke serenity (Fredrickson and Branigan 2005).

Lazarus, Kanner, and Folkman (1980) assert that these internal and external drivers of tranquility function as "breathers" and "restorers," which emerge when people do not feel compelled to pursue particular goals, and/or to try to control the future. Berenbaum, Huang, and Flores (2019) explore the cognitive appraisals that distinguish tranquility and contentment, a distinction we will revisit in our findings section.

Research on LAPs and Tranquility in Marketing

In her taxonomy of consumption emotions, Richins (1997) identifies peacefulness and contentment as two distinct LAPs salient to consumption situations. Yet scholars have only recently begun to study the linkages between LAPs and consumption. Agrawal, Menon, and Aaker (2007) find consumers' feelings of peacefulness help them process health messages more effectively, especially when such messages emphasize the consequences of an illness for close others (e.g., family). Mogilner, Kamvar, and Aaker (2011) report how purchase situations may intertwine with experience of LAPs. They find older consumers tend to identify feelings of calm versus excitement as the basis of happiness; thus, they prefer calming products versus ones eliciting excitement. Mogilner, Aaker, and Kamvar (2012) then examine consumer choice between calming and exciting product options, and find present-focused consumers tend to choose more calming options, while future-oriented consumers opt for more exciting variants.

While researchers are beginning to explore LAPs in consumer contexts, no work examines the topic from the perspective of marketing practice. Thus, a gap exists in understanding how practitioners can deliver marketplace offerings that facilitate customers' experiences of LAPs, and any ensuing outcomes that pertain to well-being.

Method

Many scholars aver that when researchers engage in underexplored or overlooked topics, a qualitative research approach is highly appropriate (Belk, Fischer, and Kozinets 2013). Leveraging this paradigm, our research is both phenomenological and pragmatic. First, we focus on understanding our participants' shared (and differing) experiences with a singular phenomenon—namely, marketplace tranquility. Second, our pragmatism stems from our "focus on…'what works'—and solutions to problems" (Creswell 2013, p. 28). Our team (two faculty, one doctoral student, all in marketing) utilizes three types of qualitative data: 1) depth interviews; 2) archival data; and 3) visual images to explore MT.

Depth Interviews

We engaged in depth interviews with practitioners who self-identified as motivated to facilitate customer tranquility, either as a primary or secondary goal. We conducted interviews in two phases. In Phase One (2017), we generated a broad initial understanding of the issues practitioners perceive as salient when striving to deliver MT. Our Phase Two (2019) interviews delve more deeply into the specific components and implications of MT emerging in Phase One, and serve as a validity check of our earlier findings. Over both phases, we discussed 31 businesses with 34 participants. Table 1 delineates the number of interviews and participants in each phase, and provides a summary of participants. Most interviews ranged from 40 minutes to over two hours; in two cases, participants' interest in the topic led to an additional hour-long interview. We recorded all but one interview, where a participant requested we take notes but

permitted us to capture direct quotes. Interviews/notes yielded 663 double-spaced pages. We incentivized our participants by offering to share our findings with them.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

We used the same semi-structured interview guide in all Phase One interviews. Prior to Phase Two, we revised the guide to plumb emergent issues from Phase One. In both phases, we initially asked participants to describe their business histories, marketing practices, and goals. We then asked about decisions pertaining to fostering customers' tranquility, and business strategies they believed help or hinder these efforts. We followed with questions about the benefits and unintended consequences of offering MT, and the boundary conditions and obstacles they perceived as salient when attempting to engineer MT.

Archival Data

We supplemented our interviews with a rigorous archival search for articles that explore linkages between tranquility, marketing, and/or consumption in academic and popular-media sources. We located and read 35 academic articles on tranquility from disciplines such as psychology, environmental science, and architecture. We also collected and read 94 articles from nonacademic sources that explore how new or existing marketplace offerings can foster tranquility, and benefit health and well-being. Overall, we found this repository supports customers' increased desire to leverage the marketplace to experience tranquility, and that an increasingly diverse response of offerings is emerging to meet that desire.

Visual Images

We compiled visual images stems from two sources. First, we took photographs at participants' businesses, carefully capturing the components they describe as strategically vital to fostering MT. Although very diverse, these photographs reinforced the findings from the

interview data that many participants leverage similar categories of business components to foster MT. We also included photographs of tranquility-oriented offerings encountered in our daily lives (e.g., ads; signs; new products). In total, our photo inventory consists of 332 images. Finally, we bookmarked but did not count (because of continual activity) the visual images participants included in their social-media marketing (e.g., Facebook and Instagram pages).

Analysis

As Corley and Gioia (2004) elucidate, we engaged in a rigorous inductive coding procedure designed to elevate our understanding of the data from the descriptive to the abstract, interpretive level. We began by closely reading our text to generate "1st-order concepts" or comprehensive, detailed listings of participants' "terms, codes, and categories" (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013, p. 20), paying particular attention to *in vivo* language such as metaphors. Next, we created 2nd-order themes, patterns that capture similarities in structure and/or function among these first-order concepts. Our final coding stage involves further grouping of 2nd-order themes into aggregate dimensions to generate the "30,000-foot view…required to draw forth… insights" that can transfer theoretically to other contexts (Gioia et al. 2013, p. 21). Two authors read and coded the interviews, negotiating and agreeing upon the findings. The third author read but did not code the data, and served as internal auditor of codes, patterns, and categories and the excerpts we selected to illustrate them. Thus, we worked in tandem to negotiate and construct the final interpretation.

Findings

Per our three research questions, this section 1) identifies and defines the construct of MT, 2) delineates the strategic components of MT and 3) explores the challenges participants face when facilitating MT, and the ways they address such challenges. Figure 1 depicts our findings. We do not strive to elicit a process model in our interviews; thus, the arrows represent general conceptual linkages between elements, rather than hard claims about temporality, unidirectionality, or causality.

[Insert Figure 1 about here]

Identifying and Defining the Construct of MT

Prior to data collection, we created a preliminary etic definition of MT, grounded in our review of our archived literature on LAPs and tranquility. Thus, it pertained primarily to the *emotional* outcomes associated with MT. We then asked Phase One participants to react to and embellish the following definition: "Marketplace tranquility is the delivery of products, services, and/or experiences that enable customers to experience peace, calm, and serenity." All agreed that customers' emotional outcomes are paramount to MT; however, participants also helped us better understand the salience of customers' cognitive and behavioral cues pertaining to the construct. Our Phase Two interviews thus delve more deeply into these dimensions. Analysis of our text from both phases supports the following definition of MT:

> *Marketplace tranquility (MT) refers to feelings of peace, calm, or serenity that customers ultimately experience through marketers' strategic delivery of unordinary goods, services, or experiences, and that frees customers from the demands of goal impingement and induces focused attention.*

Our exploration of MT supports a definition comprised of five critical aspects—with the core aspect being customers' emotional experiences, which ultimately manifests as feeling tranquil. Second, successfully executing MT is a direct result of the strategic decisions marketers make—both prior to the delivery of MT, in response to challenges arising during while delivering MT. Third, the offerings practitioners offer are unordinary; that is, non-routine and beyond those experiences customers typically encounter in their everyday lives. Fourth, MT helps free customers from the pressures of goal impingement and the demands of the external environment. Finally, these offerings spur customers to engage in focused attention. Below, we offer empirical support for each aspect, with the exception of practitioners' strategic decisions, which are integral in our discussion of our second and third research questions.

Tranquility as an ultimate emotional outcome. Many participants discuss how customers often appear to be in states of high-arousal negative (HANs) or high-arousal positive affect (HAPs) when arriving at or beginning their immersions in marketplace venues. These states seem to emanate from three distinct situations. First, customers may arrive in HAN states because they possess preconceived negative notions about their upcoming marketplace experience. We find this to be especially true when experiences are nature-based. Contemporary, urbanized society entails decreased contact with the natural world; thus, people may be averse to nature (e.g., "biophobic;" Orr 2004). Yet our participants with nature-based businesses concur with research that credits immersion in nature with enhanced physical and mental well-being (van den Bosch and Sang 2017). Thus, they strategically devise ways to diffuse customers' pre-existing negative affect about nature:

> [For] kids from [the] inner city…this is a foreign environment…all they know about the woods…are what they've seen in…horror films…They['re] convinced

there are…sharks in the lake, or that a tiger is going to jump out at them…we do our best to help them feel safe and secure. We debunk…myths…[like] we don't have bears, we don't have tigers…we try to give [as] positive an experience as we can…Maybe they hold a roly-poly [bug] for the first time and…sit on the grass. [Mary, County Forest Preserve]

Similarly, customers may not arrive with HANs in tow, but paradoxically, the purportedly tranquil marketplace venue may trigger these emotions. Research shows stranger engagement in service encounters can spur anxiety in customers (Harris and Baron 2004). Todd describes what happens when he seats customers at long tables for farm-to-table-dinners:

We…have people sitting next to people whom they've never met before. That doesn't immediately induce calm…makes most Americans a little nervous…. We [start] at 4:00 with hors d'ouevres…we have a liquor license, so we do that…. After 40 minutes, I…do about a half-hour tour to show people the gardens and say…between courses, feel free to get up and walk around…you can pet all the animals…pick herbs from the garden and taste them…eat a peach off the tree ….people say they've met people they never would have met any other way, and they really enjoyed it. [Todd, Goat Farm]

Finally, participants also describe how they have to diffuse customers' HAPs that their unique services or venues may trigger before these customers can experience tranquility. Maddie's coffee shop in a renovated church features stained-glass windows, wood floors, hand-painted tables, and local artwork. She observes:

I can tell immediately when people have not been in…they walk in, their eyes…get real big and sometimes their mouths drop open. They're like, "Wow,

> what is going on?".... [Then] they love that they're in a…calming area with all of the colors and everything—and that they get to drink coffee in here….[Maddie]

Likewise, because the theme and décor of each monthly meal changes, the student-run restaurant Andy oversees often triggers HAPs for customers. He describes how he tries to engineer a transition from HAPs to LAPs over the course of a meal:

> I think of peaks and valleys [of customers' emotional experiences]…peaks as the "wow," and the valley as tranquility…. So…the moment you see the plate, smell the food, and especially the moment you taste it, I want there to be this almost overstimulating feeling of, "Oh my gosh, this is very exciting, because this is something new," or maybe, "It's my favorite dish, and they did it again." There should be a spike in the initial response; then I want them to really enjoy it. [Meaning] slow down and take their time…you want to provide them with something warm….almost like wrap them in a blanket…provide this enveloping sense of comfort. [Andy]

In sum, our participants recognize that their desire to foster customers' experiences of LAPs may involve engineering a transition from HAN or HAP states—even if their own marketplace venues trigger high-arousal affect.

Unordinary marketplace offerings. We sought participants from a broad spectrum of businesses, but found that those who agreed to participate specialized in goods, services, or experiences that customers could not easily access at home, and that did not fit the description of mundane. Our participants believe such uniqueness contributes to MT. Phyllis notes:

> I think it's [the décor of her B&B] not something you would normally find within your home [where] you hang out on a day-to-day basis. If you have kids, you

> can't really have nice things because they are just going to get ruined…..you're going to a specific place because you want to be treated well and get something above and beyond what you would normally have in your home. [Phyllis]

Many participants describe how customers return regularly—annually for pumpkin picking, or monthly for a massage, a student-run meal, or a float-tank session. Thus, while a tranquil experience may be unordinary, it does not necessarily have to be new; in fact, practitioners claim that customers' prior experiences of MT in these contexts motivate their return. Riley notes the tranquility customers experience at his pumpkin patch is "what brings them back…."

Relatedly, our text abounds with participants' strategic design of offerings that serve as escapes from the mundane world. One strategy is to leverage "marketplace rituals" (Otnes, Ilhan, and Kulkarni 2012), or symbolic, performative activities designed to enhance customer experiences. Some rituals facilitate the transition from the mundane to a singular venue:

> [In the] war against tranquility…[college students] take on too much: socially, academically, extracurricularly, family-wise…Then they come to [Japanese cultural center for] this class…and I say, "please take off your shoes, please put on a pair of clean white socks…" and they have to use a *tsukubai*,…a small water basin where you…purify your hands…to take you away from your everyday life….from the chaos of campus. [Jessica, Japanese Cultural Center]

Freedom from goal impingement. Building on Fredrickson's (1998, p. 306) assertion that "contentment is often used interchangeably with other low-arousal positive-emotion terms such as tranquility or serenity," Berenbaum et al. (2019) seek to differentiate the cognitive appraisals that differentiates tranquility from contentment. They find that although both emotions involve

people accepting their current situations, only tranquility aligns with appraisals of feeling free from future demands, and with a present focus on a pleasurable activity. In contrast, ruminating on past goal achievement underlies contentment, but not tranquility. Our participants affirm that they try to facilitate customers' freedom from goal impingement and engagement in the present moment when fostering MT. When asked what she thinks goat yoga offers to help customers be more tranquil, Sammie observes:

> I think the chance to be present…I remind them to set aside what came before in their day, and [to] know what's yet to come will still be there after class……[to] take the time to notice their breath and the sounds around them…queuing people's attention towards the present moment seems… helpful for just creating space for calm and tranquility. [Sammie, Goat Yoga]

Participants may prioritize other business goals over facilitating MT; however, they also may recognize that not pressuring their customers to help meet these other goals contributes to a more calming and serene experience. Erin's foremost goal is to find homes for the cats she fosters at her café ("My main point is the cats"). But she acknowledges that many customers visit just to play, have a unique date, or experience what her customers call "therapy." When asked what "marketplace tranquility" brings to mind, she observes: "A place that brings calm, comfort, and a sense of home. A place free of expectations, which I've also tried to make sure people know. You don't have to come here to adopt a cat, you can come here just to be around animals."

Focused attention. While focusing on the present captures people's ability to savor and be in the moment, focused attention pertains to people's deep cognitive engagement in an environment. Recent literature presents consistent evidence of how technology-laden, urban, multitasking lifestyles negatively erode attention, and the detrimental impact of attenuated

attention spans on customer welfare (Ralph et al. 2014; Linnell et al. 2013). Scholars explore how HANs can influence attention (e.g., eliciting fear directs people's attention to "fearful" stimuli; Öhman, Flykt, and Esteves 2001; Phelps, Ling, and Carrasco 2006). Yet few studies explore how positive emotions influence attention. Our participants reveal that one key indicator of successful MT is that their customers demonstrate this phenomenon in their venues. Andy notices that when his restaurant offers tableside bottle service:

> It's not something people [at restaurants] do that frequently…we'll have someone bring a bottle tableside, present it, open it, and….pour it…People are very alert and paying lots of attention. Whether or not they know what's going on, they're keyed in.

Table 2 contains additional interview excerpts demonstrating participants' perceptions of their customers' focused attention as they experience MT.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

It is important to distinguish focused attention from mindfulness. Shapiro et al. (2006) identify three components of mindfulness—intention, attention, and attitude. Intention involves creating a goal for why one engages in mindfulness practices (e.g., meditating to relieve stress management). Similar to focused attention, mindfulness involves "attending to experience…as it presents itself in the here and now" (p. 376). Finally, attitude involves adopting an empathetic stance while engaged in self-examination. Thus, although focused attention is one component of mindfulness, with the exception of our yoga practitioners, delivering MT typically does not entail the goal of fostering mindfulness.

Delineating the Strategic Components of MT

Our second research question asks, "What components do practitioners believe are strategically salient in facilitating MT?" Our analysis supports three categories of components.

Environmental Components of MT. Environmental components structure and define the marketplace context, and include ones participants find either easy or difficult to control. The first environmental component we discuss is *nature.* As Table 1 shows, several participants' businesses are rooted in nature. Our archive features many popular-media articles describing the wellness benefits associated with spending time in natural settings (e.g., reducing stress; fostering low-arousal positive affect; van den Bosch and Sang 2017). Likewise, some people seek escape from "everyday cultural objects, hierarchies, and responsibilities…and establish magical links with sacred nature" (Canniford and Shankar 2012). Our participants acknowledge that they strategically leverage aspects of nature to try to enhance customers' well-being and maximize the likelihood of facilitating MT:

> If you can get over…that you're not a professional…golf is one of the most relaxing sports. It's so peaceful. It's quiet on the golf course…We have a ton of wildlife….you'll see a fox run across, and hawks. Just going out there and walking 18 holes is one of the most peaceful things. If you can deliver a beautiful course, the conditions are beautiful…the person going out to play golf can have a pretty relaxing round. [Steve, Country Club]

> I'm there primarily so people have a place to visit lavender, and it is a pretty peaceful place. I have a picture…of a couple of women sitting in the lavender, and they're just talking, and I've had people sit and watch others so they're not

> actively involved, but there's a nice breeze and it's just a calm, quiet place to rest and relax. [Kathy, Lavender Farm]

Even participants whose businesses are not nature-based often incorporate natural images or textures to enhance customers' tranquility:

> …trees are symbolic of so many things…roots, the core of your being…lots of things [in her office] are symbolic. I also have a lot of plants [and] pictures and images of plants. It gives people a little taste of nature…many people find that they relax in nature. [Dorothy, Massage Therapy]

Nature-based practitioners face two difficult issues with respect to MT. First is customers' potential anxiety about nature, noted earlier. Second, nature is unpredictable, and this makes leveraging or managing natural elements problematic. Brittany observes that at her park/conference center, "In the midst of 1500 acres, you are going to have bugs. We'll vacuum before people come, and [they] say, "There's bugs!" So there's that expectation [of being able to control nature] and I don't think we do a very good of managing that."

A second category of strategic environmental components is *atmospherics.* Turley and Milliman (2000) classify retail and service atmospheric elements as all decisions pertaining to the physical and human aspects of design. Practitioners mention several atmospheric decisions as salient to delivering MT. Many mention the importance of a minimalist environment. Julie describes maintaining a "visually clean" space in the museum:

> [To allow] people to have a…calm, tranquil experience, we actually physically put most of the information [outside the exhibit cases]…but we have these little books…[close by]….We limit the amount of text…people are faced with, so if they want to read, they can read but don't feel forced to, they don't feel

> overwhelmed. That, I think, is both an aesthetic decision but a decision about what we want people to feel—relaxed and able to focus. [Julie]

This example highlights two of practitioners' key beliefs about minimalist environments. First, they seem to facilitate focused attention—an aspect we describe earlier as integral to MT. Second, minimalism supports agency by freeing customers from potentially overwhelming sensory stimulation, allowing them to explore environments on their own terms. For Barbara, these "freedom-from" and "freedom-to" dimensions clearly inform MT strategies:

> [Customers] come here to disconnect. It's a complete recharge of yourself. It's…a more advanced and faster way…of getting there than…nature and meditation because [with those] you still hear sounds…vibrations…see things that can distract the mind…When you come here, no sight, smell, sound, or touch.... [Describing a float tank]…with this one [customers]…control the lights. You could go dark, or you could go 1, 2, 3 [each number is a different light color]... [Barbara, Flotation Tank Franchise]

Linkages between minimalism and tranquility are increasingly important for marketers to understand, as recent trends linking the two concepts clearly are resonating with consumers. For example, the "KonMari" movement (Kondō 2014) advocates people only keep items that "spark joy." In addition, KonMari's influence is extending into other spheres of consumption (e.g., an upsurge in donations to thrift and charity shops; Pannett and Hoyle 2019).

Participants also recognize that other aesthetic choices, like colors, can enhance or detract from MT. Erin notes about her upcoming renovations in the cat café:

> …the lighting will be calmer…. [white] was a poor…choice for the floor…The paint is chipping…people have left reviews that it's dirty. And I'm like, "it's not

dirty, it's just chipped…." We're doing accent walls because…from feedback I've heard, the all-white can create an antiseptic, anxious, hospital feeling.

Erin's example also echoes what other participants assert—that the perceived cleanliness of a venue can influence MT. Although many aspects of her farm and orchard (e.g., dirt, rocks, animals) induce mess, Kelly insists upon cleanliness in the general store and café, stating, "People like…a place that's well kept…dirty…doesn't make you feel relaxed."

In addition to color, we found practitioners rely on two design elements that emerge in our study as specifically pertaining to MT. First, many incorporate what we etically identify as "tranquility totems" into their venues. Totems are items people perceive to be laden with symbolic meaning, and thus critical to a context or event (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). We fine these totems fall into two main categories. First, many exude the aesthetic of luxury. These include high thread-count sheets, dinner tables set with tablecloths and candlelight, and special food and beverages. These totems affirm that some participants believe pampering is an essential component in delivering MT. One luxury totem Kevin offers, and that differentiates him from other tour operators, is an afternoon "glass of wine and a nice little snack" (e.g., chocolates) on his luxury coach, to enhance his patrons' experiencing of traveling from one site to the next.

In contrast to luxury totems and their association with tranquility-as-pampering, nostalgic totems typically do not involve high-end products and services, even though they too may evoke comfort. Rather than enhancing physical comfort, however, nostalgic totems are designed to evoke comforting memories of "the good old days" (Holbrook 1993). Our participants' totems include oversized rocking chairs, a colorful pumpkin display, and a wood-burning stove. The metaphors to describe how these objects contribute to their ambiance—e.g., "womblike;"

"Grandma's house"—indicate that these items resonate with an old-fashioned aesthetic, one designed to exude "homeyness" (McCracken 1989). Pam believes the picnic tables in front of her frozen dessert store are essential components of MT, and takes pains to manage the environment so customers associate them with calm: "[The] speakers outside…are not too loud so they [customers] can talk. We'll have the whole outside full and they….don't care if they are sitting next to a stranger…I see them talking to each other. It [the table] brings them together." As we discuss below, nostalgic totems also can enhance practitioners' ability to leverage temporal dimensions to facilitate MT. Figure 2 contains one example of a tranquility totem, with additional examples in the Web Appendix.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

In addition to totems, we find many participants' venues also feature subtle or obvious "tranquility zones," where customers who wish to enjoy a more calm and relaxing experience can do so without impinging on other patrons' more kinetic goals. These zones can be spatial or temporal in nature—or both. Meredith notes her new bookstore includes both a front area for merchandise and a back room where at different times, customers can read or children can play (Figure 2 one example of a tranquility zone, with additional examples in the Web Appendix):

> When we were planning the space, I did think a lot about separation of the kids' section from the adult section. And could we create some quiet places?...I don't want kids to get the "Shhh" [from customers in the front] but I also don't want to ruin the experience for the person who's looking for that quiet…having the separate room in the back….[one part] will become a kids' nook…to crawl into it…for kids, tranquility is more about freedom to not have to feel like you have to think or be careful about what you're doing. [Meredith, Bookstore]

Likewise, Phyllis describes how a new source of revenue for her B&B—small parties in her large, eat-in kitchen—spurred a renovation to preserve quietude for her overnight guests: "We just added this [door] because we realize voices carry. So we thought if we really want to give our guests a really great experience, a relaxed environment, we're going to have to close this for private events so that it doesn't impose on their experience."

Temporal Components of MT. We identify three ways our participants leverage temporal components when engineering MT. First, they rely on spaces laden with items designed to evoke nostalgia, to help customers feel transported back in time. In addition, they designate and communicate specific days and times as more likely to foster MT—or times when MT may be a less likely outcome of customer experience. Steve notes membership at his country club has doubled in the last two years, discomforting some longstanding members for whom the "busy and the energy; it's just not their thing." The club now designates certain evenings in the dining room as more serene times for these members: "…on Friday and Saturday nights….We turn the lights down low…the owner's wife…makes us turn off the lights because she likes it completely peaceful." Likewise, Julie describes how at the museum, she reserves a specific time as "Pre-K hour," and publicizes that "if you do not want to be around kids, if you want a calmer, quieter environment, then come any other time…."

The third temporal component involves integrating ways to physically slow customers down when they are in participants' venues. Rosa (2013) asserts that increased speed in technology, the pace of living (e.g., how much people accomplish in a given time), and the social and cultural rate of change all contribute to the acceleration of contemporary life. Husemann and Eckhardt (2018, p. 1142) assert that as a result, people now seek experiences that foster "consumer deceleration," or the "perception of a slowed-down temporal experience by

decreasing the activities [completed] per unit of time through altering, adopting, or eschewing forms of consumption." Although the authors do not specifically explore linkages between deceleration and tranquility, many participants clearly believe helping their customers to slow down is essential to MT. Blending spatial and temporal elements, they often strategically incorporate designs that encourage (or even force), customers to do so. Jenny describes one area of the city garden where "the inner walkways are very narrow….I think that slows people down. I…think [the designers] did it for intimacy, but…this slowdown…or the seepage of tranquility, I think will make [visitors] more aware of nature." Likewise, Jessica observes that in the tea ceremonies at the Japanese cultural center, "I don't serve tea right away…we bring out all of the equipment…methodically, and then we purify everything…this is the process so that I can slow down, and…the guests can slow down…if you don't force yourself, it's [the ceremony] not pure."

Social Components of MT. Many articles and photographs in our archive imply that to experience tranquility, a person also must pursue solitude, or the absence of social interaction and physical separation from others (Burger 1995). Consider the South Korean "jail" where people pay to stay in isolated, technology-free cells to detox from their grueling routines and device addictions (Kwong 2018). However, except for our flotation-tank franchisee, most participants' MT strategies reflect Lisa's observation that "you don't go by yourself to the forest, you go with somebody…you also achieve [tranquility] by communing with that person." Likewise, Husemann and Eckhardt (2018) also find sociality to be a core component of consumers' experience who decelerate by taking a pilgrimage journey; typically, they walk with partners, or even with strangers they meet along the route. Our participants offer many creative ways of supporting customers' interaction with intimates in low-arousal, nonthreatening

environments to enable the sharing of tranquility. As Riley observes about his 85-acre working farm and pumpkin patch, "We want to connect family."

Participants leverage two main types of social components to facilitate MT. First, they offer *structured activities* designed to bolster low-key "quality time" for their customers. These include a diverse range of classes, programs, and rituals. For example, Kathy offers lavender-picking days where families and friends gather and spend time in the fields, and every spring Todd's goat farms sees dozens of volunteers enjoy "babies and breakfast" events, where people gather to feed the newborn goats. Lisa's knit shop not only offers customers the chance to attend an out-of-town weekend retreat where they knit and model their creations, but they also knit together in the store on Sunday afternoons when it is closed for business.

In offering these events, participants often echo Riley's motivation to create venues that customers consider "safe"—that he and others mean can liberate people from competitive and comparative social situations. The owners of both yoga businesses (goat and non-goat) describe how they perceived a need to offer welcoming, reassuring, and non-threatening social spaces:

> [At one studio in town] I got screamed at, yelled at, humiliated. The whole point of yoga is to find some bliss, find some peace, relieve your stress, and that was the complete opposite for me….So [her studio] was about a space where everyone will feel comfortable, tranquil. Everyone's welcome….it wasn't just a yoga studio…you come by on a Saturday morning…tons of people [are] hanging out, drinking tea…making friends, so it's a community. [Lori, Yoga Studio]

> …a lot of people [at goat yoga] are not regular yoga students of mine, or people I've ever met…I'll [ask], "who has never done yoga before?" and almost of them

> [never have].... [Goat yoga] is way more approachable with this distraction … [people think] "not everyone is going to be looking at me and what I'm doing perhaps incorrectly"…and I think that's a barrier for a lot of people…in a studio setting [that's] so serious, so formal. [Sammie, Goat Yoga]

The final social component to MT our participants leverage is *creating—or eschewing—social norms.* Practitioners often create norms to try and maximize the opportunity that most or all customers will experience MT. Steve observes that at the country club, "we have one rule—you can't interfere with another member's experience. We will talk to you if you do." In addition, some participants follow a practice Otnes et al. (2012) observe, of couching rules and requests in ritual language. Embedding compliance requests in scripted, meaningful activities during rituals events can "soften the blow" (p. 379) of impinging on consumer agency:

> So on "Night One" [the opening dinner] of all my tours, we [he and his patrons] have a little conversation. It is just a reminder to everyone to be respectful of other people's time. So if [the trip schedule] says we're leaving at 10 a.m., we're leaving at 10 a.m. and not 10:05 a.m…I think having that conversation at the beginning just sets the tone for the week…Last summer with 400 people, I probably had five that were really, really, difficult. So that's pretty good, actually. [Kevin, Travel Company]

However, unlike Kevin, we find many participants struggle with how to introduce norms and regulations without imposing on customers' experience of tranquility. We revisit this issue in our next section.

In addition, participants often explicitly refuse to create rules that impinge on customers' freedom, in the belief that these norms might actually detract from MT. Instead, they want

customers to feel free from constraints, a cognitive appraisal Fredrickson (1998) identifies as inherent to tranquility. Maddie does not police whether people in her coffee shop buy food or beverages, or how long they occupy a table, although she recognizes her laissez-faire approach is suboptimal for business. Especially with regard to her large ("prime") tables, Maddie observes:

> People love them and want to set up shop here with their laptops….sit here all day. It's…the people that come in and they're not buying anything…just taking up a prime location for several hours…I haven't figured out how to handle….[I] could go up and say something to them. I don't ever want to offend a potential customer…so we just leave it at that. [Maddie, Coffee Shop]

Lexie observes that at her senior living center, "We don't wake everyone up at 5 a.m. and say, 'It's time to shower.' If they want to sleep until noon and have their breakfast, and they want three eggs sunny side up with bacon, then that's what they get…it's about the individual."

Challenges to MT

Our third research question—one emerging during data collection—asks, "What challenges do practitioners face when delivering MT, and how do they manage these challenges?" In general, we find these challenges stem from tensions between practitioners' desires to deliver tranquility and other business-related goals they seek to fulfill. We categorize these into three main areas: 1) growing the business while retaining core components of MT; 2) serving customers with competing needs, and 3) managing customer compliance to enhance MT, while still enabling consumer agency. We find each challenge inspires practitioners to adopt marketing tactics to help resolve these tensions.

Growing the business while retaining core components of MT. Businesses can grow by attracting more customers. For many participants, however, tensions emerge between pursuing

growth by doing so, and retaining the components that enable them to convey offerings that enhance customer tranquility. Such tensions emerge from reactive changes practitioners may make as businesses grow and evolve, or from proactive decisions they devise as new challenges arise. Yet in some cases, these changes can negatively influence marketers' ability to offer tranquility. For example, increasingly crowded and dense environments may activate feelings of confinement and threaten people's sense of freedom (Levav and Zhu 2009), leading to defensive responses (Maeng, Tanner, and Soman 2013). Furthermore, as customer counts increase, the authenticity of a tranquil marketplace venue may be challenged (Gilmore and Pine 2007):

> This is the conundrum—people want the tranquility, yet the more people [who] hear about and like your place, the more crowded it gets. So you either need to expand, which some people don't like…they don't want to come when it's packed…Or they see it is crowded on the weekends and now they don't want to come [then]….You need a certain level of people to offer these activities to cover your staff. It's a fine line. What do you offer? What do you promote? How do you grow while still offering a good experience? [Kelly, Apple Orchard]

To counteract the challenge of sustaining or increasing profits while still delivering MT, practitioners may make strategic changes to environmental components. Kelly addressed the crowding issues stemming from the increasing popularity of her orchard by remodeling the store and "adding more registers…opening it up…so…people can get through."

In addition, some participants even practice "demarketing" to cope with excess demand (Kotler and Levy 1971). Riley's farm and pumpkin patch saw 62,000 visitors during its seven-week season in 2018. On the weekends, he notes the atmosphere is more like a "carnival" or a "fair" than a farm, with bouncy houses, live music, and other activities. Riley tells customers

who expressly ask about the best time to visit to "connect with the nature" and have more of a "Sabbath time" to avoid the weekends.

Serving customers with competing needs. Another significant challenge for participants wishing to optimize MT arises from their attempts to serve customer segments with different needs. John describes the difficulty in satisfying those who seek to enjoy the tranquility nature can offer at the park/conference center, and customers who book the mansion or grounds for their weddings. Both audiences clearly seek different levels of emotional arousal:

> That wedding [in the mansion] was playing loud music until about 11:00, and then the family campout was happening in the meadow, so there was a bass [from the music] they [families] could hear….We got a lot of complaints about that, because the intent of the family campout was to be about nature and being away from everything. [Hannah, Park/Conference Center]

Thus, delivering tranquility becomes challenging when customers patronize the business for different reasons, demonstrate different needs for tranquility, and/or seek to fulfill different goals through patronage (Shah et al. 2006). After the incident above, John noted he put new rules into place: "Before, it was very loose structure on bar times and serving, so we've tightened those up a lot. We have times they shut down, so a DJ has to be done at the set time, and that…can't go past 11."

Anne also discusses challenges arising when serving the different audiences who rent workspaces from her. She addresses these by exerting extra effort to retain her core customer base—namely, the individual customers who pay for workspaces:

> …If people rent out the [event hall], it's managing a disruption to tranquility to the people…[who] pay for the space…We have to communicate, acknowledge it,

> and provide them options. This Saturday…there's going to be 100 people…in and out of that…hall. I do have members that come in just on a Saturday to do focused work. I communicate to them ahead of time….and provide them additional offerings: "Please use the gathering room free of charge. Please use one of our offices…not yet sold." To…make sure they have a physical space where they can get their work done. [Anne]

Customers who share servicescapes can positively or negatively influence each other's experiences (Grove and Fisk 1997). As we note above, one common way participants resolve the desires of consumers who vary in their desire for MT is to create spatial and temporal tranquility zones. In addition to the examples we provide earlier, Erin describes how she imposes a temporal zone so customers expecting tranquility will have a reasonable chance of experiencing it:

> One thing we noticed…sometimes people will book for themselves and seven…friends. So now if a person wants to…book for five or more people…it has to be a private party. Because…large groups were causing others to feel unwelcome. They were loud. It was like they own the place.

Finally, practitioners may even engage in the customization of MT, to address the heterogeneous goals of customers (Anderson, Fornell, and Rust 1997). As the co-owner and lead guide of his tour business, Kevin exhibits what Gwinner et al. (2005) identify as both interpersonal adaptive behavior and service-offering adaptive behavior. That is, he exhibits the personal trait of empathy, and also offers an alternative type of service to facilitate his customer's specific needs that pertain to MT:

> One…guest…comes on a lot of tours with me…[with] the group dinners…she's more of an introvert. Sometimes they get to be a little bit much for her. I always

> arrange a really nice meal for her in her room because that's her preference. I….let her choose what she would like, and then it is delivered to the room. So for her, that's how she needs a little tranquility…not to be in a room with 30 people. [Kevin, Tour Company]

Managing customer compliance while enabling MT. Our interviews are rife with discussions of how customers who fail to comply with rules and requests within marketplace venues not only disrupt others' tranquil experiences, but also interfere with the workings of the service environment (Grove and Fisk 1997). Compliance enforcement allows businesses to offer more reliable service, and enhance customer satisfaction (Dellande, Gilly, and Graham 2004). However, requests for customer courtesy also may hamper the degree to which customers feel free from external demands, a key component of tranquility (Berenbaum et al. 2019). Thus, practitioners may prefer to seek discrete ways to ask customers to exhibit courtesy and respect toward others, and toward the marketspace as well. Jennie notes people often step inside the garden beds to handle and take photos of flowers, "which is the bane of our existence." The garden relies on the selective use of subtle "windmaster" signs (portable signs that move in the wind) that feature icons designed to represent prohibited activities, rather than a verbal statement of rules. However, even these nonintrusive compliance requests can influence customers' likelihood to experience MT. Jenny notes: "This guy was going through the sign…like, "oh, no playing loud music, no smoking....going through the 9 or 10 [icons]. He was like, 'in other words have a blast, guys…have fun' [said sarcastically]. Like we were really buzzkills…." Similarly, Phyllis describes how she normally takes an indirect approach to seeking compliance at her B&B: "There are things within the guidebook, we have quiet hours. Do we have to impose them?

Nine times out of ten, no. I try to write everything down and it all depends on whether or not someone wants to read through all of that."

Some customers ignore the explicit and implicit norms our participants establish, with detrimental results. Erin asks all parents to be partners with her and monitor their children's behavior to help keep her rescue cats friendly and approachable, and enhance the chance visitors will adopt them. The excerpt below affirms Dellande et al.'s (2004) finding that when customers do not exhibit role clarity, noncompliance with providers' requests may result. In this case, the customer's refusal to adapt a role the provider suggests leads to dissatisfaction and detachment:

> Under 18 has to be with a parent….When they get to the lobby area, I talk to them through that window first. We go over a couple of rules…[I say] to the parents, "You're my extra eyes and ears."…I said to one lady, "Can we switch out toys for your daughter, because [her] bopping the cat in the face is not really working for the cat." And she goes, "Bopping the cat?...Oh my God, are you serious?" I said, "Yes, that's why I asked you if you could help me be the extra eye."… Then she came up on me and said, "You know, we're really not having a good time. We want our money back." So the hardest thing to enforce is to get parents to watch their kids. [Erin, Cat Café]

Customers' neglect of norms may further accelerate participants' need to enforce compliance—which in turn, may disrupt other customers' potential to experience tranquility. Lori describes this cascading effect with students' cellphone usage in her yoga studio:

> …we used to say, it's OK as long as they turn them off, but… students start[ed] to text during class. That's not keeping the place tranquil. It's totally distracting….It says on [the sign] to turn them off, but in the announcements now we [say], "no

> cellphones in the studio at all." We make exceptions [for]… doctor[s]…[who set phones] on vibrate. And no texting during class. I…announce it in the class, and fifteen minutes later somebody's phone goes off, and I'm like, "Really?" [Lori]

To counteract the negative consequences of restricting customer agency, practitioners recognize it is often useful to couch compliance in requests for customers to help co-create experiences. Jeff describes how he engages his children who visit the planetarium before a show:

> …discipline [is tough] in a darkened environment.… I want…them involved, so I say, "I can't do this show without you. Can you help me?" … they're all excited about helping, so I'll say, "I['ll] make a deal with you…If a teacher asks you a question, what do you do?" They all raise their hands. I say, "Yeah, but it's dark in here and I won't be able to see…." So I tell them, if I ask them a question they can just tell me the answer without raising their hands, and they're like…"great!" Then I say, "The [rest of] the deal is, what if I'm not asking a question?" They say, "We need to be quiet," and I say, "Deal?" And they go, "Deal." [Jeff]

In short, our participants often meet the challenge of requiring customer compliance through a variety of strategies that range from more subtle, to the direct and participatory.

Discussion

Our motivation for identifying and exploring MT stems from the fact that with the accelerating pace of our modern life, people struggle to experience peace, calm, and serenity—emotions that can contribute positively to their well-being. Increasingly, people are turning to

marketplace solutions to experience LAPs. As we noted, few studies explore the intersection of LAPs and consumption; in particular, a lacuna exists in our current understanding of marketers' strategic delivery of tranquility-related offerings. This research fills this gap and advances current understanding of this timely topic by introducing and delineating the construct of marketplace tranquility (MT).

We define MT as the feelings of peace, calm, or serenity that customers ultimately experience through marketers' strategic delivery of unordinary goods, services, or experiences, and that frees customers from the demands of the goal impingement and induces focused attention. We identify MT as driven by the strategic utilization of three components—environmental, temporal, and social. Further, we find our participants face quite a few challenges when attempting to deliver MT, and create unique strategies to overcome those challenges.

Theoretically, our research contributes to the literature on LAPs and consumers' experiences of tranquility (Mogilner et al. 2012). While prior research focuses on tranquility as a static emotional state, our findings shed light on the dynamic aspects of tranquility in the marketplace, and its relationships with other emotions that may precede MT. We find that often, practitioners must strategically pave a path toward tranquility for their customers. For example, our findings show that customers can only experience tranquility after practitioners help diffuse HAPs, or even HANs, that customers are experiencing when they enter marketplace venues, of that the venues themselves stimulate.

Customer experience is a multidimensional construct that entails customers' responses to marketplace offerings during their entire purchase journey (Lemon and Verhoef 2016). The current research contributes theoretically to the customer experience literature (Pine and Gilmore 1999) by identifying the components of MT that marketers strategically maneuver to enrich their

customers' experience. We find marketers leverage the environmental, temporal, and social components of the marketplace to enable their customers to experience MT in venues not readily reproducible at home, or accessed in everyday life. Furthermore, the challenges that emerge for marketers, and their strategic resolution of these challenges, provide deeper insights into customer experience management (Schmitt 2003). In particular, we demonstrate how marketers optimize the delivery of MT along with other business goals to maintain expected customer experiences. The present work, thus, offers important examples of how marketers can design, deliver, and manage customer experience to facilitate MT, thereby offering empirical evidence and theoretical perspective on customer experience management.

We also contribute to the existing literature on customer well-being by explicating MT as practitioners' direct response to customers' demands for tranquility to counteract pressure and stress in their lives. Prior research on well-being explores how people can enhance their well-being through market offerings. For example, purchasing experiences rather than material goods makes people happier (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). Extant research, however, does not explore how marketers can induce specific affective states that customers desire as they seek to improve their well-being. The present research, thus, demonstrates how marketers leverage marketplace components and resources to fulfill customers' demand for tranquility, which in turn can enhance and support well-being.

Beyond these important theoretical contributions, we also provide valuable implications for practitioners. First, we suggest MT can benefit marketers not only by enabling them to attract new customers, but also by maintaining existing ones. Many of our participants mention their returning customers, those who repeatedly patronize their business (even if only during specific seasons), and tie this loyalty to customers' experiences of MT. For example, Kevin's customers

tell him they rebook tours with him because he makes the travel experience "peaceful and calm." These examples indicate that MT can facilitate customers' revisits and build loyalty, subsequently contributing to higher profits.

Second, the challenges of MT suggest the importance of educating customers early in the experience, to enhance the chances for successfully delivering MT. Our findings indicate marketers should socialize their customers about consuming tranquil offerings so they are able to enjoy such offerings fully, without creating challenges for practitioners. This need for education implies MT might benefit from a co-creation process, where practitioners invite customers to suggest or even create tranquil offerings (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004).

Lastly, this study suggests marketers can wield positive influences on customer well-being through their design of various tranquility components. Acknowledging the transformative impact of marketing on customer welfare (Mick 2006), our work demonstrates practitioners strive to enhance customer well-being by effectively managing the environmental, temporal, and social components of MT. For example, we find effective MT delivery can reduce customers' stress stemming from goal pressures in their lives.

The current research also opens up other avenues for future research. First, although we focus on marketers' understanding of MT, clearly it is important to investigate how customers perceive the commercial acquisition of tranquility, and what roles they expect the marketplace to play in fulfilling this goal. Thus, researchers should engage in dedicated inquiry to explore how customers leverage the marketplace to experience tranquility, and what factors may drive their choice of different services and offerings. For example, a robust market exists for products that may engender tranquility at home (e.g., bubble bath, candles, tea, wine). However, marketers may shape customers' desires for more luxurious (and costly) variants that offer similar benefits

(e.g., massage or spa sessions). This connoting of tranquility with luxury consumption may raise ethical questions about who has access to tranquility, and whether it is only attainable by more affluent customers. Relatedly, future research could investigate whether there is any disparity between customers' expectations and marketer' delivery of tranquil outcomes.

Further work also can plumb the broader implications of MT on customer well-being. While our work primarily focuses on the delivery of MT, a deeper understanding of the ways such offerings positively (or negatively) influence society in general, and individuals in particular, would be valuable. For example, prior research documents that positive mood enhances prosocial behavior, such as volunteering to help others (Isen and Levin 1972), or donating greater amounts of money (Liang, Chen, and Lei 2016). As a mechanism for engendering LAPs, MT may facilitate such prosocial behavior. Yet it is also true that the concept of emotional engineering in the marketplace might trigger reactance and decrease customer's willingness to help others. Thus, this topic offers fertile ground for future research.

In our data, we observe that in offering tranquility-inducing experiences to their customers, certain businesses import services and practices from different cultures. For example, the Japanese cultural center and the two yoga businesses are rooted in Eastern cultures, where LAP states are more valorized as "ideal" states of affect than in Western ones (Tsai 2007). As the marketplace becomes more globalized and culturally diverse, it will be valuable to understand the transportability of MT, and how it emerges in, and illuminate different cultures. Such investigation could provide critical insights for academics, marketers, and even policymakers, and help them understand how tranquil offerings morph and differ across different cultures, to enhance customer well-being.

Our study is not without its limitations. We believe MT is a goal salient to a wide range of manufacturers, retailers, and service providers, and acknowledge that we may leave many potential participant pools untapped. In addition, although we do assert that unordinary products, services, and experiences can foster MT, it is important to plumb the distinctions between tranquility outcomes that emerge in more everyday settings, versus those associated with more unique marketplace offerings. In addition, it is obviously important to collect data on MT experiences from consumers' perspectives, and to compare what practitioners perceive to be core components and outcomes of MT with those consumers themselves identify.

In conclusion, Bansal and Corley (2012, p. 509) state that impactful research must meet the criteria of "significance, novelty, curiosity, scope, and actionability." We believe our study of MT meets all of these standards, as its timeliness is relevant to marketing phenomena on the micro, meso and macro levels. Increasingly, people's mental and physical well-being are becoming more vulnerable to the stress incurred while managing hectic, complex lives. Likewise, nuclear families, kinship circles and friends find it difficult to engage in collective experiences of LAPs, amidst the invasiveness and pervasiveness of technology. On a macro level, institutional support for resources such as nature, and for democratized marketplace experiences that can enhance tranquility, are crucial to the delivery of wellness-related goods, services, and experiences. We hope that by introducing and unpacking the construct of MT, and by exploring how practitioners strategically deliver and address challenges pertaining to MT, that academics and practitioners will study how marketplace offerings can more effectively contribute to customers' experiences of low-arousal positive affect, while furthering goals related to brand loyalty, customer retention, and profit generation.

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Table 1. Participant Summary

Business	Pseudonym	Participant Title	Gender	Location
Phase 1 (2017)				
Bakery	Sarah	Owner	F	Small City
Psychotherapist	Karen	Owner	F	City
County Forest Preserve	Mary	Asst. Dir. of Education	F	Town
Personal Training Studio	James	Co-owner	M	Small City
Flower Farm/Goat Yoga	Sammie	Co-owner	F	Small City
Goat Farm	Todd	Co-owner	M	Small City
Japanese Cultural Center	Jessica	Director	F	Small City
Knitting Shop	Lisa	Owner	F	Small City
Lavender Farm	Kathy	Owner	F	Small City
Massage Therapy	Dorothy	Owner	F	Small City
Museum	Julie	Dir. of Education	F	Small City
Park/Conference Center	Hannah	Marketing Coordinator	F	Town
	John	Assoc. Dir.	M	
Performing Art Center	Brittany	Assoc. Dir. of Marketing	F	Small City
Planetarium	Jeff	Director/Professor	M	Small City
	Maggie	Operations Asst.	F	
Pumpkin Patch & Farm	Riley	Co-owner	M	Town
Senior Retirement Center	Lexie	Dir. of Marketing	F	Small City
Undergraduate Library	Angie	Library Head	F	Small City
	Stanley	Health Sciences Librarian	M	
Yoga Studio/Art Gallery	Lori	Owner	F	Small City
Phase 2 (2019)				
Apple Orchard & Pumpkin Patch	Kelly	Store Manager/Beekeeper	F	Small City
Bed & Breakfast	Phyllis	Owner	F	Large city
Bookstore	Meredith	Owner	F	Town
Cat Café	Erin	Owner	F	Large city
City Garden	Jenny	Comm./Membership Mgr.	F	Large city
Coffee Shop	Maddie	Owner	F	Town
Country Club	Steve	Membership Dir.	M	Small City
Frozen Dessert Shop	Jim	Owner	M	Small City
	Pam	Store Manager	F	
Flotation Tank Franchise	Barbara	Studio Coordinator	F	Large city
Student-Run Restaurant/ Theme Park Resort	Andy	Dir.; Faculty Member; Former Mgnt. Staff	M	Small City
Tour Company	Kevin	Owner	M	Large city
"Third Place" Workplace	Anne	Director	F	Small City

Town = population ~5,000; City=population~200,000; Large City= population ~ 8,000,000

Table 2. Additional Examples of Focused Attention from Participants

Pseudonym	Business	Excerpt
Barbara	Flotation Tank Franchise	[Tanks] are no sight, sound, smell, touch, or taste…[they] are sense-deprivation…the Navy Seals use [them] for… hyperlearning….They play languages, or things they're trying to learn at an astronomical rate. The subconscious can soak in so much more information than your normal conscious. So when you're in the tank and you're still sleeping, your subconscious is still going.
Dorothy	Massage Therapy	[With clients] talking…I know [some] want [to], but…if they're particularly revved up, I'll say "I'm going to have you take a nice, deep breath in and…exhale more slowly…" A lot of times…they will just start paying attention to what's happening in their body, and if they don't, I'll just start another round.
Erin	Cat Café/ Fostering	You see [kids]…put their head down, get next to the cat. It's not hyper and crazy…those moments where they just chill and they're looking into the eyes of the cat, then just start petting, that's a tranquil moment for a kid. It's not really that much different for adults….[who] get down on the cat-hair [laden] carpet and sit face-to-face with the cat….Tranquil to me is when you look at…the interaction, and it looks like [customers] don't know there is anybody else in the room.
Julie	Museum	With young kids, they're all wired up, on a field trip…I do things that bring some calm, some tranquility to the experience…I tell them, "We're only going to look at four things. Then [you can] look at everything [else], don't worry…so…training people to cultivate their own sense of tranquility, their own sense of, you can really be deeply involved in seeing something.
Maddie	Coffee Shop	It's important to me...if I went into a coffee shop, what kind of experience would I want?...to be able to sit and enjoy—if I had a book…—and I came in to read, I wouldn't want to be distracted from that.

Figure 1. Strategic Conceptual Framework of Marketplace Tranquility (MT)

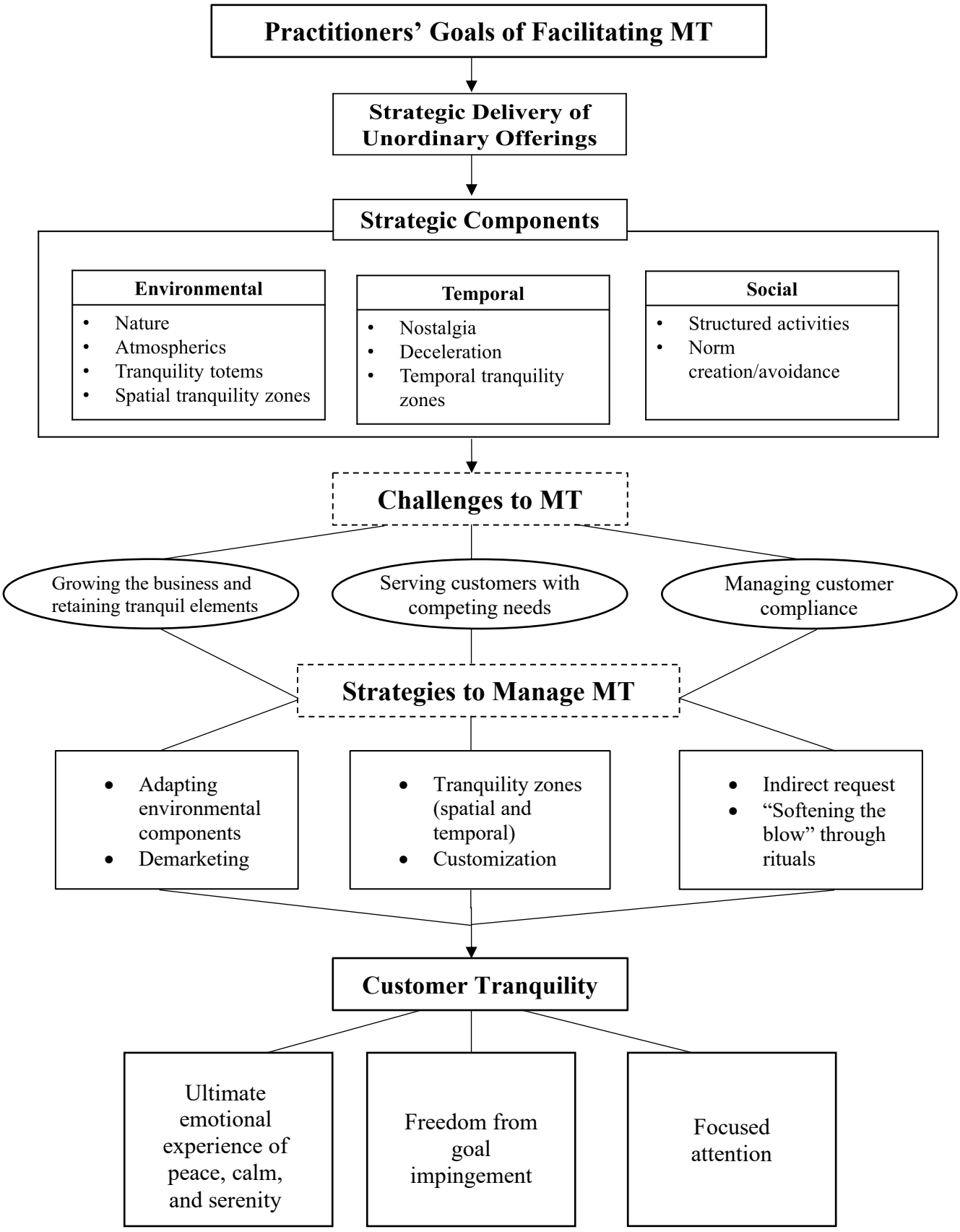

Figure 2. Tranquility Totems and Tranquility Zones

Tranquility Totem: Artificial Campfire, Entrance to Alternative Workplace

Tranquility Zone: “Greenhouse” with Swings, Hotel Lobby

Cultivating the Green-Tea Moustache: Defining, Delineating and Delivering Marketplace Tranquility

Web Appendix

Web Appendix includes pictures of tranquility totems and zones.

EXAMPLES OF TRANQUILITY TOTEMS/TRANQUILITY ZONES

Tranquility Totem: Sleeping Cat Strategically Placed Near Window, Cat Café.

Tranquility Totem: Barn Mural, Apple Orchard and Farm

Tranquility Zone: Reading Room, Rear of Bookstore

Tranquility Zone: Heathrow Airport “Rest and Relaxation Room”