Consumer-Driven Memorialization

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Consumer research has focused on market-mediated efforts to memorialize the past, but this overshadows the issues that arise when consumers, as nonprofessionals, make the past consumable. Consumer-driven memorialization is defined as consumer engagement with traces of the past in memoryscapes of low market-mediation that creates a complex interplay of remembering and forgetting. Based on an ethnographic study of urban exploration, we theorize that consumer-driven memorialization comprises two practices of tracing and trace-making. Tracing involves consumer attempts to recover traces of the past, while trace-making involves consumer attempts to create traces for the future. Consumers enact multiple roles during consumer-driven memorialization: explorers experience the past, archaeologists materialize the past, artists aestheticize the past, and historians narrate the past. The theorization of consumer-driven memorialization offers three contributions. First, the dimensions of consumer-driven memorialization broaden understanding of what constitutes a consumable past in contexts of low market-mediation. Second, we explain how the ideological and material challenges that emerge in consumer-driven memorialization generate a complex interplay between remembering and forgetting. Third, we shed light on how consumer-driven memorialization is inscribed in space.

Keywords: memorialization, traces, history, remembering, forgetting

"To do what I do, it brings attention to the place, even if it is just for half an hour and then there is something that I produce from the buildings that is going to be there for prosperity. I can write about them, I can take photos of them, I can paint them, and they will be remembered. [...] It is like putting a message on someone's gravestone. Otherwise, it is just going to be forgotten and it is like it never existed." (Ariel)

Ariel is an urban explorer who photographs abandoned buildings in an attempt to memorialize the past. Abandoned buildings that attract urban explorers can sometimes be derelict shells or can sometimes be full of leftover possessions of prior occupants. These buildings and their contents are traces of the past, defined as "marks, residues or remnants left in place by cultural life" (Anderson 2021, 5). Ariel's account reveals how encounters with traces of the past prompt her to create new traces for the future. These new traces take the form of storytelling and photography as a means of making the past consumable for others. For Ariel, this ensures that the building is remembered and counters the risk of it being forgotten. We interpret such consumer effort as consumer-driven memorialization. In this article, we introduce the concept of consumer-driven memorialization defined as consumer engagement with traces of the past in memoryscapes of low market-mediation that creates a complex interplay of remembering and forgetting.

Consumer research has directed attention to market-mediated efforts to make the past consumable, focusing on brand and marketing managers (Brown, McDonagh, and Shultz 2013; Brunk, Giesler, and Hartmann 2018), government and policy-makers (Coskuner-Balli 2020), and

tourism agents (Thompson and Tian 2008). While prior work acknowledges consumers as co-creators of meanings of the past (Belk and Costa 1998; Chronis, Arnould, and Hampton 2012; Peñaloza 2001), it overshadows consumers as the drivers of memorialization. This limits our understanding of the issues that arise when consumers, as non-professionals, make the past consumable. In extending the focus beyond highly market-mediated settings, we follow Samuel's (2012, 10) observation that memorialization is the "work of a thousand different hands" to foreground the roles that consumers play in driving memorialization.

Memorialization is dynamic as "what it contrives symptomatically to forget is as important as what it remembers" (Samuel 2012, xxiii). The interplay between remembering and forgetting points toward the various ideological and material challenges that may arise when making the past consumable. Market-mediated mythmaking can depoliticize the past, resulting in the erasure of politically problematic countermemories (Brunk et al. 2018). Market-mediated actors also use ambiguity to increase resonance for consumers, resulting in the malleability of historical meanings (Brown et al. 2013). Often the power of market-mediated actors operates to silence, or at least overshadow, less powerful voices (Thompson and Tian 2008). Much of this work indicates how highly market-mediated representations can sanitize the past to make it more consumable. This results in a form of "memory selectivity" (Marcoux 2017, 959) that filters out or rearranges the past in ways that blur remembering and forgetting.

We build on prior consumer research associated with market-mediated actors by prioritizing the active role consumers play in driving memorialization. We are guided by the following research questions: How do consumers, as nonprofessionals, memorialize the past in low market-mediated settings? How do remembering and forgetting interplay in consumer-driven memorialization? We draw on the theoretical framing of meshwork offered by Ingold (2015, 2016) in our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization. Meshwork is a boundless arrangement that accommodates multiple temporal trajectories (past, present, future). In simple terms, we view meshwork as a temporal assemblage that captures the ongoing generation of traces over time. As well as capturing evidence of cultural life, traces can also be erased, mis-remembered, and forgotten (Anderson 2021). A meshwork perspective thus enables us to respond to Brunk et al.'s (2018, 1340) call for research that approaches "remembering and forgetting dynamically over time as an outcome that is temporarily attained."

The substantive contribution of this article is a theorization of consumer-driven memorialization that comprises two practices of tracing and trace-making. Tracing involves consumer attempts to recover traces of the past, while trace-making involves consumer attempts to create traces for the future. We demonstrate the performative quality of consumer-driven memorialization by identifying the roles of explorer and archaeologist that occur during tracing, and the roles of artist and historian that occur during trace-making. Explorers experience the past, archaeologists materialize the past, artists aestheticize the past, and historians narrate the past. Our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization offers three contributions. First, we theorize the dimensions of consumer-driven memorialization that broaden understanding of what constitutes a consumable past in contexts of low market-mediation. Second, we explain how the ideological and material challenges that emerge in consumer-driven memorialization generate a complex interplay between remembering and forgetting. Third, we shed light on how consumer-driven memorialization is inscribed in space.

Our article is structured as follows. We begin with the theoretical foundations for the research that is organized into sections relating to memorializing the past, traces of the past, meshwork, and meshwork and memorialization in contexts of high market-mediation. The details of our 3-year ethnographic study of urban exploration are presented. Our findings discuss the four roles that consumers play in consumer-driven memorialization. We close with a discussion of our contributions and offer directions for future research.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Memorializing the Past

We conceptualize memorialization on a gradient from high to low market-mediation. Table 1 illustrates four dimensions to explain this gradient: performative scripts, type of memory, memoryscape staging, and memorialization narratives. The shaded background on the table illustrates the gradated degrees of market-mediation, with the darker shade indicating higher levels. Importantly, high and low market-mediation are not binary conditions but rather may emerge in varying degrees across the dimensions. In contexts of high market-mediation, memorialization is more driven by market actors, but this does not preclude the active role of consumers. Equally, in contexts of low market-mediation, memorialization is more consumer-driven, but this does not preclude the presence of market resources.

The first dimension of performative scripts refers to the extent to which consumers' engagement with the past is scripted within memoryscapes. In memoryscapes with high market-mediation, consumer engagement is highly scripted. This aligns with Bennett's (1995) Foucauldian-inspired analysis of the museum as a space of regulation involving technologies of social and behavior management. Further along the gradient, consumers can engage in more performative freedom through, for example interactive exhibits; yet, their behavior may still be subject to

TABLE 1

GRADIENT OF HIGH TO LOW MARKET-MEDIATION IN MEMORIALIZATION

	High market-mediation ⟷ Low market-mediation	
Performative scripts	Scripted performances	Unscripted performances
Type of memory	Established memories	Overlooked memories
Memoryscape staging	Commercial staging	Consumer staging
Memorialization narratives	Commercial interpretations	Consumer interpretations

some degree of regulation. This is because even in market-mediated contexts that enable performative freedom, memoryscapes are still "carefully orchestrated by producers, designers and retailers" (Gabriel and Lang 2006, 83) who regulate appropriate consumer conduct. At the lowest level of market-mediation, memoryscapes have fewer performative scripts and behavioral restrictions, such as industrial ruins that lie outside regulatory regimes (Edensor 2005).

The second dimension on the gradient is type of memory. Established memory refers to commonly accepted accounts of the past that are often highly market-mediated by commercial mythmakers (such as marketing agents and tourist promoters) who imbue goods, services and experiences with culturally resonant stories (Brunk et al. 2018; Thompson and Tian 2008). Moving along the gradient, memories emerge from the interplay between consumers and market actors, and as the consumer takes a more active role in memorialization, memories may be reimagined over time. Such reimagination may catalyze invented traditions (Hobsbawm 1983) that signal sociocultural shifts in how we interpret the past. At the other end of the gradient, overlooked memories are characterized by a lack of interest from market and other institutional actors (such as historians) due to a perceived lack of sociocultural significance.

The third dimension on the gradient from high to low market-mediation is memoryscape staging that refers to how memory becomes inscribed in space. In contexts with high market-mediation such as heritage sites, monuments, and museums, market actors may stage the memoryscape through constructing physical landscapes and displaying artifacts (Chronis et al. 2012). As we move along the gradient, the degree of consumers' active involvement in memoryscape staging increases. For example, in both historical re-enactments (Belk and Costa 1998) and living museums (Goulding 2001), consumers interact with the space and each other in ways that can recreate the past. At the other end of the gradient, memoryscapes with low market-mediation may be consumer-constructed, for example persevering space in the home in memory of a family member.

The final dimension on the gradient from high to low market-mediation is memorialization narratives. In heritage or museum sites that are highly market-mediated, we may encounter "narrative and dramatic fixing" that can "banish ambiguity" (Edensor 2005, 831). Under these conditions, commercial memorialization narratives are likely to dominate. Moving along the gradient, memorialization narratives can be co-created by market actors and consumers. This occurs when memorializations stem from both mediatized consumer culture and the consumer's personal values and lived experiences. A prime example is Chronis et al.'s (2012) analysis of Gettysburg where master narratives portrayed by market actors are used as a springboard for reimagined consumer narratives. The memorialization of iconic events can become increasingly ambiguous over time and may amplify consumer curiosity (Brown et al. 2013), or may prompt consumers to become playful and oppositional to commodified memoryscapes (Peñaloza 2001). Although this creates fluidity in memorialization narratives, consumer interpretations are arguably more diverse in contexts where there is lower market-mediation. In these memoryscapes, we witness fragmented narratives, ambiguity, and an excess of contradictory meanings that require fuller performative and corporeal engagement to access meaning (Edensor 2005).

In viewing memorialization as a gradient of high to low market-mediation, rather than a binary, we are better able to highlight the complex interplay of remembering and forgetting. Prior research has explored the ideological and material challenges that arise in memorialization with higher degrees of market-mediation (Brown et al. 2013; Brunk et al. 2018; Thompson and Tian 2008). However, the complex interplay between remembering and forgetting is less well understood in contexts with low market-mediation in which memorialization efforts are consumer-driven. This is important because we know from previous research that consumers intentionally engage in forgetting

while memorializing the past (Marcoux 2017). Developing an understanding of forgetting becomes even more significant when consumers, as nonprofessionals, make the past consumable for others.

Traces of the Past

Traces are defined as "marks, residues or remnants left in place by cultural life" (Anderson 2021, 5). Traces have been the focus of research in various disciplines. For example, anthropologists attend to cultural traces (Napolitano 2015), geographers to place traces (Anderson 2021), archaeologists to material traces (Buchli and Lucas 2001), and historians to traces of the past (Munslow 1997). Traces manifest in various forms including material (e.g., objects, buildings) and nonmaterial (e.g., emotions, memories); stem from human and nonhuman actors (e.g., animals, weather); and are visible and nonvisible (e.g., sensed by sound, taste, or scent) (Anderson 2021). This body of research on traces highlights two practices of tracing and trace-making that we adopt in our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization. We define tracing as consumer attempts to recover traces of the past, and trace-making as consumer attempts to create traces for the future.

In consumer research, tracing is evident in acts of discovery during consumer attempts to trace object provenance (Arsel and Bean 2013) and various burgeoning industries such as DNA testing for genetic ancestry (Hirschman and Panther-Yates 2008). Research has also explored familial traces through inheritance of keepsakes, heirlooms, and gifted assets (Bradford 2009; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000; Türe and Ger 2016). In these cases, beneficiaries become caretakers or guardians of possessions to maintain inalienable wealth. Such an approach is attentive to the things left behind (Napolitano 2015). Previous consumer research has recognized the pivotal role of materiality in both remembering (Turley and O'Donohoe 2012) and forgetting (Marcoux 2017). A material focus is what Ivy (1995) refers to as the mattering of memory that acknowledges the inextricable connection between material and meaning (Hodder 2012). This requires us to recognize that meanings emerge not from the trace itself but rather from interactions with it (Thibault 2018). As a result, traces do not always hold a singular meaning. Consumer research highlights how traces prompt heterogeneity in memorialization of historical iconic brands (Brown et al. 2013) and in the portrayal of memories and countermemories that shape historical and cultural identity (Brunk et al. 2018; Goulding and Domic 2009; Thompson and Tian 2008).

In consumer research, trace-making can be found in street artists' attempts to inscribe their traces onto the built environment during place-marking (Visconti et al. 2010), and in tattooed consumers' attempts to inscribe embodied memory traces into their flesh (Roux and Belk 2019; Steadman, Banister, and Medway 2019). The trace-maker produces traces through skilled and material inscriptions (Thibault 2018). Creating traces can be unintentional, and consequently, inevitable (Paxton and Griffiths 2017). This is most apparent in the digital domain where trace-making emerges in digital footprints (Belk 2013; Hoffman and Novak 2018; Mardon and Belk 2018). Hoffman and Novak (2018) use an assemblage approach to reveal how these digital traces become arranged. Another approach to arranging traces, which is the one we follow in this article, is meshwork (Ingold 2015, 2016). We review Ingold's meshwork in the next section as the basis for our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization.

Meshwork

Meshwork is a "boundless and ever-extending" (Ingold 2015, 11) arrangement comprised of traces from multiple temporal trajectories (past, present, future). In simple terms, we view meshwork as a temporal assemblage that captures the ongoing generation of traces over time. In theorizing meshwork, Ingold critiques theoretical perspectives that portray fixed understandings of sociocultural life and instead draws attention to the ongoing activity of human and nonhuman trace-makers. We consider meshwork a particularly useful approach in our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization because it enables "tracing action" that goes "beyond present-times" (Canniford and Bajde 2015, 6).

Meshwork is useful for understanding the diverse interpretations that emerge in consumer-driven memorialization. This is because meshwork is held together through knots (Ingold 2015, 2016) where many diverse traces can be drawn together and kept in place. For example, in relation to our epigraph, Ariel's memorialization through storytelling, photography, and paintings may differ from another urban explorer's memorialization of the same building. A key characteristic of traces in the meshwork is that they are contrapuntal (Ingold 2015), meaning that each trace coexists with other traces. Rather than being fused together in a totality, they remain loosely tied because although traces are "bound together *in* the knot, they are not bound *up* by it" (Ingold 2016, 104). This creates "knots of histories" (Napolitano 2015, 47) that generate diverse interpretations of the past. We see this in Brown et al.'s (2013, 604) analysis of the Titanic as a "meanings magnet" whereby ambiguous myths accumulate over time.

We define accumulation of meaning over time as temporal layers. Temporal layers are informed by a perduranist perspective that calls us "to follow things through in their temporal trajectories" (Ingold 2013, 81). This involves considering the emergence, development, and demise of traces within the meshwork. Temporal layers capture the modification of traces (Lynch 1972), and their potential

erosion and erasure that may lead to them being "mis-remembered or forgotten" (Anderson 2015, 15). Being attentive to temporal layers allows us to develop more expansive interpretations of the past by revealing additions and erasures over time. Temporal layers are therefore useful in exploring the complex interplay of remembering and forgetting in consumer-driven memorialization.

In the next section, we review relevant work that has operationalized Ingold's meshwork within the context of memorialization. While this prior work focuses on meshworks that are catalyzed by market-mediated actors, it offers a useful basis for our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization.

Meshwork and Memorialization in Contexts of High Market-Mediation

A useful application of Ingold's meshwork is found in Allen and Brown's (2016) conceptualization of the Hyde Park 7/7 memorial in London as a commemorative space that knots together diverse and unanticipated memorializations:

> "[I]t also enables a capacity to tolerate unexpected and potentially unwelcome activities—such as graffiti or homeless camps—that bring their own historical trajectories into the meshwork. Because these other unanticipated flows are what will ultimately ensure that the site and the event that it seeks to commemorate will, to some degree, remain a live object of concern, whatever form that might take, rather than disappear into the unnoticed world of commemorations which fail to matter to the communities around them." (Allen and Brown 2016, 25–26)

The memorial can be regarded as highly market-mediated due to its staging by professional designers who sought to memorialize each victim from the 7/7 bombings. As well as the performative scripts associated with remembering victims, the meshwork extends to unregulated performative scripts (such as graffiti). Knots are key to understanding Allen and Brown's (2016, 25) observation that "different and unanticipated" flows of activity are knotted together in the meshwork but without the prioritization of one dominant narrative. This means that the meshwork is anchored in diverse and ongoing moments of human engagement that enables the past to remain a live object of concern.

High market-mediation results in the material perdurance of memoryscapes as market actors seek to preserve sites of established memory. Watts (2018, 380) draws attention to how material perdurance "acts as a kind of beacon for experiential engagement" and promotes memory work that is led by "dialogical participation rather than didactic instruction." In highly market-mediated sites, consumer engagement can be dialogically participative in which meanings are co-produced (Peñaloza 2001) and co-performed (Belk and Costa 1998). This attention to dialogical participation leads to somewhat similar conclusions as Allen and Brown (2016) on the open meanings embedded in memorialization. Both of these studies demonstrate the democratization of memory-making as they shift emphasis from closed narratives of the past produced by market-mediated actors to how consumers can be drawn into memorialization.

We build on prior work on memoryscapes with high market-mediation to consider how consumer-driven memorialization can occur in memoryscapes with low market-mediation. These memoryscapes draw attention to "surplus materialities and meanings" associated with traces of overlooked people, places, and things (Edensor 2005, 834). Legg (2004, 481) reminds us that history is regarded as the "story of the triumphant" whereas memory is a "democratic enterprise" open to all that is imbued with emotion and affect (Assman 2008). We follow this distinction and consider history as an institutionally controlled intellectual project that promotes dominant interpretations of the past. In contrast, memory is embodied and belongs to individuals and groups who proliferate their own diverse interpretations of the past (Assman 2008; Nora 1989). Prior consumer research has overlooked the role of consumers as drivers of memorialization that limits our understanding of the issues that arise when consumers, as nonprofessionals, make the past consumable. To redress this gap, we use the context of urban exploration as the basis for our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Context

Urban exploration is a subcultural activity in which individuals explore and memorialize abandoned buildings through photography in efforts to draw attention to overlooked memories. It refers to exploring abandoned structures, such as hospitals, factories, subterranean tunnels, and residential buildings. Sites of urban exploration may contain market resources (such as abandoned objects), but they are characterized by low market-mediation as access is not facilitated by the market. Instead, consumers engage in recreational trespass (Garrett 2014) to gain access to buildings and develop their own interpretation of the past without guidance from market actors. Urban exploration is thus ideally matched with our intention of theorizing consumer-driven memorialization and how consumers, as nonprofessionals, engage with traces of the past.

The roots of urban exploration have been traced to early accounts of individuals, such as Philibert Aspairt's exploration of the Parisian catacombs in 1793, while contemporary accounts relate it to subcultural groups, such as San Francisco Suicide Club in the 1970s (Ninjalicious 2005). Urban exploration is guided by the shared code of "take

only photographs, leave only footprints." The code prohibits damage to locations and demands explorers use existing structural breaches to gain entry, do not remove objects, and leave locations fully intact. Not all explorers follow the code as we discuss within our findings. The illicit nature of urban exploration leads explorers to extraordinary physical lengths to gain access to buildings and hide from patrolling security services. Urban exploration is very dangerous and has resulted in deaths through falling and drowning in subterranean drains. Some explorers are motivated by thrill-seeking, whereas some are motivated by the right to explore beyond the restrictions of the law (Garrett 2014). Others are driven to memorialize the past and draw attention to the plight of abandoned buildings (Garrett 2011).

Urban exploration involves a relatively consistent set of practices, despite the variety of urban exploration sites. Urban explorers engage in complex research practices to locate buildings including using online maps, conservation listings, and national databases. They conduct reconnaissance trips under the cover of darkness or by early morning light to avoid detection. They find access through holes in fences, broken windows and doorways, or may scale walls to reach gaps in the buildings' structure. Once inside, urban explorers search through the interior and absorb the atmosphere of the abandoned building. Some locations are completely empty, whereas others may be full of abandoned possessions and material decay. Urban explorers photographically document their surroundings to create a souvenir of their experience and a trace of the building. In this way, urban explorers are "temporal alchemists, churning the past, present, and to some extent the future into new and exciting forms" (Garrett 2011, 1065).

Urban exploration photography is shared on forums and social media. These forums are very active and have contributed to the enduring cultural fascination with abandonment that harkens back to 18th century Romanticism in which ruins were admired for their aesthetic power

(Woodward 2002), wild desolation, and sublime grandeur. Contemporary expressions of such ruin-pleasure (Macaulay 1953) include urban exploration horror films and ruin porn photography that celebrates the aesthetic decline of the built environment (Trigg 2007). The allure of modern ruins has been linked to social critiques of capitalism (Apel 2015) and societal failure (Crawford 2015). For example, mass deindustrialization has created a ruin landscape (Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2014) and iconic ruin imagery such as images of Detroit. These social changes have provided a wealth of abandoned locations for urban explorers.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following prior consumer cultural studies (Arnould and Price 1993; Canniford and Shankar 2013; Higgins and Hamilton 2019; Scott, Cayla, and Cova 2017), we used an ethnographic approach. Data collection extended over a 3-year period and included a multisite netnography of urban exploration forums and social media, in-depth interviews with urban explorers, and ethnographic fieldwork of abandoned buildings. Table 2 provides a summary of data sources. This multimethod approach allowed immersion within the context and developed a holistic understanding of urban exploration.

Data collection began with online observations of forums, Facebook groups, and personal websites to build an initial understanding of urban exploration. Relevant sites were identified through levels of activity and interactivity (Kozinets 2015). Forums were very active with new posts created on an hourly basis and each forum category (such as asylums, residential sites, industrial sites) having between 1,500 and 5,000 threads. Regular monitoring of discussion threads and social media posts was undertaken on a weekly basis for 1 year.

The netnography facilitated contact with urban explorers who were invited to participate in an interview. Interview

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES

Method	Source	Dataset
Netnography	Urban exploration forums (28dayslater.co.uk and Oblivion State) Urban exploration Facebook groups (Abandoned Uncovered, 28daylater.co.uk Official Facebook Group, and Urban Exploring and Infiltration) Personal websites of urban explorers	230 pages screenshot data, 98 pages netnography fieldnotes
Ethnographic fieldwork	Fieldwork of abandoned buildings in the UK	27 abandoned buildings
Photography	Photographs taken during fieldwork	1,179 photographs
In-depth interviews	Interviews with urban explorers from six countries including United Kingdon, United States, Canada, Italy, Germany, and Netherlands, duration 90 minutes to 4 hours	28 interviews, 630 pages transcription

TABLE 3

INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Age	Gender	Country	Education	Occupation
Josh	38	Male	United Kingdom	Postgraduate	Artisan bike designer
Abby	23	Female	Germany	Undergraduate	Postgraduate student
Matt	25	Male	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	Postgraduate student
Lexi	32	Female	Germany	Not disclosed	Professional photographer
Sam	27	Female	United Kingdom	Postgraduate	Travel writer
Pete	30s	Male	United Kingdom	Postgraduate	Government worker
Aaron	36	Male	Canada	Not disclosed	Sales executive
Andy	21	Male	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	Sportsperson
Connor	25	Male	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	Computer technician
Mila	30s	Female	Germany	Undergraduate	Freelance writer
Rory	30s	Male	United Kingdom	Vocational Qualification	Professional photographer
Simon	30s	Male	United Kingdom	Vocational Qualification	Mental health practitioner
Hanna	22	Female	Germany	Undergraduate	Undergraduate student
William	53	Male	United Kingdom	Vocational Qualification	Disability support worker
Euan	40	Male	United Kingdom	Postgraduate	Freelance building surveyor
Liam	38	Male	United Kingdom	High School	Manufacturing technician
Seb	26	Male	Italy	Undergraduate	Professional photographer
Nick	33	Male	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	Events manager
Lydia	50	Female	United Kingdom	Postgraduate	Magistrate
Tom	40	Male	Canada	Not disclosed	Advertising executive
Ariel	29	Female	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	Writer
Paul	40	Male	United Kingdom	High School	Professional photographer
Luke	32	Male	United Kingdom	High School	Mechanical engineer
Nate	26	Male	United States	Undergraduate	Advertising producer
Ross	38	Male	United Kingdom	High School	IT technician
Rob	40s	Male	United Kingdom	High School	Business executive
Max	40	Male	Netherlands	Not disclosed	Sales manager
Jack	35	Male	United Kingdom	Undergraduate	Self-employed contract cleaner

participants were identified through purposeful and snowball sampling. A total of 28 urban explorers were interviewed who were aged between 21 and 53 years old and were predominately male (one third female) that represents the demographic of the subculture (Mott and Roberts 2014). Participants came from a variety of educational backgrounds, reflecting Garrett's (2014) suggestion that it would be problematic to assume that urban explorers are a homogeneous group. Table 3 provides details of interview participants using pseudonyms to protect anonymity. Interviews followed a semistructured guide (McCracken 1988) which was revised as new themes emerged. Topics of discussion included typical and favorite exploration trips, interactions with other urban explorers, attractions and risks of urban exploration, and approaches to photography. We used auto-driven photo elicitation (Heisley and Levy 1991) of participants' own photography to better probe approaches to tracing and trace-making.

The first author undertook ethnographic fieldwork of 27 abandoned buildings. This enabled participation in urban exploration practices by exploring, researching, and photographing abandoned buildings. Fieldwork enhanced the experiential process of data collection (Pink 2015) and recognized the researcher as a sentient practitioner who develops ways of knowing by moving through the environment (Ingold 2011). A range of sites were selected including abandoned asylums, hospitals, residential sites, seminaries, schools, university campuses, railway stations, and industrial sites.

Both authors worked closely throughout data collection and analysis, meeting regularly to discuss emerging themes. Data collection was completed when we reached the point of theoretical saturation. Data analysis followed an iterative process using Glaser's (1965) constant-comparative method in which intertextual similarities and differences across data sets were identified. Particular attention was given to identifying recurring patterns and processes, and instances of alternative or negative cases (Miles and Huberman 1994). The iterative approach allowed for greater sensitization to themes emerging from the field (Thompson 1997). This allowed back and forth movement between emic terms and etic theorization.

FINDINGS

The substantive contribution of this article is the theorization of consumer-driven memorialization. We define consumer-driven memorialization as consumer engagement with traces of the past in memoryscapes of low market-mediation that creates a complex interplay of

FIGURE 1

CONSUMER-DRIVEN MEMORIALIZATION
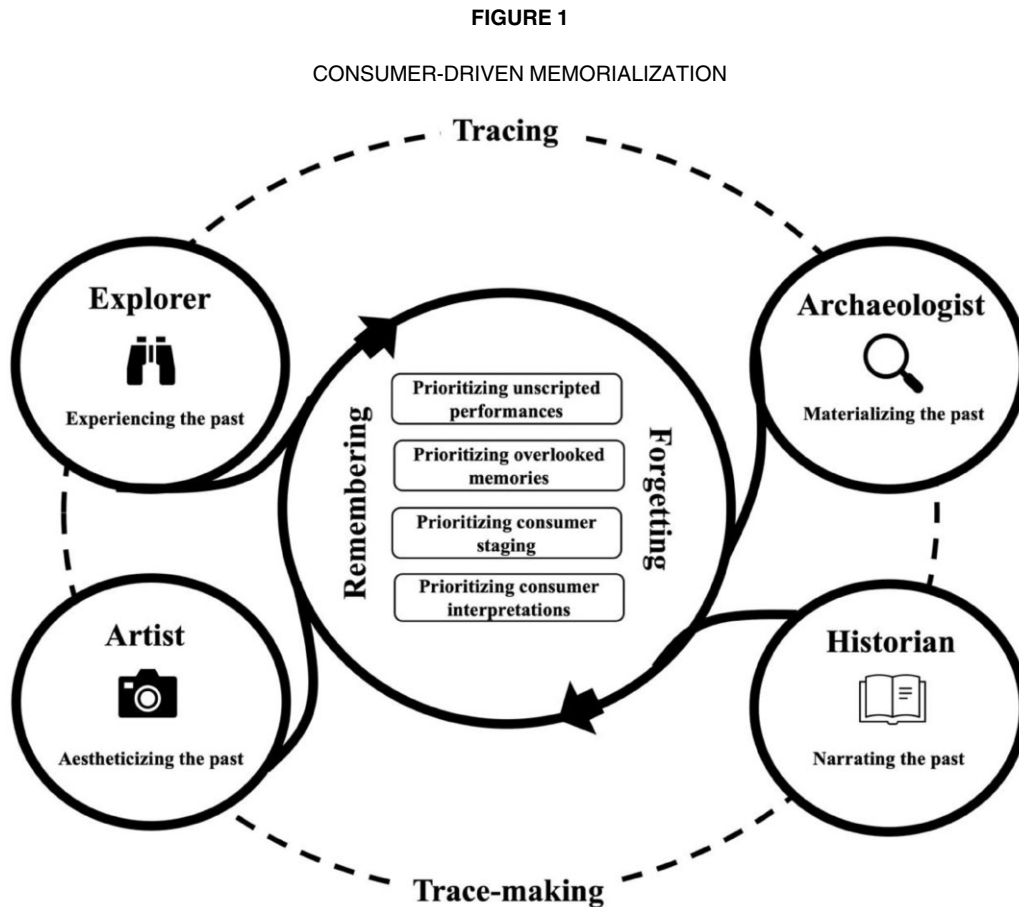
remembering and forgetting. This comprises two practices of tracing and trace-making. Figure 1 serves as the framework for the presentation of our findings. It illustrates tracing and trace-making as part of a cyclical and generative process that knots together diverse memorializations. We identify four roles that consumers enact during their engagement with the past. The roles of explorer and archaeologist occur during tracing, and the roles of artist and historian occur during trace-making. Explorers experience the past, archaeologists materialize the past, artists aestheticize the past, and historians narrate the past.

In making the past consumable for themselves and others, we witness how "remembering can involve forgetting" (Marcoux 2017, 950). We reveal this complex interplay of remembering and forgetting across all four roles. Building on the dimensions identified in table 1, we discuss the challenges associated with prioritizing unscripted performances, overlooked memories, consumer staging, and consumer interpretations associated with low levels of market-mediation. Although we discuss the roles separately, consumers can enact multiple roles

simultaneously during memorialization. These roles demonstrate consumers as active and skilled practitioners (Ingold 2013) in their engagement with the past.

Explorer: Experiencing the Past

The explorer role involves experiencing the past through prioritizing unscripted performances. Within urban exploration, explorers discover and physically explore abandoned buildings and their contents as traces of the past. Concealed locations and lack of obvious entry points are both initial indicators of the unscripted performances at play within urban exploration. Exploring involves detective work and the first challenge is pinpointing locations of abandoned buildings. Often urban explorers spend hours scrutinizing online maps and photographs for traces that reveal a building's location while some opt for a more intrepid approach by physically exploring the landscape. Once abandoned buildings are located, urban explorers confront the puzzle of gaining entry. This challenge is enhanced in buildings where there are official efforts to

FIGURE 2

NATE'S ABANDONED ASYLUM
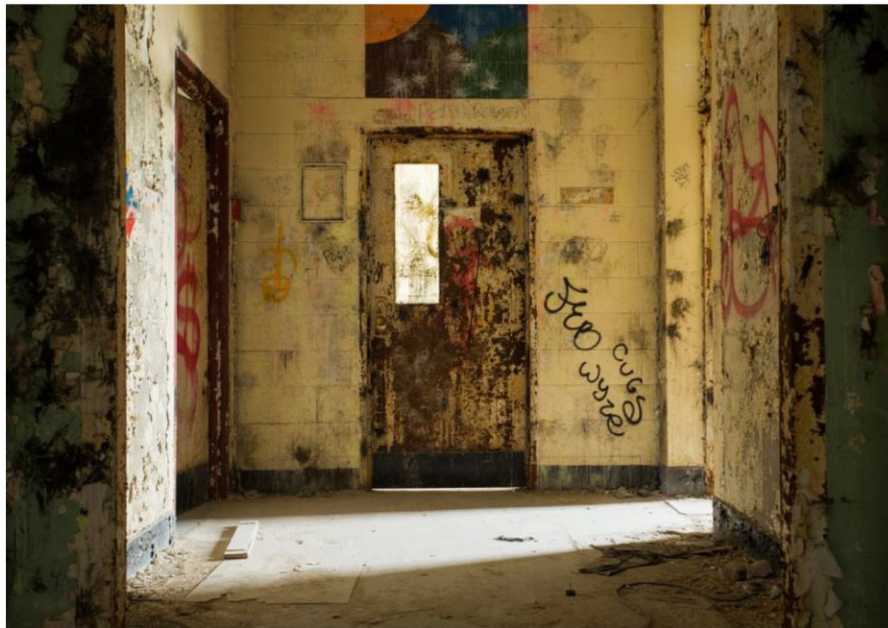
keep explorers out as illustrated by Nate's discussion of an abandoned asylum in New York (figure 2):

> "Gaining entrance is always a question mark because they are constantly boarding up the old exits and then other people are creating new ones. So it is kind of like a puzzle, like a Rubik's Cube. You always get to find the new entrance, like game playing with the people who keep up the place. It is also avoiding detection. You are sneaking around. It is a much more elaborate game of hide and seek [...] At the same time when you start thinking about the history of it and the history of mental health at that time, it can be very, very sad. Like just looking at it. You get to look at these spaces and thinking that was not an empty bed, that was somebody's bed." (Nate)

In contexts of high market-mediation, Gabriel and Lang (2006) depict the consumer as an explorer who is driven by thrill-seeking, curiosity, and allure of the unknown. These drivers are arguably enhanced in urban exploration sites that are characterized by an absence of performative scripts. For Nate, accessing the asylum involves a shift away from scripted navigation to a form of "game playing" that is entirely reliant on the shifting openings in the asylum. Nate reveals the ever-changing composition of the asylum as access-routes become blocked and other urban explorers create new openings in the building's structure.

Ingold (2011) likens such embodied explorations that are attentional to the traces left by others as wayfaring.

Wayfaring becomes a means of remembering as "one remembers as one goes along" (2011, 16). This occurs in two distinct ways for Nate. First, he references various childhood games that reveals the playful performative script inherent to the explorer role, but also one that implicates remembering a personal past. Second, the empty hospital beds prompt reflection on traumatic mental health treatments that were once commonplace at the asylum. The abandoned asylum becomes a palimpsest of shifting meanings that retain traces of the building's origin alongside new traces of decay that signal its inevitable transformation following its abandonment. We witness how traces shape the abandoned asylum as a multilayered memoryscape that reinterprets a place of trauma as a place of play. This reinterpretation illustrates how meanings can accumulate over time that we refer to as temporal layers.

Similar to other extraordinary experiences (Arnould and Price 1993; Canniford and Shankar 2013; Scott et al. 2017), Ross frames urban exploration as a form of escapism from his everyday routine.

> "You are on the grounds and you are climbing up a drainpipe to get through a window, crawling through a board that is loose. As soon as you start doing that the excitement just starts and you just get lost, everything else disappears. All the crap that comes from the daily routine that you have just lived for the past five days just gone. So I get the excitement, the nerves and then the freedom really from

everything else outside. It is just fun. It is brilliant. [. . .] By going to these places I get the peace and quiet, I get to soak in the history of these places." (Ross)

Whereas discoveries within highly market-mediated settings tend to be "simulated pseudo-explorations" because they are orchestrated by market actors (Gabriel and Lang 2006, 83), urban explorers seek more unique experiences. Ross's account conveys excitement and dramatic tension as he engages in physical bodywork and thrill-seeking that are a far cry from the highly regulated performative scripts enacted in market-mediated memoryscapes. In contrast, the memoryscapes with low market-mediation that Ross refers to, have limited regulation of performative scripts beyond the community code of 'take only photographs, leave only footprints.' This is meaningful for Ross because it enables unregulated physical and mental immersion so he can fully absorb the history of abandoned buildings. Immersion in these memoryscapes layers the past and the present because, as theorized by Ingold (2016, 17), memory-making is simultaneously an opportunity to "cover the same ground" (past) and "an original movement" (present). Thus, while Ross engages with traces of the past within abandoned buildings, his words also convey the immediacy of exploring. The "performative, corporeal engagement" (Edensor 2005, 834) required to explore memoryscapes with low market-mediation demands a focus on the here and now to ensure safety. These present moments of experiential consumption are momentarily foregrounded over tracing the past.

Unscripted performances not only manifest physically but also emerge through the explorer's affective engagement with traces of the past. Some accounts of urban exploration involve playful ventures of speculation; for example, Hanna approaches exploring with an imaginative gaze:

> "There are also buildings that are still in good condition and I think if you find a place like that then you are thrown back into another century. [. . .] You have this inner cinema when you go. If you have a castle built in the 18th century, it just feels like you are actually in this time. It is the thought that the past has happened there. Magic doesn't always have to be supernatural because if you are walking around in an old ball house, you can imagine the glamour and the parties. It is like these decayed Disney moments." (Hanna)

For Hanna, buildings are evocative spaces (Higgins and Hamilton 2019) that animate the past through catalyzing cultural archetypes. By constructing her own "inner cinema" that showcases a range of imagined events, Hanna engages in dialogical participation (Watts 2018) by employing cultural archetypes from Disney which she layers with the traces of the old castle to support her imaginative fantasies. Hanna's imaginings of faded grandeur add new layers of meaning to the castle. This imaginative response to traces of the past stems from her present-day

unscripted embodied movement in the space. Experiences of "embodied (re)imagining" (Chronis et al. 2012, 276) encountered in abandoned buildings boosts what Ingold (2016, 122) refers to as "narrative interweaving of present and past." For Ingold (2015, 141), the power of imagination lies in "appearing things" rather than in a factual and complete interpretation of the past. This is intensified by unscripted performances that are entirely unregulated by market actors that consequentially have implications for remembering and forgetting.

Remembering and Forgetting: Prioritizing Unscripted Performances. Unscripted performances can risk material damage to traces of the past. In the absence of supervision, consumers may transgress conventionally agreed codes of conduct by creating their own entry points to memoryscapes. This human destruction meshes with natural decay to prompt changes in the building's structure that enhance its precariousness. Material changes can repurpose memoryscapes in ways that encourage forgetting. Due to the unscripted character of consumer performances in memoryscapes with low market-mediation, the past can become obscured in foregrounding experiential encounters. Our analysis in this section reveals that experiencing the past creates a complex meshwork of embodiment and imagination. By centralizing embodiment and imagination over historical fact, consumer-driven memorialization may cultivate forgetting. For example, although Nate acknowledges the traumatic past of the asylum, his engagement is more heavily dominated by play and thrill-seeking.

While the performative scripts in highly market-mediated memoryscapes at least retain some "genealogical threads" (Thompson and Tian 2008, 611) from the past, we see how such threads in memoryscapes with low market-mediation become much more tenuous. A focus on experiencing the past makes it more consumable but may result in consumer imaginings that generate new embodied experiences of the past. Consumer imaginings add layers to the meshwork and reinforce how meaning emerges not from traces themselves but from interaction with them (Thibault 2018). This is further amplified within the archaeologist role when urban explorers interact with abandoned material culture.

Archaeologist: Materializing the Past

The archaeologist role involves materializing the past through prioritizing overlooked memories. While some abandoned buildings are merely shells and have been stripped of all possessions, others remain largely intact and contain various artifacts that act as traces of the past. This intact state is common within abandoned residential properties that are often overlooked as valued memoryscapes when compared to sites of established memory, such as battlefields, tombs, and monuments. Urban explorers find

FIGURE 3

SIMON'S VICTORIAN PRAM

value in even the most mundane and everyday material culture that market actors may have overlooked and mention a vast range of discovered artifacts such as children's toys, perfume bottles, diaries, hairbrushes, furniture, and rosary beads. Simon's discussion of finding a Victorian pram (see figure 3), following a 4-year search, demonstrates how emotions are embedded in the archaeologist role:

> "I actually got my dream at the weekend! It was a Victorian pram. I have been searching for them [. . .] I walked into the upstairs bedroom and there was this wooden television from about 1940, some children's toys on the windowsill, and next to it this old pram, the really old ones that the Victorians used to push around. Oh God I nearly had a heart attack! I went and touched it and smelt it and everything. I was so happy to see it, it was like I had won the lottery. That house hadn't been opened in about 30 to 40 years [. . .] It is like stepping into another world. The history of the whole thing and the mystique is at the core of it because you don't know what you are going to find. You walk into a frozen snapshot of a previous time. [. . .] They are the most natural museum because they are not contrived and put together by some curator. They are as they were in use, so they are the perfect kind of museum because you are seeing them in their proper situation, in their proper context." (Simon)

Simon's tireless search of abandoned residences was driven by his love of vintage perambulators that are rarely found intact. Urban explorers' engagement with abandoned artifacts that have been seemingly overlooked and

untouched for decades means that they re-emerge as live objects of concern (Allen and Brown 2016). The pram can be considered as a survivor object (Sturken 2016) that has persisted from the time of its abandonment. Engagement with survivor objects can be a moving experience. For Simon, the Victorian pram has evocative qualities and his sensory exploration of the material and nonmaterial traces associated with the pram is clearly accompanied by excitement. The "natural museums" of urban exploration enable market resources (such as abandoned possessions) to catalyze consumer-driven meanings that emerge within memoryscapes with low market-mediation. Ingold (2013) prioritizes the memory work in archeological endeavors as more important than the artifact itself. As such, Simon's sensorial engagement becomes where the work of memorialization lies. While Sturken (2016, 19) suggests that the process of museumization imbues survivor objects with "mystical and magical qualities," we offer an alternative scenario where these survivor objects are special precisely because they have been left in place.

William describes a coveted memoryscape that is notorious amongst urban explorers because the abandoned house contains a 1965 Rolls Royce Silver Shadow. Similar to above, the allure of the brand reveals how market resources can prompt consumer-driven memorialization. William regularly visits this abandoned home of a wealthy businessman and narrates finding old photographs, financial records, and letters. He recounts one visit when he arrived

under the cover of darkness to wait for sunrise before exploring:

> "I had to go in the pitch black, I had to walk up the stairs into the house and sit until it reached daylight. I was shit scared. [. . .] It had rained that much through the night that the roof had came down. When I went in it fell right on top of me and hit me on the side of the face. It was like a Spielberg film, I could not tell you what it was like. I felt this big whack, bruised, but then when I looked up all these papers started floating down that were in this cupboard that nobody had seen! Nobody had seen! I found all of this amazing stuff. [The deceased owner] was in the original Glasgow to Monte Carlo car race with Jaguar and I saw a photograph of him in it! To me that was unbelievable history." (William)

William's comparison to a Hollywood blockbuster and the language he uses calls attention to his sensory and affective engagement. In narrating fear and excitement, William embraces affect as core to his time in the abandoned home which reaches an "atmospheric climax" (Hill, Canniford, and Eckhardt 2022, 129) when the contents of the cupboard are released. The uniqueness of the Rolls Royce generated an urban legend around this location that attracts urban explorers from across the country. While most focus their tracing efforts on the Rolls Royce, William prioritizes recovering the backstory of the occupant by learning more about his life through letters and photographs that have been overlooked by other urban explorers. These abandoned artifacts "create a kind of corporeal presence" (Sturken 2016, 20) of the departed homeowner that enables William to engage with the past.

Once found, urban explorers must decide what to do with the recovered artifacts. The urban exploration code of 'take only photographs, leave only footprints' provides a constitutive rule (Phipps and Ozanne 2017) that prohibits removing artifacts and disturbing abandoned buildings. However, not everyone follows this rule and urban explorers often debate the ethics of removing artifacts on community forums. One discussion that generated 156 comments is an example of the moral dilemma faced by urban explorers regarding whether removing artifacts is rescue or theft.

> Original Post (Kevin): I know it's an unwritten rule for urban explorers to never take anything. Afraid I can't say that's a rule I always obey [. . .] Having said that, every place where I have taken things was demolished within a year, so whatever I got was going to a dumpster anyway. I am a good person and never bring anyone any harm and I'm at peace with that decision.
>
> Comment (Craig): Shame on any explorer who take anything at all from a derp [derelict place]. You're not fit to be called a proper explorer. That is precisely why the world of exploring is so secretive - too many asshole thieves about [. . .] The brain block [anatomical specimen] you 'rescued'

from a morgue? What you mean is the brain block you stole from a morgue and deprived someone else the chance to see and photograph it for your own greed. Scum.

This heated exchange reveals the alternative epistemologies urban explorers adopt in tracing the past. Kevin imagines the future destruction of the artifacts to justify their removal and secure their material perdurance. Craig rejects this response and does not see it as sufficient justification for breaking the code. Similar to Hill et al.'s (2022, 131) finding that removal of "symbolic and emotionally charged objects" can disrupt atmospheres, Craig views these violations as detrimental to the experience of future urban explorers. Archaeological intervention, such as removing artifacts, can create "cuts in the meshwork" (Hicks 2016, 35) that decontextualize artifacts from their provenance and prohibit the "ability to follow things through in their temporal trajectories" (Ingold 2013, 81). Issues around preservation approaches are normally collective decisions in highly market-mediated memoryscapes but, as this forum exchange shows, these decisions become fragmented within memoryscapes with low market-mediation. This fragmentation results in implications for remembering and forgetting.

Remembering and Forgetting: Prioritizing Overlooked Memories. The archaeologist role highlights significant sociocultural and political issues concerning what histories are considered worthy of remembrance and which are not. Urban explorers materialize a range of places, some of which have obvious grandeur and some of which are more mundane. Unlike the memory selectivity (Marcoux 2017) by market-mediated actors who prioritize memorialization of places and artifacts of sociocultural significance, we see how consumer-driven memorialization can expand remembrance to broader contexts, including abandoned residential properties. Although consumer-driven memorialization in memoryscapes with low market-mediation draws attention to overlooked memories, it does so by assaying "surface material without deep excavation" (Garrett 2011, 1050). This explains why consumers, as nonprofessionals, are limited in their capacity to memorialize the past.

In materializing the past, urban explorers are often drawn to artifacts of notoriety that represent iconic material culture from the past (e.g., Victorian perambulator, vintage car). These artifacts take on the status of legitimate memory objects (Marcoux 2017) because of their rarity in mainstream markets. Such legitimate material culture becomes heavily knotted because these artifacts generate diverse interpretations from the large number of urban explorers who have an interest in them. This opens the opportunity for a proliferation of remembering but equally may have the unintended consequence of a proliferation of forgetting. Prioritizing overlooked memories can become more problematic when consumer-driven memorialization is shared through trace-making. Trace-making involves consumer

FIGURE 4

RORY'S LAYERED TRACE-MAKING

attempts to create traces for the future and is discussed in the following two roles.

Artist: Aestheticizing the Past

The artist role involves aestheticizing the past through prioritizing consumer staging. Trace-making ensures that traces of the past will perdure beyond the lifespan of the buildings themselves. Urban explorers' artistic outputs involve creative expression that contributes to the enduring aesthetic appeal of abandonment (Trigg 2007). Rory creatively stages abandoned family photographs he retrieved from an abandoned high-rise apartment to imbue his own photography with meaning:

> "Personal photographs left behind is bizarre and really kind of mad to me because I think they are the most treasured things that you take. [. . .] That to me gave it more meaning and a better documentation. I wanted to find out what happened there and who lived there. To do something better than just taking photographs. When you are in these empty places, you kind of have a duty, sounds bit wankish, but you have a responsibility, you have an opportunity to actually do and record something special." (Rory)

In figure 4, trace-making begins with Rory standing in the same scene from which the original photograph of the children was taken. This allows him to better capture the presence of the absent residents in his photography. Rory's

trace-making retains distinct temporal parts (Donnelly 2011) of past and present as he layers the abandoned photographs over present day scenes of abandonment to "record something special." These temporal layers animate history as the abandoned high-rise regains meanings of family, play, and home. This draws attention to the ability for the past to re-surface in the present as a means of "awakening memories" (Marcoux 2017, 962). The temporal layers within Rory's photographs demonstrate that "the past is not finished but active in the present" (Ingold 2016, 21).

The sense of responsibility that Rory mentions might be interpreted as a "moral imperative" (Tait 2011, 1221) that inspires him to publish a photobook in which he produces an aesthetic testimony to the plight of disappearing high-rise housing. This form of public housing is often associated with deprivation due to poor construction and lack of maintenance. Much of this housing in the United Kingdom has been demolished and does not tend to be celebrated and memorialized given its connotations as a failed social project. In contrast to such forgetting, Rory becomes a memory keeper (Marcoux 2017) who aestheticizes the past though consumer staging and brings attention to this form of housing as a "visceral phenomenon" (Tait 2011, 1229).

Urban explorers' artistic outputs simultaneously preserve the past and are an "act of inscription" (Ingold 2015, 60) that reflect their own identity and aesthetic style. These inscriptions can be imbued with emotional and personal

FIGURE 5

ROB'S ABANDONED STAIRCASE

significance. Rob draws on his embodied aesthetic experiences (Joy and Sherry 2003) to edit and stage his photographs in a way that expresses his emotional response to abandonment (see figure 5):

> "I just tend to capture what I feel at the time. I am trying to represent slightly darker than what you originally see because that is sometimes how the scene is when you go in there. They weren't always happy places, so I tend to darken them up. Sometimes it is how you feel when you are processing [photographs]. Ultimately that is why the pictures may tend to show a slightly sadder side than making it bright and cheerful because at the end of the day it has been left. Why has it been left? Something has not gone right, and something may have gone dramatically wrong." (Rob)

Rob's questioning of the circumstances of abandonment offers value to understand how people use the past as a means of epistemic reflection. Within these memoryscapes of low market-mediation, Rob is left to imagine the circumstances that have led to abandonment. Herein, we witness photographs as "inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy" (Sontag 1977, 23). Rob's fascination with abandonment started with playing in WWII air raid shelters and childhood adventures with his father in disused prisoner of war (POW) hospitals. Years later, Rob aesthetically imbues his photographs with emotion rather than being concerned with an indexical representation of the original. His approach to trace-making is

that of iconic authenticity (Grayson and Martinec 2004). From this perspective, consumer staging within consumer-driven memorialization can result in an emotional aestheticization of the past.

Previously, we saw play emerge in experiencing the past during tracing. Play also emerges in aestheticization of the past during trace-making. Self-photography is another "act of inscription" (Ingold 2015, 60) that urban explorers use to imbue their photographs with their own identity. This can sometimes take the form of what Paul refers to as a "theatrical selfie." A theatrical selfie involves adorning a mask that evokes an alternative persona, such as monkeys, clowns, and zombies. This sense of playfulness is visible in figure 6 in which urban explorers perform dramaturgical roles for the camera. Such ludic masquerading (Seregina and Weijo 2017) adds new layers of playful meaning to abandoned buildings. In this particular example, we see the layering of urban explorers' informal and farcical performance against the grand ancestral home with its display of family lineage through formal portraits. On the one hand, these highly staged theatrical selfies generate consumer fascination and help make the past consumable. On the other hand, such consumer staging may divert attention away from traces of the past because new meanings may be at odds with original meanings.

Some urban explorers inscribe traces of themselves to create a perduring record of their own existence. They

FIGURE 6

THEATRICAL SELFIE.

often empathize with the precarious trajectories of abandoned buildings that they relate to the fragility of human life. From this perspective, abandoned buildings offer a "rhetorical vehicle" (Brown et al. 2013, 608) for talking about death as urban explorers compare the inevitable demise of buildings to their own mortality. Ross explains the importance of creating traces for himself and his local community:

> "I get to create memories, I get to share memories. So what it means to me is freedom and sharing and creating memories for myself and for others who look at my stuff, read my website. [. . .] All of my pictures are so dark and sort of my pictures represent me. [. . .] There is only one thing that is inevitable and that is death unfortunately. You know I am not an educated lad so if I can leave my mark in one way then that works for me. I want my pictures to be getting looked at when I am no longer around. That is my goal to document as much as possible of buildings that aren't going to be around for too much longer." (Ross)

For Ross, urban exploration simultaneously catalyzes reflections on the past and reflections on the future. As a web-designer by trade, Ross has built an online memoryscape whereby he systematically archives his exploration photography. Here we see trace-making practices extend the meshwork into the digital domain that increases the scope for creativity. Ross stages photographs with his own "dark and moody" aesthetic style that allows him to leave his "mark" through photography in an effort to be remembered by future generations. By creating an online memoryscape, Ross generates a digital legacy (Belk 2013) in anticipation that future generations will regard it as a carefully curated archive.

Unlike previous work where custodians rejuvenate the past by merging past and present in a relatively neat fusion of family identity (Türe and Ger 2016), urban explorers rejuvenate a past to which they have no familial connection. This results in less coherent temporal layers because new layers of meaning added by urban explorers may prompt forgetting more than remembering. Consumer-driven memorialization that prioritizes the urban explorer's personal "symbolic immortality" (Price et al. 2000, 186) over memorializing the past raises implications for remembering and forgetting.

Remembering and Forgetting: Prioritizing Consumer Staging. Urban explorers aestheticize the past through prioritizing consumer staging that may emphasize emotion, play, and identity expression. Within consumer staging, the trace-maker's own goals of self-expression may therefore supersede indexical remembrance of the past. This can result in "unanticipated flows" (Allen and Brown 2016, 25) as each urban explorer aesthetically interprets the past in their own way. These diverse consumer stagings coexist in the meshwork without one taking precedence to create multiple aesthetic visions of the past. On the one hand, this offers opportunities to capture how consumers respond to the past through more creative remembrance. On the other,

it creates openings for an aesthetic romanticization that skews indexical accounts of the past. This is evident in the ruin porn genre that aestheticizes the decline of the built environment (Trigg 2007) often at the cost of meaningful critique of social and economic failures that lead to abandonment and ruination.

The implications of prioritizing consumer staging become most obvious when considering the outputs of consumer-driven memorialization, such as Rory's photobook and Ross's website. These outputs shift memoryscapes along the gradient of market-mediation as they become market resources consumed by others. Sometimes these aesthetic outputs resonate with local communities and families (e.g., Rory's layered photography) and sometimes they catalyze a playful or farcical memorialization (e.g., zombie masks). While the former may increase remembering, the latter may prompt forgetting as new layers detract from previous meanings. This is further exacerbated when aesthetic outputs are staged for an audience gaze that impacts how the past is aesthetically remembered. In the following section on the historian role, we discuss how aesthetic outputs are often accompanied by narrative outputs.

Historian: Narrating the Past

The historian role involves narrating the past through prioritizing consumer interpretations. Some urban explorers write detailed place histories about buildings, previous residents, and the circumstances leading to abandonment. In this sense, they become keepers of public memory who mediate between past and present (Kalela 2012). However, discovering the history for mundane buildings (such as private residences) is not always accessible, and instead urban explorers elect to narrate their own stories of the past:

> "Sometimes in a lot of these places it is as if they just walked out one day, turned the key, and never returned. I went to one that was owned by a military chap. One day he just left, probably around the mid-70s, just locked the door and never came back. But what was eerie about it was you went into the pantry and there was pickles there that had got the dates on from 1971. There were old sewing machines, there were TVs, pictures, paintings, ornaments, clothing, the beds were still made. You acquired a sense of how people used to live. [. . .] The abandoned is more about the mystery, about the story not being complete. What you find with heritage sites is that they have covered everything, but in a lot of these derelict places it does make you wonder, if walls could talk, they would certainly have a lot to say." (Rob)

Rob refers to an abandoned house that has been uninhabited for many years and speculates about the circumstances surrounding its abandonment. In the archaeologist role, we discussed how possessions are core to tracing the past. The historian role illustrates how possessions are implicated in

trace-making as they become "storytelling devices" (Sturken 2016, 19) that urban explorers use during their memorialization. Rob's story about the sudden departure of the prior resident draws on clues from the possessions (e.g., the pickle preservation date) to fill what would otherwise be gaps or missing traces in the meshwork. Unlike highly market-mediated heritage sites that can "banish ambiguity" (Edensor 2005, 831), abandoned buildings remain incomplete memoryscapes cloaked in mystery. Rob's comment "if walls could talk" draws attention to the ghostly traces (Ingold 2015) that leave no physical manifestation yet are no less present. In the absence of people who bore witness to life in the home, urban explorers have broader interpretive freedom to re-write narratives of the past.

These narrative outputs extend online. For example, the photograph of an abandoned house in figure 7 was shared to an urban exploration Facebook page and attracted numerous comments surmising its unknown history:

> Commentor: I can imagine the scenario as it happened. Rural Ontario family, lived in house for 60 or 70 years. The matriarch gets very old and feeble, depends on her bachelor son to take care of her. He does, until she dies. He lives on in the house alone, in squalor, no money to repair the roof. Does not maintain the house, chops wood for the fireplace, the furnace no longer works, electricity turned off, God knows what he eats. He shuffles around the house, not wanting to accept the reality of what is happening to the house, and powerless to do anything anyway! He too dies an old man, no survivors can be found. The house sits and rots away, remembering better days.

Such online discussions reveal that even without place histories, leftover traces invite storytelling about people, places, and events that echo from the past. The lack of concrete knowledge about the happenings of abandonment prioritizes the imaginative rather than the real. In this example, the photograph prompts additional consumer interpretation through the creation of an entirely fictional story by a member of the social media audience. The urban explorer's social media post has been co-opted, demonstrating how abandoned buildings become more heavily knotted when shared online as they invite audience speculation.

We regard such audience speculation as remixing (Parmentier and Fischer 2015) in which diverse consumer interpretations can coexist. This highlights the expansiveness of consumer-driven memorialization that extends beyond trace-makers to consumers of their productive outputs. Such storytelling often requires the techniques of a novelist (Lipscomb and Carr 2021) who repairs missing parts of the meshwork with their interpretations. However, it is important to recognize that such speculative memorialization can involve forgetting because, although these narratives make the past consumable, they obscure actual

FIGURE 7

ABANDONED HOUSE ONTARIO.

events. In both above examples, narrating the past relates to ordinary homes that have gained significance to urban explorers. In use, they would only be significant to their residents, but in dis-use, they gain meanings because of the mystery surrounding their abandonment.

The lack of market-mediated protection of these homes necessitates additional effort from urban explorers to protect the locations from "nefarious people" (Simon) such as vandals, and scrap metal thieves. Urban explorers often adopt measures to conceal locations in their storytelling, such as devising "cryptic" (Ariel) codenames and false clues to hoodwink others. For example, when sharing a story about an abandoned home, Simon digitally alters the image to mislead onlookers by editing the addresses on the abandoned postcards (see figure 8):

Simon intentionally creates false traces to protect buildings, which alter the story of the home for the audience. Making the past consumable for an audience opens abandoned buildings to potential risk, meaning that urban explorers intentionally alter representations of the past in an effort to protect the building for the future. Such consumer interpretations create a loss of resolution (Bailey 2007) because they can decontextualize the trace from its origin. Simon disassociates the house from its actual location by editing the address on the postcards that could alter future historical interpretations. We understand urban explorers' trace-making as what De Groot (2016) calls historical fictions that invite reflection on the representational process of history-making. The falsification of traces

demonstrates the fluidity of consumer-driven memorialization when traces become untethered within the meshwork only to become layered with new meanings. This creates a complex dynamic between remembering and forgetting.

Remembering and Forgetting: Prioritizing Consumer Interpretations. Urban explorers create scope for remembering by drawing attention to overlooked memories, but they accept the incompleteness of their trace-making. Instead, they use "imaginative capacity" (Epp, Schau and Price 2014, 88) in narrating the past. Such reinterpretation reveals that consumer-driven memorialization is not backward-looking but, rather, a generative process that builds layers of meaning over time. However, when trace-making relies heavily on imagination, it may generate more fiction. Although a meshwork perspective affords this "boundless capacity for reinterpretation" (Watts 2018, 381), this may result in a boundless capacity for forgetting.

It is important to examine the intentionality (Paxton and Griffiths 2017) that underpins consumer interpretations within consumer-driven memorialization. While it may not be the intention of urban explorers to generate fiction in narrating the past, they may skew more toward forgetting than remembering due to both their lack of knowledge and their desire to narrate overlooked memories. This is more problematic when urban explorers intentionally create fiction (such as Simon's false clues in the postcards) as this may become misinterpreted as fact by others. This blurring of fact and fiction has the capacity to depoliticize the past

FIGURE 8

SIMON'S FALSE CLUE.

as new fictious narratives may shape future interpretations in ways that contribute to collective forgetting.

DISCUSSION

The substantive contribution of this article is the theorization of consumer-driven memorialization. We define consumer-driven memorialization as consumer engagement with traces of the past in memoryscapes of low market-mediation that creates a complex interplay of remembering and forgetting. Our theorization offers three contributions. First, we theorize the dimensions of consumer-driven memorialization that broaden understanding of what constitutes a consumable past in contexts of low market-mediation. Second, we explain how the ideological and material challenges that emerge in consumer-driven memorialization generate a complex interplay between remembering and forgetting. Third, we shed light on how consumer-driven memorialization is inscribed in space.

Making the Past Consumable in Consumer-Driven Memorialization

Our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization explains how consumers kickstart memorializations of the past that are characterized by low market-mediation. In recognizing consumers as active and skilled practitioners

(Ingold 2013) who experience, materialize, aesthetize and narrate the past, our theorization provides a useful extension to prior consumer research on the role of market-mediated actors in making the past consumable (Brown et al. 2013; Brunk et al. 2018; Coskuner-Balli 2020; Thompson and Tian 2008). We theorize four dimensions of consumer-driven memorialization: unscripted performances, overlooked memories, consumer staging, and consumer interpretations. Together, these dimensions broaden understanding of what constitutes a consumable past. We elaborate on each dimension below.

The prioritization of unscripted performances in consumer-driven memorialization is important because it acknowledges the value of vernacular forms of memory work (Winter 2010). This move beyond scripted performances reflects the shift from esoteric to social memorialization (Samuel 2012) and hence the role played by consumers in bringing the past into the present. Such a shift gestures to greater inclusivity in consumer-driven memorialization and sensitizes us to how previously devalued modes of remembering can generate traction in mainstream memory. In the absence of behavioral restrictions in contexts of low market-mediation, consumers have scope to broaden the ways in which they experience the past. In following Samuel (2012, 10), we acknowledge "the ensemble of activities and practices in which ideas of history are embedded" and recognize the whole spectrum of different ways that consumers memorialize the past.

In prioritizing overlooked memories over established memories, our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization reveals that consumer engagement with the past can range from contexts of grandeur to the mundane. Pasts that are considered consumable are often associated with historical significance (Chronis et al. 2012; Maclaran and Brown 2005), cultural resonance (Belk and Costa 1998; Brunk et al. 2018; Thompson and Tian 2008), and traumatic events (Marcoux 2017). We draw attention to a consumable past that differs dramatically from the material-spatial arrangements associated with more established memories. The prioritization of overlooked memories involves interactions with traces of the past that are characterized by dirt, decay, and disorder. This enables "left-overs of histories" (Napolitano 2015, 48) to surface that would otherwise be absent from highly market-mediated memorialization.

We extend attention beyond commercial staging of memoryscapes to include consumer staging that is deployed during consumer-driven memorialization. Much like commercial staging, consumer staging makes the past more consumable as it is generated with a public audience in mind. Products of memorialization (such as photobooks) may aesthetically romanticize the past to appeal to a consuming audience. These products become additive to the meshwork (Ingold 2015). Through consumer trace-making, we demonstrate how consumer staging extends beyond the physical memoryscape to include virtual memoryscapes. The sharing and circulation of aesthetic outputs on social media, websites, and print media enable products of memorialization to reach a broader audience yet opens them to co-optation. While in commercial staging "unanticipated flows" may ensure memorializations remain live objects of concern to the communities connected to them (Allen and Brown 2016, 25), consumer staging reveals how unanticipated flows can become co-opted by unconnected communities that divert attention away from original meanings.

Within consumer-driven memorialization the prioritization of consumer interpretations generates diverse memorialization narratives because it places no limits on the interpretive scope of consumers who memorialize the past. This is enhanced by the medium of dissemination as the internet and social media enable a collective authorship. From this perspective, consumer-driven memorialization is the "work of a thousand different hands" (Samuel 2012, 10) that collectively make the past more consumable. This may appear as a coherent endeavor; yet, consumer-driven memorialization generates a meshwork of individual consumers' different and often conflicting interpretations. The process intensifies when social media attention results in some traces of the past becoming heavily knotted. This offers a way of understanding the past that challenges more coherent narrative closure in highly market-mediated memorialization.

Remembering and Forgetting in Consumer-Driven Memorialization

We reveal ideological and material challenges that emerge during consumer-driven memorialization and argue that forgetting is inevitable when consumers, as nonprofessionals, make the past consumable. Our concept of temporal layers is a useful means to understand the interplay between remembering and forgetting in consumer-driven memorialization. The generative character of consumer-driven memorialization means that with layers of remembering come layers of forgetting.

At an ideological level, we reveal how the alternative epistemologies that emerge in consumer-driven memorialization generate a complex interplay between remembering and forgetting. We demonstrate how consumers not only consume history but become empowered, during their consumption, to author history. By adding temporal layers in authoring history, consumers employ norms and practices that deviate considerably from market actors. Forgetting can emerge from deliberate efforts by market actors to create countermemories that romanticize the past (Brunk et al. 2018; Thompson and Tian 2008). Similarly, forgetting can stem from consumers' "deliberate effort to unremember" (Marcoux 2017, 951). In this prior research, deliberate forgetting is driven by political revisionist aims (Brunk et al. 2018; Thompson and Tian 2008) or containment strategies (Marcoux 2017). We build upon this work by demonstrating how forgetting in consumer-driven memorialization is often an unintended consequence of remembering. The tracing and trace-making practices employed by consumers are grounded in the prioritization of unscripted performances, overlooked memories, consumer staging, and consumer interpretations that are epistemologically valuable but can lead to the erasure or blurring of pressing sociocultural and political concerns.

At a material level, we reveal how the democratization of memorialization presents dilemmas for consumers. In our findings we see a lack of agreement about how memorialization should be enacted, for example, debates surrounding the removal of artifacts from abandoned buildings. Unlike memorialization practices that are agreed collectively in highly market-mediated contexts, consumer-driven memorialization promotes a fragmented approach. Consumers employ falsification of traces that "deposit additional memory traces" that "vary from and overlay earlier memories, creating a complex palimpsest about the past" (Winter 2010, 11) that we refer to as temporal layers. While consumer-driven memorialization can promote "resistance to erasure or oblivion" (Winter 2010, 12) by encouraging others to remember, the lack of market-mediated protection puts material traces at risk of loss, damage, or erasure. This interplay reveals the fragility of material memory in consumer-driven memorialization

that has the double capacity to both deposit and lose layers of meaning.

Consumer communities, such as urban explorers, may be considered as counter-epistemic communities (Waisbord 2018) who promote contested interpretations of the past that enter public consumption. Much like Hobsbawm's (1983) notion of invented tradition, the discontinuity that characterizes consumer-driven memorialization makes necessary the invention of continuity. It is important to be critical of invented traditions as some counter-epistemic positions may put forward harmful representations, such as those who deny the existence of genocide (Hovannisian 1999). Our interest is on the past, but these counter-epistemic communities are found in various other contexts from health (e.g., anti-vaxxer communities) to sustainability (e.g., climate emergency deniers). Outputs of counter-epistemic communities are often generated for a consumption audience, meaning that attention to aesthetic and narrative appreciation often supersedes factual accuracy. When these outputs enter the public domain and gain purchase within public discourse, they may become invented traditions that embed forgetting at a collective level.

Spatialization of Consumer-Driven Memorialization

This contribution sheds light on how consumer-driven memorialization is inscribed in space. Building on Epp and Price's (2010) analysis of the network transformation surrounding a singularized object, we consider spaces where the entire network is inactive, such as abandoned homes where domestic life has ground to a halt. In these cases, consumer reincorporation attempts are not aimed at moving an object from inactive to active status (Epp and Price 2010) but, rather, at maintaining the network in its state of relative inactivity. As noted in our findings, consumers locate value in the untouched appearance of abandoned places that are likened to natural museums by offering a window into a previous moment in time. Counter to the artificial place atmospheres in highly market-mediated settings (Hill et al. 2022), consumers consider that memoryscapes with low market-mediation offer a more authentic engagement with the past.

This insight also offers implications for the atmospheric experience of place. Drawing on Winter's (2010, 12) definition of memory as "history seen through affect," we see how consumer-driven memorialization becomes an affective historiography. The way in which affect flows through bodies and spaces (Hill, Canniford, and Mol 2014) in abandoned buildings generates distinctive atmospheres of remembrance. Previous work on place atmospheres highlights how memories and prior emotions can be activated in the atmospheric experience of place (Steadman et al. 2019; Hill et al. 2022). Whereas these studies prioritize present-day atmospheres, our analysis reveals how

consumers use memoryscapes to grasp atmospheres of the past. In doing so, our theorization provides a useful extension by drawing attention to the affective-spatio nature of consumer-driven memorialization.

We address Brunk et al.'s (2018) call for future research on the unstable relationship between memory and materiality. While they consider commercial products, the spaces and artifacts featured in our study are vulnerable to natural decay. A meshwork perspective sensitizes us to more-than-human trace-makers (Ingold 2013), such as animal, environmental, and biological matter, that transform the materiality of the memoryscape. This provides a marked contrast to the artificial preservation that would typically occur in museumization or curatorship to minimize the impact of nonhuman trace-makers. Measures such as temperature and UV control, protective cases, and conservation cleaning could be viewed as what Hicks (2016) refers to as cuts in the meshwork. However, the lack of custodianship within memoryscapes with low market-mediation means that these spaces continue to transform uncontrollably. This illustrates the diverse ways in which the mattering of memory (Ivy 1995) is inscribed by both human and nonhuman trace-makers to transform memoryscapes over time.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

We believe that our theorization of consumer-driven memorialization offers avenues for future research in a range of consumption settings. The most obvious avenue for future research is how consumers trace the ancestral past. Given the popular interest in genealogical tracing, it is surprising that consumer research has not explored this context in more depth. One potential route would be to investigate market-mediated genealogical tracing in terms of both material traces (e.g., census archives, ancestor tracing services) and biological traces (e.g., DNA testing), and how these interrelate with consumer-driven efforts to memorialize the ancestral past.

Future research could also explore how consumer-driven memorialization unfolds in consumer identity projects. One area worthy of exploration is intentionality in trace-making for consumer identity creation. For example, the creation of personal legacies, such as making memory-boxes when facing terminal illness, and lifelogging. Intentionality has relevance to the digital sphere. Future research may explore the dimensions of consumer staging and consumer interpretations in relation to attempts to control aesthetics and narratives of the self (e.g., de-tagging and erasing search histories). Other trace-making emerges unintentionally, such as digital surveillance through smart devices and future research could usefully explore the ethical implications associated with market-mediated uses of these consumer traces.

Finally, we encourage future research to engage with our concept of temporal layers to examine how consumer action disrupts and challenges previously accepted accounts of the past. For example, we see temporal layers as a useful concept to interrogate how consumers may work to decolonize the past or the role consumers may play in cancel culture. Consumer interpretations may encompass reinterpretations that occur over varying temporal periods. These may range from a distant past (e.g., removing statues of historical figures whose actions are no longer deemed worthy of celebration), to a more recent past (e.g., editing the language of novels at odds with contemporary sensitivities).

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The first author conducted all data collection from 2013 until 2016. Interviews for UK participants took place in person, and via video conferencing software for participants outside the geographic locality. Ethnographic fieldwork primarily took place in various sites across central Scotland. Data were discussed and analyzed by both authors using interview transcripts, netnography, field notes, and visuals. The final article was jointly authored. Data are securely stored on the University of Glasgow's institutional repository.

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