

**Here today, gone tomorrow:**  
**Pop-up stores' ephemerality and consumer behavior**

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**Because my Hogwarts letter never came.**

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## List of abbreviations

BEX	brand experience
CI	confidence interval
Cov.	covariate
eWoM	electronic word of mouth
NFU	need for uniqueness
REX	retail experience
WoM	word of mouth

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# **1 General introduction**

## **1.1 Relevance**

In the face of increasingly diversified retail formats and changing consumer needs, brick-and-mortar retail must reinvent itself to remain relevant. Traditional retailing is in intense competition with its online counterpart, which attracts consumers through unprecedented convenience and cheaper, faster access to better deals (Arnold & Reynolds, 2003). As a result, consumers have access to an array of information and alternatives that is wider and more diverse than ever before (Kozinets et al., 2002). In this competitive environment, it is no longer sufficient for brick-and-mortar retailers to differentiate themselves from the competition by offering attractive prices or innovative products (Grewal, Levy, & Kumar, 2009); as the satisfaction of functional demands is now taken for granted, intangible components have become more important. This shift led to the development of an increasingly experience-oriented view of consumption that appeared two decades ago (Schmitt, 1999) and is still flourishing today (Malter, Holbrook, Kahn, Parker, & Lehmann, 2020). As experience has the potential to be more valuable to consumers than the physical product or service itself (Kotler, 1973; Pine & Gilmore, 1998), today's retail aims to ensure success by fostering the creation of special and superior experiences (Verhoef et al., 2009).

As a result of this development, brick-and-mortar retailers are investing more and more in store concepts that go beyond the mere presentation of product features, focusing rather on the experience and entertainment value (Hollenbeck, Peters, & Zinkhan, 2008). Such experiential stores are operated by manufacturers themselves under a single brand name and with the primary goal of strengthening the brand (Kozinets et al., 2002). For

example, flagship stores are a type of experiential stores characterized by their unique store design. Complementary to traditional brand stores, they offer a novel product and brand staging that does not push sales or profit metrics (Jahn, Nierobisch, Toporowski, & Dannewald, 2018). Instead, flagships tell a story and entertain the customer (Kozinets et al., 2002) to strengthen brand loyalty and brand image (Hollenbeck et al., 2008).

In addition to the increased experience orientation, today's consumer behavior is characterized by a desire for ephemerality, referred to as "liquid consumption". Consumers increasingly value flexible, adaptable, and mobile forms of consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Product life cycles have been shortened due to technological transformations (Bauman, 2000), while consumers view possessions as more and more irrelevant (Bellezza, Ackerman, & Gino, 2017) and value them only temporarily in each context (Bardhi, Eckhardt, & Arnould, 2012).

Pop-up stores are an experiential retail store concept that addresses these issues by combining an emphasis on experience with ephemeral consumption. They are defined as a temporary retail environment that delivers a brand experience (Robertson, Gatignon, & Cesareo, 2018). In 2004, the first pop-up store was popularized by the Japanese luxury label *Commes des Garçons* in a former bookstore in Berlin. Here, expensive designer fashion was presented in an extremely austere ambience (Bäumchen, 2004). Since then, pop-ups have become a thriving retail format used widely across various sectors: LAMY, a producer of writing implements, hosted its first pop-up in a colorful, hip, and unusual Berlin location from October 2019 to January 2020 (Braun, 2020). During the summer of 2019, the beer brand Corona let its pop-up visitors in Barcelona enjoy drinks, listen to live music, and participate in workshops (Kundicevic, 2019). To raise brand awareness in the Netherlands and spread content on social media, the accessories company Kapten & Son hosted a pop-up in Amsterdam for two months in 2019 (Willms, 2019). Even one of the world's largest tech companies, Facebook, staged a two-day pop-up in Cologne in



2018 to engage in direct dialogue with users and educate its visitors about security and privacy on Facebook (Müller, 2018). Moreover, pop-ups have proven to be an appropriate tool for promoting brands and simultaneously saving city centers from vacancies in times of uncertainty, such as the current pandemic crisis (Raskopf, 2020). For example, Bergamotte, a flower and botanicals distributor, launched pop-up stores in cities throughout Germany, Austria, and Switzerland in 2020 (Gräfen, 2020).

This innovative retail format aims to engage both existing customers and new audiences (Robertson et al., 2018). As with all experiential stores, the primary goal of a pop-up is not to increase sales in the short term but to get consumers excited about the brand and its products through fun and entertainment, thus helping to build a special brand image (Niehm, Fiore, Jeong, & Kim, 2006), increase brand-related word of mouth (WoM) (Klein, Falk, Esch, & Gloukhovtsev, 2016) and brand awareness (Robertson et al., 2018), and strengthen the long-term connection between customer and brand (Zogaj, Olk, & Tscheulin, 2019). The store itself becomes the product (Surchi, 2011) and the advertising platform for the brand (Warnaby, Kharakhorkina, Shi, & Corniani, 2015).

As an experience-based retail concept, pop-up stores have great conceptual similarities to flagships. Their differentiating feature is their ephemerality (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). Unlike flagships, pop-ups are suddenly opened for only a short period of time, disappearing afterward (Kim, Fiore, Niehm, & Jeong, 2010; Klein et al., 2016; Niehm et al., 2006; Warnaby & Shi, 2019). As pop-ups' ephemerality may inspire excitement (de Lassus & Freire, 2014) and affect perceived uniqueness (Zogaj et al., 2019), it is conceivable that this distinguishing characteristic may influence consumer behavior in a way that is positively related to the pop-up and its brand. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate pop-ups and their ephemerality in greater detail.

## 1.2 Literature review and research gap

The following categorizes the different forms pop-ups can take, identifies their main features, analyzes their goals, and determines the characteristics of their target group. By reviewing the state of the art in pop-up research and pinpointing pop-ups' particularities, the research gap becomes evident.

### 1.2.1 Forms of pop-up stores

Temporary retail stores are applied in a variety of contexts and forms. These forms can be categorized according to their objectives: communicational, experiential, testing, or transactional pop-up stores (Warnaby et al., 2015).<sup>1</sup>

- *Communicational* pop-up stores are an event-centered form of brand communication (Alexander, Nobbs, & Varley, 2018; de Lassus & Freire, 2014; Warnaby et al., 2015). They aim to strengthen brand awareness, brand identity, and a positive brand value perception (de Lassus & Freire, 2014). If successful in spreading their message, such pop-ups are reported upon widely in the press and on blogs. Thus, they contribute to communication about the brand and strengthen its image (de Lassus & Freire, 2014; Klein et al., 2016).
- Pop-ups are also used as an *experiential* marketing tactic, designed to foster consumer–brand engagement. By focusing on the creation of superior retail and brand experiences, experiential pop-ups offer special atmospheres, unique concepts, exclusive products, and entertainment (Klein et al., 2016, Warnaby et al., 2015). In addition, they give visitors the opportunity to test and learn about their products and brands firsthand (Kim et al., 2010). Especially for luxury brands, experiential pop-ups complement flagship stores by serving as additional

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<sup>1</sup> Note that these categories are not free from overlap.

touchpoints that encourage consumers to experience the brand in a more accessible way (Robertson et al., 2018).

- *Testing* pop-ups are launched to gain knowledge about a market. They are a low-risk and low-cost method of testing market potentials or new (international) markets for a product or brand (Picot-Coupey, 2014). Testing pop-ups can also be an instrument for online retailers to assess the potential of expanding into brick-and-mortar retail (Warnaby et al., 2015).
- In contrast to the other categories, *transactional* pop-ups are used to maximize sales or market share. They often appear in the form of seasonal pop-ups, such as Halloween or Christmas stores (Klein et al., 2016; Picot-Coupey, 2014), or flash retailing stores designed to clear stock at discounted prices (Klein et al., 2016; Warnaby et al., 2015).

Building on established literature (e.g., Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018), this dissertation defines pop-ups as follows: *pop-ups are temporary retail environments that promote a single brand and are operated to deliver experiences. As they characteristically aim to create word of mouth, pop-ups also have communicational objectives. Moreover, some pop-ups are used to test foreign markets or new products. In this definition, pop-ups are not designed primarily to generate revenue.*

## **1.2.2 Characteristics of pop-up stores**

In line with the definition above, pop-ups have two main characteristics: they are ephemeral and experiential.

Research agrees that the limited availability of pop-ups is their distinguishing feature (e.g., Kim et al., 2010; Klein et al. 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). In contrast to the permanence of other experiential stores, pop-ups are usually only open for a couple of weeks – they are *ephemeral*. As the importance of this ephemerality has been widely

recognized in the literature, it is surprising that research analyzing the concept remains so limited (see Table 1): Within their qualitative study, Shi, Warnaby, and Quinn (2019) analyzed how a pop-up's ephemerality is included in the store's concept. They found that the spatial and temporal scarcity is often reflected in elements such as the store's interior design, event-like character, and communication strategy. In another qualitative study, de Lassus and Freire (2014) found the ephemerality of pop-ups to inspire excitement for the store and the brand, while Zogaj et al.'s (2019) quantitative study revealed this limited opening time to affect perceived uniqueness. Furthermore, their study indicated that store ephemerality might also have a considerable effect on customers' willingness to pay. Within their conceptual research propositions, Robertson et al. (2018) highlighted a need to investigate the ephemeral and experiential qualities of pop-ups in greater detail. Encouraged by this proposition, by the notion that a pop-up's ephemerality inspires excitement and affects perceived uniqueness, and especially by the inexplicable lack of research regarding pop-ups' main distinguishing feature, this dissertation aims to provide a detailed view on the opportunities that store ephemerality provides for customers and brands.

**Table 1.** Summary of previous research.

Authors (year) <sup>a</sup>	Method	Ephemerality	Retail experience
Overdiek & Warnaby (2020)	Qualitative		Store uniqueness, staff service quality
Shi et al. (2019)	Qualitative	✓	Store uniqueness, store atmosphere
Zogaj et al. (2019)	Quantitative	✓	Store uniqueness, hedonic shopping value
Robertson et al. (2018)	Conceptual	✓	Store uniqueness, exclusive product assortment
Lowe et al. (2017)	Qualitative		Store uniqueness, store atmosphere, hedonic shopping value, staff service quality
Klein et al. (2016)	Quantitative		Store uniqueness, store atmosphere, hedonic shopping value
de Lassus & Freire (2014)	Qualitative	✓	Store atmosphere, hedonic shopping value, exclusive product assortment
Picot-Coupey (2014)	Qualitative		Store uniqueness, store atmosphere, exclusive product assortment, staff service quality
Russo Spena et al. (2012)	Qualitative		Staff service quality
Kim et al. (2010)	Quantitative		Store uniqueness, exclusive product assortment, staff service quality
Niehm et al. (2006)	Quantitative		Store uniqueness, exclusive product assortment, staff service quality

<sup>a</sup> Selected literature.

Compared to ephemerality, pop-ups' second main characteristic – *retail experience* – has garnered more attention (see Table 1). This aspect is defined as visitors' overall perceptions of a store's features (Verhoef et al., 2009). The most important

features in terms of delivering a retail experience are store uniqueness, store atmosphere, hedonic shopping value, exclusive product assortment, and staff service quality.<sup>2</sup>

- The novel and extraordinary form of pop-ups distinguishes them from conventional retail stores, rendering them *unique* (Klein et al., 2016; Picot-Coupey, 2014). A prime example of this uniqueness is Nike’s pop-up designed as a giant shoebox placed on a New York street corner (Kletschke, 2015). Firms carefully select their launch dates and locations, which serve to distinguish the store from the outside environment (Shi et al., 2019) – in a way that makes consumers feel lucky to have managed to visit the store (Zogaj et al., 2019). In terms of form, a pop-up’s uniqueness is emphasized in an up-to-date, distinct store design (Klein et al., 2016). Pop-ups are aesthetic and utilize special imagery to exude novelty (Robertson et al., 2018). Moreover, they are inviting and allow visitors to have extraordinary, customized interactions and experiences with the brand (Klein et al., 2016; Niehm et al., 2006) through elements such as innovative technologies and digital installations (Overdiek & Warnaby, 2020; Shi et al., 2019). Due to their unexpectedness (Robertson et al., 2018), they catch the attention of consumers and further surprise and excite them (Kim et al., 2010; Lowe, Maggioni, & Sands, 2017; Niehm et al., 2006; Robertson et al., 2018). A store’s uniqueness may be further strengthened by requiring an appointment or reservation (Shi et al., 2019).
- In addition to their uniqueness, pop-ups offer a special *store atmosphere* (Klein et al., 2016; Shi et al., 2019). Consumers perceive the inviting and interactive environment as attractive and pleasant (Klein et al., 2016). De Lassus and Freire (2014) described the atmosphere in pop-ups as relaxed, fun, and youthful. This

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<sup>2</sup> Note that these characteristics are not free from overlap.

atmosphere is generated through specific design concepts and curated configurations of corporate identity elements, fixtures, and fittings (Shi et al., 2019). Crucial here are the visual merchandising and architecture, especially the in-store design and exterior. Architects create a special place – almost a work of art – to promote the brand’s values (Picot-Coupey, 2014). Lowe et al. (2017) found that a favorable store atmosphere depends on having a design that fits with the image of the brand, the location, and the context. In contrast, de Lassus and Freire (2014) determined that pop-ups for luxury brands should have a different, lighter atmosphere than their parent houses do. Following this guidance, Louis Vuitton launched a pop-up store in a shuttered Chicago nightclub (Brenner, 2019).

- Pop-ups’ *hedonic shopping value* is created by making visits to the store entertaining and fun (Klein et al., 2016; Lowe et al., 2018). With elements such as live music, games, and interactive touchpoints, pop-up stores provide an experiential environment (Zogaj et al., 2019) that visitors perceive as emotional and hedonic (de Lassus & Freire, 2014). For example, the Wrangler pop-up in London hosted performances by various music artists alongside their fashion collection (Halliday, 2019).
- An *exclusive product assortment* offers another opportunity to heighten the retail experience, despite pop-ups having a non-sales focus. In addition to purchasing these special products, visitors may have the opportunity to test, evaluate, and explore them (Kim et al., 2010; Niehm et al., 2006). Picot-Coupey (2014) found that pop-ups generally offer a narrow merchandise mix, focusing on one product line; these products may be new, limited editions, or both (de Lassus & Freire, 2014; Kim et al., 2010; Robertson et al., 2018). As pop-ups are associated with the notion of novelty, it is especially newer products or brands that may be consistent with the image of pop-ups. Showcasing limited editions or exclusive,

hard-to-find products also fits with pop-ups' ephemerality and uniqueness (Robertson et al., 2018). For example, Lego opened a pop-up in London to unveil its limited-edition wooden collectable toys (Douglas, 2019).

- *Staff service quality*, especially in terms of a face-to-face dialogue between customer and brand, is another key aspect of retail experience (Niehm et al., 2006). In particular, a dialogue between customers and the brand may be strengthened by brand representatives, shopper assistances, and experts (Russo Spena, Cardia, Colurcio, & Melia, 2012). In pop-ups, sales representatives do not only inform customers about the products but may also exchange experiences with them (Kim et al., 2010), thus facilitating consumer engagement with the brand (Lowe et al., 2017; Picot-Coupey, 2014). This firm–customer interaction plays an important role in value co-creation (Overdiek & Warnaby, 2020). A model of extraordinary staff service quality is the Lidl pop-up store, where experts served visitors wine in a darkened room (Abernethy, 2019).

By combining these features, pop-ups can deliver a positive retail experience. However, experience does not exclusively define pop-ups but applies to all experiential stores, and research regarding experience in the context of experiential stores is not scarce (e.g., Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Jahn et al., 2018). Indeed, flagship store research has already identified these same store features as being part of the retail experience (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Jahn et al., 2018; Kozinets et al., 2002; Nierobisch, Toporowski, Dannewald, & Jahn, 2017). It is therefore surprising that research on pop-ups has largely focused on the retail experience itself, neglecting to analyze their distinguishing feature of ephemerality. Hence, this dissertation sees value in investigating the ephemeral quality of pop-ups in greater detail.



### 1.2.3 Goals of pop-up stores

Pop-ups aim to provide consumers with a favorable *brand experience* (Klein et al., 2016). As retail experience touchpoints are often related to the brand, with brand-tailored information, brand representatives, and corporate design, a favorable retail experience in experiential stores can translate to a superior brand experience (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016). Brand experience is defined as the consumer's subjective internal responses (sensations, feelings, cognitions) and behavioral reactions to brand-related stimuli (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009).

As with all experiential stores, the primary goal of a pop-up is not to increase sales. However, the findings of Zogaj et al. (2019) show that the perceived uniqueness of pop-ups may also affect *short-term goals* (i.e., willingness-to-pay for products in the store). In contrast to this unexpected effect, the *long-term goal* orientation of pop-ups, which is also the focus in practice, is reflected in several studies. Robertson et al. (2018) proposed within their conceptual work that the more positive the emotions arising from the pop-up experience are, the stronger the buzz generated will be. Klein et al. (2016) can confirm this: Pop-ups' hedonic shopping value, store uniqueness, and store atmosphere may increase WoM about the brand, while brand experience partially mediates this effect. By generating WoM, the brand may be stored in consumers' minds for longer, thus contributing to pop-up stores' brand-related long-term goals. Robertson et al. (2018) even stated that a logical requirement for the effectiveness of an ephemeral retail concept – such as a pop-up – is that it creates traffic and buzz. Additionally, they suggested that pop-ups generate brand awareness, brand image, and brand loyalty. Zogaj et al. (2019) investigated the effect on brand loyalty, finding that the long-term, brand-related loyalty goal can only be achieved by triggering short-term, product-related responses through store uniqueness. However, their model did not include brand

experience, which several studies have shown to significantly affect brand attitude and loyalty (e.g., Brakus et al., 2009; Dolbec & Chebat, 2013).

As the relevant concept in consumer preferences for liquid consumption, it is surprising that ephemerality has received so little attention from research on pop-ups' goals; as yet, only retail and brand experiences have been identified as having an effect on their achievement. However, ephemerality – the hallmark differentiating pop-ups from other experiential stores – may also contribute to consumer behavior. As commodity theory (Brock, 1968) states, consumers have a greater desire for scarce goods and regard them as more valuable (Lynn, 1991). Along these lines, research has found that limitedly available products or services have positive effects for both customers and brands, such as emotional arousal (Zhu & Ratner, 2015) and an increase in purchase intention (Aggarwal, Jun, & Huh, 2011), willingness to pay (Balachander & Stock, 2009), and perceptions of quality and value (Suri, Kohli, & Monroe, 2007). It is therefore fair to assume that not only the desire to possess scarce goods but also the spatial and temporal scarcity of the pop-up itself may have an impact on consumer behavior that is positively related to the pop-up and its brand.

#### **1.2.4 Pop-ups' target groups**

Pop-up store research has granted a great deal of attention to consumer characteristics (Kim et al., 2010; Niehm et al., 2006; Robertson et al., 2018), determining that pop-ups may reach a consumer segment that is slightly different from the brand's mainstream patrons (Robertson et al., 2018).

Niehm et al. (2006) investigated *demographic characteristics* and found that it is especially the young or female consumers who are aware of and engage with pop-up stores. Later, Kim et al. (2010) identified relevant *psychological characteristics*, revealing that consumer innovativeness and shopping enjoyment affect consumers' opinion about the importance of hedonic elements in pop-up retail and attitudes toward

pop-ups in general, which affects store patronage intentions. Furthermore, Robertson et al. (2018) proposed that pop-ups are a retail solution that engages novelty-seeking consumers.

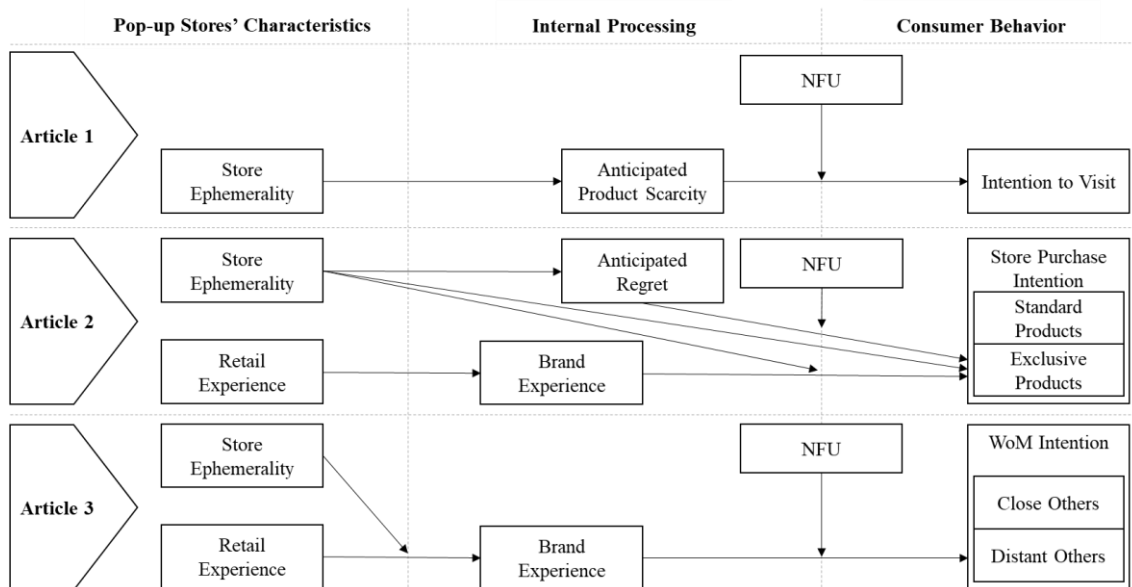
Through their conceptual analysis, Robertson et al. (2018) brought the consumer trait *need for uniqueness* (NFU) into focus. Consumers with a high NFU are those who use consumption to reinforce their distinction from others (Tian & McKenzie, 2001). As a pop-up's extraordinary, novel, and ephemeral qualities can contribute to a visitor's sense of uniqueness, high-NFU individuals are expected to be more likely to visit pop-ups and therefore represent a suitable target group. However, such consumers are assumed to not necessarily contribute to pop-up's goals, particularly the creation of WoM, as they would likely eschew it to preserve their uniqueness (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010; Robertson et al., 2018). Though NFU could play a significant role in a pop-up's ability to achieve its goals, research on pop-ups has largely overlooked the format's target group.

In light of the aforementioned findings, the goal of this dissertation is to analyze pop-ups' unique selling point of ephemerality and their target group by investigating their impact on consumer behavior before, during, and after a pop-up visit.

### **1.3 Research outline**

This dissertation includes three articles that aim to analyze what drives consumers' intention to visit pop-up stores (Article 1), whether and what type of purchases are made there (Article 2), and how such stores can drive word of mouth for brands (Article 3). In all three articles, special attention is paid to the pop-up stores' ephemerality and consumers' NFU. As a whole, this work extends the well-established commodity theory, which states that a limited-supply of items motivates individuals' desire for them, by applying it to stores instead of products. It also contributes to literature that identifies ephemeral consumption to be a novel concept of consumer behavior (Bardhi & Eckhardt,

2017) and adds to existing pop-up literature, which has largely neglected to consider their distinguishing feature of store ephemerality (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). Finally, this dissertation highlights the importance of NFU – the key characteristic of pop-ups’ target group that can play a game-changing role in consumer behavior related to pop-ups. An overview of the dissertation’s framework is provided in Figure 1, showing that pop-ups and their special characteristics may affect internal processing, which further drives consumer behavior, while the character trait NFU may influence these relationships.



**Figure 1.** Dissertation framework.

Considering pop-ups’ widespread application but also potential for failure, *Article 1* seeks to determine which pop-up store characteristics attract visitors. Research on pop-ups has already identified the experience they offer as having an impact on consumers’ patronage intentions (Kim et al., 2010). However, these results could apply to all experiential stores, not just pop-ups. As commodity theory finds the limited availability of events to increase the desire to attend them (Lynn, 1991), this article assumes that pop-ups’ main distinguishing feature – their ephemerality – may contribute

to consumers' intention to visit. Furthermore, following the halo effect (Thorndike, 1920) in assuming that people draw conclusions from known characteristics to unknown ones, this article expects consumers to associate a pop-up's ephemerality with an offer of scarce, exclusive products. As scarcity research has already demonstrated, the limited availability of products positively affects their desirability (e.g., Ge, Messinger, & Li, 2009). Hence, anticipating a scarce assortment may attract consumers to pop-ups, despite their non-sales focus (Klein et al., 2016). As high-NFU consumers – pop-ups' target group – have a greater preference for scarce products (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000; Snyder, 1992) and would therefore be drawn more strongly to pop-up stores, Article 1 proposes a need to examine the impact of anticipated product scarcity on consumers' intention to visit by considering their NFU.

Building on Article 1's suggestion that consumers intend to visit pop-up stores because of their assortment, *Article 2* investigates how ephemerality affects visitors' in-store purchase behavior. Recent research indicates that favorable retail and brand experiences in flagship stores can trigger immediate store purchases (Jahn et al., 2018). Furthermore, while pop-ups focus on promoting buzz and not direct in-store sales, their ephemerality provides an opportunity to generate sales both directly (Zogaj et al., 2019) and via anticipated regret in the case of no purchase (Gupta & Gentry, 2019). If pop-ups are able to systematically generate sales, the question remains as to what kind of product might sell well. In flagships, positive retail and brand experiences have been linked with the purchase of exclusive products but less so with standard products that are also available elsewhere (Jahn et al., 2018). In contrast, research has shown that ephemerality may not stimulate the purchase of exclusive products, as they are already perceived as such, while the purchase of standard products may benefit from limited availability (Gierl, Plantsch, & Schweidler, 2008). Hence, this article assumes that consumers prefer buying standard products in ephemeral pop-ups rather than in permanent flagships. If store

ephemerality indeed has a greater effect on the purchase of standard products than exclusive ones, those visitors actually buying these products in pop-ups must be identified. Members of pop-ups' target group – consumers with a high NFU – covet unique, exclusive products and not standard ones (Snyder, 1992). Therefore, the impact of store ephemerality on store purchases must be examined by considering not only product category (standard vs. exclusive products) but also individual personality traits.

As store ephemerality may play a game-changing role in terms of short-term, store-related goals, *Article 3* investigates its relevance for one of pop-ups' main goals, the creation of brand-related WoM. Pop-up research has already identified retail and brand experiences as affecting WoM about the brand (Klein et al., 2016). This article assumes that ephemerality contributes to brand experience and thus consumers' intentions to spread positive WoM, as scarcity may increase a brand's perceived uniqueness and value. However, research predicts high-NFU consumers to generate less WoM out of fear of emulation (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010); if this is indeed the case, pop-ups' target group would be acting contrary to their goals. In light of this discrepancy, this article sees the value of a more detailed view of the effect of NFU on WoM, suggesting a need to differentiate between audience types (close friends vs. distant others): Brand experience may translate into increased WoM among distant others when consumers have a high NFU, as they are likely to self-enhance to impress (Barasch & Berger, 2015). In contrast, for the case of close others, high-NFU consumers are expected to reduce WoM to preserve their uniqueness and prevent these others from enjoying the same experiences (Moldovan, Steinhart, & Ofen, 2015).

Overall, this dissertation highlights the profound importance of store ephemerality and NFU in influencing consumer behavior in pop-up stores. Contributing to and expanding upon commodity theory, the contents within attempt to prove that this established theory may be applied not only to a limited availability of supply but also to

a limited spatial and temporal availability of stores. Furthermore, by considering the significant role of store ephemerality in consumer behavior related to pop-ups, this dissertation also adds to literature that identifies ephemeral consumption as a novel concept of consumer behavior. Finally, it contributes to existing pop-up literature, which has largely neglected to consider their distinguishing feature and their target group.

The major findings and contributions of each article are presented in Table 2. As the three articles adopt different approaches in terms of conceptual background and study set-up, Table 3 offers a methodological overview.

**Table 2.** Overview of the articles.

#	Title	Major Objectives	Key Findings	Overall Theoretical Contributions	Theoretical Contributions	Managerial Contributions
1	Hurry up! The effect of pop-up stores' ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit	Examine the relationship between store ephemerality and consumers' intention to visit by considering the mediating role of anticipated product scarcity and the moderating role of NFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ephemerality leads consumers to anticipate limited product assortments, thus driving intention to visit, especially for high-NFU consumers</li> <li>• Not always a positive direct effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension to commodity theory: It can be applied not only to a limited availability of supply but also to a limited spatial and temporal availability of stores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Halo effect: Despite pop-ups' non-sales focus, product assortment is an important driver for consumers' intention to visit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store ephemerality alone is not enough to make store attractive</li> <li>• Pop-ups should offer exclusive products, especially for consumers with a high NFU</li> </ul>
2	Short and sweet: Effects of pop-up stores' ephemerality on store sales	Examine how store purchases in experiential stores are affected by stores' ephemerality and whether brands benefit from offering not only exclusive but also standard products in pop-ups by considering the role of consumers' NFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop-ups' ephemerality increases store purchases of standard products more than exclusive ones</li> <li>• High NFU mitigates the influence of anticipated regret on the purchase of standard products</li> <li>• High NFU facilitates the influence of anticipated regret on the purchase of exclusive products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution to literature that identifies ephemeral consumption as a novel concept of consumer behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite non-sales focus, pop-ups' ephemerality facilitates product purchase</li> <li>• Regret theory: Anticipated regret triggers in-store purchases</li> <li>• Unlike flagships, pop-ups also foster the purchase of standard products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pop-ups should offer standard products as a complement to exclusive ones, especially for low-NFU consumers</li> <li>• Exclusive products should remain the focus for high-NFU consumers</li> </ul>
3	Once they've been there, they like to share: Capitalizing on ephemerality and need for uniqueness to drive word of mouth for brands with pop-up stores	Examine the relationship between retail experience, brand experience, and WoM (both interpersonal and electronic) by considering the moderating roles of (perceived) store ephemerality and NFU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retail experience positively affects brand experience, especially when the store is (perceived as) ephemeral, which further heightens WoM</li> <li>• Brand experience translates into increased eWoM for high-NFU consumers</li> <li>• High NFU does not positively influence the effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribution to existing pop-up literature, which has largely neglected to consider their distinguishing feature and their target group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Store ephemerality contributes to brand experience</li> <li>• NFU plays a significant role in the relation between retail experience and WoM</li> <li>• Need to differentiate between interpersonal and eWoM</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brands should highlight the ephemerality of pop-ups to generate WoM via brand experience</li> <li>• High-NFU consumers should be targeted by highlighting unique experiences and encouraging sharing on social media</li> <li>• Low-NFU consumers should be targeted with benefits unrelated to uniqueness to achieve positive interpersonal WoM</li> </ul>



**Table 3.** Data, sample, and methodology of the articles.

#	Overall Conceptual Background	Conceptual Background	Data, Sample, and Research Context	Methodology
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Halo Effect (Thorndike, 1920): People draw conclusions from known characteristics to unknown ones</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study 1: <math>N = 618</math>, through clickworker; one-factor, two-level (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) between-subjects design; product category: sportswear</li> <li>Study 2: <math>N = 171</math>, through social networks; 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) <math>\times</math> 2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design; product category: sportswear</li> <li>Study 3: <math>N = 603</math>, through clickworker; 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) <math>\times</math> 2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design; product category: chocolate</li> </ul>	Moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 14 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018)
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commodity Theory (Brock, 1968): Individuals desire limited available goods and services</li> <li>Need for Uniqueness (Snyder 1992): High NFU consumers desire exclusivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regret Theory (Loomes &amp; Sugden, 1982): Anticipating either the delay of a purchase or missing an opportunity to acquire an item may cause anticipated regret</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study 1: <math>N = 215</math>, through clickworker; one-factor, two-level (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) between-subjects design; product category: chocolate</li> <li>Study 2: <math>N = 215</math>, through clickworker; one-factor, two-level (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) between-subjects design; product category: chocolate</li> </ul>	Moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 14 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018)
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NFU-WoM-Framework (Cheema &amp; Kaikati, 2010): Consumers with high (vs. low) uniqueness are less willing to recommend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study 1: <math>N = 48</math>; field study; product category: fittings and sanitary products</li> <li>Study 2: <math>N = 119</math>; field study; product category: bikes</li> <li>Study 3: <math>N = 262</math>, through clickworker; one-factor, two-level (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design; product category: chocolate</li> <li>Study 4: <math>N = 160</math>, through social networks; one-factor, two-level (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) between-subjects design; product category: fashion</li> <li>Study 5: <math>N = 492</math>, through clickworker; 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) <math>\times</math> 2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design; product category: fashion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study 1: Moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 7 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018)</li> <li>Studies 2–5: Moderated mediations (using PROCESS Model 21 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018)</li> </ul>

## **1.4 Abstracts**

### **1.4.1 Article 1**

Retail has responded to the continuing shift in consumer preferences toward ephemerality and immediacy with pop-up stores: temporary, experiential store formats. Considering pop-ups' widespread application, it is important to identify which store characteristics attract visitors. Research has pinpointed the pop-up experience as affecting consumer behavior. However, experience does not exclusively define pop-ups but applies to all experiential stores. Our three experiments suggest that pop-ups' distinguishing feature – ephemerality – leads consumers to anticipate limited product assortments, thus driving intention to visit. This drive is even stronger for pop-ups' target group, consumers with a high need for uniqueness.

### **1.4.2 Article 2**

As a response to increasing demand for ephemeral and experiential consumption, pop-up stores have developed into a preferred retail format. Appearing only temporarily, these experiential stores represent an event rather than a regular retail concept. As such, the relevance of research on experiential stores finding that customers' retail experience improves their brand experience, thus stimulating in-store purchases, is unclear. However, our two experiments demonstrate that pop-ups' distinguishing feature – ephemerality – may also affect purchases. We find that brand experience in pop-ups, strengthened by their ephemerality, boosts in-store purchases of standard products. Looking into the mechanism behind this effect, we determine that ephemerality directly increases purchases of standard products but not exclusive ones. Furthermore, ephemerality enhances consumers' anticipated regret. By considering pop-ups' target group – consumers with a high need for uniqueness – we demonstrate that anticipated

regret drives in-store purchases of standard products for low-NFU consumers but exclusive products for high-NFU consumers.

### **1.4.3 Article 3**

Consumers increasingly share their experiences both interpersonally and electronically. Responding to this trend, brands have taken to launching pop-up stores: an ephemeral, experiential store format designed to generate word of mouth about the brand. Although pop-up research has already identified retail and brand experiences as having an impact on WoM about the brand, it has surprisingly considered neither pop-ups' distinguishing feature of ephemerality nor their target group, consumers with a high need for uniqueness. Building on five studies (two field studies, three experiments), our results provide converging evidence that retail experience positively affects brand experience, especially when the store is (perceived to be) ephemeral – as is the case with pop-ups. Moreover, our research corroborates our prediction of self-enhancement: For high-NFU consumers, brand experience translates into increased WoM when communicating with distant others. When communicating with close others, however, the instinct of high-NFU consumers to preserve their uniqueness does not affect WoM.

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## **2 Hurry up! The effect of pop-up stores' ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit (Article 1)**

(with Waldemar Toporowski)<sup>3</sup>

This manuscript was submitted to the *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services* in May 2020 and has been accepted for publication in August 2020.

Henkel, L., & Toporowski, W. (2021). Hurry up! The effect of pop-up stores' ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 58, forthcoming.

Earlier versions of this manuscript have been accepted for presentation at the following conferences:

- AMA Winter Educators' Conference (2020), San Diego, USA. (VHB-JQ3: D)
- American Collegiate Retailing Association (ACRA, AMA SIG) Conference (2020), New Orleans, USA.
- 5<sup>th</sup> Colloquium on European Research in Retailing (CERR) (2020), Valencia, Spain.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Recent Advances in Retailing and Consumer Science Conference (RARCS) (2020), Baveno, Italy.

*Keywords:* pop-up store, ephemerality, intention to visit, need for uniqueness

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## 2.1 Introduction

The success of Snapchat, Uber, and Airbnb is generally attributed to consumers' changing preferences for what Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) call "liquid consumption" – in some areas, consumers increasingly value temporary, ephemeral possessions over enduring and secure ones (Chen, 2008). In the past, researchers maintained that customers make purchases and become loyal to a brand based on trust, security, and commitment. However, consumers are no longer wary of brands that embody adaptability, flexibility, and mobility but rather value them for offering centralized access, sharing, and borrowing (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). In addition to this shift in preferences toward ephemeral consumption, retailing faces the ever-present challenge of an increasing share of digital and mobile shopping. Brick-and-mortar retailing has been adapting to this trend and attempting to satisfy consumers demanding memorable in-store experiences (Verhoef et al., 2009).

One concept that addresses these issues by combining an emphasis on experience with ephemeral consumption is the pop-up store: a temporary retail environment that delivers a brand experience (Robertson et al., 2018). In addition to the limited availability and the experiential in-store environment, a major characteristic is pop-up's focus on promoting a brand to create buzz (Klein et al., 2016; Warnaby et al., 2015). As with all experiential stores (such as flagships), pop-ups are not designed primarily to generate revenue (Klein et al., 2016) but rather to test foreign markets or new products, create brand awareness, or bolster long-term customer relationships (de Lassus & Freire, 2014; Klein et al., 2016). Accordingly, pop-up store literature often focuses on the effect of pop-ups on brand buzz and long-term brand outcomes (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018).

But who exactly are these consumers who are drawn to liquid consumption – particularly pop-up stores – and therefore behave favorably? Research has

characterized typical pop-up visitors as young, mainly female (Niehm et al., 2006), enjoying shopping (Kim et al., 2010), innovative (Kim et al., 2010), and above all having a high need for uniqueness (NFU) (Robertson et al., 2018). Although there is ample research on pop-ups' target groups, the question remains as to which store characteristics ultimately lead consumers to perceive pop-ups as attractive. Recognizing and reinforcing these competitive advantages is crucial if brick-and-mortar retail wants to keep up with e-commerce. Moreover, literature on experiential stores has already suggested that a failure to align with consumer expectations in terms of store characteristics likewise fails to achieve a positive impact (Nierobisch et al., 2017). A look at practice shows on that while Amazon has shut down its first generation of US pop-up stores (Weise, 2019), others are thriving. Adidas has been operating pop-ups for years to communicate with customers and offer them a more intense brand experience (Hartmans, 2017) while IKEA continues to launch a variety of pop-ups worldwide to create amazing shopping experiences through inspiration and surprise (Sanchez, 2017). A columnist for *The New York Times* even wondered, "Has SoHo Become One Big Wellness Pop-Up?" (Meltzer, 2019). Considering pop-ups' widespread application and their potential for failure, it is also practically relevant to identify the pop-up store characteristics that attract visitors.

Research on pop-ups has already identified the pop-up experience – which includes characteristics such as hedonic elements, design novelty, and uniqueness – as having an impact on favorable consumer behavior (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). This finding is unsurprising, given that experience does not exclusively define pop-ups but applies to all experiential stores and research regarding experience in the context of experiential stores is not scarce (e.g., Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Jahn et al., 2018). However, the main feature distinguishing pop-ups from other experiential stores – ephemerality – may contribute to consumers' intention to visit. De Lassus and Freire (2014) found that a pop-up's ephemerality can arouse curiosity and excitement

about the store. Evidence from economic psychology further suggests that the limited availability of goods and services can increase consumers' desire for them (Lynn, 1991). It is therefore conceivable that the temporal and spatial scarcity of the pop-up itself can affect consumers' intention to visit. In light of these considerations, it is surprising that research addressing what spurs consumers to visit pop-ups has largely focused on the pop-up experience and not on this distinguishing and relevant concept in consumer behavior (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018).

Assuming that people draw conclusions from known characteristics to unknown ones (Thorndike, 1920), we would further expect consumers to associate a pop-up's ephemerality with an offer of limited edition products. Due to their scarcity these rare products are further perceived as unique and exclusive (Barone & Roy, 2010; Lynn, 1991). If consumers expect exclusive products in pop-ups, this information may further spill over to consumers' perception of the pop-up's brand sponsor and let them perceive the brand as exclusive, which could be a side benefit. As scarcity research has already demonstrated, a limited availability of products due to supply scarcity positively affects consumers' desire for them and thus their purchase decisions (e.g., Ge, Messinger, & Li, 2009; Robinson, Brady, Lemon, & Giebelhausen, 2016). Hence, we expect anticipated product scarcity to be an important driver for consumers' intention to visit pop-ups. Robertson et al. (2018) have already highlighted in their conceptual work the relevance of investigating the effect of product scarcity on intention to visit. Encouraged by their research proposition, we would additionally expect not only consumers' knowledge about the product offerings but also even the anticipation of scarce, exclusive products to affect consumers' visits. Although pop-ups are not designed primarily for direct sales (Klein et al., 2016), consumers may expect an even scarcer product range to be offered in pop-ups than in flagships.



Pop-ups are highly original and unique. It is therefore unsurprising that research predicts such stores to be particularly attractive to consumers with a high NFU – those who use consumption to distinguish themselves from others (Robertson et al., 2018). People who manifest high NFU desire exclusive, limited-supply products (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000; Snyder, 1992). As this greater preference for scarce products could drive high-NFU consumers to visit pop-up stores, we propose a need to examine the impact of anticipated product scarcity on consumers' intention to visit by considering their NFU.

The purpose of this work is threefold. *First*, we seek to demonstrate the influence of store ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit. This is an important contribution to the existing literature on pop-ups (e.g., Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018), which has largely overlooked their distinguishing feature. *Second*, despite pop-ups having a non-sales focus (Klein et al., 2016), we investigate whether consumers expect to find an even scarcer product range in pop-ups than in flagships, which could in turn have a positive impact on the brand. *Third*, we analyze whether the offer of an exclusive, limited product assortment is a key driver of consumers' intention to visit, especially for those with a high NFU. To achieve these aims, we conducted three studies that examine how store ephemerality is linked to consumers' intention to visit while also considering the mediating role of anticipated product scarcity and the moderating role of NFU in this relationship.

## **2.2 Theoretical background and hypotheses**

Before discussing the specifics of our studies, we begin by introducing the concept of pop-up stores and briefly reviewing the state of the art in pop-up research. We then provide a theoretical background on the effect of store ephemerality via anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit by considering the moderating role of NFU. Along the way, we introduce our hypotheses.

### **2.2.1 Pop-up stores**

Temporary retail stores are used in a variety of contexts with different objectives: communicational, experiential, testing and transactional (Warnaby et al., 2015). Building on established literature (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018), this study is defining pop-ups as follows: pop-ups are temporary retail environments that are promoting a single brand (i.e. they are mostly “brand pantheons” according to Warnaby et al., 2015) and are operated to deliver an experience. Aiming at the creation of word of mouth, pop-ups characteristically also have communicational objectives. Some pop-ups are further used to test foreign markets or new products. Contrary, flash retailing and seasonal pop-up stores, such as Christmas stores, pursue transactional objectives.

Pop-ups, as all experiential stores, offer a highly experiential retail environment across various dimensions. Inside pop-ups, brands create a special retail atmosphere with design elements such as sensory stimuli and interactivity (de Lassus & Freire, 2014; Klein et al., 2016). Customers feel entertained by the surprises that await them and the process of discovering the brand (Klein et al., 2016), while well-trained brand representatives provide service-oriented face-to-face dialogue and thus engagement on a personal level. Furthermore, a pop-up’s customers are often allowed to test the assorted products (Robertson et al., 2018). While Verhoef et al. (2009) had already demonstrated that factors related to a store’s environment influence consumer experience, Nierobisch et al. (2017) supplemented this with their finding that customers experience the retail environment more deeply in experiential stores than in traditional ones. A consumer’s retail experience can then translate into brand experience (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016), as brand experience is derived from the brand-related stimuli showcased in experiential stores (Brakus et al., 2009). Further research has acknowledged the role of experiential stores in brand communication by identifying retail and brand experience as

important drivers of brand buzz and long-term brand outcomes (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018).

### **2.2.2 Store ephemerality, anticipated product scarcity, and intention to visit**

In contrast to the permanence of other experiential stores, such as flagships, pop-ups are usually only open for a couple of weeks (Klein et al., 2016). Several elements are used to emphasize pop-up's spatial and temporal scarcity – their ephemerality. Shi et al. (2019) analyzed these temporal elements theoretically. Accordingly, pop-ups' ephemerality is often reflected in their interior design, e.g. by keeping the original configuration of the vacant store or integrating displays counting the time until the store closes permanently (Surchi, 2011). Further, it is represented in performative aspects, e.g. by making it necessary for visitors to reserve prior to visit or by live performances, in their extraordinary location, in communicating exclusively through social media and in their integration of multi-channel retailing in their concept. Additionally, to make their spatial and temporal scarcity explicit, some pop-ups are nomadic and movable, e.g. in shipping containers.

The temporary nature of pop-ups relates to the novel phenomenon of ephemeral consumption, whereby flexible, adaptable, and mobile forms of consumption are valued more and more (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Product life cycles have been shortened due to technological transformations (Bauman, 2000), while consumers are becoming increasingly careless with their possessions (Bellezza et al., 2017) and value them only temporarily in each context (Bardhi et al., 2012). In addition, consumers are placing greater emphasis on consumption practices, experiences, and networks than on object attachment (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). As the relevant concept in consumer preferences for liquid consumption, it is surprising that ephemerality has received so little attention from research on pop-ups; as yet, only the pop-up experience has been identified as

having an effect on whether consumers are likely to visit (Kim et al., 2010; Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018).

Indeed, ephemerality – the hallmark differentiating pop-ups from other experiential stores – may also contribute to consumer behavior. Recent research has found that the perceived time scarcity of pop-ups has a positive effect on consumers' willingness to pay for their offerings (Zogaj et al., 2019). It is plausible that this ephemerality could affect not only the purchase decision but also the store visit itself. As commodity theory states, one's possession of limited-supply items evokes feelings of personal distinctiveness (Brock, 1968). Accordingly, consumers have a greater desire for scarce goods and services and regard them as more valuable (Lynn, 1991). In line with this, de Lassus and Freire's (2014) findings indicate that the impermanence of pop-ups may spark consumers' curiosity and excitement about being able to visit and be among the first to own a special item. Therefore, we expect that not only the desire to possess scarce goods but also the urge to experience a pop-up's spatial and temporal scarcity itself has an impact on consumers' intention to visit.

**H1.** Store ephemerality positively affects consumers' intention to visit.

According to the halo effect, people extrapolate from known characteristics to deduce unknown ones (Thorndike, 1920). Especially when consumers like a brand, positive information spills over more freely to other associated but unmentioned attributes (Ahluwalia, Unnava, & Burnkrant, 2001). On the one hand, this may lead to the conclusion that consumers expect exclusive brands to sell exclusive products, regardless of the store type. On the other hand, we assume that consumers draw conclusions from pop-ups' ephemerality to their assortment, expecting the store to offer scarce, exclusive products. In contrast to demand induced product scarcity, supply scarcity may be valued by consumers as exclusive since the products are rare (Barone & Roy, 2010; Lynn, 1991). This assumption is in line with existing literature on pop-ups (de Lassus & Freire, 2014;

Robertson et al., 2018), which finds that pop-ups mainly sell limited editions and exclusive products. Further, from scarcity research we know that there is a positive effect of the limited availability of products on consumer behavior (e.g., Ge et al., 2009; Robinson et al., 2016; Verhallen & Robben, 1994). For example, product scarcity can weaken the effect of price on product choice (Parker & Lehmann, 2011) and increase the likelihood of choosing an unfamiliar brand (Robinson et al., 2016). Also Robertson et al. (2018) see a need in investigating the effect of pop-ups' assortment on consumers' visit. They are proposing within their conceptual work and thereby encouraging future research to investigate if a scarce product assortment could heighten the likelihood of a store visit. Further, we expect not only consumers' knowledge about the store's product offerings but also even the anticipation of scarce, exclusive products being a driver of consumers' visits. Hence, despite pop-ups' non-sales focus (Klein et al., 2016), we would expect consumers to be attracted by their scarce assortment and suggest that anticipated product scarcity functions as a mediator between store ephemerality and intention to visit.

**H2.** Anticipated product scarcity mediates the relationship between store ephemerality and consumers' intention to visit.

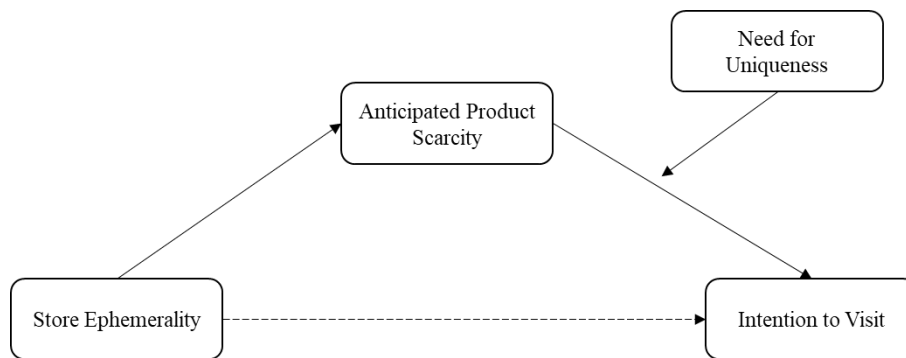
### **2.2.3 The moderating role of need for uniqueness**

As pop-ups offer an unusual and exclusive retail experience, they are expected to attract consumers with a high NFU (Robertson et al., 2018). Such consumers engage in consumer counter-conformity behaviors by making choices that are creative, unpopular, or reflect an avoidance of similarity to others (Tian & McKenzie, 2001). High-NFU consumers covet unique, scarce products that differentiate them from other people (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000; Snyder, 1992). Hence, we assume that the effect of anticipated product scarcity on consumers' intention to visit a pop-up store is greater when consumers' NFU is high. The personality trait NFU works as a moderator in the relationship between anticipated product scarcity and intention to visit.

**H3.** High NFU facilitates the influence of anticipated product scarcity on consumers' intention to visit.

### 2.3 Overview of studies

Our research set out to examine the relationship between store ephemerality and consumers' intention to visit by considering the mediating role of anticipated product scarcity and the moderating role of NFU. Figure 2 depicts the conceptual framework. We tested our hypotheses in three studies whose mix of approaches provide converging evidence for a mechanism that links store ephemerality with anticipated product scarcity and intention to visit.



**Figure 2. Article 1:** Conceptual framework showing the relationship between store ephemerality and consumers' intention to visit by considering the mediating role of anticipated product scarcity and the moderating role of NFU.

Through two pretests, we demonstrated that consumers' retail experience at pop-up and flagship stores does not differ. However, consistent with the definition of pop-ups, the pretests also confirmed that consumers perceive the ephemeral store to be significantly less temporally available than the permanent one. In Study 1, we found that store ephemerality directly affects intention to visit (H1). Additionally, we provided support for our proposition that ephemerality positively affects consumers' intention to

visit via anticipated product scarcity (H2). Especially, the effect of anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit is stronger if consumers manifest high NFU (H3). Furthermore, in Study 2 we manipulated participants' need for uniqueness as high or low, between subjects, in order to reduce common method bias. We confirmed the indirect effect of ephemerality through anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit (H2). Further, we provided support for the moderating effect of NFU (H3). Surprisingly, we did not find a direct effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit (H1). Within Study 3, we applied our model to another product category, confirming Hypotheses 2 and 3 and further finding a moderation of the indirect effect. However, we still failed to find a significant direct effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit, therefore leading us to reject Hypothesis 1. Across these studies, we found consistent support for our theorizing regarding the role of anticipated product scarcity and NFU in pop-up stores.

## 2.4 Pretests

We conducted two pretests with separate groups of consumers to verify that the retail experience does not differ between pop-up and flagship stores and that consumers perceive the pop-up to be more ephemeral than the flagship.

For *Pretest 1*, the 248 participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 27.48$ ,  $SD = 8.79$ ; 70.6% female), recruited through social networks and flyers, were asked to imagine coming across a video of a large sportswear brand presenting one of its stores. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two experiential store type conditions by showing them photos and videos of the store: In the flagship store condition, viewers were shown a variety of products on shelves as well as informational and interactive attractions within the store. For the pop-up store condition, the video included a shop window announcing that the store would only be around for one month. We distinguished between the stores' ephemerality, coding the pop-up as 1 and the permanent flagship as 0. Afterwards, all respondents evaluated their retail experience on 7-point Likert scales (Cronbach's

$\alpha = .91$ ). We measured participants' perceptions of extraordinary store atmosphere, staff service quality, and entertainment in eleven items (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016) and perceived store ephemerality using a single item adapted from prior research (Eisend, 2008).

The results of an ANOVA confirmed that the retail experience does not differ between the two experiential store types ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.02$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 4.90$ ;  $F(1, 246) = .75$ ,  $p = .387$ ). Furthermore, the results indicate that participants perceive the ephemeral store to be significantly less temporally available than the permanent one ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.13$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 3.97$ ;  $F(1, 244) = 29.80$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

With *Pretest 2*, we sought to verify the findings of *Pretest 1* for a different product category (groceries). The 219 participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 35.72$ ,  $SD = 11.94$ ; 62.6% female), recruited through social networks and flyers, were asked to imagine coming across photos and videos of one of a national chocolate brand's stores. They were randomly assigned to a flagship or a pop-up store condition. Afterwards, all respondents evaluated their retail experience on 7-point Likert scales across eight items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ) (Jahn et al., 2018). We also measured whether they perceived the store as being available for only a limited time (Eisend, 2008).

The results corroborate *Pretest 1*'s findings that the retail experience does not differ between the pop-up and the flagship condition ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.40$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 5.39$ ;  $F(1, 217) = .01$ ,  $p = .913$ ), though participants perceive the ephemeral store to be significantly less temporally available than the permanent one ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.91$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 2.50$ ;  $F(1, 217) = 156.47$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Considering these results, it is surprising that research on pop-ups has largely neglected ephemerality, focusing instead on the experience. While the pop-up experience may indeed have an effect, it appears to not differ between flagship stores and pop-ups, indicating that attention would be better placed elsewhere. Building on these findings, we



conducted the following studies keeping the retail experience constant to investigate the effect of pop-ups' main distinguishing feature – store ephemerality – on consumers' intention to visit the store.

## **2.5 Study 1**

### **2.5.1 Method**

For Study 1, we recruited a group of 618 German-speaking participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 33.28$ ,  $SD = 11.68$ ; 45.8% female; 21.2% students) through clickworker for a nominal payment and employed a one-factor, two-level (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store) between-subjects design. For all items we used 7-point Likert scales.

First, participants evaluated their familiarity with the same large sportswear brand as in Pretest 1, measured with a single item in line with Milberg, Sinn, and Goodstein (2010). We used this brand familiarity further as a covariate. Afterwards, participants were asked to imagine coming across a video of this sportswear brand presenting one of its stores (see Appendix A for situation description). As in the pretest, respondents were randomly assigned to the flagship or the pop-up store condition, viewing the same photos and videos. To distinguish between the stores' ephemerality, we coded the pop-up as 1 and the permanent flagship as 0. A manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the pop-up to be significantly less temporally available than the flagship ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 6.49$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 3.60$ ;  $F(1, 616) = 693.54$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Next, we asked respondents to evaluate the degree to which they anticipated product scarcity when thinking about the store presented (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ ). Here, we adapted a three-item scale from prior research (Janssen, Vanhamme, Lindgreen, & Lefebvre, 2014). Specifically, we asked respondents to which extent they agreed to the following statements: "I expect the store to offer unique and original products", "I expect the store to offer rare and valuable products", "I expect that the store's products cannot

easily be found elsewhere”. Afterwards, respondents gauged their intention to visit the store in the near future if they had the opportunity to do so, measured with two items based on Grewal, Baker, Levy, and Voss (2003; Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .95$ ). Finally, all participants were asked to evaluate their need for uniqueness, based on eight items from Tian and McKenzie (2001; Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .94$ ). See Appendix B for all construct measures.

### 2.5.2 Results

In line with Hypothesis 1, consumers had a stronger intention to visit the ephemeral pop-up than the permanent flagship ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 4.39$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 3.99$ ;  $F(1, 616) = 6.86$ ,  $p = .009$ ).

To examine how store ephemerality is linked to consumers’ intention to visit while also considering the mediating role of anticipated product scarcity and the moderating role of NFU in this relationship, we performed a moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 14 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018). We summarized our findings in Table 4 (Study 1).

First, we investigate whether consumers draw conclusions from store ephemerality to store assortment and if this in turn affects their intention to visit. The results show that store ephemerality has a significant effect on anticipated product scarcity ( $b = .61$ ;  $p < .001$ ) while anticipated product scarcity positively affects intention to visit ( $b = .48$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The direct path of store ephemerality on consumers’ intention to visit is not significant ( $b = .03$ ;  $p = .849$ ), which demonstrates a full mediation, thereby providing support for Hypothesis 2.

**Table 4. Article 1:** Summary of moderated mediation analyses.

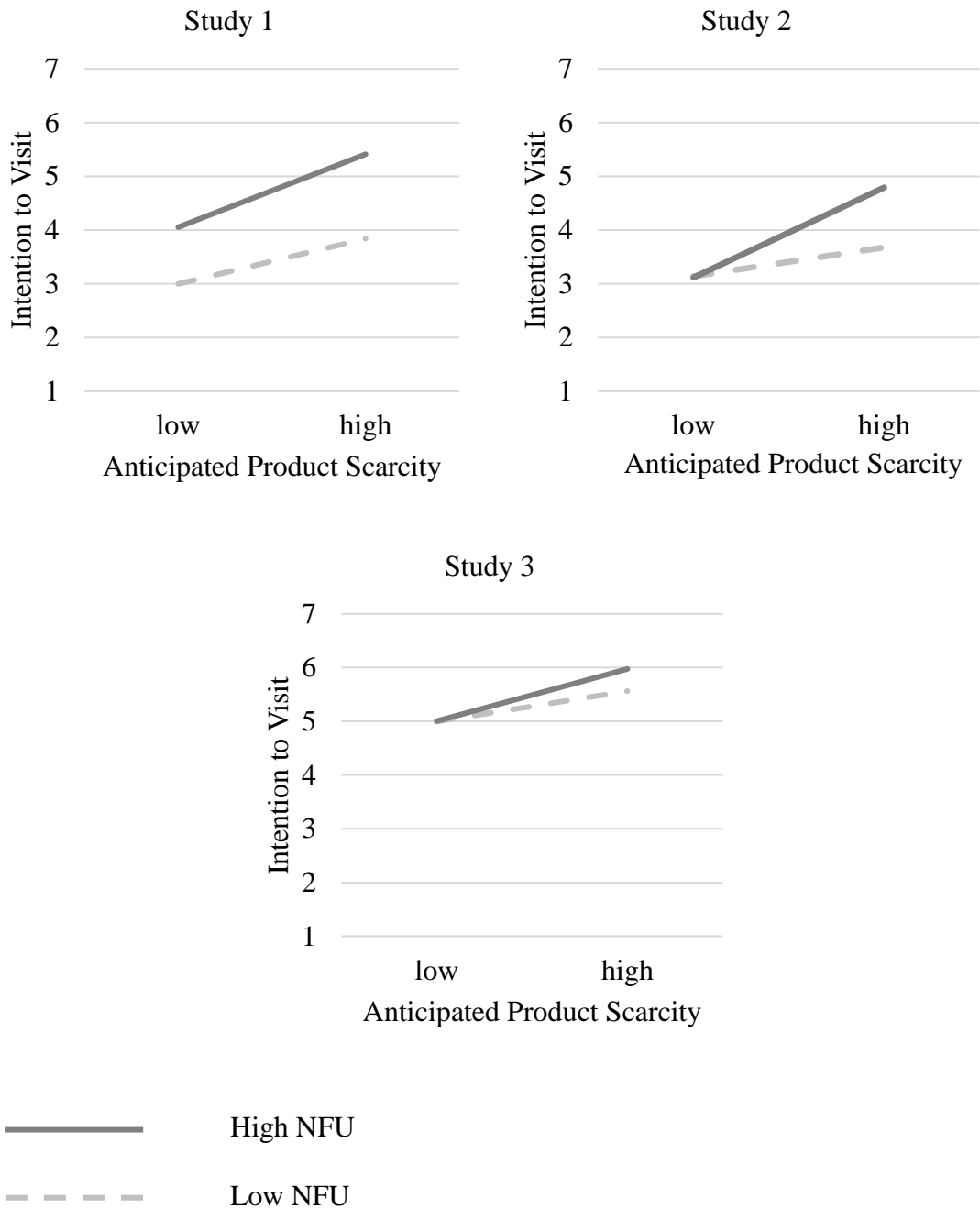
	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
DV: Anticipated product scarcity						
<i>Direct effects</i>						
Store ephemerality	.61	6.68***	.91	5.55***	.49	5.95***
Brand familiarity (cov.)	.07	1.61			.08	1.62
DV: Intention to visit						
<i>Direct effects</i>						
Store ephemerality	.03	.19	-.48	-1.82*	-.06	-.56
Anticipated product scarcity	.48	6.94***	.45	3.76***	.47	7.23***
NFU	.42	8.50***	.38	1.55	.21	1.87*
Ant. product scarcity × NFU	.07	1.91*	.39	1.74*	.24	1.89*
Brand familiarity (cov.)	.33	5.66***			.13	1.75*
<i>Conditional effects</i>						
Low NFU	.36	3.85***	.25	1.41	.34	3.39***
High NFU	.58	6.73***	.64	4.29***	.58	7.00***
<i>Indirect effects</i>						
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI
Low NFU	.22	[.099, .357]**	.23	[-.088, .565]	.17	[.061, .297]**
High NFU	.35	[.214, .508]**	.58	[.284, .936]**	.29	[.178, .413]**
<i>Index of moderated mediation</i>						
	.04	[-.001, .091]	.35	[-.022, .763]	.12	[.000, .244]**

*Note.* DV = dependent variable; NFU = need for uniqueness; CI = confidence interval. Anticipated product scarcity, NFU, and brand familiarity have been mean centered. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

Hypothesis 3 predicts the need to integrate the personality trait NFU into the model, proposing that high NFU enhances the effect of anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit. The outcomes indicate that the effect of anticipated product scarcity on consumers' intention to visit is qualified by a significant interaction with NFU ( $b = .07$ ;  $p = .056$ ). As spotlight analysis reveals, anticipated product scarcity has a stronger impact on consumers' intention to visit when their NFU is high ( $b = .58$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than when it is low ( $b = .36$ ;  $p < .001$ ). These results offer support for Hypothesis 3 and are depicted in Figure 3 (Study 1). In addition, brand familiarity as a covariate displays a significant effect that may offer further explanation for consumers' intention to visit ( $b = .33$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

More evidence of the moderation of the indirect effect of store ephemerality by NFU could be provided by the index of moderated mediation (Hayes, 2015). Although the bulk of the interval is above zero, we cannot definitively say that the indirect effect of store ephemerality through anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit depends on NFU because the confidence interval for the index of moderated mediation includes zero (index of moderated mediation: .04, 95% CI:  $-.001$  to  $.091$ ).



**Figure 3. Article 1:** Intention to visit according to NFU.

### 2.5.3 Discussion

We found a direct effect of store ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit, suggesting that intention to visit differs between pop-ups and flagships. Further, Study 1 provides evidence that, consistent with the halo effect, consumers draw conclusions from pop-ups' ephemerality to their assortment, expecting the store to offer scarce, exclusive products. Furthermore, we found support for our hypothesis (H2) that through anticipated product

scarcity, a pop-up's ephemerality affects consumers' intention to visit. Combined with the role of NFU, we can identify differential patterns. Specifically, anticipated product scarcity has a stronger positive effect on intention to visit for consumers manifesting high NFU than for those with a low NFU.

## 2.6 Study 2

### 2.6.1 Method

For Study 2, 171 German individuals ( $M_{\text{age}} = 27.34$ ,  $SD = 9.41$ ; 60.2% female) were recruited through social networks and flyers. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions as part of a 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store)  $\times$  2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design. For all items we used 7-point Likert scales.

First, to reduce common method bias, we manipulated participants' NFU as high or low, between subjects, using an elaboration exercise based on Cheema and Kaikati (2010). Participants in the high-NFU condition were instructed to elaborate upon the importance of individuality (being different from others), whereas those in the low-NFU condition elaborated on the value of conformity (being similar to others). For a manipulation check, all participants were asked to evaluate their need for uniqueness at the end of the survey (using five items from Tian and McKenzie, 2001; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$ ). As expected, the elaboration task had a significant effect on NFU ( $M_{\text{high NFU}} = 4.26$ ;  $M_{\text{low NFU}} = 3.16$ ;  $F(1, 169) = 40.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hence, we distinguished between the levels of NFU and coded the high-NFU condition as 1 and the low-NFU condition as 0.

Next, we asked participants to imagine coming across a video of the same sportswear brand presenting one of its stores as in Pretest 1 and Study 1. As in the previous studies, respondents were randomly assigned to the flagship or the pop-up store

condition, viewing the same photos and videos of a large sportswear brand's store. To underline the pop-up's ephemerality, we added another picture highlighting the limited availability of the store. Like before, we coded the pop-up as 1 and the permanent flagship as 0 to distinguish between their ephemerality. A manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the pop-up to be significantly less temporally available than the flagship ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 6.49$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 4.42$ ;  $F(1, 169) = 101.36, p < .001$ ).

As in Study 1, we also asked respondents to assess anticipated product scarcity (using three items from Janssen et al., 2014; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .72$ ) and their intention to visit the store (using two items from Grewal et al., 2003; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ).

## 2.6.2 Results

Results of an ANOVA reveal that consumers' intention to visit does not differ between pop-ups and flagships ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 3.61$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 3.68$ ;  $F(1, 169) = .08, p = .785$ ), thus failing to offer support for Hypothesis 1.

To validate the findings of Study 1 by examining how store ephemerality is linked to consumers' intention to visit and the roles that anticipated product scarcity and NFU play in this relationship, we performed a moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 14 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018).

The results (see Table 4, Study 2) indicate that store ephemerality positively affects anticipated product scarcity ( $b = .91$ ;  $p < .001$ ), which then raises intention to visit ( $b = .45$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Further, the results show that store ephemerality does not positively but rather negatively affect consumers' intention to visit ( $b = -.48$ ;  $p = .071$ ). Thus, anticipated product scarcity is partially mediating the effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit. Accordingly, the results do not fully provide support for Hypothesis 2.

Demonstrating the moderating role of NFU in the effect of anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit, we find a significant interaction effect ( $b = .39$ ;  $p = .083$ ). In

line with Hypothesis 3, there is a positive effect of anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit for high-NFU consumers ( $b = .64$ ;  $p < .001$ ) but not for low-NFU consumers ( $b = .25$ ;  $p = .159$ ). Results are depicted in Figure 3 (Study 2).

To get more insight into the workings of NFU for pop-up and flagship stores, we take a closer look at the index of moderated mediation. Since it is not significant, it is indicating no moderated mediation effects (index of moderated mediation: .35, 95% CI:  $-.022$  to  $.763$ ).

### **2.6.3 Discussion**

Study 2 replicates the positive indirect effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit via anticipated product scarcity. In addition, the results of Study 2 extend those of Study 1 in several important ways.

With regard to the direct effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit, we found that the permanently available flagships attract consumers as strong as pop-ups do (leading us to reject Hypothesis 1). This result is at odds with previous research, which has found consumers to exhibit greater desire for scarce services (Lynn, 1991). One reason for this discrepancy might be that time pressure is generally regarded as a stressor (Gunthorpe & Lyons, 2004). A store's transience may therefore hamper shopping enjoyment, triggering negative feelings and reducing intention to browse (Kim & Kim, 2008; Kristofferson, McFerran, Morales, & Dahl, 2016).

By manipulating NFU, we reduced common method bias and still found a significant interaction effect. The effect of anticipated product scarcity on consumers' intention to visit a pop-up store is stronger when consumers' NFU is high. These findings are in line with current literature on pop-ups and highlight the importance of NFU – the key characteristic of pop-ups' target group – which can play a game-changing role in the success of pop-ups.



## 2.7 Study 3

### 2.7.1 Method

Study 3 set out to verify the results of Study 2 and to apply the model to a different product category, namely groceries. We recruited 603 German individuals ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.18$ ,  $SD = 12.01$ ; 48.4% female; 16.4% students) via clickworker for a nominal payment and employed a 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store)  $\times$  2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design. For all items we used 7-point Likert scales.

First, we used the same elaboration exercise as in Study 2 to manipulate participants' NFU to be high or low. A manipulation check (using eight items from Tian and McKenzie, 2001; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ) confirmed that the elaboration task had a significant effect on NFU ( $M_{\text{high NFU}} = 4.30$ ;  $M_{\text{low NFU}} = 3.67$ ;  $F(1, 601) = 36.75$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Afterwards, participants evaluated their familiarity with the same national chocolate brand as in Pretest 2, measured with a single item in line with Milberg et al. (2010). We used this brand familiarity further as a covariate.

Next, participants were asked to imagine coming across a video of one of this chocolate brand's stores. They were randomly assigned to one of the two store types and were shown the same photos and videos as in Pretest 2. We again distinguished between the stores' ephemerality, coding the pop-up as 1 and the permanent flagship as 0. A manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the pop-up to be significantly less temporally available than the flagship ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 6.53$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 2.53$ ;  $F(1, 601) = 1775.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Additionally, as in the previous studies, we measured anticipated product scarcity (using three items from Janssen et al., 2014; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .63$ ) and intention to visit the store (using two items from Grewal et al., 2003; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ).

## 2.7.2 Results

Results of an ANOVA show that consumers do not have a higher intention to visit the ephemeral pop-up than the permanent flagship store ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.49$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 5.31$ ;  $F(1, 601) = 2.53, p = .112$ ), thus rejecting Hypothesis 1.

To further investigate how store ephemerality is linked to consumers' intention to visit the store and the roles of anticipated product scarcity and NFU in this relationship, we performed a moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 14 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018).

Supporting Hypothesis 2, the results (see Table 4, Study 3) reveal that store ephemerality positively affects anticipated product scarcity ( $b = .49$ ;  $p < .001$ ), which in turn boosts intention to visit ( $b = .47$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In line with our previous studies, the results indicate that store ephemerality does not positively affect consumers' intention to visit ( $b = -.06$ ;  $p = .578$ ), thus indicating a full mediation.

According to Hypothesis 3 and our previous results, we would expect high NFU to enhance the effect of anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit. Our results replicate the findings of the previous studies and show that the significant effect of anticipated product scarcity is further qualified by a significant interaction with NFU ( $b = .24$ ;  $p = .059$ ). Spotlight analysis reveals that high NFU affects the influence of anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit more strongly ( $b = .58$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than low NFU does ( $b = .34$ ;  $p = .001$ ). Hence, our findings (see Figure 3, Study 3) support Hypothesis 3. A further explanation for consumers' intention to visit may be offered by brand familiarity ( $b = .13$ ;  $p = .080$ ).

Moreover, as indicated by the index of moderated mediation (index of moderated mediation: .12, 95% CI: .000 to .244), the indirect effect from store ephemerality to intention to visit through anticipated product scarcity is further qualified by NFU.

Specifically, store ephemerality increases intention to visit through anticipated product scarcity for consumers with high NFU (indirect effect: .29, 95% CI: .178 to .413) stronger than for those with a low NFU (indirect effect: .17, 95% CI: .061 to .297).

### **2.7.3 Discussion**

Study 3 lent further support to verify our model by applying it to the product category of groceries. The results confirm the positive indirect effect of store ephemerality through anticipated product scarcity on intention to visit. Furthermore, by manipulating NFU, we can identify differential patterns of the influence of store ephemerality on intention to visit. Specifically, ephemerality has a stronger positive effect on intention to visit via anticipated product scarcity for consumers manifesting high NFU than for those with a low NFU. In line with Study 2 and contrary to our initial expectations, we found no direct positive effect of store ephemerality on consumers' intention to visit, suggesting that intention to visit would not differ directly between pop-ups and flagships.

## **2.8 General discussion**

Existing literature on pop-ups largely points to the pop-up experience as the factor affecting consumer behavior (Kim et al., 2010; Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). However, this work suggests that pop-ups' main distinguishing feature also contributes to consumers' intention to visit. Although contrary to our expectations we did not always find a positive direct effect of store ephemerality on intention to visit, our results indicate that pop-ups' distinguishing feature leads consumers to anticipate limited product assortments, thus driving intention to visit. Considering pop-ups' target group – consumers with a high NFU – we can identify differential patterns. Specifically, anticipated product scarcity has a stronger positive effect on intention to visit for consumers manifesting high NFU than for those with a low NFU.

### 2.8.1 Theoretical implications

Encouraged by Robertson et al. (2018), who suggest within their key research propositions a need to investigate ephemeral and experiential pop-ups more in detail, this research provides several contributions. *First*, our findings add to current literature that finds ephemeral consumption, as opposed to long-term orientation, to be a novel concept of consumer behavior (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Demonstrating that pop-ups' ephemerality indirectly affects consumers' intention to visit is an important contribution to research on pop-ups (e.g., Klein et al., 2016), which has largely neglected to consider their distinguishing feature. We were able to show that focusing on the pop-up experience alone is not enough to fully grasp their particular appeal, as the experience itself does not differ from that of other experiential stores.

*Second*, despite pop-ups having a non-sales focus (Klein et al., 2016), we also found anticipated product assortment to be an important driver for consumers' intention to visit pop-ups, with consumers expecting an even scarcer product range in pop-ups than in flagships. These findings add to the research proposition of Robertson et al. (2018), which sees a need to investigate the impact of offering scarce products in pop-ups on consumer visit. By extending these expectations, we show that not only consumers' knowledge about the product offerings but also even the anticipation of scarce, exclusive products is affecting consumers' visits.

*Third*, until now, pop-up literature has only suspected NFU to be an important character trait and moderator (Robertson et al., 2018). Our results clearly indicate that an exclusive, limited product assortment is an important driver for consumers' intention to visit, especially for those with a high NFU. These findings are thus in line with current literature on pop-ups and emphasize the importance of NFU in targeting customers.

## 2.8.2 Managerial implications

Our findings also impart important implications for brands regarding the development of pop-up store concepts. Pop-ups differ from traditional retail and flagship stores due to their ephemerality. Several elements may be used to emphasize pop-ups ephemerality. Pop-ups' limited availability may be reflected by their interior design, event character, and communication strategy (Shi et al., 2019). However, our work indicates that store ephemerality alone is not enough to make the store attractive. Although pop-ups are not launched primarily to generate revenue, we find that product assortment still drives visit intention. To meet consumers' expectations, pop-ups should therefore offer exclusive products, ensuring that the scarcity of the product assortment is highlighted, especially for those with a high NFU. To further increase the stores' perceived uniqueness and thus target high-NFU consumers, pop-ups could highlight the stores' uniqueness by not only emphasizing its ephemerality and scarcity with limited edition products, but also by underlining experiential stores key factor – unique experiences (Zogaj et al., 2019). High-NFU consumers may be targeted by a unique and distinctive store design (Robertson et al., 2018, Klein et al., 2016), sensory stimulation and unique personalized interactions with the brand, for example via media stations or interactive games (Klein et al., 2016, Niehm et al., 2006). Coming back to the case of Amazon shutting down its first generation of pop-ups: we would suggest that they and all brands launching pop-ups ensure that the store's products match its concept, as one reason for failure could be not having met consumers' expectations in terms of offering exclusive, scarce products. Our results also lead to the conclusion that standard products, those that can be purchased elsewhere, may be perceived as being more exclusive when found in pop-ups due to their perceived limited availability. Further, as a side benefit, if consumers expect exclusive products in pop-ups, this information may further spill over to consumers' perception of the pop-up's brand sponsor and let it be perceived as exclusive. Wu, Lu, Wu, and Fu

(2012) also validate the positive influence of perceived uniqueness on perceived value, which in turn may have a positive effect on consumers' behavior towards the brand. Moreover, our results may be relevant not only for well-known brands but also for unfamiliar ones. As we know from scarcity research, consumers may prefer unknown brands if temporality is a factor (Robinson et al., 2016). Hence, it is possible that pop-ups and their ephemerality could also provide a real opportunity for unfamiliar brands. Finally, our findings apply not only to brands targeting high-NFU consumers but also to those aiming to expand their target groups. If their pop-ups attract consumers with a high NFU, this new target group will likely also appreciate the uniqueness of the store and associate this positive quality with the brand in the future.

### **2.8.3 Limitations and avenues for future research**

In interpreting our findings and continuing this line of research, it is important to recognize certain limitations of our study. First, watching video footage is an imperfect simulation of a real-life retail experience, and self-reported measures of store visits may be subject to social desirability bias. Therefore, our framework should be applied not only to different brands and products – both well-known and unfamiliar – but also to actual store visits. Second, although we kept experience constant in our experiments because both conditions portrayed experiential stores, it is also conceivable that store ephemerality could affect experience, as greater perceived store ephemerality may increase perceived store uniqueness (Zogaj et al., 2019). Therefore, we would suggest integrating consumers' anticipated experience into the framework to investigate whether ephemerality dominates the already established effect of experience.

Future studies should further investigate store ephemerality as the important distinguishing feature of pop-ups. Specifically, researchers should consider how consumers' perceptions of a store's value change based on its ephemerality (Lynn, 1991). As we could not find a direct positive effect of ephemerality on consumers' intention to

visit, research should focus on not only the bright but also the dark side of how store ephemerality affects consumer behavior. Furthermore, as pop-ups target consumers who seek uniqueness and status (Robertson et al., 2018) – needs that can be fulfilled by visiting an exclusive, ephemeral store – it is important to investigate the impact of self-staging on consumer behavior in pop-ups.

Finally, as ephemerality is the hallmark of pop-ups, further studies should also consider the role that it plays in how such stores affect short- and long-term brand outcomes. Our work has shown that consumers base their intention to visit a pop-up store on its assortment, despite pop-ups having a non-sales focus. Therefore, it is also necessary to investigate how ephemerality affects purchase behavior in the store. Are pop-ups able to generate sales on short notice as a result of their ephemerality, even though maximizing revenue is not their primary purpose? If so, the question remains as to what kinds of products might sell well in pop-ups. Furthermore, the literature has already established that the pop-up experience may affect buzz and long-term outcomes. However, details regarding the mechanism behind this effect and the role of ephemerality remain scarce.

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### **3 Short and sweet: Effects of pop-up stores' ephemerality on store sales (Article 2)**

(with Steffen Jahn and Waldemar Toporowski)<sup>4</sup>

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Earlier versions of this manuscript have been accepted for presentation at the following conferences:

- 48<sup>th</sup> EMAC Conference (2019), Hamburg, Germany. (VHB-JQ3: D)
- 20<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Research in the Distributive Trades of the European Association for Education and Research in Commercial Distribution (EAERCD) (2019), Zaragoza, Spain.
- 10<sup>th</sup> EMAC Regional Conference, Sankt Petersburg, Russia, 2019.

*Keywords:* pop-up store, experiential store, ephemerality, in-store purchase, need for uniqueness

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<sup>4</sup> This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

### **3.1 Introduction**

To overcome the mounting competition in retailing, differentiate themselves from others, and satisfy the customer desire for extraordinary encounters, more and more brands are opening experiential stores (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Jahn et al., 2018). Whether from established or unknown companies, luxury or budget brands, these brick-and-mortar stores are almost infinite in variety (Klein et al., 2016). An ongoing trend in the world of experiential stores is the temporary available pop-up store that is delivering a brand experience. Similar to all experiential stores, the primary goal of a pop-up store is not to increase sales, but to get consumers excited about the brand and its products through fun and entertainment in order to build a special brand image, to increase brand-related word of mouth, awareness, and a long-term customer-brand connection (Klein et al., 2016; Niehm et al., 2006; Zogaj et al., 2019).

Beyond branding, recent research has shown that favorable retail and brand experience in flagship stores can promote immediate in-store purchases (Jahn et al., 2018). One may ask whether this finding applies to pop-ups as well, given their event-like qualities (de Lassus & Freire, 2014) that mainly encourage visitors to share their unique experiences and generate buzz for both the pop-up and the brand (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). Hence, typical visitors may end up not purchasing items but instead sharing their visits on social media to signal how in touch they are with new trends (Robertson et al., 2018; Warnaby et al., 2015).

On the other hand, there is a chance that indeed visitors purchase in pop-up stores. For example, Henkel and Toporowski (2021) found that pop-ups' distinguishing feature – their ephemerality – results in the anticipation of an exclusive assortment in pop-ups, which drives consumers' visits. In line with this finding, Zogaj et al. (2019) advanced the idea that pop-ups' ephemerality provides an impetus for product-related short-term reactions and thus revenue generation. Furthermore, ephemerality seems to

provoke greater anticipated losses from not making a purchase and thus anticipated regret. This may further enhance visitor's urgency to buy (Gupta & Gentry, 2019). It is therefore conceivable that because of their ephemerality, pop-ups can trigger sales on short notice, even though they are designed to pursue long-term and not short-term goals.

If pop-ups are able to systematically generate sales, the next step is to know the products that visitors prefer to buy. The extraordinary experience delivered in flagships has been linked more strongly with the purchase of exclusive products than standard ones – those that are also available elsewhere (Jahn et al., 2018). Notably, limited editions and exclusive products – unique, hard-to-find products – are mainly found in pop-ups (Robertson et al., 2018). These findings imply that pop-ups would be better off by selling a large variety of exclusive products and not feature standard products. However, exclusive products are already perceived and acted upon as such, regardless of whether they are only available for a limited time; they have nothing to gain from ephemerality.

In response, we develop a model of product purchase in pop-ups that considers product type and consumer characteristics. Consumers with a high need for uniqueness (NFU; Snyder, 1992) represent the target group of pop-ups and respond differently to product assortment decisions than low-NFU consumers (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021). We argue that, while high NFU increases purchase of exclusive products in pop-ups, for low-NFU consumers the opposite is true. Specifically, people who do not use consumption to reinforce their differentiation from others may be inclined to purchase standard products, if they are available for a limited time.

This research offers three contributions: *First*, by focusing on pop-ups' ephemerality – their unique characteristic – and their revenue-generating potential, we investigate how purchases in experiential stores are affected by the store's ephemerality. *Second*, we examine whether brands can benefit from including standard products in their pop-up offerings, which generally focus on exclusive items. *Third*, we analyze the role of

NFU in purchase behavior and thereby add to current research that finds consumers high in this trait to be pop-ups' target group. In the following sections, we are providing a detailed rationale for our assumptions and the empirical studies.

## **3.2 Theoretical background and hypotheses**

Before discussing the specifics of our studies, we begin by introducing the concept of pop-up stores and briefly reviewing the state of the art in experiential store research. We then provide a theoretical background on the effect of store ephemerality on in-store purchase behavior. Along the way, we introduce our hypotheses.

### **3.2.1 Pop-up stores**

Pop-ups are a temporary retail format that is operated to deliver experiences. Unlike other experiential stores, pop-ups cannot be found permanently in one place. They are often only open for a few weeks – they are ephemeral. Therefore, research agrees that pop-ups' limited availability is their main distinguishing characteristic (e.g., Klein et al. 2016). Besides, pop-ups deliver a retail experience – defined as visitors' overall perceptions of a store's characteristics (Verhoef et al., 2009). Especially, store uniqueness, store atmosphere, hedonic shopping value, exclusive product assortment, and staff service quality can be identified as the main store characteristics that deliver a retail experience: The novel and extraordinary form of the store distinguishes pop-up stores from conventional retail stores and makes them unique (Klein et al., 2016). For example, the stores' uniqueness is represented in an up-to-date, unique store design (Robertson et al., 2018). Due to their unexpectedness, pop-ups catch consumers' attention and further surprise and excite them (Robertson et al., 2018). In addition to their uniqueness, pop-ups offer an inviting and interactive environment that is perceived as an attractive, pleasant atmosphere (Klein et al., 2016). Pop-ups' hedonic shopping value is created by providing entertainment and fun during the store visit (Klein et al., 2016). With live music,

interactive games, and interactive touchpoints, pop-up stores provide an experiential environment for visitors (Zogaj et al., 2019). Pop-ups' exclusive product assortment is another opportunity to heighten the visitors' retail experience, although they are not focused on sales. Picot-Coupey (2014) finds pop-ups to offer a narrow ranged merchandise mix, focusing on one product line. These products may be new, limited editions, or both. Showcasing limited editions or unique, hard-to-find products also fits with pop-ups' ephemerality and uniqueness (Robertson et al., 2018). Staff service quality and especially a personal conversation between customer and brand is another top factor of pop-up stores' retail experience. In pop-ups, customers may not only get informed by the sales representatives but may also get into a personal exchange (Kim et al., 2010; Niehm et al., 2006).

As these retail experience touchpoints are often related to the brand with brand-tailored information, brand representatives, and corporate design, a favorable retail experience can translate into a superior brand experience for experiential stores and pop-ups in particular (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016). Activated by brand-related stimuli, consumers' sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral reactions may form their brand experience (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009).

### **3.2.2 Purchase behavior in experiential stores and the role of ephemerality**

Through their investigation of flagship stores, Jahn et al. (2018) determined that a stronger customer brand experience might boost immediate in-store purchases. They argued that although their main objective is not maximizing sales, flagships still offer products – especially exclusive ones – to offset operating costs. Hence, brand experience during a flagship store visit may translate into economic outcomes.

Nevertheless, these findings might not be directly transferable to other experiential store concepts. The primary goals in launching a pop-up are generating buzz and attaining long-term brand improvement; sales are only secondary (Robertson et al.,

2018). In contrast to permanent experiential stores, pop-ups typically exist for only a few weeks (Klein et al., 2016). This spatial and temporal scarcity is emphasized in their design and decoration, in an event-like atmosphere, and in their customized communication (Shi et al., 2019).

The rise of such temporary stores can be tied to the novel phenomenon of ephemeral consumption, a pattern of consumer behavior increasingly favoring “ephemeral, access based, and dematerialized consumption” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017, p. 587). In addition, Henkel and Toporowski (2021) suggest that consumers anticipate limited products in pop-ups due to their distinguishing feature which is further stimulating consumers’ intention to visit. Thus, pop-ups’ ephemerality may also present an opportunity to generate sales.

Previous research on scarcity has already demonstrated that consumers perceive scarce products to be more valuable (Lynn, 1991). Furthermore, commodity theory (Brock, 1968) finds consumers who possess scarce items to feel unique. Therefore, consumers strongly desire to own limited, unique products. Similarly, the limited lifetime of a pop-up may also convey a feeling of uniqueness and thus trigger a sense of urgency to buy (Robertson et al., 2018). Zogaj et al. (2019) find pop-ups’ ephemerality to affect consumers’ willingness to pay. Therefore, we expect purchase behavior in pop-ups to be influenced by the stores’ spatial and temporal scarcity, apart from consumers’ demand for scarce products.

Turning to the matter of which product types might sell well in pop-up stores, we acknowledge that they typically offer limited editions and selective products (Robertson et al., 2018). In line with this, Jahn et al. (2018) revealed that flagship visitors favor in-store purchases of exclusive products over standard ones. However, previous research has indicated that time limitation has no effect on the desire for exclusive products (Gierl et al., 2008); consumers perceive these items as such, regardless of whether they are only

available for a short time. Hence, store ephemerality might not facilitate in-store purchases of exclusive products. Contrary to typical pop-up practice and flagship store research, studies have confirmed that consumers buy a greater number of standard products when temporality is a factor (Gierl et al., 2008). Therefore, we hypothesize that store ephemerality may increase consumers' desire for standard products more than for exclusive products.

**H1a.** Store ephemerality positively affects the in-store purchases of standard products but not exclusive ones.

These ideas may be further applied to the findings Jahn et al. (2018) derived from their studies in a flagship store context. They determined that due to an enhanced brand experience, retail experience has an especially positive impact on purchases of exclusive products, as compared to standard ones. However, considering store ephemerality and its special impact on standard products, we would suggest different results for the case of pop-up stores: We hypothesize that, if the store is ephemeral, a favorable brand experience translates more strongly into a purchase of standard products than of exclusive ones.

**H1b.** Store ephemerality facilitates the influence of brand experience on in-store purchases of standard products more than it does for exclusive products.

### **3.2.3 The mediating role of anticipated regret**

We further know that the perception of scarce availability leads consumers to intensively evaluate the anticipated gains from buying and the losses from not doing so (Byun & Sternquist, 2012). This leads to greater anticipated regret (Gupta & Gentry, 2019), which is the feeling induced by comparing a potential outcome or state of events with that of a forgone alternative (Bell, 1982). As defined in regret theory (Loomes & Sugden, 1982), anticipating a delayed or missed opportunity to purchase an item may cause anticipated

regret. For example, a favorable evaluation of temporary deals leads consumers to anticipate regret, which may intensify their urgency to buy (Gupta & Gentry, 2019). Pop-up literature assumes an analogous effect for temporary stores: They too may convey regret and a sense of urgency to buy (Robertson et al., 2018). Therefore, we hypothesize that store ephemerality primes a consumer's anticipated regret of having lost the opportunity to procure an item in the store, which further increases the likelihood of in-store purchases, regardless of product type.

**H2.** Anticipated regret mediates the effect of store ephemerality on in-store purchases.

### **3.2.4 The moderating role of need for uniqueness**

High-NFU individuals use consumption to reinforce their distinction from others (Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Thus, they represent a suitable target group of pop-up stores, as their desire for uniqueness may be satisfied by the unique, novel, and ephemeral stores (Robertson et al., 2018). Consumers with a high level of need for uniqueness covet unique products since they contribute to their differentiation from other consumers. In the pop-up context, Henkel and Toporowski (2021) noted that high-NFU consumers are more likely to visit due to pop-ups' exclusive, limited product assortment; consumers with a low NFU have generally been found to prefer standard products (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000; Snyder, 1992). Therefore, it is conceivable that the relationship between anticipated regret and in-store purchases varies by consumers' NFU.

**H3a.** A high level of need for uniqueness mitigates the impact of anticipated regret on the purchase of standard products.

**H3b.** A high level of need for uniqueness facilitates the impact of anticipated regret on the purchase of exclusive products.



### **3.3 Overview of studies**

The following studies will investigate how purchases in experiential stores are affected by store ephemerality and whether brands benefit from offering not only exclusive but also standard products in pop-ups. Two studies explore and examine these relationships.

Study 1 provides support for our proposition that store ephemerality facilitates the influence of brand experience on standard product purchases more than it does in the case of exclusive products. Investigating the mechanism behind this effect, Study 2 presents a more detailed analysis of pop-ups' ephemerality and its impact on purchases. The results indicate that the effect of anticipated regret on the purchase of standard products is stronger for consumers with a low level of need for uniqueness, but its influence on the purchase of exclusive ones is facilitated by high NFU. Together, these studies support our theoretical considerations in terms of the effect of store ephemerality and NFU on visitors' purchase behavior in pop-ups.

### **3.4 Study 1**

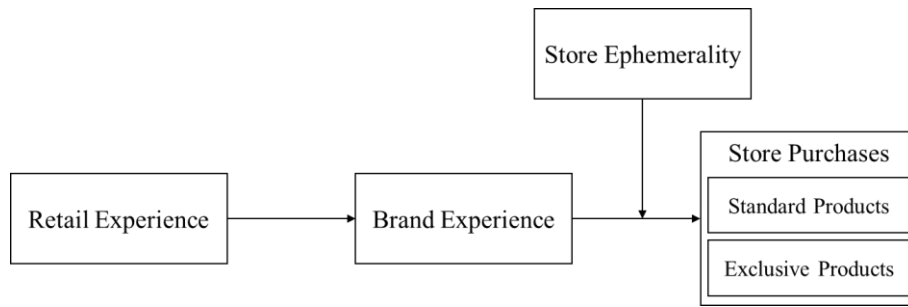
#### **3.4.1 Method**

We recruited 215 participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.87$ ,  $SD = 11.98$ ; 61.9% female) via clickworker, used a between-subjects design, and manipulated the store's ephemerality (flagship vs. pop-up store). Figure 4 summarizes the conceptual framework. All items were measured using 7-point Likert scales (see Appendix C for all construct measures).

To maximize compatibility, we used a study design similar to that of Jahn et al. (2018). First, we manipulated the store's ephemerality by randomly assigning the participants to a pop-up or a flagship store condition. Both groups were asked to imagine a store visit (see Appendix D for situation description). Therefore, we showed both groups the same video of a German chocolate brand's experiential store. Further, participants in the pop-up condition got the information that the store was only opening for a limit of a

few weeks. In contrast, the flagship was permanently available. The results of a manipulation check (Eisend, 2008) showed a significant effect of ephemerality (flagship vs. pop-up store) on perceived limited availability ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.94$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 2.50$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Next, the respondents evaluated their retail experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ) by stating their perceptions of store uniqueness, hedonic shopping value, staff service quality, extraordinary store atmosphere, and assortment using eight items based on Jahn et al. (2018) and Klein et al. (2016). Further, participants rated their brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ) which was measured through nine items based on Brakus et al. (2009). Afterward, participants were guided to a checkout area. There were five standard products – regular chocolates readily available elsewhere (ranging between €1.09 and €1.29). In addition, the selection included five exclusive products, such as unique chocolates, branded products, and souvenirs, costing between €2.50 and €11.49. We asked participant to indicate which and how many of each (up to five) of the presented items they would buy in the presented store. To derive the dependent variables, we calculated each participant's intended expenditure for both the standard and exclusive products. The respondents then evaluated their anticipated regret of having lost the opportunity to make a purchase (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ; three items based on Gupta & Gentry, 2019). Finally, participants stated their preferences for the given product category (chocolate) and for the brand presented. Anticipated regret, product category preference, and brand preference were further used as covariates.



**Figure 4. Article 2, Study 1:** Conceptual framework showing the relationship between retail experience, brand experience, and store purchases of standard and exclusive products by considering the moderating role of store ephemerality.

### 3.4.2 Results

In H1a, we predicted that purchase intentions of standard (but not exclusive) products would increase if the store were ephemeral. Descriptive analysis indicates that shoppers spend more on standard products when the store is ephemeral than when it is not ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = \text{€}1.42$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = \text{€}0.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In support of H1a, regression results indicate that ephemerality has a significant and positive effect on standard product purchase ( $b = .82$ ,  $p < .001$ ), while its effect on exclusive product purchase is non-significant ( $b = .85$ ;  $p = .414$ ). Additionally, the covariate of anticipated regret significantly affects consumers' intentions to purchase standard ( $b = .22$ ;  $p = .005$ ) and exclusive products ( $b = .52$ ;  $p = .033$ ). However, these intentions are not affected by product category and brand preferences.

Results further indicate that a favorable brand experience translates into a purchase of standard products ( $b = .16$ ;  $p = .078$ ). Importantly, results revealed a significant interaction with store ephemerality ( $b = .32$ ;  $p = .010$ ): store ephemerality facilitates the influence of brand experience on purchases of standard products ( $b = .33$ ;  $p = .012$ ). Conversely, there is no significant increase in the case of low store ephemerality ( $b = .01$ ;  $p = .896$ ); the results are depicted in Figure 5.

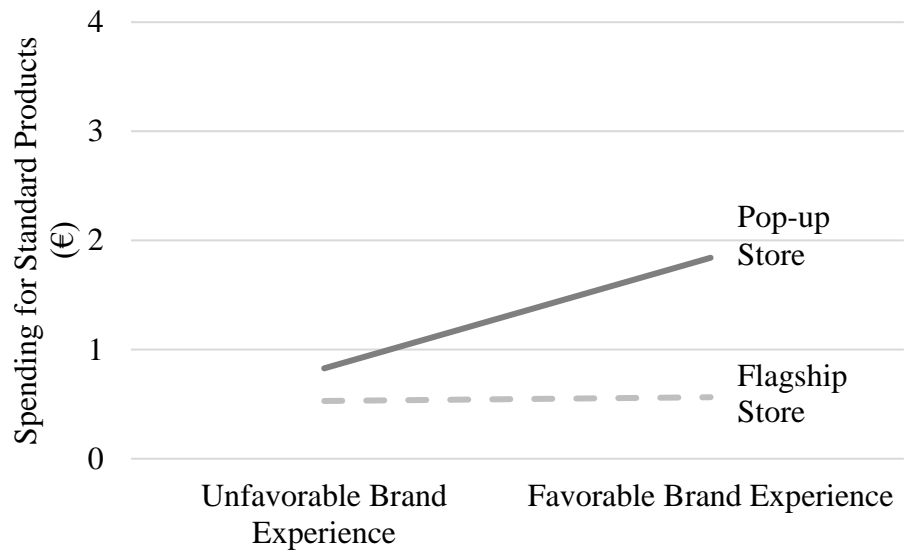
To examine the moderating role of store ephemerality in the effect of retail experience on in-store purchases through brand experience, we employed moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS (Model 14 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018). The results are summarized in Table 5. As indicated by a significant index of moderated mediation (.07; 95% confidence interval [CI] = .009, .165), the indirect effect of retail experience on the purchase of standard products through brand experience depends on store ephemerality. Particularly, through brand experience, retail experience increases consumers' intention to buy standard products when the store is ephemeral (indirect effect: .08; 95% CI = .009, .170) but not when it is long-lived (indirect effect: .00; 95% CI = -.041, .044).

In a next step, we examined whether the role of ephemerality differs for the purchase on standard versus exclusive products. We argued that ephemerality's effect on the link between brand experience and purchases would be greater for standard products than exclusive ones, as consumers perceive exclusive products to be limited, regardless of whether they are only available for a short time. Results indicate that brand experience positively affects exclusive product purchases ( $b = .59$ ;  $p = .011$ ) but that this effect is not moderated by store ephemerality ( $b = .14$ ;  $p = .607$ ). Combined with ephemerality's moderating influence on standard product purchases, results confirm H1b: ephemerality facilitates the influence of brand experience on standard product purchases but not on the purchase of exclusive ones.

### **3.4.3 Discussion**

This study demonstrates that experiential stores, especially pop-ups, are a retail format that can increase immediate economic outcomes, despite not being focused on sales. Our results indicate that visitors' brand experience – strengthened by the ephemerality of pop-ups – positively affects their in-store purchases. However, this is only applicable to purchases of standard products and not exclusive ones. To understand the mechanism

behind this effect, Study 2 analyzed the ephemerality of pop-ups and its impact on in-store purchases in greater detail.



**Figure 5. Article 2, Study 1:** Spending on standard products by store ephemerality.

**Table 5. Article 2:** Summary of moderated mediation analyses.

Dependent variable: Purchase intention	Study 1				Study 2			
	Standard products		Exclusive products		Standard products		Exclusive products	
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Direct effects</i>								
REX	-.39	-.31**	-1.58	-1.78*				
BEX	.16	1.77*	.59	2.56**				
Store ephemerality	.82	3.59***	.85	.82	.95	4.24***	1.06	1.02
Anticipated regret					.33	3.89***	.21	.65
NFU					-.22	-1.93*	.93	1.56
BEX x Store ephemerality	.32	2.60**	.14	.52				
Anticipated regret x NFU					-.13	-2.12**	.34	2.41**
Anticipated regret (cov.)	.22	2.86***	.52	2.15**				
Product category preference (cov.)	-.05	-.75	-.50	-.17				
Brand preference (cov.)	-.01	-.13	-.08	-.36				
Brand experience (cov.)					.00	.02	.79	2.74***
<i>Conditional effects</i>								
Low store ephemerality	.01	.13						
High store ephemerality	.33	2.53**						
Low NFU					.51	3.57***	-.26	-1.19
High NFU					.18	2.06**	.60	1.32
<i>Indirect effects</i>								
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI
Low store ephemerality	.00	[-.041, .044]	.12	[.011, .328]**				
High store ephemerality	.08	[.009, .170]**	.15	[.012, .393]**				
Low NFU					.28	[.073, .569]**	-.14	[-.484, .062]
High NFU					.10	[.001, .223]**	.33	[-.174, .966]
<i>Index of moderated mediation</i>	.07	[.009, .165]**	.03	[-.107, .186]	-.07	[-.183, -.005]**	.19	[.027, .435]**

Note. REX = retail experience; BEX = brand experience; NFU = need for uniqueness; CI = confidence interval. REX, BEX, store ephemerality, anticipated regret, NFU, and covariates have been mean centered. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported.

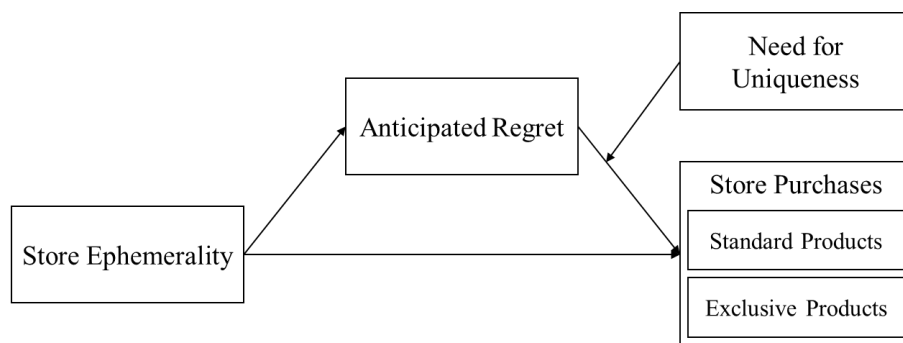
\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

## 3.5 Study 2

### 3.5.1 Method

Study 2 set out to examine the role of anticipated regret and NFU in the effect of store ephemerality on purchases of standard and exclusive products; Figure 6 summarizes the conceptual framework. We used clickworker to recruit another group of 215 participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 34.32$ ,  $SD = 12.12$ ; 42.8% female) and manipulated the store's ephemerality (flagship vs. pop-up store). Participants were asked to imagine the same situation as in Study 1 (manipulation check:  $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 6.01$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 2.97$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Next, in line with Study 1, the respondents evaluated their brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ), which was further used as a covariate, with nine items from Brakus et al. (2009), indicated their intended purchases of standard and exclusive products, and determined their anticipated regret of having lost the opportunity to make a purchase in the store (using three items from Gupta and Gentry, 2019; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$ ). Additionally, we asked participants to rate their need for uniqueness (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .85$ ) on six items based on Tian and McKenzie (2001).



**Figure 6. Article 2, Study 2:** Conceptual framework showing the relationship between store ephemerality and store purchases of standard and exclusive products by considering the mediating role of anticipated regret and the moderating role of NFU.

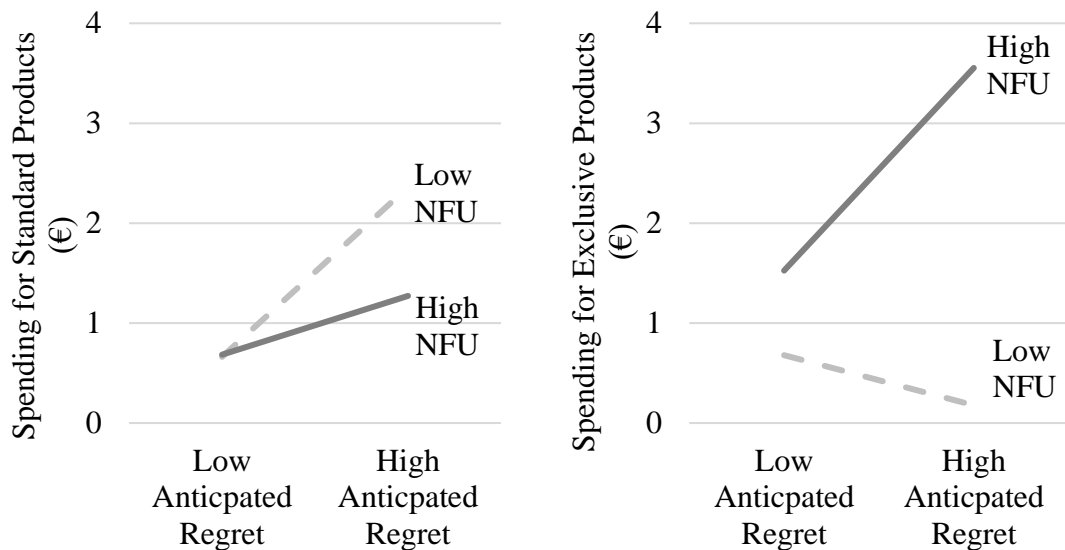
### 3.5.2 Results

Corroborating findings from Study 1, results (see Table 5) indicate that the purchase of standard products is directly increased by store ephemerality ( $b = .95$ ;  $p < .001$ ), while store ephemerality does not directly affect purchases of exclusive products ( $b = 1.06$ ;  $p = .308$ ). This supports H1a's prediction that store ephemerality positively affects the purchase of standard products but not exclusive ones.

Next, we investigated whether anticipated regret mediates the effect between store ephemerality and purchases. Mediation analysis (PROCESS Model 4 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018) reveals this to be the case for standard products only. Specifically, store ephemerality has a positive, indirect effect on standard product purchase through anticipated regret (.18; 95% CI = .052, .357), while the indirect effect on exclusive product purchase was non-significant (.13; 95% CI = -.197, .488). Thus, our results can partially support H2: through anticipated regret, store ephemerality positively affects purchases of standard products but not exclusive ones.

H3a and H3b are suggesting that the desirability of standard (exclusive) products would increase if consumers' NFU were low (high). For standard products, we found a significant negative interaction effect between anticipated regret and purchase ( $b = -.13$ ;  $p = .036$ ). When NFU is low, anticipated regret has a stronger effect on purchases of standard products ( $b = .51$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than when NFU is high ( $b = .18$ ;  $p = .041$ ) (see Figure 7). These results support H3a.





**Figure 7. Article 2, Study 2:** Spending on standard and exclusive products by NFU.

Although results do not show a significant direct effect of anticipated regret on the purchase of exclusive products ( $b = .21$ ;  $p = .518$ ), we find a significant moderating effect for NFU ( $b = .34$ ;  $p = .017$ ): a high level of need for uniqueness boosts the impact of anticipated regret on the purchase of exclusive products (see Figure 7), thus supporting H3b.

Taken together, moderated mediation analysis provides strong support for the research model as demonstrated by significant indexes of moderated mediation for both standard ( $-.07$ ; 95% CI =  $-.183, -.005$ ) and exclusive product purchases ( $.19$ ; 95% CI =  $.027, .435$ ). Consumers with a low need for uniqueness respond to store ephemerality-induced anticipated regret with increased purchases of standard products at the pop-up (indirect effect:  $.28$ ; 95% CI =  $.073, .569$ ) and marginally decreased purchases of exclusive ones (indirect effect:  $-.14$ ; 95% CI =  $-.484, .062$ ). By contrast, high-NFU consumers respond to store ephemerality-induced anticipated regret with marginally increased purchases of exclusive products (indirect effect:  $.33$ ; 95% CI =  $-.174, .966$ ) but also of standard ones (indirect effect:  $.10$ ; 95% CI =  $.001, .223$ ), albeit the latter effect is smaller compared to that of low-NFU consumers.

### **3.5.3 Discussion**

Study 2 provides evidence that pop-ups' ephemerality, across conditions, increases in-store purchases of standard products but not of exclusive ones. Furthermore, consistent with regret theory, the findings reveal that consumers' anticipated regret increases as a result of this ephemerality. Anticipated regret drives in-store purchases of standard products primarily for low-NFU consumers and of exclusive products for consumers high on NFU. These findings extend the ones of Henkel and Toporowski (2021), who demonstrated that high-NFU consumers are attracted by pop-ups' exclusive product range but did not examine purchase outcomes of need for uniqueness.

## **3.6 General discussion**

Established pop-up literature tends to center on the opportunity that experiential stores may trigger buzz and other brand-related outcomes, ignoring other possible consequences (e.g., Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). This work, however, represents an empirical effort to demonstrate that ephemeral, experiential stores can actually boost immediate economic outcomes, despite having a non-sales focus.

Experiential store literature points to consumers' retail and brand experiences as key factors affecting their behavior, particularly in terms of in-store purchases (Jahn et al., 2018). However, by extending the ideas of Zogaj et al. (2019), this work indicates that it is pop-ups' differentiating characteristic that plays an important role in purchase behavior. Pop-ups' ephemerality increases visitors' purchases of standard products more than exclusive products. Our results also show that pop-ups' target group must be considered when it comes to purchases: in line with our hypotheses, we found that the influence of anticipated regret on the purchase of standard (exclusive) products is mitigated (facilitated) by high NFU.

### 3.6.1 Theoretical implications

From a theoretical standpoint this work offers three main contributions. *First*, our study adds to research that shows that consumers anticipate an exclusive, limited product assortment in pop-ups due to their ephemerality (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021). By presenting in detail how store ephemerality may also contribute to in-store purchases, our findings are contributing to literature that identifies ephemeral consumption as a new trend in consumer behavior (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). The results provide evidence that ephemerality strongly affects purchase decisions, facilitating purchases in pop-ups despite such stores do not focus on sales. Thus, these findings present an important contribution to research, which has largely focused on investigating the effects of experiential stores on word of mouth and other brand-related outcomes (e.g., Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). We further suggest that customers' retail and brand experiences also translate into direct economic outcomes. Our findings reveal that commodity theory (Brock, 1968) can be applied not only to a limited availability of supply but also to a limited spatial and temporal availability of stores. This spatial and temporal scarcity itself affects purchase behavior, just as the desire to possess scarce goods does.

*Second*, our results indicate that – unlike in flagships, where consumers tend to buy exclusive products (Jahn et al., 2018) – pop-ups facilitate the purchase of standard products as well. This is managerially relevant because thus far brands have tended to use pop-ups to offer only exclusive items. In line with Gierl et al. (2008), we maintain that ephemerality does not facilitate in-store purchases of exclusive products, as they are already perceived as being special.

*Third*, regret theory (Loomes & Sugden, 1982) finds application in the explanation of our findings. Until now, researchers have only conjectured that store ephemerality triggers anticipated regret in the case of foregone purchase and thus urgency to buy

(Robertson et al., 2018). We not only confirm this link but also identify NFU as an important moderator, we determine that anticipated regret increases purchases of standard products for low-NFU consumers and exclusive products for those with a high NFU.

### **3.6.2 Managerial implications**

Pop-ups enable customers to experience the brand more intensely while allowing brands to generate immediate revenue. Hence, pop-ups may contribute not only to long-term but also to short-term company goals. Clearly from the findings there are two specific points that brands launching pop-ups need to consider when developing a product strategy for their pop-ups: *First*, because ephemerality and exclusivity are related (Lynn, 1991), brands have thus far preferred an exclusive assortment for their pop-ups. However, our study finds strong support for offering standard products in pop-ups as a complement to exclusive ones, especially to attract low-NFU consumers. *Second*, nevertheless, because high-NFU consumers are pop-ups' target group, exclusive products should remain the focus.

### **3.6.3 Limitations and avenues for future research**

Despite its contributions, this work has limitations and offers opportunities for future research. Whilst the data were purposely collected in an FMCG experiential store context to maximize compatibility with the findings of Jahn et al. (2018), the framework needs to be verified and extended by applying it to different brands and products. Also real purchase data could be used to ultimately make the results generalizable.

Future studies should delve deeper into the mechanisms behind consumers' responses to ephemeral pop-up stores, as research regarding this important retail concept and store ephemerality in particular remains scarce. Pop-up store literature may further consider the change in consumers' perceptions of a product's value (Lynn, 1991) or

quality (Suri et al., 2007) based on store's ephemerality. However, it may also consider negative consequences caused by limited availability (e.g., Kristofferson et al., 2017).

Furthermore, our results reveal that the format's target group of high-NFU consumers can play a significant role; this key character trait should therefore be examined more closely in consumers' purchase behavior and in the pop-up context in general. As consumers with a high NFU are less responsive to brand's promotion activities (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000), the effect of NFU in the achievement of pop-ups' goals may be uncertain. Finally, as store ephemerality may play a game changing role in short-term goals, also one of pop-ups' main goals – the creation of word of mouth – should be investigated by considering the roles of ephemerality and NFU; future research should therefore attempt to shed light upon these workings.

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## **4 Once they've been there, they like to share: Capitalizing on ephemerality and need for uniqueness to drive word of mouth for brands with pop-up stores (Article 3)**

(with Waldemar Toporowski)<sup>5</sup>

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- 48<sup>th</sup> AMS Annual Conference (2020), Miami, USA.
- 11<sup>th</sup> EMAC Regional Conference (2020), Zagreb, Croatia.
- 7<sup>th</sup> Nordic Retail and Wholesale Conference (NRWC) (2020), Umea, Sweden.

*Keywords:* pop-up store, ephemerality, word of mouth, need for uniqueness

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## 4.1 Introduction

Consumers today are sharing their experiences more frequently, both interpersonally and electronically, which can exert great influence on the consumption decisions of others (e.g., Chen & Lurie, 2013; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006). It is then no surprise that several marketing formats aim to generate such word-of-mouth (WoM) communication. Considering that brand encounters that elicit emotional arousal cause consumers to talk about the brand (Lovett, Peres, & Shachar, 2013), many companies have taken to launching pop-up stores: temporary retail environments that deliver brand experiences (Klein et al., 2016). Such stores speak to the modern consumer's preference for ephemeral consumption and greater emphasis on experiences (Robertson et al., 2018).

Similar to all experiential stores (such as flagships), the purpose of pop-ups is not revenue generation (Klein et al., 2016); instead, they are primarily designed to create brand awareness, test new products or foreign markets, or enhance long-term customer relationships (de Lassus & Freire, 2014; Klein et al., 2016). The WoM that pop-up stores generate due to emotional arousal contributes to these goals by helping cement the brand in consumers' minds. Some even consider the creation of traffic and buzz to be a logical requirement for the effectiveness of ephemeral retail concepts such as pop-ups (Robertson et al., 2018).

Research has identified the retail experience – visitors' overall perceptions of a store's characteristics (Verhoef et al., 2009) – as having an influence on pop-up store related consumer behavior, especially in terms of producing positive WoM for the brand (Klein et al., 2016). This relationship has in turn been shown to be mediated by brand experience (Klein et al., 2016): consumer responses to brand-related stimuli, whether internal or behavioral responses (Brakus et al., 2009). However, these findings are expectable, given that experience is not exclusive to pop-ups but integral to all experiential stores, a context for which there exists ample research regarding experience



and its influence on WoM (e.g., Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Jahn et al., 2018; Nierobisch et al., 2017).

In the context of pop-ups, more interesting is the characteristic differentiating them from other experiential stores – their ephemerality – as it may be a factor contributing to consumers’ brand experience and thus their intentions to spread positive WoM. The ephemerality of pop-ups has been found to inspire excitement for the store and the brand (de Lassus & Freire, 2014) and to play a significant role in customers’ intentions to visit (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021). This fleetingness has also been shown to have a considerable effect on customers’ willingness to pay (Zogaj et al., 2019) and may also increase the perceived value of limited services (Lynn, 1991). Besides, limited availability may induce arousal (Zhu & Ratner, 2015). It is therefore conceivable that a pop-up’s temporal and spatial scarcity could affect the link between retail and brand experience, thus further heightening positive WoM for the brand. Considering the relevance of ephemerality for consumer behavior, it is counterintuitive that research on pop-ups did not focus on addressing its effects on WoM, considering instead the role of the pop-up experience (e.g., Klein et al., 2016).

Pop-ups are expected to be particularly attractive to high need for uniqueness (NFU) consumers, who want to differentiate themselves from others and be unique (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021). Research on NFU and WoM has found consumers with a high (versus low) NFU to be less willing to generate positive WoM out of fear of losing their uniqueness (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010). However, as people are likely to adjust their WoM behavior according to their communication goals, we question whether this assumption is applicable both when speaking to close others (e.g., friends) and when the audience comprises distant others (e.g., the public). While interpersonal WoM involves face-to-face communication, typically between close relations (Sun, Youn, Wu, & Kuntaraporn, 2006), publicly spread electronic word of mouth (eWoM) is imparted to

distant others via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). High-NFU consumers may try to preserve their uniqueness by preventing close friends from enjoying the same experiences with the brand (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010; Moldovan et al., 2015). However, the low interpersonal closeness involved when communicating with strangers or the public (e.g., in an online context) may motivate high-NFU consumers to self-enhance and communicate positive information (Dubois, Bonezzi, & De Angelis, 2016). Hence, as the effect of NFU on WoM may depend on the audience's closeness, we suggest to analyze the effect of brand experience on WoM by considering consumers' NFU and differentiating between the two types of WoM audiences (close friends vs. distant others).

This work is pursuing the following three goals: *First*, we aim to demonstrate the effect of store ephemerality on the relationship between retail and brand experience. This is a crucial contribution to literature that identified ephemeral consumption as a current concept of consumer behavior, with long-term orientation falling out of favor (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). Furthermore, we add to pop-up literature, which has tended to ignore their distinguishing feature (e.g., Klein et al., 2016). *Second*, we seek to understand the role of the format's target group – consumers with a high NFU – in the relation between brand experience and WoM. Research regarding pop-ups has generally overlooked NFU although it may play a significant role in the success of such stores. *Third*, we intend to verify the value of a more detailed view of the effect of NFU on WoM, suggesting a need to differentiate between WoM among close friends (interpersonal WoM) and WoM among distant others (eWoM). Hence, we conducted five studies that analyze the roles of store ephemerality and NFU in the relationship between retail experience, brand experience, and WoM.

## **4.2 Theoretical background and hypotheses**

In the following, we introduce the concept of pop-up stores and review the state of the art in pop-up research. Afterwards, we provide a theoretical background and introduce hypotheses on the effects of store ephemerality and NFU in the link between retail experience, brand experience, and WoM.

### **4.2.1 Pop-up stores and word of mouth**

Pop-up stores are implemented in a variety of contexts with diverse objectives (Warnaby et al., 2015). In line with pop-up literature (Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018), we define pop-ups as temporary retail environments that promote a single brand and are operated to deliver an experience. Besides, by following communicational objectives, pop-ups aim to create word of mouth. In contrast, flash retailing and seasonal pop-ups pursue transactional objectives.

Like all experiential stores, pop-ups are a retail format that is highly experiential across various dimensions. Klein et al. (2016) summarized the three elements deemed integral to pop-up stores: providing visitors with hedonic shopping value, a pleasant store atmosphere, and a unique store environment. Later, Jahn et al. (2018) defined the retail experience for experiential stores to be a result of consumers' perception of extraordinary store atmosphere, staff service quality, and assortment. As these touchpoints are often related to the brand, a favorable retail experience can translate to a superior brand experience (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016).

Further research has acknowledged the role of experiential stores in brand's communication by determining retail and brand experience as important impact factors for WoM and brand-related long-term goals (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018). WoM generation is of particular interest to researchers because it is considered a logical requirement for the effectiveness of pop-ups. As consumers share

appealing and exceptional content (Berger, 2014), especially after experiencing emotional arousal in response to a brand encounter (brand experience; Lovett et al., 2013), research suggests that a retail experience entailing the perception of experiential stores as having such desired qualities stimulates brand experience and thus further positive WoM toward the brand (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016; Nierobisch et al., 2017).

#### **4.2.2 The moderating role of store ephemerality**

Previous research addressing experiential store–fueled positive WoM has largely overlooked the key difference between flagship and pop-up stores: ephemerality (e.g., Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016; Nierobisch et al., 2017). While other experiential stores are permanently open, pop-ups are usually only around for a few weeks (Klein et al., 2016). Their spatial and temporal scarcity is often reflected in elements such as the store’s design, event-like character, and no-mass communication strategy (Shi et al., 2019). We therefore question whether the results of the existing studies are applicable to all experiential store formats. Indeed, the impact of retail experience on brand experience has been shown to depend on store type, with the effect being greater for flagship stores than for non-experiential brand stores (Jahn et al., 2018).

The limited availability of pop-ups may be classified in the currently rising form of “ephemeral, access based, and dematerialized” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017, p. 587) consumption. This novel phenomenon of ephemeral consumption is also reflected in the immateriality of digital products (Belk, 2013; Mardon & Belk, 2018). Consumers attach more importance to “consumption practices, experiences, and networks” (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017, p. 587) than to object attachment.

Given the relevance of ephemerality for consumer behavior, it is counterintuitive that pop-up research has largely focused on retail and brand experience as determinants of WoM (Klein et al., 2016). Indeed, ephemerality may affect consumer behavior within

pop-ups, too: Such temporal scarcity has been found not only to attract visitors (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021) and affect their willingness to pay (Zogaj et al., 2019) but also to arouse excitement for the store and brand (de Lassus & Freire, 2014).

Scarcity as an important factor in consumers' economic behavior (Lynn, 1991) relates to either time, as pop-ups do, or quantity (Aggarwal et al., 2011; Parker & Lehman, 2011). According to commodity theory (Brock 1968), consumers prefer scarce goods and services and appreciate them more since they convey the impression of distinctiveness (Lynn, 1991). Although a limited availability may also have negative consequences, such as competitive threats (Kristofferson et al., 2017), there are several positive effects of limited availability for customers and brands. Aggarwal et al. (2011) demonstrated that a cue indicating a product's limited time availability is positively affecting consumer behavior in terms of purchase intention. Besides, a lack of time can contribute to consumers' decision in favor of a product when they do not have strong prior preferences (Parker & Lehmann, 2011). Additionally, Balachander and Stock (2009) demonstrate that using editions limited in time positively affects brand profits since consumers are willing to pay more. Suri et al. (2007) add that the perceptions of quality and value increase under time scarcity. Furthermore, increasing perceived scarcity may boost perceived uniqueness (Wu et al., 2012). Time limitation even has the potential to generate positive long-term consequences (Hamilton et al., 2009). Zhu and Ratner (2015) see a reason for all these positive effects in arousal.

Hence, a pop-up's limited existence may interact with a consumer's perception of the store (retail experience), generate arousal, and thus further reinforce the consumer's brand experience. We therefore predict that the link between retail and brand experience is dependent on (perceived) store ephemerality.

**H1.** The positive effect of retail experience on brand experience increases if (perceived) store ephemerality is high.

### **4.2.3 The moderating role of need for uniqueness**

By offering unique experiences, consumers with a high NFU are especially attracted by pop-ups (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021; Robertson et al., 2018). Such individuals engage in consumer counter-conformity behaviors by making choices that are creative, unpopular, or reflect an avoidance of similarity to others (Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Research on pop-ups has paid no particular attention to this target group, though NFU could play a significant role in the effects of experience on WoM. Accordingly, Robertson et al. (2018) proposed that future research should examine whether WoM decreases with greater NFU in experiential store contexts. Consumers with a high NFU yearn for unique, scarce products that differentiate them from others, especially those within their social groups (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000; Snyder, 1992; Tian & McKenzie, 2001). Therefore, out of fear of losing their uniqueness, such individuals are less willing than those with a low NFU to generate positive WoM for publicly consumed products that they own (Cheema & Kaikati, 2010).

However, we question whether this assumption is applicable to both WoM shared with close friends and WoM shared with distant others. Because eWoM typically takes place between strangers (often several at once) and interpersonal WoM is mainly used in private conversations among people known to one another (Bickart & Schindler, 2001; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Hoffman & Novak, 1996), in the following we equate eWoM with WoM among distant others and interpersonal WoM with WoM among close friends.

People have different communication goals depending on their audience and are therefore likely to adjust WoM accordingly. When communicating with those who are close, the tendency is to attempt to maintain existing relationships (Chen, 2017). Hence, we expect that high-NFU consumers want to preserve their uniqueness and prevent close others from enjoying the same experiences with the brand. Moldovan et al. (2015) found that consumers with a high NFU try to scare closer persons out of adopting the same

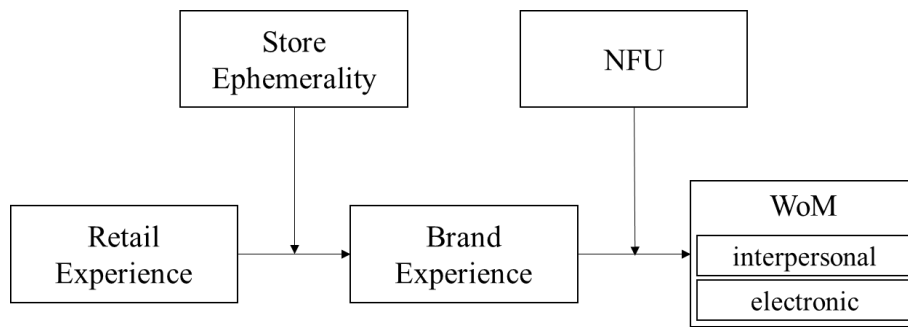
products or brands as they adopted. In contrast, when communicating with strangers or the public, people are likely to try to impress (Chen, 2017); low interpersonal closeness may activate the motive to self-enhance and communicate positive information (Dubois et al., 2016). This is in accordance with Lovett et al. (2013), who demonstrated that individuals manifesting high NFU spread interpersonal WoM much less than eWoM. The explanation for this could be twofold: Because personal interactions offer more options for people to express their uniqueness (e.g., through their visual appearance), spreading WoM is less necessary. At the same time, as communication on online platforms is usually broadcasted among strangers, people may feel a greater need to prove their uniqueness through WoM. In addition, Barasch and Berger (2014) found that consumers tend to share information that makes them look good, when talking with multiple people. In line with Cheema and Kaikati (2010) and Robertson et al. (2018), we assume the effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM to decrease if a consumer's NFU is high. Conversely, we expect that high-NFU consumers may seek to flaunt their uniqueness through communication with distant others; NFU thus reinforces the impact of brand experience on eWoM.

**H2a.** The positive effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM about the brand decreases if NFU increases.

**H2b.** The positive effect of brand experience on eWoM about the brand increases if NFU increases.

### **4.3 Overview of studies**

To analyze the relationship between retail experience, brand experience, and positive WoM by considering the moderating roles of (perceived) store ephemerality and NFU, we tested our hypotheses in five studies: two field studies and three experiments. The conceptual framework is summarized in Figure 8.



**Figure 8. Article 3:** Conceptual framework showing the relationship between retail experience, brand experience and consumers’ intention to spread interpersonal and electronic WoM by considering the moderating roles of store ephemerality and NFU.

First, we conducted a field study involving real consumer behavior within a pop-up store context. We demonstrated in Study 1 that only if consumers perceive the store to be ephemeral retail experience enhances brand experience, which in turn heightens positive WoM. This finding that the link between retail and brand experience depends on perceived store ephemerality is consistent with H1. In Study 2 we verified the robustness of this moderating effect by conducting another field study considering a different brand and product category. In addition, the results offer evidence for the proposed need to differentiate between the two types of WoM audiences (close friends = interpersonal WoM vs. distant others = eWoM) when integrating NFU into the model. Supporting H2a and H2b, the results of Study 2 show that an increase in NFU decreases the positive effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM but increases the effect for eWoM. In an experiment within Study 3, we manipulated consumers’ NFU by using a one-factor, two-level (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design. The findings provide additional support for our hypotheses. Study 4 was conducted to further validate our framework by applying it to a typical pop-up product category, namely fashion. Within this experiment, we manipulated store’s ephemerality (flagship vs. pop-up store). Although the results support H1 and H2b, they surprisingly show no significant



interaction of brand experience and NFU for interpersonal WoM, thus rejecting H2a. In Study 5, we used the same fashion context as in Study 4 and employed a 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store)  $\times$  2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design. Again, H1 and H2b can be confirmed but we still failed to find support for H2a in the fashion category. By using a mix of approaches and samples, these five studies find support for our proposition of a need to consider the effects of (perceived) store ephemerality and NFU in pop-up stores.

## **4.4 Study 1**

### **4.4.1 Method**

A national brand in the fittings and sanitary ware category that distributes its products primarily through construction stores and other retailers let us approach its pop-up store visitors to conduct this field study. In December 2019 the brand's pop-up truck was located in one of the largest cities in Germany. Transformed into a modern, mobile showroom, the pop-up contained a screen that informed visitors about the production of the brand's products and their usage. Furthermore, it included an array of innovative products representing the future of water design – fittings, showers, ceramic fixtures, toilets, and state-of-the-art systems for water safety – all of which could be touched, tested, and experienced. The store's design was adjusted to the brand's corporate colors.

During one day, we approached 48 pop-up store visitors upon exiting ( $M_{\text{age}} = 39.06$ ,  $SD = 15.41$ ; 37.5% female; 12.5% students). 7-point Likert scales were used for all items (see Appendix E for all construct measures).

First, the participants evaluated their retail experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .76$ ) on five items based on Jahn et al. (2018) and Klein et al. (2016). Next, they were asked to indicate perceived store ephemerality (single item; Eisend, 2008). Afterward, respondents assessed their brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .82$ ), measured with four items based on

Brakus et al. (2009). We then measured participants' intentions to spread positive WoM, both interpersonally (two items; Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002) and electronically (two items; Okazaki, Rubio, & Campo, 2014), and computed a WoM index as an average of these four items (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .75$ ). Finally, all respondents were asked to specify their product involvement (Mittal & Lee, 1989; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ). We used this measure further as a covariate, as products in the fittings and sanitary ware category are costly and tend to require conscious purchase decisions.

#### 4.4.2 Results

The results (see Table 6, Study 1 and Table 7, Study 1) of a moderated mediation (using PROCESS Model 7 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018) reveal that a better retail experience significantly improves brand experience ( $b = .58$ ;  $p = .008$ ). Following H1, the effect of retail experience on brand experience is assumed to be stronger if consumers perceive the store's availability to be limited; indeed, a significant interaction confirms that this relationship is affected by perceived store ephemerality ( $b = .32$ ;  $p = .005$ ). As a spotlight analysis reveals, retail experience only affects one's brand experience when perceived store ephemerality is high ( $b = 1.16$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and not when it is low ( $b = .19$ ;  $p = .528$ ). These results offer support for H1 (see Figure 9, Study 1). In addition, consumers' product involvement may be a further impact factor for brand experience ( $b = .29$ ;  $p = .030$ ).

Looking at the impact on WoM, we found that both retail ( $b = .59$ ;  $p = .023$ ) and brand experience ( $b = .31$ ;  $p = .074$ ) affect consumers' intentions to spread WoM directly (see Table 7, Study 1). Moreover, the results reveal that the indirect effect of retail experience through brand experience on WoM depends on perceived store ephemerality (index of moderated mediation: .10; 95% CI = .009, .232). Brand experience is mediating the effect of retail experience on WoM when perceived store ephemerality is high (indirect effect: .36; 95% CI = .053, .709) but not when it is low (indirect effect: .06;

95% CI =  $-.131, .255$ ). A further explanation for WoM may be provided by the significant effect of the covariate product involvement ( $b = .26; p = .077$ ).

#### **4.4.3 Discussion**

Assessing real consumer behavior in a pop-up store context, Study 1 provides evidence that only if consumers perceive the store to be open for a limited time retail experience increases brand experience. In turn, brand experience further heightens positive WoM for the brand. This finding that the effect of retail experience on brand experience is dependent on perceived store ephemerality is consistent with commodity theory and supports H1. In doing so, it contributes to pop-up store research, which has already identified a significant impact of retail on brand experience but has not considered pop-ups' differentiating feature in this relationship (Klein et al., 2016). Additionally, it supports current research that finds ephemeral consumption as a novel phenomenon in consumer research. In line with scarcity research, the results underline the important impact of time limitations on consumer behavior.

**Table 6. Article 3:** Summary of regression analyses.

Dependent variable: BEX	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3		Study 4		Study 5	
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Direct effects</i>										
REX	.58	2.77***	.91	7.95***	.60	7.76***	.67	8.72***	.66	12.14***
(Perceived) Store ephemerality	.10	1.25	.12	1.54	.19	3.12***	.69	4.97***	.13	1.58
REX x (Perceived) Store ephemerality	.32	2.97***	.08	1.82*	.16	2.86***	.39	2.71***	.16	2.21**
Product involvement (cov.)	.29	2.24**								
Brand familiarity (cov.)			.05	.87			.02	.38	-.02	-.51
Brand loyalty (cov.)					.30	5.57***				
<i>Conditional effects</i>										
Low (perceived) store ephemerality	.19	.64	.81	7.59***	.54	6.82***	.45	3.37***	.66	12.14***
High (perceived) store ephemerality	1.16	5.35***	.97	7.47***	.70	8.27***	.84	11.74***	.82	17.22***

Note. BEX = brand experience; REX = retail experience. REX, BEX, perceived store ephemerality, product involvement, brand familiarity, and brand loyalty have been mean

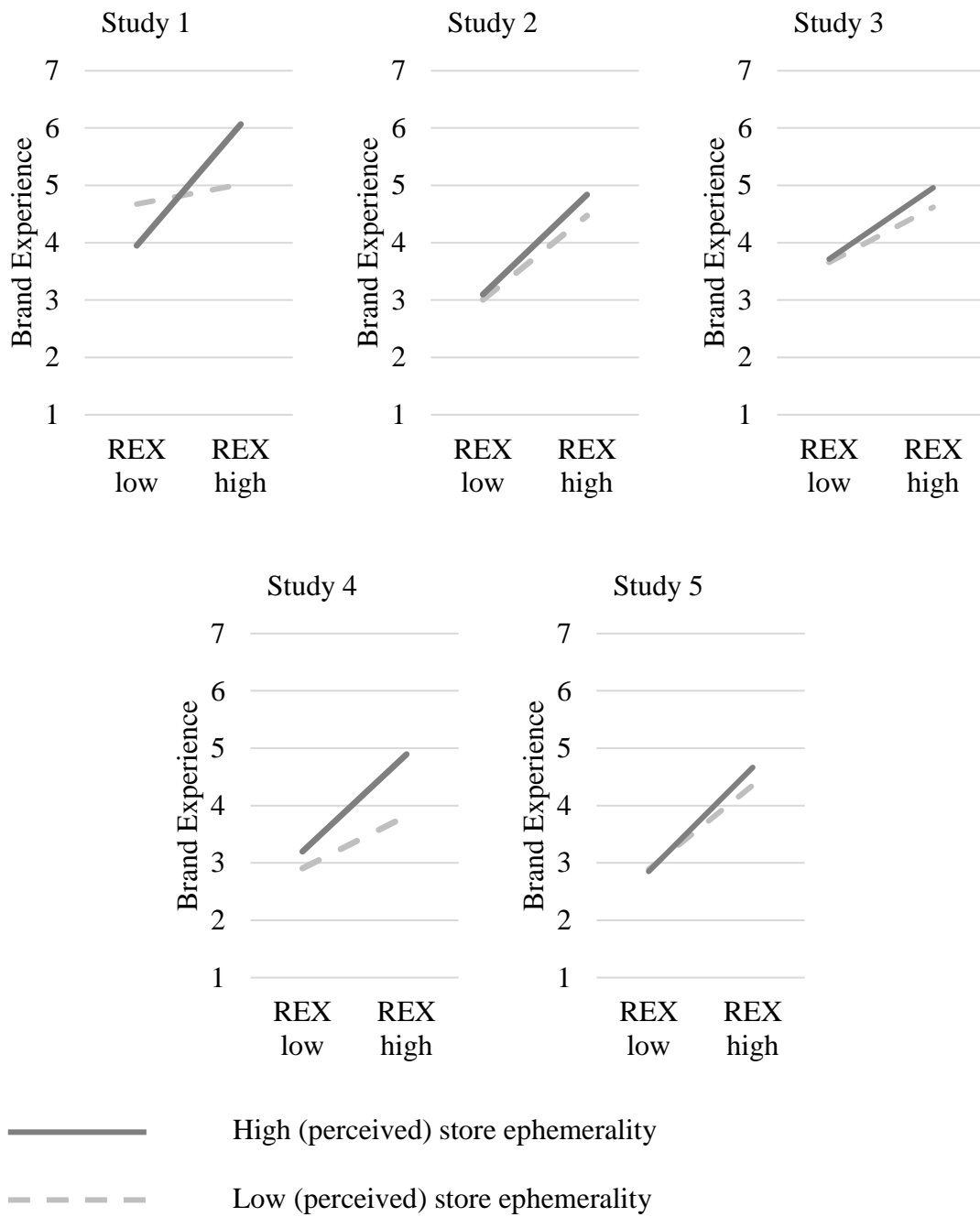
\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 7. Article 3: Summary of moderated mediation analyses (Studies 1–3).**

Dependent variable:	Study 1		Study 2				Study 3			
	WoM		Interpersonal WoM		eWoM		Interpersonal WoM		eWoM	
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Direct effects</i>										
REX	.59	2.36**	.25	1.34	.36	2.04**	.51	8.01***	.07	.69
BEX	.31	1.83*	.45	3.22***	.18	1.44	.41	5.35***	.47	4.25***
NFU			-.14	-1.28	.20	1.81*	.14	1.44	.43	2.56**
BEX x NFU			-.11	-1.70*	.18	2.93***	-.22	-2.55**	.19	1.73*
Product involvement (cov.)	.26	1.81*								
Brand familiarity (cov.)			.28	4.13***	.19	2.42**				
Brand loyalty (cov.)							.33	7.44***	.22	2.83***
<i>Conditional effects</i>										
Low NFU			.59	4.14***	-.04	-.29	.41	5.35***	.47	4.25***
High NFU			.33	1.88*	.38	2.80***	.19	2.56**	.66	5.99***
<i>Indirect effects</i>										
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI
Low perceived store ephemerality	.06	[-.131, .255]								
High perceived store ephemerality	.36	[.053, .709]**								
Low ephemerality, low NFU			.48	[.241, .755]**	-.04	[-.259, .206]	.22	[.123, .351]**	.25	[.118, .416]**
Low ephemerality, high NFU			.27	[.010, .580]**	.31	[.086, .552]**	.10	[.023, .205]**	.36	[.209, .537]**
High ephemerality, low NFU			.57	[.294, .894]**	-.04	[-.305, .246]	.29	[.069, .168]**	.09	[.171, .516]**
High ephemerality, high NFU			.32	[.012, .670]**	.37	[.103, .646]**	.13	[.030, .256]**	.10	[.294, .668]**
<i>Index of moderated mediation</i>	.10	[.009, .232]**	-.01	[-.032, .003]	.01	[-.003, .038]	-.04	[-.084, -.005]**	.03	[-.003, .088]

Note. CI = confidence interval; REX = retail experience; BEX = brand experience; NFU = need for uniqueness. REX, BEX, NFU, product involvement, brand familiarity, and brand loyalty have been mean centered. Unstandardized path coefficients are reported.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .



**Figure 9. Article 3:** Brand experience according to perceived store ephemerality.

## 4.5 Study 2

### 4.5.1 Method

The primary goal of Study 2 was to analyze the impact of NFU on the relationship between brand experience and WoM. Additionally, it sought to provide further support for the relationships explored in the previous study.

This field study was conducted with a German bike manufacturer that operates internationally and sells its products largely online and via selected retailers. To foster brand awareness, the company decided to open a pop-up store for one week in November 2020 in a large German city. The pop-up displayed brand and manufacturing information through interactive video walls. In addition to the standard bikes sold through retailers, the store carried other variations and exclusive product lines. Furthermore, it offered bike customization and product individualization.

Visitors leaving the pop-up store were selected randomly, with 119 respondents ultimately taking part ( $M_{\text{age}} = 32.04$ ,  $SD = 10.63$ ; 37.8% female; 9.2% students). To avoid language barriers, only German visitors were recruited. First, participants rated their familiarity with the bike manufacturer (Milberg et al., 2010) which was further used as a covariate. As in the previous study, respondents were asked to indicate their retail experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .80$ ), perceived store ephemerality, and brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .84$ ). Furthermore, they specified their intentions to spread positive WoM interpersonally (two items based on Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ) and electronically (two items based on Okazaki et al., 2014; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .80$ ). Finally, we asked respondents to evaluate their NFU (three items; based on Tian & McKenzie, 2001; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .66$ ).

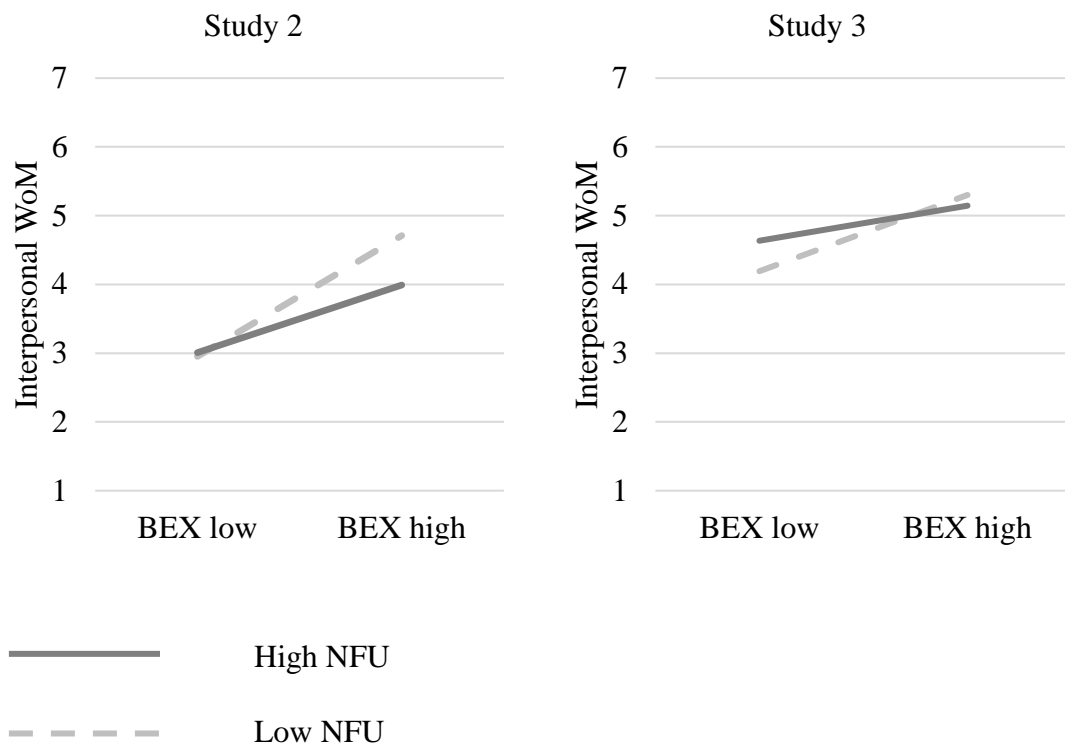
## 4.5.2 Results

To examine in detail how retail experience is linked to WoM through brand experience, considering perceived store ephemerality and NFU as moderators, we performed moderated mediations (PROCESS Model 21; 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018). In H1, we predicted that perceived store ephemerality would moderate the relationship between retail and brand experience. Indeed, the moderated regression analysis results (see Table 6, Study 2) reveal a significant interaction effect ( $b = .08$ ;  $p = .071$ ), thus providing further support for H1. In particular, retail experience has a stronger impact on brand experience when perceived store ephemerality is high ( $b = .97$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than when it is low ( $b = .81$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (see Figure 9, Study 2).

To test H2a and H2b, we integrated NFU into the model and differentiated between interpersonal and eWoM. Specifically, the hypotheses propose that high NFU increases the effect of brand experience on eWoM (H2b) but mitigates the effect on interpersonal WoM (H2a). The results are outlined in Table 7 (Study 2).

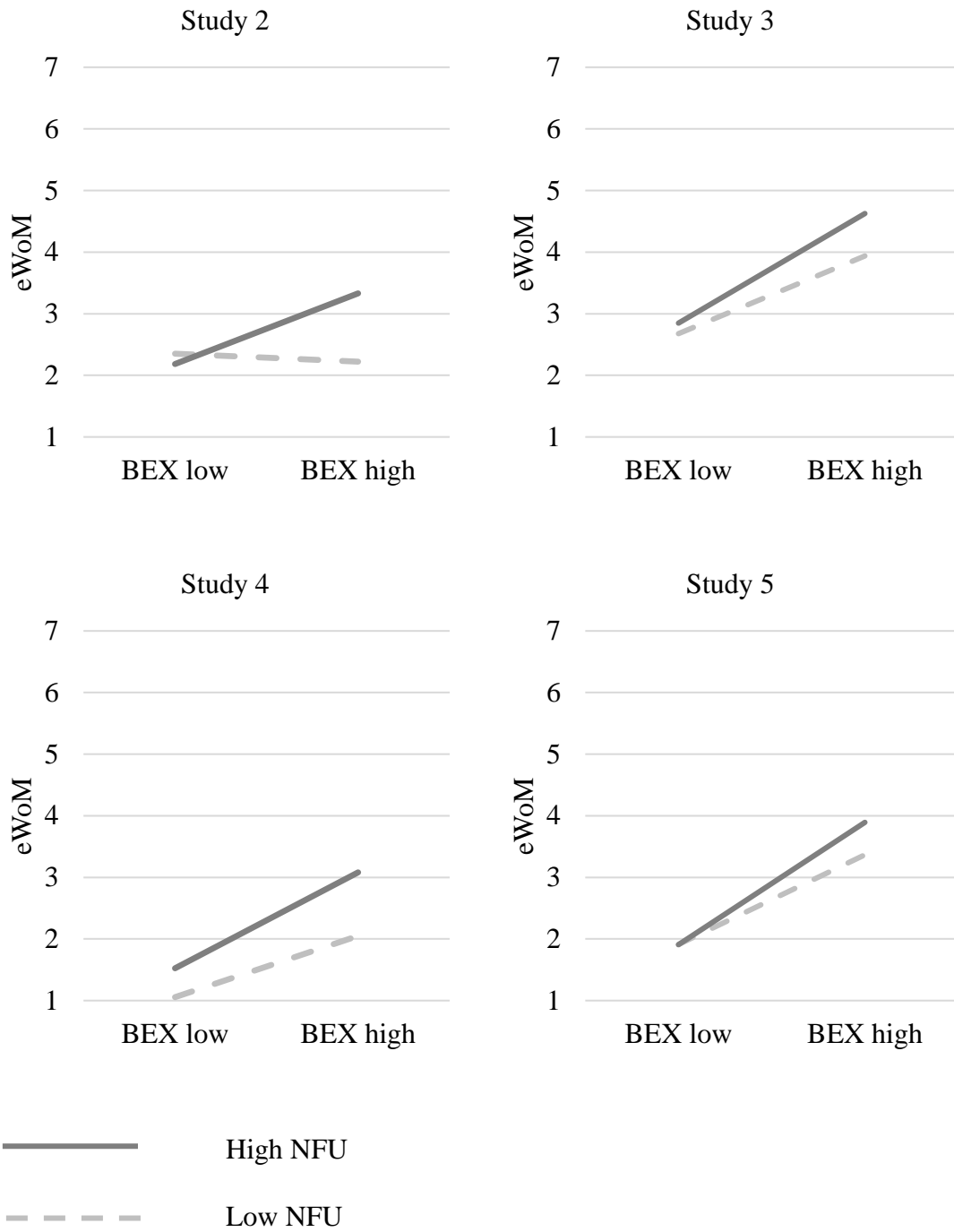
For interpersonal WoM, our results indicate that the significant effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM ( $b = .45$ ;  $p = .002$ ) is further qualified by a negative interaction with NFU ( $b = -.11$ ;  $p = .091$ ). Conditional effects show that brand experience has a stronger impact on interpersonal WoM when NFU is low ( $b = .59$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than when it is high ( $b = .33$ ;  $p = .062$ ). Thus, we can support H2a (see Figure 10, Study 2). Another explanation for the increase in interpersonal WoM is consumers' brand familiarity ( $b = .28$ ;  $p < .001$ ).





**Figure 10. Article 3:** Interpersonal WoM according to NFU.

For eWoM we found different results (see Table 7, Study 2 and Figure 11, Study 2) indicating a significant positive interaction effect with NFU ( $b = .18$ ;  $p = .004$ ): High NFU facilitates the influence of brand experience on eWoM ( $b = .38$ ;  $p = .006$ ), while low NFU has no effect on this relationship ( $b = -.04$ ;  $p = .774$ ), thus supporting H2b. Furthermore, retail experience ( $b = .36$ ;  $p = .044$ ) and brand familiarity ( $b = .19$ ;  $p = .017$ ) also play roles in explaining eWoM.



**Figure 11. Article 3: eWoM according to NFU.**

### **4.5.3 Discussion**

The results of this second field study offer additional support for the moderating effect of perceived store ephemerality on the impact of retail on brand experience. Study 2 also provides evidence for H2a and H2b by demonstrating that the link between brand experience and WoM is affected by NFU. Research regarding pop-ups has generally overlooked the format's target group of high-NFU consumers. However, our results reveal NFU's game-changing role in the relation between brand experience and WoM: an increase in NFU decreases the positive effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM (supporting H2a) and increases the positive effect of brand experience on eWoM (consistent with H2b). Contributing to the findings of Cheema and Kaikati (2010), we see the value of a more detailed view of the effect of NFU on WoM, suggesting a need to differentiate between interpersonal and eWoM when considering NFU in these relationships.

## **4.6 Study 3**

### **4.6.1 Method**

For Study 3, we recruited 262 German-speaking participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 38$ ,  $SD = 12.86$ ; 39.3% female; 16% students) through clickworker and manipulated participants' NFU to be low or high using an elaboration task following Cheema and Kaikati (2010). Those assigned to the high-NFU condition were directed to expound the importance of being different from others, while participants in the low-NFU condition were asked to elaborate on the value of being similar to others. For a manipulation check ( $M_{\text{high NFU}} = 4.64$ ;  $M_{\text{low NFU}} = 3.64$ ;  $p < .001$ ), all participants evaluated their NFU at the end of the survey (five items; Tian & McKenzie, 2001; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ). Further, we coded the high-NFU condition as 1 and the low-NFU condition as 0.

Afterward, participants evaluated their attitudinal and behavioral loyalty to a large national chocolate brand (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$ ), measured with four items based on Liu-Thompkins and Tam (2013) and Yoo and Donthu (2001), which we further used as a covariate. Participants were then asked to imagine entering a pop-up store belonging to the chocolate brand and looking around (see Appendix D for the description supplied). They were shown photos and videos presenting entertaining, interactive store features. Further, there was a display announcing that the store would only be open for four weeks.

Following this scenario, all respondents evaluated their retail experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ), measured on nine items (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016). They then indicated their perceived store ephemerality, measured with one item based on Eisend (2008), and rated their brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .95$ ) across ten items (Brakus et al., 2009). Finally, we measured their intentions to spread WoM electronically (with three items based on Okazaki et al., 2014; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ) and interpersonally (with three items based on Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ).

#### **4.6.2 Results**

To further examine the game-changing roles of store ephemerality and NFU in the relation between retail experience, brand experience, and WoM, we again performed moderated mediations (using PROCESS Model 21 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018).

As predicted in H1, the results of the moderated regression analysis (see Table 6, Study 3) indicate that the significant effect of retail experience on brand experience ( $b = .60$ ;  $p < .001$ ) is further depending on perceived store ephemerality ( $b = .16$ ;  $p = .005$ ): Retail experience has a stronger effect on brand experience when perceived store ephemerality is high ( $b = .70$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than when it is low ( $b = .54$ ;  $p < .001$ ) (see Figure 9, Study 3). Preexisting brand loyalty may provide a further explanation for brand experience ( $b = .30$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

In testing H2a and H2b (see Table 7, Study 3), we again find for interpersonal WoM that the significant effect of brand experience ( $b = .41; p < .001$ ) is further qualified by a negative interaction with NFU ( $b = -.22; p = .011$ ). Brand experience has a stronger impact on interpersonal WoM when NFU is low ( $b = .41; p < .001$ ) than when it is high ( $b = .19; p = .011$ ). These results offer support for H2a and are depicted in Figure 10 (Study 3). Brand loyalty may provide another explanation for the increase in interpersonal WoM ( $b = .33; p < .001$ ). Moreover, the results reveal that the indirect effect of retail experience on WoM through brand experience depends on perceived store ephemerality and NFU (index of moderated mediation:  $-.04$ ; 95% CI =  $-.084, -.005$ ) (see Table 7, Study 3 for indirect effects).

The results for eWoM are different (see Table 7, Study 3 and Figure 11, Study 3), indicating a significant positive interaction of brand experience with NFU ( $b = .19; p = .086$ ): High NFU facilitates the influence of brand experience on eWoM more strongly ( $b = .66; p < .001$ ) than low NFU does ( $b = .47; p < .001$ ). In addition, preexisting brand loyalty ( $b = .22; p = .005$ ) may further explain eWoM.

### **4.6.3 Discussion**

The results of Study 3 verify the previous findings by demonstrating within an experiment that perceived store ephemerality and NFU play significant roles in the already established relationships between retail experience, brand experience, and positive WoM. The experiment context allowed us to manipulate NFU to reduce common method bias, yet we still found significant interaction effects.

## **4.7 Study 4**

### **4.7.1 Method**

To verify the results of the previous studies through another experiment, Study 4 applies the model to another product category: fashion, the genre which brought pop-ups to the

forefront (Niehm et al., 2006). This time, we used social networks and flyers to recruit 160 German participants ( $M_{\text{age}} = 27.88$ ,  $SD = 7.81$ ; 63.4% female) and manipulate store ephemerality (flagship vs. pop-up store).

First, participants were asked to evaluate their familiarity with a multinational fashion retailer (Milberg et al., 2010). As in Study 2, this brand familiarity was further used as a covariate. Afterward, participants were given the same scenario as in Study 3, instructing them to imagine visiting one of the retail company's stores (see Appendix D). Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two store-type conditions: In the flagship condition, participants were presented with photos and videos of entertaining, informational, and interactive store features. For the pop-up condition, we added a photo of a shop window that announced the limited opening period of one month. As part of the survey, participants indicated their perceived store ephemerality, measured with one item based on Eisend (2008) ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 5.02$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 3.66$ ;  $p < .001$ ). We further used this manipulation as a moderator.

Next, we asked participants to fill out the same questionnaire as in Study 3, assessing their retail experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .92$ ), brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ), and intentions to spread WoM both electronically (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ) and interpersonally (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ). Finally, all participants evaluated their NFU (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .87$ ), measured as in Study 3.

#### **4.7.2 Results**

To investigate the roles of store ephemerality and NFU in the relationship between retail experience, brand experience, and consumers' intentions to spread interpersonal and eWoM, we performed moderated mediations as in Studies 2 and 3 (using PROCESS Model 21 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018).

In line with our previous studies, the results (see Table 6, Study 4) indicate a significant interaction effect of retail experience and store ephemerality on brand experience ( $b = .39; p = .007$ ). The spotlight analysis reveals a stronger effect of retail experience on brand experience in the pop-up condition ( $b = .84; p < .001$ ) than in the flagship condition ( $b = .45; p = .001$ ). These results provide further support for H1 and are depicted in Figure 9 (Study 4).

Furthermore, in line with H2a and H2b and given the results of Studies 2 and 3, high NFU would be expected to weaken the effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM and enhance the effect of brand experience on eWoM. The results of the moderated mediation analyses are summarized in Table 8 (Study 4).

For interpersonal WoM, our results indicate that the significant effect of brand experience ( $b = .50; p < .001$ ) is not mitigated by NFU ( $b = -.01; p = .856$ ), offering no support for H2a. Though unaffected by NFU, one explanation for the increase in interpersonal WoM may be provided by brand familiarity ( $b = .14; p = .039$ ).

For eWoM, our results replicate those of Studies 2 and 3. The significant direct effect of brand experience on eWoM ( $b = .47; p < .001$ ) is further strengthened by a significant interaction with NFU ( $b = .07; p = .081$ ): High NFU has a stronger effect on the influence of brand experience on eWoM ( $b = .58; p < .001$ ) than low NFU does ( $b = .37; p = .001$ ). Thus, H2b is supported (see Figure 11, Study 4).

**Table 8. Article 3:** Summary of moderated mediation analyses (Studies 4–5).

Dependent variable:	Study 4				Study 5			
	Interpersonal WoM		eWoM		Interpersonal WoM		eWoM	
	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>Direct effects</i>								
REX	.19	1.52	-.05	-.51	.42	7.10***	.13	1.88*
BEX	.50	4.39***	.47	5.52***	.51	8.05***	.54	7.42***
NFU	-.02	-.24	.24	3.69***	.11	1.10	.28	2.57**
BEX x NFU	-.01	-.18	.07	1.76*	-.04	-.56	.20	2.32**
Brand familiarity (cov.)	.14	1.08**	-.03	-.53	.14	2.65***	-.05	-1.00
<i>Conditional effects</i>								
Low NFU			.37	3.52***			.54	7.42***
High NFU			.58	5.63***			.73	10.63***
<i>Indirect effects</i>								
	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI	<i>B</i>	95% CI
Low ephemerality, low NFU	.24	[.060, .425]**	.17	[.040, .315]**	.34	[.245, .443]**	.35	[.248, .476]**
Low ephemerality, high NFU	.22	[.045, .386]**	.26	[.079, .428]**	.31	[.221, .410]**	.48	[.362, .617]**
High ephemerality, low NFU	.43	[.199, .689]**	.31	[.140, .502]**	.42	[.309, .535]**	.44	[.321, .564]**
High ephemerality, high NFU	.41	[.142, .635]**	.48	[.300, .664]**	.38	[.281, .496]**	.60	[.474, .731]**
<i>Index of moderated mediation</i>	-.01	[-.037, .017]	.03	[-.003, .068]	-.01	[-.037, .071]	.03	[.020, .079]**

Note. CI = confidence interval; REX = retail experience; BEX = brand experience; NFU = need for uniqueness. REX, BEX, NFU, and brand familiarity have

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ .



### 4.7.3 Discussion

These results lend further weight to our model by verifying its application for the product category of fashion. With the manipulation of store ephemerality, the results provide additional evidence for the need to include this factor in existing models. Considering that pop-ups differ from other experiential stores only in their temporal scarcity, the finding that retail experience translates into brand experience more easily among pop-ups than flagships offers support for H1's proposed positive effect of ephemerality. Furthermore, the experiment highlights the need to differentiate between interpersonal and eWoM when it comes to NFU. Confirming H2b, the results indicate that high NFU has a greater effect than low NFU on the influence of brand experience on eWoM. Surprisingly, unlike in Studies 2 and 3, our analysis reveals no significant interaction of brand experience and NFU for interpersonal WoM, thus failing to offer support for H2a.

The share-and-scare strategy to avoid imitation could not be established in this study. It seems that consumers perceive the risk of emulation to be rather low, perhaps owing to a more personal and trustful relationship when communicating with close others (Moldovan et al., 2014). The fact that interpersonal WoM mostly occurs in smaller and more familiar environments supports this assumption (Lovett et al., 2013). Hence, we conclude that as the fear of imitation plays a smaller role in personal conversations, high-NFU consumers also spread positive interpersonal WoM. Moreover, as individuals can express their uniqueness through their appearance, which is especially relevant in the fashion context, NFU may play a subordinate role in interpersonal communication for fashion brands (Lovett et al., 2013). The focus of these interpersonal discussions is to report about a specific brand or brand experience and pass on useful information (Barasch & Berger, 2014). As a result, independent of NFU, the better one's brand experience is, the more willing one is to spread positive interpersonal WoM.

## 4.8 Study 5

### 4.8.1 Method

Study 5 aimed to validate the results of Study 4. We recruited 492 German individuals ( $M_{\text{age}} = 37.18$ ,  $SD = 12.24$ ; 41.5% female; 16.7% students) via clickworker and employed a 2 (store ephemerality: flagship vs. pop-up store)  $\times$  2 (NFU: low NFU vs. high NFU) between-subjects design.

First, participants elaborated on the same task as in Study 3 to manipulate their NFU to be high or low. A manipulation check (using five items from Tian & McKenzie, 2001; Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ) confirmed that the elaboration task had a significant effect on NFU ( $M_{\text{high NFU}} = 4.31$ ;  $M_{\text{low NFU}} = 3.59$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Afterward, participants indicated their familiarity with the same fashion retailer as in Study 4 (Milberg et al., 2010).

Following Study 4, respondents were randomly assigned to the flagship or the pop-up condition and were shown the associated photos and videos. Then, they evaluated their retail experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ), brand experience (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .94$ ), intentions to spread WoM electronically (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ) and interpersonally (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ), and perceived store ephemerality (manipulation check: ( $M_{\text{pop-up}} = 6.23$ ;  $M_{\text{flagship}} = 3.25$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

### 4.8.2 Results

To deepen our investigation of the roles of store ephemerality and NFU, we performed a last round of moderated mediations (using PROCESS Model 21 with 10,000 bootstrap samples; Hayes, 2018).

Again, the results (see Table 6, Study 5) confirm H1: the positive effect of retail experience on brand experience ( $b = .66$ ;  $p < .001$ ) is further qualified by store ephemerality ( $b = .16$ ;  $p = .027$ ), with the effect being stronger for pop-ups ( $b = .82$ ;

$p < .001$ ) than for flagships ( $b = .66$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The results are depicted in Figure 9 (Study 5)

According to H2a and H2b, and given the results of Studies 2 and 3, we expected high NFU to minimize the effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM and bolster its effect on eWoM. However, as Study 4 revealed no significant interaction for interpersonal WoM, we manipulated NFU to gain more insights into the moderation effect (see Table 8, Study 5 for results).

In line with Study 4, our results indicate that the significant effect of brand experience on interpersonal WoM ( $b = .51$ ;  $p < .001$ ) is not further qualified by a significant negative interaction with NFU ( $b = -.04$ ;  $p = .574$ ). Hence, we cannot support H2a. However, brand familiarity may offer some explanation for the increase in interpersonal WoM ( $b = .14$ ;  $p = .008$ ).

The results for eWoM replicate those of Studies 2–4. The significant direct effect of brand experience on eWoM ( $b = .54$ ;  $p < .001$ ) is qualified by an interaction with NFU ( $b = .20$ ;  $p = .021$ ): High NFU has a greater effect on the influence of brand experience on eWoM ( $b = .73$ ;  $p < .001$ ) than low NFU does ( $b = .54$ ;  $p = .001$ ), thus supporting H2b (see Figure 11, Study 5). Moreover, the results reveal that the indirect effect of retail experience on WoM through brand experience depends on perceived store ephemerality and NFU (index of moderated mediation: .03, 95% CI = .020, .079) (see Table 8, Study 5 for indirect effects).

### **4.8.3 Discussion**

By manipulating both store ephemerality and NFU, Study 5 confirms that for experiential stores in a fashion context, NFU does not mitigate the impact of brand experience on interpersonal WoM. This may be because in such situations, consumers can communicate and maintain their uniqueness through their outward appearance. In line with the previous

studies and by extending existing pop-up literature and adding to scarcity research, we reaffirmed that pop-ups in contrast to flagships can generate even stronger brand experiences through retail experiences. Furthermore, Study 5 provides support for the idea that high-NFU consumers prefer to present their uniqueness by sharing their brand experiences with the public via eWoM.

## **4.9 General discussion**

Experiential store literature largely points to the experience itself as a factor affecting consumer behavior, especially in terms of WoM, which is seen as a logical requirement for a pop-up to be effective (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016). Our results not only confirm the well-known effect of retail experience on brand-related WoM through brand experience but also expand our understanding of how WoM is affected by retail experience in experiential stores, particularly pop-ups. Retail experience positively affects brand experience, especially when the store is (perceived to be) ephemeral, as is the case with pop-ups but not flagships. Moreover, our research corroborates the prediction that for high-NFU consumers, brand experience translates into increased WoM when communicating with distant others. For close others, we predicted the opposite. However, although the results of Studies 2 and 3 support our expectation, Studies 4 and 5 failed to find a significant interaction in the fashion context.

### **4.9.1 Theoretical implications**

Motivated by Robertson et al. (2018), whose propositions highlight a need to analyze the ephemeral and experiential quality of pop-ups in greater detail, this work contributes to literature in several ways. *First*, by demonstrating that ephemerality has a strong influence on consumers' brand experience, which further heightens WoM, we extend ephemeral consumption literature (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). In line with scarcity research, we demonstrate the positive effect of pop-ups' time scarcity for consumers and brands. While

Wu et al. (2012) find perceived scarcity to increase perceived uniqueness, Zhu and Ratner (2015) identify arousal as a consequence of limited availability. Contributing to these findings, we show that pop-ups' ephemerality may affect a consumer's perception of the store (retail experience), generate arousal, and thus further reinforce the consumer's brand experience. Our work provides an important contribution to this field of research, as pop-up literature has largely neglected to consider their differentiating characteristic (exceptions: Henkel & Toporowski, 2021; Zogaj et al., 2019). Klein et al. (2016) determined that pop-ups' hedonic shopping value, store uniqueness, and store atmosphere increase consumers' WoM toward the brand via brand experience. These findings are in line with experiential store literature attesting that a favorable retail experience translates indirectly through brand experience into brand-related WoM (Jahn et al., 2018). However, we were able to demonstrate that the retail experience alone is insufficient to explain brand experience and WoM in a pop-up context, as it is not the experience itself that distinguishes pop-ups from other experiential stores.

*Second*, though pop-up literature has assumed NFU to be an important target group characteristic, finding it to affect intention to visit (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021; Robertson et al., 2018), research has generally overlooked its impact on WoM. Together, our studies show that NFU plays a significant role in the relation between retail experience and WoM and thus contributes to pop-ups' main goal of spreading buzz.

*Third*, contributing to the findings of Cheema and Kaikati (2010), our results indicate the value of a more detailed view of the effect of NFU on WoM, suggesting a need to differentiate based on the audience's closeness to the communicator (interpersonal vs. eWoM). These findings are consistent with current literature on WoM and highlight the importance of NFU in effectively driving WoM.

## 4.9.2 Managerial implications

Pop-ups aim to generate WoM because it can exert great influence on consumption decisions. However, monitoring WoM performance to ensure effectiveness proves to be difficult. Our findings provide important implications for brands pursuing communicational objectives with pop-up stores. Our study suggests that brands should highlight the unique quality of pop-ups – their ephemerality – to generate WoM via brand experience. This could be manifested in their design. Ephemerality may also be represented through performative aspects, such as requiring visitors to make a reservation or including live performances; an extraordinary location; or exclusive communication without mass media. To make their spatial and temporal scarcity even more explicit, brands can design pop-ups to be nomadic and movable by installing them in spaces such as shipping containers (Shi et al., 2019).

Furthermore, as our findings apply not only to brands that target high-NFU consumers but also to those targeting low-NFU consumers, brands should consider expanding their target groups. Though high-NFU consumers monopolize eWoM, interpersonal WoM is spread by both high- and low-NFU consumers. To target those with a high NFU, pop-ups should highlight not only their ephemerality and scarcity but also the key element of experiential stores: unique experiences (Zogaj et al., 2019). High-NFU consumers may be drawn to unique and distinctive store features (Robertson et al., 2018, Klein et al. 2016); limited edition products (Henkel & Toporowski, 2021); or sensory stimulation and unique personalized interactions with the brand via elements such as media stations or interactive games (Klein et al., 2016; Niehm et al., 2006). Because high-NFU consumers prefer to spread eWoM, we suggest that brands targeting them place hashtags throughout the store to encourage the sharing of experiences via social media posts, which the brand can then track. To target low-NFU consumers, we advise brands to focus on benefits unrelated to uniqueness, such as functionality, hedonic value,

or cognitive challenge (Vandecasteele & Geuens, 2010), while additionally offering standard, familiar products.

### **4.9.3 Limitations and avenues for future research**

This work is not free from limitations and offers several opportunities for future research. With the field studies, social desirability bias may not be excluded, while with the experiments, the situation descriptions and manipulations are an imperfect simulation of a real-life retail experience. Still, our framework holds value and therefore should be applied to different familiar and unfamiliar brands and products. Even a follow-up study regarding visitors' actual WoM behavior would be useful. As in the end we could not state that there is a negative interaction effect of NFU with brand experience on interpersonal WoM, research should investigate this relationship further.

Future studies should delve deeper into analyzing ephemerality as pop-ups' key distinguishing feature. Specifically, researchers should consider how ephemerality generates arousal (Zhu & Ratner, 2015), changes consumers' perceptions of store and brand value (Lynn, 1991), and has the potential to generate long-term brand success. Brand loyalty has been identified as a key goal of pop-ups, alongside WoM generation. However, knowledge about the mechanism behind the effect of pop-ups on brand loyalty and the role of ephemerality remains unclear (Zogaj et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is questionable whether consumers with a high need for uniqueness can even become loyal to a brand.

In conclusion, pop-ups offer a win-win situation for customers and brands: while customers are granted the opportunity to experience a brand more intensely, brands can benefit from immediate positive WoM.

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## **5 Overall discussion**

This dissertation was motivated by the rise of pop-up stores as a retail concept devised to satisfy consumers' desire for ephemerality and extraordinary experiences. As pop-ups are highly original and unique, they are expected to target consumers with a high NFU (Robertson et al., 2018). In contrast to traditional brand stores, experiential stores are not primarily designed to generate revenue but rather to deliver experiences, boost brand-related WoM (Klein et al., 2016), and contribute to other brand-related long-term goals (Robertson et al., 2018). What distinguishes pop-ups from other experiential stores is their limited availability (Klein et al., 2016). However, research has largely neglected this dimension and the target group's characteristics, focusing instead on the pop-ups' retail and brand experiences as affecting consumer behavior (e.g., Kim et al., 2010; Klein et al., 2016). To help fill this research gap, the studies included in this dissertation examined the impact of store ephemerality and NFU on pop-up store-related consumer behavior: intentions to visit, to make in-store purchases of standard and exclusive products, and to spread positive interpersonal and electronic WoM for the brand. Drawing and expanding on commodity theory and further theoretical approaches, the findings are able to explain the psychological processes that lead to these behaviors. The results of the combined studies provide valuable insights into how store ephemerality and NFU can create a win-win situation for consumers and brands. Several academic and practical implications that can be gleaned from this new understanding are summarized in the following paragraphs.

### **5.1 Theoretical implications**

This dissertation contributes to current literature that finds ephemeral consumption – as opposed to long-term orientation – to be a novel concept of consumer behavior (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). The results reveal that commodity theory can be applied not only to a limited availability of supply but also to a limited spatial and temporal availability of

stores. Taken together, the three studies demonstrate that ephemerality has a strong influence on consumers' intention to visit, purchase intentions, and willingness to spread positive WoM. In doing so, this work indicates the inadequacy of research focusing exclusively on the role of the pop-up experience itself, as it is not unlike that of other experiential stores. This is an important contribution to the existing literature on pop-ups (e.g., Klein et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2018), which has largely neglected to consider their distinguishing feature and focused instead on consumer experience. Furthermore, the findings are in line with current literature on pop-ups (Robertson et al., 2018) in highlighting the importance of NFU: This key characteristic of pop-ups' target group can play a game-changing role in their success. Moreover, the articles provide further insights into consumer behavior before, during, and after a pop-up visit.

Contributing to theory on the halo effect, *Article 1* demonstrates that a pop-up's ephemerality leads consumers to anticipate the store offering a limited product assortment, thus driving intention to visit – especially for high-NFU consumers. Despite pop-ups having a non-sales focus, as has been widely communicated in practice and literature (Klein et al., 2016), the results show that product assortment is an important driver of consumers' intention to visit pop-ups.

Motivated by these results, *Article 2* was conceived to examine purchases made during the pop-up visit. The results contribute to experiential store literature by indicating that pop-ups' ephemerality facilitates product purchases, despite their non-sales focus. In line with regret theory, this work identifies anticipated regret as a main driver of in-store purchases. Furthermore, it suggests that unlike flagships, which mainly spur purchases of exclusive products (Jahn et al., 2018), pop-ups also foster the purchase of standard products. This is because exclusive products are not further affected by time restrictions but standard ones are (Gierl et al., 2008). Thus, pop-ups' ephemerality increases store purchases of standard products more than exclusive ones. When considering pop-ups

target group, Article 2 demonstrates that high NFU mitigates the influence of anticipated regret on the purchase of standard products but facilitates its influence on the purchase of exclusive ones.

Considering these game-changing roles played by store ephemerality and NFU in terms of in-store purchases, *Article 3* was devised to investigate their roles in one of pop-ups' major goals: the creation of WoM. The empirical results indicate that the already examined effect of retail experience on brand experience (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016) is dependent on (perceived) store ephemerality. Because store ephemerality contributes to brand experience, it further heightens positive WoM toward the brand. In addition, this article's results reveal the important role of NFU: While brand experience translates into increased eWoM for high-NFU consumers, this is not the case for interpersonal WoM. Contributing to the NFU–WoM framework developed by Cheema and Kaikati (2010), this article suggests the value of a more detailed view of the effect of NFU on WoM.

Within their empirical studies, all the three articles provide converging evidence for a need to integrate store ephemerality and the character trait NFU into frameworks analyzing pop-ups' success.

## **5.2 Managerial implications**

This dissertation's findings add to the understanding of pop-ups' experiential and communicational objectives and provide important implications for brands regarding the development of successful pop-up store concepts. The key takeaway is that brands should not only highlight a pop-up's ephemerality but also reconsider its target group.

To help achieve pop-ups' goals, brands should call attention to the unique quality of such stores: their ephemerality. This could be reflected through elements such as performative aspects, an extraordinary location, and exclusive communication. As

Article 2 explains, emphasizing a store's ephemerality may even contribute to direct in-store sales. Thus, pop-ups contribute to not only long-term brand-related goals but also short-term goals that are easier to measure. Furthermore, the results of Article 3 indicate that brands should highlight store ephemerality to generate WoM via brand experience. As a store format aiming to create WoM, pop-ups can exert great influence on long-term consumption decisions. Despite the clear importance of a pop-up's ephemerality, the results of Article 1 clarify that it is not the only quality that makes such stores attractive. Therefore, brands launching pop-ups should not lose sight of generating extraordinary experiences.

As it is especially the consumers with a high NFU who anticipate limited editions and exclusive products in pop-ups, despite their non-sales focus (Article 1), pop-ups should attract them by offering such products and making sure to highlight their scarcity. This idea is encouraged by the findings of Article 2, which demonstrate that high-NFU consumers purchase exclusive products in pop-ups. Furthermore, Article 3 suggests targeting such consumers because they contribute to the creation of electronic WoM. To do so, brands should increase a store's perceived uniqueness, considering elements such as an individual and distinctive store design, sensory stimulation, and special personalized interactions with the brand. However, Article 3 also recommends reconsidering the stores' target group, as high-NFU consumers do not particularly contribute to the generation of interpersonal WoM, while those with a low NFU do. Hence, if a pop-up aims to create interpersonal WoM, the brand may also want to focus on benefits unrelated to uniqueness, such as functionality, hedonic value, or cognitive challenges, while offering standard, familiar products. Article 2 supports this suggestion by demonstrating that low-NFU consumers purchase standard products in pop-ups.

Altogether, the findings presented in this thesis establish that retail and brand experiences are not the only important factors for pop-ups' success; their ephemerality

and target group may also contribute to their attractiveness and both short- and long-term goals.

To paraphrase Frida Kahlo, brands launching pop-ups should remember, “We should do the absurd and the ephemeral.”

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix A. Article 1: Situation description.**

Now imagine the following situation: You are browsing the Internet and you are coming across a video of BRAND presenting one of its stores. You are curious; therefore, you are going to watch it.

**Appendix B. Article 1: Construct measures.**

Constructs	Measures	Factor Loadings			Cronbach's $\alpha$		
		Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
<b>Perceived store ephemerality</b> (Eisend, 2008)	This store is only available for a limited time.						
<b>Brand familiarity</b> (Milberg et al., 2010)	I am very familiar with BRAND.						
<b>Anticipated product scarcity</b> (Janssen et al., 2014)	I expect the store to offer unique and original products.	.858	.821	.853	.78	.72	.63
	I expect the store to offer rare and valuable products.	.829	.879	.747			
	I expect that the store's products cannot easily be found elsewhere.	.809	.711	.696			
<b>Intention to visit the store</b> (Grewal et al., 2003)	The likelihood that I would visit this store is very high.				.95	.93	.91
	I would be willing to visit this store.						
<b>Need for uniqueness</b> (Tian & McKenzie, 2001)	I collect unusual products as a way of telling people I'm different.	.818	.819	.797	.94	.84	.92
	I have sometimes purchased unusual products or brands as a way to create a more distinctive personal image.	.834	.792	.782			
	I often look for one-of-a-kind products or brands so that I create a style that is all my own.	.818	.843	.749			
	I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.	.850	.744	.787			



Often when buying merchandise, an important goal is to find something that communicates my uniqueness.	.858	.651	.842
Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.	.825		.834
I often think of the things I buy and do in terms of how I can use them to shape a more unusual personal image.	.834		.812
The products and brands that I like best are the ones that express my individuality.	.851		.798

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**Appendix C. Article 2: Construct measures.**

Constructs	Measures	Factor Loadings		Cronbach's $\alpha$	
		Study 1	Study 2	Study 1	Study 2
<b>Perceived store ephemerality</b> (Eisend, 2008)	This store is only available for a limited time.				
<b>Retail experience</b> (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016)	The store has a pleasant atmosphere.	.778		.88	
	This store is unique.	.779			
	The assortment of the store is exclusive.	.634			
	The store is exciting.	.760			
	The staff has my best interests at heart.	.771			
	The store is attractive from the inside.	.738			
	The assortment of the store offers a different way to enjoy it than my ordinary grocery retailer does.	.673			
<b>Brand experience</b> (Brakus et al., 2009)	The staff understands my specific needs and tries to satisfy these very well.	.752			
	BRAND makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	.836	.701	.94	.87
	I find BRAND interesting in a sensory way.	.836	.653		
	BRAND induces feelings and sentiments.	.855	.721		
	BRAND is an emotional brand.	.852	.704		
	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use BRAND.	.783	.659		
	BRAND results in bodily experiences.	.851	.654		
BRAND is action oriented.	.841	.771			

	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter BRAND.	.773	.743		
	BRAND stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	.858	.726		
<b>Anticipated regret</b> (Gupta & Gentry, 2019)	I feel like I would experience regret if I waited and ended up without having bought anything in the store.	.924	.914	.91	.90
	I would be upset if I missed buying some products of interest in the store.	.908	.902		
	I feel like if I missed buying the product of interest right away, I would regret it later.	.935	.924		
<b>Preference for chocolate</b>	I like eating chocolate.				
<b>Preference for the brand</b>	When eating chocolate, I prefer BRAND.				
<b>Need for uniqueness</b> (Tian & McKenzie, 2001)	I collect unusual products as a way of telling people I'm different.		.755		.85
	I have sometimes purchased unusual products or brands as a way to create a more distinctive personal image.		.794		
	I often look for one-of-a-kind products or brands so that I create a style that is all my own.		.780		
	I often try to find a more interesting version of run-of-the-mill products because I enjoy being original.		.743		
	Often when buying merchandise, an important goal is to find something that communicates my uniqueness.		.686		
	Having an eye for products that are interesting and unusual assists me in establishing a distinctive image.		.796		

**Appendix D. Articles 2 and 3:** Situation description.

Now imagine the following situation: You are spending your day off today in the nearest city. You decide to go downtown for shopping. You don't have a specific destination in mind and stroll down the shopping street. You are passing a BRAND store. You are curious, so you go in and look around.

**Appendix E. Article 3: Construct measures.**

Constructs	Measures	Factor Loadings					Cronbach's $\alpha$				
		Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5
<b>Retail Experience</b> (Jahn et al., 2018; Klein et al., 2016)	The store has a pleasant atmosphere.	.745	.818	.821	.859	.802	.76	.80	.91	.92	.91
	The store is unique.	.743	.704	.840	.881	.796					
	The assortment of the store is exclusive.	.823	.639	.722	.618	.708					
	The store is exciting.	.755	.771	.756	.740	.783					
	The staff has my best interests at heart.	.609	.817	.823	.811	.774					
	The store is attractive from the inside.			.719	.832	.727					
	The assortment of the store offers a different way to enjoy it than my ordinary retailer does.			.778	.689	.770					
	The store's assortment is special.			.679	.753	.637					
<b>Brand Experience</b> (Brakus et al., 2009)	BRAND makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses.	.843	.830	.874	.862	.831	.82	.84	.95	.94	.94
	BRAND is an emotional brand.	.847	.802	.830	.741	.807					

	BRAND results in bodily experiences.	.787	.820	.836	.758	.812					
	BRAND stimulates my curiosity and problem solving.	.796	.828	.782	.806	.804					
	I find BRAND interesting in a sensory way.			.835	.775	.807					
	BRAND induces feelings and sentiments.			.836	.807	.825					
	I have strong emotions for BRAND.			.858	.826	.797					
	I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use BRAND.			.855	.769	.806					
	BRAND is action oriented.			.796	.835	.795					
	I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter BRAND.			.737	.766	.675					
<b>Interpersonal WoM</b> (Maxham & Netemeyer, 2002)	In a personal conversation with friends, I would spread positive word of mouth about BRAND.	.701		.922	.887	.924	.75 (Overall WoM)	.88	.92	.89	.93
	If my friends were looking for advice, I would tell them to try BRAND.	.735		.936	.931	.932					
	I would recommend BRAND to my friends face to face.			.935	.907	.954					

<b>eWoM</b> (Okazaki et al., 2014)	I would write positive things about BRAND online (social media, websites, blogs, etc.)	.825	.932	.919	.901	.80	.92	.89	.91
	To recommend BRAND, I would digitally share, like, or repost its content.	.771	.935	.928	.925				
	I would share my positive experiences with BRAND online, e.g., via Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter.		.924	.876	.926				
<b>Perceived Store Ephemerality</b> (Eisend, 2008)	This store is only available for a limited time.								
<b>NFU</b> (Tian & McKenzie, 2001)	I have sometimes purchased unusual products or brands as a way to create a more distinctive personal image.	.755	.886	.798	.845	.66	.91	.87	.88
	When it comes to the products I buy and the situations in which I use them, I have often broken customs and rules.	.754	.838	.786	.824				
	When a style of clothing I own becomes too commonplace, I usually quit wearing it.	.811	.839	.828	.838				
	I actively seek to develop my personal uniqueness by buying special products or brands.		.847	.824	.824				

	When products or brands I like become extremely popular, I lose interest in them.	.861	.838	.802	
<b>Product Involvement</b> (Mittal & Lee, 1989)	Choosing sanitary ware is an important decision for me.				.88
	Which sanitary ware I buy matters to me a lot.				
<b>Brand Loyalty</b> (Liu-Thompkins & Tam 2013; Yoo & Donthu 2001)	I consider myself to be loyal to BRAND.	.794			.90
	BRAND would be my first choice.	.912			
	I have a strong preference for BRAND.	.929			
	I like BRAND more than similar brands.	.869			
<b>Brand Familiarity</b> (Milberg et al., 2010)	I am very familiar with BRAND.				

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Laura Henkel, Göttingen, den 12. März 2021