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# 'If it comes from Juazeiro, it's blessed'! Liquid and solid attachment in systems of object itineraries of pilgrimages

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## ABSTRACT

Building on an interpretive approach, we employ the multi-sited ethnographic methods of 'following the thing' and 'following the people' to track the movements of consumers and objects during a Catholic pilgrimage in the Northeast region of Brazil. We find a system of object itineraries that exemplifies how pilgrims liquefy and solidify attachments to objects to relate to God and saints during movements between their home and the sacred site. We expand perceptions by showing how materiality and relevance to the self can be important even in liquidity. Our findings have implications to the understanding of consumption of the spiritual and liquid/solid attachment to sacred objects.

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Object itineraries; liquid attachment; pilgrimage; ethnography; following the thing

## Introduction

Meaningful and enduring relationships with objects have marked consumer culture investigations on materiality (Belk, 1992; Borgerson, 2014; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Individuals cherish some possessions (Curasi, Price, & Arnould, 2004; Martin, 2017) and view them as sacred and part of themselves, shaping and reflecting their identity (Belk, 1988; Ferreira & Scaraboto, 2016). Consumers develop attachments to material possessions, which are appropriated, decommodified, and singularised through person–object interactions (Kleine & Baker, 2004), and such attachments vary along the spectrum from solid to liquid: solid attachment is enduring, ownership-based and tangible, while liquid attachment is ephemeral, access-based and dematerialised (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017).

We investigate liquid and solid attachments to material possessions in a situation of spiritual consumption, a context that has attracted a great deal of attention (Moufahim & Lichrou, 2019; Redden, 2016; Rinallo, Maclaran, & Stevens, 2016). We scrutinise pilgrimages, a feature of all major world religions characterised by secular movements (Higgins & Hamilton, 2016) that represent a privileged context for understanding material culture, as pilgrims are constantly exposed to sacred objects. According to the World Tourism Organization (2014), 300 to 330 million pilgrims visit the world's key religious sites every year, undertaking approximately 600 million national and international religious trips. Pilgrimages are extraordinary experiences marked by the temporary mobility (Bell & Ward, 2000) of pilgrims and

various possessions in systems of consumers–object itineraries, characterised by time and space set apart from ordinary life. Pilgrims seek a connection with dead spiritual figures, in terms of a tangible experience, while performing rituals replete with sacred objects, often with the aim to achieve material results, such as healing (Turner & Turner, 2011). Specifically, our context is the pilgrimage to Juazeiro do Norte (hereafter Juazeiro), Brazil, an important sacred site that receives more than 2.5 million pilgrims each year for a non-canonised priest of the Catholic Church, Padre Cícero, who has led pilgrims to create an authentic and spontaneous pilgrimage with its own rituals (Kozinets & Sherry, 2012).

We draw on an itinerary approach (Hahn & Weiss, 2013), which strives to track the movements and inertness of objects for the duration of the consumer–object attachment. In contrast with previous findings indicating that liquid attachments between consumers and objects are less special than solid ones (Masset & Decrop, 2016) and that, in liquid consumption, consumers put less importance on material objects (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017), we posit that even when their attachment to the object is liquid, consumers consider temporary, more detached relationships with possessions to be special and of high value. In particular, we argue that even consumers' sacred possessions can become disposable and replaceable (liquefied), by demonstrating that during pilgrims' mobility the person–object attachment may become liquefied, although still remaining of high relevance to the self and of high identity value. That is, pilgrims develop both liquid and solid attachments to their objects, but materiality and singularity continue to be important during the liquid attachment.

A growing line of research has attempted to comprehend the role of objects in spiritual consumption, such as when the marketplace creates opportunities and facilitates the materialisation of the spiritual (Kedzior, 2012); when the meanings of objects delivered to pilgrimage sites create tensions between pilgrims and the local community (Turley, 2012); when objects become sacred, profane or both (Rinallo, Borghini, Bamossy, & Kozinets, 2012); and in the relationship between authenticity and rituals (Moufahim & Lichrou, 2019). Nevertheless, few studies have attempted to advance alternative theorisations about why and how consumers may develop attachments to sacred objects that go beyond the extended self (Bardhi, Eckhardt, & Arnould, 2012). Previous studies have already shown the role of the movement of a single object within a religious context (Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017) and the role of some objects that are taken from the sacred site of the pilgrimage to enter a system of gift-giving practices (Moufahim, 2013). However, to our knowledge, no previous work has holistically addressed the role of a constellation of objects in movement during pilgrimages. Our fieldwork allows for a holistic perspective in terms of the multiplicity of objects to observe, instead of investigating only one focus object (such as the tracking of the Small Chapel in Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017). We fill these gaps by (i) proposing a framework of a system of objects' itineraries in the context of pilgrimages that explains why pilgrims develop attachments to sacred objects that vary from liquid to solid; (ii) providing empirical evidence that consumers perceive even liquid, temporary, more detached relationships with possessions as of high value, due to the movement of objects, power of the sacred site, and to the rituals involved; and (iii) understanding the role of a constellation of material artefacts as fundamental for pilgrims in order to relate to the sacred, reflecting their relationships with the site and with God and saints.

Next, we introduce the theoretical orientation that we used to analyse the ethnographic data, followed by the method and interpretation of research findings. We discuss our findings on liquidity and solidity in the context of spiritual consumption and then present the implications and insights for future research.

## Literature review

### *Liquid and solid attachment*

The material culture (Miller, 2005) has been a top concern of marketing and consumer research in the past decades, and researchers have devoted great effort to understand the importance of material possessions to the self (Belk, 1988, 1992; Grayson & Shulman, 2000; McCracken, 1986; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017; Schouten, 1991; Tian & Belk, 2005; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988). Meaningful objects have a biography, developed when individuals and objects gather time, movement and change, continuously transforming each other (Appadurai, 1986; Csikszentmihalyi & Halton, 1981; Epp & Price, 2010; Kopytoff, 1986). Possessions become important as material artefacts helping consumers achieve future desires and outcomes and re-establish past selves (Schouten, 1991). In this sense, consumers can develop strong ties with objects (Grayson & Shulman, 2000; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988), so consumer–object relationships can reveal intriguing perspectives of consumption, such as object attachment (Money, 2007; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988; Walther & Schouten, 2016; Watkins, Denegri-Knott, & Molesworth, 2016).

Drawing on theories of liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000), Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) introduced a new conception of consumption as both liquid and solid (opposite poles of a broad spectrum), to move understanding on materiality forward. From this standpoint, it is possible to understand alternative relationships with the material world that go beyond the extended self (Bardhi et al., 2012). Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017, p. 582) defined liquid consumption as ‘ephemeral, access-based and dematerialised’ and solid consumption as ‘enduring, ownership-based and tangible’. They argued for a different logic of consumption, one embodying fluidity and in which circulation states of consumption are more valued. The theory of liquid consumption also claims that there is an ephemeral attachment to digital or physical consumption, in which temporality and access are valued (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017).

Recent investigations have provided an overview of consumption in liquid times (Arcuri & Veludo-de-Oliveira, 2018; Atasoy & Morewedge, 2017; Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2016; Figueiredo, 2012; Husemann & Eckhardt, 2018). Investigating the nature of consumer–object relationships and the role of possessions, Bardhi et al. (2012) developed the construct of a liquid relationship with possessions to mark the detached and flexible manner in which consumers relate to objects in the context of global nomadism. Previous studies have shown that liquidity can affect brand connection, demonstrating how contemporary society has become more individualised (Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2008) and consumers more responsible for themselves (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014). Accordingly, Binkley (2008) showed how liquidity can help explain anti-consumerism movements, and Masset and Decrop (2016) demonstrated how consumers may develop enduring attachments not only to their tourist possessions but also to liquid ones, in the sense that they are temporary, more detached, and less special. In this article, we add to

the literature on liquidity by empirically investigating how consumers liquefy attachment to objects even when they are special or sacred. As noted, the context of our investigation is a Catholic pilgrimage in Brazil.

### ***Pilgrimage and object itineraries***

In a consumption perspective, pilgrimages are spheres of exchange in which religious commodities are produced, distributed and consumed, and are important contexts for the creation and organisation of identities and religious communities (Da Rocha Pinto, 2007). Pilgrims are constantly exposed to objects in the form of texts, images and other items that compose the particular universe of the pilgrimage site, and they take these forms back to their hometowns as discourse and practices imbued with the authority and sacredness of the site. They search for a connection with a deceased spiritual figure and perform rituals involving sacred objects, often with the goal of achieving material or physical results (Turner & Turner, 2011). These rituals provide participants with a collective sense of identity and integration, facilitating the creation and maintenance of shared traditions that link the individual to the community (Rook, 1985). In this sense, a commodity may become sacred by means of rituals designed to transform it symbolically (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989), or the ritual exists because of the object itself (Nordin, 2009), as with the case of *ex-votos*, religious offerings commonly featured in pilgrimage rituals. Pilgrims visit sites, often under difficult circumstances, to express their devotion and to experience close contact with a religious figure, God or a saint, to whom they are particularly devoted (Da Rocha Pinto, 2007). They distinguish themselves from regular tourists who have no deep interest in the religious meanings and rituals of the pilgrimage site (Eade, 1992).

Research in marketing and consumer behaviour on spirituality is diverse (Arvidsson, 2014; Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Gould, 2006; Husemann & Eckhardt, 2018; Mathras, Cohen, Mandel, & Mick, 2016; McAlexander, Dufault, Martin, & Schouten, 2014; Muniz & Schau, 2005; Rinallo et al., 2016; Shaw & Thomson, 2013). In parallel, the spiritual experiences of pilgrimage are relevant for marketing studies because pilgrimage sites create not only an atmosphere of spirituality but also an environment for consumption, in which pilgrims need accommodation and meals, as well as goods and services (Scott & Maclaran, 2012). Research has undertaken considerable effort to investigate extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993), including the role of family in pilgrimages (Higgins & Hamilton, 2014); the dynamic processes of consuming pilgrimages under sacred versus profane tenets (Crockett & Davis, 2016; Husemann, Eckhardt, Grohs, & Saceanu, 2016; O'Guinn & Belk, 1989); the transformation of a pilgrimage site, such as Shangri-La, into a tourism destination and its consequences (Llamas & Belk, 2011); the differences between pilgrims from geographically different origins in the way they interact with the place in terms of religiosity and consumption (Haq & Jackson, 2009); and self-transformations of pilgrims after the experience (Higgins & Hamilton, 2016; O'Guinn & Belk, 1989).

In pilgrimages, a constellation of objects, sacred and profane, move with pilgrims through their temporary mobility between home and the pilgrimage site. These movements of things, or object itineraries, mark the importance of a material culture (Hahn & Weiss, 2013). The term 'object itineraries', used in cultural biographies of things

(Kopytoff, 1986) and of travelling objects (Clifford, 1997), acknowledges the movements that objects undergo as well as their inertness. These cultural artefacts are embedded within an assembly of contexts, with tensions surrounding their roles, usages and appropriations. Itineraries attribute a non-linear mobility to objects and regard movements in time, space or social spheres as capable of transforming people and objects (Hahn & Weiss, 2013). The itinerary approach mixes the pathways, stations and transitions of modern-day travellers with the older idea of a path such as a pilgrimage, leading to the transformation of the traveller by successfully passing through discrete stages (Hahn & Weiss, 2013).

Tracking the mobility and meanings of objects may, therefore, generate significant insights into consumer–object attachment (Appadurai, 1986; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Previous marketing studies (Figueiredo & Uncles, 2015; Hansson, 2015; Kuruoğlu & Ger, 2015; Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005) have tracked the mobility of objects while they are active or mobilised as part of a network and aligned them with a set of practices that may empower or constrain their agency (Epp & Price, 2010). Other studies have focused on how the circulation of objects, including religious artefacts (Geary, 1986; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017), creates value (Figueiredo & Scaraboto, 2016). This article holds on the ‘objects itineraries’ approach to observe the movement of objects in pilgrimage, demonstrating that pilgrims liquefy and solidify attachments to objects to relate to God and saints during movements between their home and the sacred site. In the next section, we present the method used to analyse the liquidity/solidity phenomenon in the domain of spiritual consumption.

## Method

We carried out data collection in a two-stage process (Table 1) during the pilgrimage to Juazeiro, a city of 250,000 inhabitants in Northeast Brazil. This city is an important sacred site of pilgrimage for those devoted to Padre Cícero (Figure 1), a priest who died in 1934. In the first stage, from December 2016 to January 2017, we collected data using participant observation, interviews, photography and video. These two initial months helped us to understand the environment, the pilgrims and the rituals and routines of the pilgrimage. During the second stage, we focused on the objects, in an immersion approach, spending 10 days with the pilgrims and tracking movements totalling approximately 1,700 km.

**Table 1.** Data collected December 2016/January 2017 and July 2017.

Interviews	Audio-visual materials	Field notes	Other materials
20 interviews with pilgrims, members of the local church, local researchers on the theme, and local businesspeople	2981 photos and 300 videos	74 pages of field notes from 63 hours of observation in December/January 42 pages of field notes, 1.5 line-spaced, from 10 days of immersion	Letters from pilgrims to Padre Cícero (access granted by the local church) CD, DVD, and booklet of pilgrimage songs (purchased or provided by the church)



**Figure 1.** Pilgrims at the statue of Padre Cícero in the city of Juazeiro (photo taken by first author).

We used the methods of ‘following the thing’ and ‘following the people’, two multi-site ethnographic techniques derived from anthropology, cultural studies, geography, migration studies, tourism and sociology (Marcus, 1995; Sheller & Urry, 2006). Inspired by recent work (Figueiredo & Scaraboto, 2016; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017), these methods involve tracing the circulation of material objects – commodities, gifts, and so on – through different contexts (Marcus, 1995). Our approach can be categorised as mobile ethnography, in which researchers participate in patterns of movement while conducting ethnographic research.

Members of the local church at the pilgrimage site helped us find a group of approximately 50 pilgrims who lived 600 km from the pilgrimage site. In July 2017, the pilgrims travelled by bus to Juazeiro, and en route they visited another site of pilgrimage (the city of Canindé) and went shopping in the Central Market of the city of Fortaleza (Table 2). One of the authors travelled with this group from their hometown to those cities, experiencing the places and then returning home with them. While in the pilgrims’ hometown, the author stayed at the house of Helen<sup>1</sup>, who also shared the same lodgings with the author and the three other pilgrims during the pilgrimage.

This group of four pilgrims became our informants, the focus of our research, and we tracked their objects instead of collecting information about the entire group. Although

**Table 2.** Cities and distance travelled by the pilgrim group.

Date	City	Transportation	Distance (km)
15/07/2017	Ceará-Mirim <sup>a</sup>	-	-
17/07/2017	Ceará-Mirim to Juazeiro	Bus	605
21/07/2017	Juazeiro to Canindé	Bus	457
23/07/2017	Canindé to Fortaleza	Bus	117
23/07/2017	Fortaleza to Ceará-Mirim	Bus	499
24/07/2017	Ceará-Mirim <sup>b</sup>	-	-
Total distance travelled			1,678

<sup>a</sup>Author's arrival in the city of Ceará-Mirim (beginning of data collection).

<sup>b</sup>Author's departure from Ceará-Mirim (end of data collection).

the informants did not necessarily use the objects during that pilgrimage, they thoroughly expressed the importance of the shared meanings that pilgrims hold of the objects in their culture and how these construct or reflect their relationships with the site, God and saints. These pilgrims presented the objects to us mostly during participant observations or interviews, by showing the real objects during our conversations or when talking retrospectively about their memories and shared cultural meanings. To track objects' movements, we observe the real objects (e.g. saint statues, rosaries, candles, fireworks) and pilgrims also helped us to imagine and reconstruct the movement that other objects normally perform (e.g. ex-votos and shrouds). The 10-day period of immersion was important to enable us to understand how the objects were regarded before, during and after the pilgrimage, to track the objects over the journey, and to observe the interactions that took place between consumers and objects.

During the data collection period, we followed the pilgrims' schedule, in their penitence activities (e.g. long walks) and in their relaxation periods. We also attended their meetings and a ceremony in which they shared their stories of miracles with other pilgrims. At certain points, we carried out informal interviews with some of the other pilgrims. It was not possible to record these interviews, because these people were always on the move in the city. Conversations were, however, carefully recorded in the field notes. Nevertheless, we conducted several formally recorded interviews with some of the pilgrims, as well as with other people knowledgeable about the history of the site, to improve our understanding of the pilgrimage from a general perspective. We triangulated the data to obtain convergence on the topic of study. Participant observation was important for generating insights into the pilgrimage system and for drawing a picture of the pilgrims' culture that encompassed not only the pilgrims' own views but also several other perspectives. The interviews, in which many stories of miracles and thanks were shared, delineated how the pilgrims expressed their experiences of the pilgrimage.

We focused our analysis of the collected material on salient aspects of consumer-object attachment. Photos served as illustrative data, and videos helped us recall details of the field experience. The interviews, field notes and letters were transcribed and analysed, allowing recurrent patterns and themes to emerge in the coding process. Drawing on the principles of naturalistic inquiry (Belk, Sherry, Jr., & Wallendorf, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Spiggle, 1994) and corroborating our findings using related ethnographic research (Belk et al., 1989; Higgins & Hamilton, 2014; Masset & Decrop, 2016), each author carried out data analysis to triangulate the data and to achieve unbiased analysis of the material (Belk et al., 1988). We coded each observation, interview and letter, looking for cultural categories and individual

and collective interpretations based on iterative movements between theory and data (Spiggle, 1994). We validated our analysis by submitting the codes and categories to evaluation and review by three peers in our field of research. We also contacted fieldwork participants after data collection to check the findings, which are based on the recurrent themes that we identified in the analysis.

## Findings

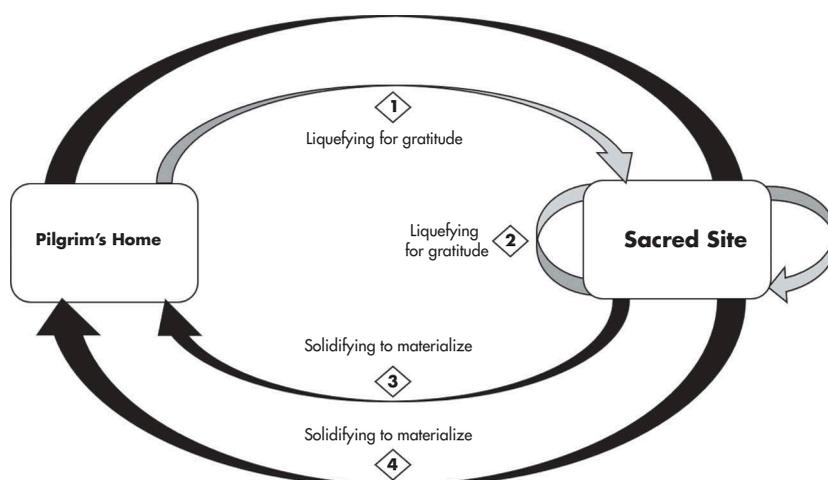
We observed how pilgrims developed different attachments (Table 3), between liquid and solid, to a constellation of valuable or sacred objects during their temporary mobility. Such artefacts are typically of little monetary value, but they have substantial symbolic value (Liao & Huang, 2006; Moufahim, 2013) because they are singular (Epp & Price, 2010; Kopytoff, 1986) and have a specific purpose, becoming important for the performance of the pilgrimage. However, even sacred artefacts can become disposable and replaceable (Bardhi et al., 2012). During their mobility, pilgrims tended to liquefy or solidify attachment (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017; Bardhi et al., 2012) to objects (Figueiredo & Scaraboto, 2016; Geary, 1986; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017). Several objects – brought by the pilgrims from their hometown or purchased on-site – seem to have stood in a liquid relationship with the pilgrims and were used to fulfil vows made to a saint as gratitude. By contrast, the objects that pilgrims carried back home or retained during the journey had a solid attachment to the pilgrims and seemed to carry the sacred power of the pilgrimage site materialised.

We identified four main itineraries in which pilgrims tend to liquefy attachment for gratitude and solidify attachment to materialise their experience, faith and identity, as depicted in Figure 2.

Corroborating previous research (Belk et al., 1989; Scaraboto & Figueiredo, 2017), we found that objects are valued in this sacred context throughout three main processes: (1) movement of objects, (2) power of the sacred site, and (3) rituals. First, the movement of objects between pilgrims' home and the sacred site adds value to these objects, as they follow the pilgrims in their experience. Such movement expresses and reinforces pilgrims' faith and gratitude, and the objects carry perceived healing powers back home. For example, to fulfil promises, pilgrims bring objects from home to deliver to the sacred

**Table 3.** Object itineraries and pilgrims' attachments to them during pilgrimage.

Itineraries	Attachment	Movement	Objects
Itinerary 1	Liquefying for gratitude (liquid attachment to objects, which is ephemeral and more detached but expresses material relevance. Pilgrims tend to liquefy the attachment to the objects to express gratitude for blessings)	Objects taken from pilgrims' home to the sacred site	Shrouds, ex-votos, letters
Itinerary 2	Solidifying to materialise (solid attachment to objects, which is enduring, ownership-based, and expressive of material relevance. Pilgrims tend to solidify the attachment to objects to materialise their experience, their faith, and identity)	Objects purchased/acquired and delivered to the sacred site	Fireworks, candles, ex-votos
Itinerary 3	Liquefying for gratitude (liquid attachment to objects, which is ephemeral and more detached but expresses material relevance. Pilgrims tend to liquefy the attachment to the objects to express gratitude for blessings)	Objects taken from the sacred site to pilgrims' home	Statues of saints, rosaries, scapulars, hats, gifts, traditional foods, craft objects
Itinerary 4	Solidifying to materialise (solid attachment to objects, which is enduring, ownership-based, and expressive of material relevance. Pilgrims tend to solidify the attachment to objects to materialise their experience, their faith, and identity)	Objects taken back to pilgrims' home through sacred site	Purses, house keys, automobile keys, spectacles



**Figure 2.** Conceptual framework of itineraries and attachment.

site and/or take back home objects blessed at the site. Second, the sacred site is fundamental to the value of objects in pilgrimages; pilgrims value objects differently depending on their origin, and objects carried from the sacred site are relatively highly valued in their ability to emit sacred power. For example, some objects may be available at several sites, but those obtained in Juazeiro (the sacred site) are perceived as more valuable. Finally, objects are more valuable when they are used in rituals, since they become protected, sacralised and cherished after being blessed during rituals.

### ***Itinerary 1: liquefying for gratitude (shrouds and ex-votos)***

Pilgrims often go to a sacred site to make vows. They pray to a saint and ask for a blessing, such as a cure for an illness, unity and harmony within the family, or a promotion at work. They then promise to do something in return for receiving what they asked for; an agreement is made, in which the pilgrim gives the saint something in exchange for the saint's help. Pilgrims often promise to carry out a bodily performance, such as walking on their knees or completing a pilgrimage, and they may use objects to express their gratitude. To those objects, pilgrims develop a liquid attachment, which is ephemeral and more detached, though they continue to have material relevance. This type of attachment is ephemeral because this itinerary includes objects that are delivered to the sacred site as a token of gratitude. In other words, pilgrims liquefy the attachment to the objects to express gratitude for blessings.

### ***Shrouds***

Historically, the shroud is a garment used to cover a dead person at a funeral. At pilgrimage sites, however, people mainly use shrouds to represent the cure of an illness, and a sick pilgrim may promise to wear a shroud as thanks for being cured. In the case of the pilgrimage to Juazeiro, the use of a black shroud is related to a vow the wearer has made to Padre Cícero: the use of a brown shroud (Figure 3) indicates that the wearer is giving thanks for a blessing given by St Francis of Assisi.



**Figure 3.** Pilgrims dressed in brown shrouds (photo taken by first author).

Pilgrims wear the shroud for one or two full days. They walk around the city wearing it, and at a specific moment, they deposit the shroud at a sacred place, such as the tomb or the statue of Padre Cícero, the House of the Miracles, a church local to the site, the museum of Padre Cícero, or the house where he lived. By taking off the shroud and leaving it at a sacred place, the pilgrim redeems the promise and fulfils the agreement with the saint. In the words of two pilgrims, we interviewed for our study:

The graces I receive, I first ask God. I ask the saint's intercession [...] I had the grace of my daughter [...], because there was no doctor to cure her illness [...] Everything she ate, she vomited. [...] Then I found myself so desperate that I asked God. Then on that day, I went to Juazeiro. [...] Before I arrived at my house, my mother said, [...] 'she has not vomited for two days, and she's eating fine'. From that day on, she has not vomited any more. I went to pay her promise in Canindé. Then I took her, with her outfit. She was [wearing a] shroud. [...] She went in brown, and I delivered her outfit there. [...] She wore a white cord of Francis of Assisi [...] I ordered to celebrate a mass for her. I attended the mass with her. (Helen)

In my first promise, I visited Juazeiro, but I paid my promise in Canindé. [...] I promised to wear the brown outfit and brown slippers, and deliver everything there [...] in Canindé. [...] The brown is [for] Francis of Assisi, and the black [...] is [for] Padre Cícero. (Joseph)

The shroud has an ephemeral relationship to the pilgrim because the relationship is over in two days, completed by the delivery of the object to the sacred place. It is also more detached, after the pilgrim no longer owns the object. The material existence of the object, however, plays a pivotal role in the realisation of the act of redeeming the promise. This is a representation of how liquid attachment to an object represents a material relevance for the person using it. Without the shroud, the pilgrim would not be able to complete the ritual of redeeming the promise. By leaving the shroud at the site, the pilgrim leaves behind the

pain and suffering and expresses gratitude. The shroud is physical evidence that helps materialise this action, even when the attachment to the object is liquid.

### **Ex-votos**

Ex-votos (Figure 4) are material artefacts that represent the spiritual exchange in a relationship forged between humans and God (Weinryb, 2016). Some objects represent the pilgrims' ex-votos, such as candles and painted wooden panels, (Jacobs, 2016) or wooden pieces carved in the shape of the healed body part, such as an arm or a lung. These objects represent promises and the gratitude pilgrims feel towards God and saints for their intercession in their lives. If pilgrims have recently bought a house, they may deliver a small image of a house; if they are newly married, they may deliver the wedding dress itself; if they have recovered from an illness, they may deliver a picture of themselves.

In addition, pilgrims use ex-votos to manage temporality (Bardhi et al., 2012), in the sense that past selves (now healed) or desired selves (now achieved) are metaphorically represented through the consumption of material objects (Marcoux, 2001; Mehta & Belk, 1991; Price, Arnould, & Curasi, 2000; Schouten, 1991). For example, pilgrims may deliver an ex-voto in the shape of a head that represents their past sick selves, or they may deliver a small image of a house to represent their desired selves.

Artisans from the pilgrims' hometowns often produce carved wooden ex-votos in the shape of the body part that was healed by divine grace. Pilgrims may also decide to purchase an ex-voto at the sacred site, where a typical price is around R\$ 5.00. Movement of these ex-votos occurs when the pilgrims ask the saint to help them achieve something and promise to go to the sacred site to deliver the ex-voto. The object is thus a representation of the promise the pilgrim made (Weinryb, 2016). The pilgrim delivers the ex-voto to the same sacred places as a shroud; these places are filled with thousands of wooden carved heads, arms, legs, lungs, hearts and so on.



Figure 4. Ex-votos on display at the House of Miracles (photo taken by first author).

The pilgrims ask Pe. Cícero [...] thus, the object the pilgrim materialize has the same meaning. I'm paying the promise, it's part of me [...] paying for Pe. Cícero, thanking what he did. [...] I paid a promise in Juazeiro, I got my grace, I left a head in Juazeiro and such. (Joseph)

The duration of the attachment with ex-votos may depend on the type of ex-voto. For example, pilgrims may have a different attachment with a wedding dress than a wooden piece in the shape of a leg in terms of time. The first is used in a specific and important ceremony, and thus it will probably take more time (days or months) to deliver to the site. The second is purchased and delivered in a few hours or days. The attachment that pilgrims have to some ex-votos is ephemeral because they do not spend years with the objects, as happens in solid forms of attachment. In addition, they are more detached, because they know they will relinquish them at the sacred site. Finally, in terms of materiality, the ex-votos are physical evidence of an important situation in pilgrims' lives, and their disposal marks their gratitude of the blessings received.

### ***Itinerary 2: liquefying for gratitude (fireworks and candles)***

Pilgrims also liquefy attachment to the objects to express gratitude when they purchase and use the objects at the sacred site, and therefore, the objects circulate on-site only. Because they are purchased and consumed at the sacred site, these objects may have an even shorter attachment in temporal terms with the pilgrims than the liquid attachment of itinerary 1. They are ephemeral – purchased and used within hours; pilgrims do not own them, and they fulfil the pivotal purpose of redeeming promises as material evidence of the redemption. We found that fireworks and candles are common examples of this type of object.

#### ***Fireworks***

Pilgrims may promise the saint that they will set off some fireworks (Figure 5) to represent the receipt of a blessing. They usually purchase fireworks near shrines and set them off nearby. The attachment between the pilgrim and the object is, therefore, developed in only a few hours, so it is ephemeral, such that the pilgrim has a liquid attachment to the object that will quickly be consumed and thrown away. However, the object has a high material value as it represents a way to thank God and the saints.

#### ***Candles***

In Catholicism, candles have several meanings; they can represent faith (a flame that should never go out) and also Jesus, who is the light in the darkness and in times of difficulty. In general, Catholics light candles on special days, when they are praying, or to pray for the souls of loved ones who have died. This tradition of lighting candles is transported to pilgrimage sites, and thus the candle is a symbol of one of the greatest pilgrimage practices in Juazeiro. Pilgrims purchase candles near shrines and light them in large metal boxes designed for the purpose and placed close to the shrines; they light them to give thanks for their blessings (Figure 6). The pilgrim's attachment to the object is the same as in the case of fireworks: purchase and consumption are almost



Figure 5. Pilgrim setting off firework (photo taken by first author).



Figure 6. Pilgrims lighting candles (photo taken by first author).

simultaneous. In addition to representing liquid attachment, candles play an important material role in redeeming promises.

### ***Itinerary 3: solidifying to materialise (statues of saints and rosaries)***

When they go back to their hometowns, pilgrims often assemble a collection of objects that they bought to represent the sacred site. In this itinerary, pilgrims carry objects to take home for themselves or as gifts for relatives and friends (Moufahim, 2013). Going home is a sad part of the experience, and many pilgrims note that in the time spent at the sacred site, they find a spiritual peace and do not feel any pain. They do not want to say goodbye to Juazeiro, and the last mass on-site is always emotionally charged. They return home, however, with dozens of objects that are imbued with the sacredness of the pilgrimage site (Nordin, 2009).

Pilgrims develop solid attachments to the objects that they take home, which they typically place in important and strategic places around their houses. The objects represent their faith beyond the sacred site, translate the identity of the pilgrim, protect the pilgrim's home through their inherent power, and continue to be used at the darkest times. Pilgrims tend to keep these objects for years, and the more events they undergo together, the more their attachment is strengthened. Therefore, pilgrims attempt to solidify the attachment to objects to materialise their experience, faith and identity. We found that small statues of saints and rosaries are good examples of this type of itinerary.

#### ***Statues of saints***

Statues of various religious figures, such as Padre Cícero, Our Lady of Sorrows, and Our Lady of Conception, are commercially available at the pilgrimage site in Juazeiro. Historically, these statues of saints were produced in plaster. More recently, they have begun to be made of rubber, which, unlike plaster, is impossible to break, so the owner can keep the object for a longer time. The status of these statues is in line with previous findings on the relevance of material substance (Ferreira & Scaraboto, 2016), in which the materials objects are composed of play an important role in consumer-object attachment. Accordingly, displacement is inappropriate for a sacred object, which leads pilgrims to search for opportunities to purchase on-site. The appearance of the object is another criterion pilgrims take account of in the purchase, so they may pay a higher price for a more beautiful statue. For example:

So, mainly in the *sertão*, we venerate the saint statues a lot. As a symbol of protection. Just because it comes from Juazeiro, the image is already taken as blessed. The statue of Jude the Apostle, the statue of Raymund Nonnatus, Frei Damião, Our Lady of Aparecida, Our Lady of Sorrows. So, it has to come from Juazeiro because it has already become something more sacred because it came from Juazeiro. (John)<sup>1</sup>

There are certain requirements for how statues of saints are bought and used. The object must be bought at the pilgrimage site, because only objects purchased in close proximity to the sacred site are regarded as imbued with the saint's sacredness (Belk et al., 1989; see also Moufahim, 2013). Before use, the object must be blessed, either by a priest or by coming into contact with a sacred thing, such as Padre Cícero's tomb. Before receiving this blessing, objects do not yet have 'sacred' status and thus cannot be used. Accordingly, there are restrictions on where they can be placed; pilgrims commonly devote a specific part of their houses for statues of saints (Epp & Price, 2010; Money, 2007), which ensures that the statues are the kind of irreplaceable possession that will never be thrown away carelessly (Grayson &

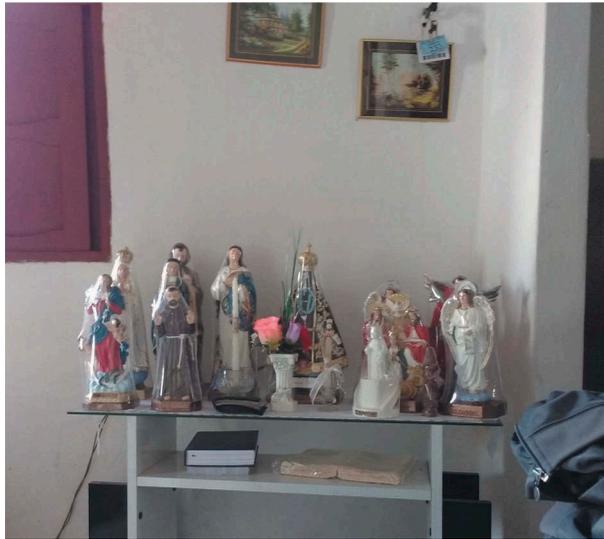


Figure 7. 'Table of the saints' in a pilgrim's living room (photo taken by first author).

Shulman, 2000). Pilgrims may use a small table in their living rooms, called the 'table of the saints', to hold several statues (Figure 7).

The events to which these objects have accompanied their owners raise their level of power (Epp & Price, 2010; Kopytoff, 1986); thus, the objects become more important to pilgrims. For example, pilgrims who have suffered a dark period in their lives may go to their statues of saints to pray, and later, when they have overcome the problems, they may renovate and strengthen the relationship with the saint. The experiences of past healing remain in their minds, and when asked about the meanings of the objects, they may make a point of mentioning those experiences, as in the following examples:

It was a promise to get my state pension. Then she (a friend of hers) said, 'Lean on Padre Cícero and lean on Our Lady of the Knots'. She said to purchase the saint statue. I bought [it]. [...] I did the way she advised me. I put my name and the Social Security Institution name under it [the statue of the saint], and I made her novena. I bought the statue in Juazeiro. Every day, I lit a candle and made her novena. I prayed every day at six o'clock. [...] In November, I received the first payment of my retirement. That was the grace and the cause that I bought her. I lean on her. And this cord that she has in her hand, it is her untying the knots. (Helen)

Pilgrims develop enduring attachment with statues of saints. Solid attachment is characteristic of this itinerary, mainly because pilgrims transfer a portion of the sacred experience to their lives at home, and statues remain in their homes for years.

### *Rosaries*

A rosary is intended to lead the faithful in prayer. Each bead on a rosary guides the pilgrim to reflect on the events and mysteries in the lives of Jesus and Mary, the mother of Jesus. On the pilgrimage of Juazeiro, the rosary is an object that expresses a pilgrim's identity (Belk, 1988), and pilgrims almost invariably claim that the 'Rosário da Mãe das Dores' (Rosary of the Mother of Sorrows) is the true rosary. Usually, pilgrims have many

rosaries (Rinallo, Scott, & Maclaran, 2012), including those they received as gifts from loved ones. None, however, has the importance of the Rosary of the Mother of Sorrows, which contains figures of Padre Cícero and Our Lady of Sorrows, thus materialising their images (Rinallo, Borghini, et al., 2012). According to many pilgrims, Padre Cícero himself introduced the Rosary of the Mother of Sorrows into the pilgrimage culture. Thus, when considering the role and importance of this priest, pilgrims typically mention stories or mythologies (Belk & Costa, 1998; Crockett & Davis, 2016; Llamas & Belk, 2011) about the way he introduced the object and how he encouraged people to use it. They also recount stories about their own experiences with the rosary, involving enchanted creatures, supernatural powers or important figures that lived in the place before and who played pivotal roles in their beliefs and the way they live now.

As with statues of the saints, there are certain requirements on the purchase and use of the rosary. First, pilgrims must purchase the rosary at the sacred site; that is the only place where they can find it, and purchasing it in another, non-sacred place is not to be considered. Furthermore, only after the rosary is blessed can pilgrims pray with it, so it helps the pilgrim overcome a problem or facilitates the occurrence of a true miracle elevate the status of the object and its sacredness to the pilgrim. The rosary is part of pilgrims' daily lives: they wear it around their neck all day even when they are not using it to pray:

I use the rosary of Our Lady and ask her to defend me from all evils. This is how I use it. I pray it because my godfather Padre Cícero said, 'Pray the Rosary of the Mother of Sorrows every day to defend you'. Because my weapon against the enemy is me praying my rosary. So I pray to him and offer to the godfather Padre Cícero and Our Lady of Sorrows to defend myself and get rid of all the evil, and all my family and I pray for those who do not believe. And I thank God. I went through a lot of pain, I went through a lot of dark moments in my life, I went hungry, but my faith was there in God. (Helen)

The daily use of the rosary can lead to its deterioration. When praying, pilgrims constantly rub the beads, causing the rupture of the string on which they are threaded. To make the rosary stronger and more resistant to breakage, pilgrims may change the cotton string for a nylon one. When the rosary breaks, pilgrims try to gather up all the beads that they can, which can seem like an impossible task and keep them at home, as a Catholic should never throw away a rosary. When a rosary breaks, the pilgrim purchases another one for use. The enduring relationship between rosary and pilgrim is permeated by the solid nature of the relationship. The close proximity of the object to the body and its daily use demonstrate its importance in pilgrims' lives, even when they are away from the sacred site. It is thus part of both the ordinary and the extraordinary realms of the pilgrim's life, though its origins lie in the itinerary of pilgrims returning home.

#### ***Itinerary 4: solidifying to materialise (purses and house keys)***

We observed a fourth itinerary in the pilgrimage experience. Those objects travel longer distances than objects in the other itineraries to be close to the sacred site and to be imbued by its sacredness (Belk et al., 1989), thus taking on some of its power. These objects, therefore, undergo a transformation from a profane state to a sacred state, a transformation that is important for both the object and its owner. The journey creates an enduring pilgrim's attachment to the object. Therefore, in this type of itinerary,

pilgrims also try to solidify their attachment to objects to materialise the sacred power of the site.

### *Purses*

Pilgrims may carry purses as everyday accessories. At Juazeiro, pilgrims go to Padre Cícero's tomb to have their purses blessed (Figure 8). The tomb is located inside a small chapel in the city and is displayed on an altar. The structure that separates and blocks access to the altar contains spaces through which pilgrims can stretch their arms and touch the tomb, though reaching it is difficult because of the small size of the chapel and because thousands of pilgrims are trying to do this at the same time. Pilgrims typically go to the tomb to be closer to the saint. They believe that touching the tomb, like receiving a blessing from a priest, has the potential to cure illness and make objects sacred. After touching the tomb, they say that they feel lighter and experience peace.

Pilgrims can touch the tomb with their hands, and they may also bring small objects into contact with the tomb. A church official collects any object that a pilgrim is carrying – a purse, a wallet, a photo, a bottle of water, a statue of a saint, a rosary and a hat – allows the object to rest on the tomb, and then returns it to the pilgrim. This all takes place within a few seconds so that as many pilgrims as possible can have their objects blessed through these means. They may want to have a purse blessed to protect it from thieves or to touch their car keys or their house keys on the tomb to protect those things from any malice, as the following pilgrim stated:

The woman was saying that pilgrims have to put [the items they are carrying into] the bag. [...] She said, 'Look, whatever object you lay on the grave of Padre Cícero, [...] it gets blessed'. Then I say, 'And I believe! When I come here again, I'll lay my bag [on the tomb]'.  
(Mary)

The pilgrim has a solid attachment to the object, which is already part of his or her daily routine. The attachment is strengthened because the mundane object enters the sacred realm after contact with the tomb (Belk et al., 1989). This is an example of an ordinary



**Figure 8.** Pilgrims having their purses blessed at Padre Cícero's tomb (photo taken by the first author).

object travelling with the pilgrim for the whole pilgrimage and in which the consumer–object relationship is a solid one.

### **House keys**

Pilgrims also use objects, such as house keys, to represent and protect things that cannot be taken to the sacred site, such as the actual house. Pilgrims have the keys to their houses blessed on Padre Cícero's tomb to protect them from storms, fire and other threats. In doing this, pilgrims trust in the power of the sacred to shield their homes from disaster. Some objects may have a specific meaning: for example, pilgrims take their spectacles to be blessed to cure eye diseases:

What moved me the most was to put a hand on Padre Cícero's grave. Oh, I felt like that, like he was there, you know? And that he was holy. [...] I touched him. I said, 'My God, it's holy!' I said, 'Lord, heal me, Padre Cícero!' I put my hand there, and then I put my hand on my head and prayed. It is as if I have taken it out from the grave to my head, as if I have caught healing. So, in a spiritual way, like that, you know? An energy to the brain. (Mary)

As pilgrims circulate in the temporary mobility of the pilgrimage, they develop liquid attachment to some objects and enter into solid relationships with others. In the framework depicted in [Figure 2](#), we identified four main itineraries in which pilgrims tend to liquefy attachment for gratitude for blessings received and solidify attachment to materialise their experience, their faith and their identity, by scrutinising the mobility of objects in pilgrimages.

## **Discussion**

Drawing on Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017), we extend the notion of liquid and solid approaches to pilgrims' attachment to objects, in which pilgrims are essentially consumers on an extraordinary experience of pilgrimage. If we view attachment as being on a spectrum between liquid and solid, pilgrimage is an example of an experience in which participants are permeated by both liquid and solid forms of attachment to very traditional objects, which goes beyond the notion that liquidity is related to merely modern forms of attachment, such as the fluid nature of digital materiality (e.g. music streaming, e-readers services), or to the ephemerality on novel consumers practices (e.g. ridesharing, online hospitality services).

### ***Liquid attachments in pilgrimage itineraries***

We found evidence of liquid forms of object attachment in itineraries 1 and 2. Pilgrims in these itineraries mainly used objects as part of a spiritual act for the purpose of fulfilling a promise; some of those objects were taken by the pilgrims from their homes, while others were consumed on site. Thus, liquid attachment is mainly related to ephemeral attachment to physical consumption, and its value is context-related and instrumental (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017).

Liquid attachment to objects helps us understand why pilgrims sometimes do not want to own things (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). In itineraries 1 and 2, they want the object to fulfil a role, and they want to deliver the object to the sacred site as a way to thank

the saint with physical evidence of their blessings. At that point, objects left at the site end their individual attachment to the pilgrim and enter into a second collective life (Weinryb, 2016): the objects are displayed in the House of Miracles to all passing pilgrims and are material proof of a sacred faith that is capable of curing anything. These findings are different from the negative tensions provoked by the delivery of ex-votos investigated by Turley (2012), in which local residents of the pilgrimage site did not understand the meanings of the ex-votos.

The concept of dematerialisation can deepen our understanding of liquidity. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) define dematerialisation as the use of fewer or no materials to deliver the same level of functionality, and they posit that experience consumption is preferred to material possessions. We agree that pilgrimage is a dematerialised experience; however, the display of material artefacts in pilgrims' temporary mobility indicates an ultimate need to express the itinerary through the material. We, therefore, contend that though pilgrimages can be understood through the lens of liquidity, solid attachment is still important. Liquid attachment to objects in movement implies a high degree of relevance to the self, as the objects are the representation of the pilgrim's most desired aims, which have been achieved (with difficulty) because of the saint's intercession. Thus, despite being liquid, the attachment remains special or singular (Kopytoff, 1986). Our results also expand on the findings of Masset and Decrop (2016), who observed that tourists also develop both liquid and solid attachments to possessions but that liquidity was less special to them.

### ***Solid attachments in pilgrimage itineraries***

In itineraries 3 and 4, pilgrims developed solid attachment to objects. As Hansson (2015) also found, pilgrims purchase objects of the sacred site (e.g. real fragments of the site) and bring them back home to place in their houses (Belk et al., 1989). Pilgrims may also perform the whole temporary mobility of pilgrimage while carrying objects that were already part of their daily lives. After touching the ground of the sacred site, the object becomes protected; in other words, the place where the object originates and the places it passes through are important for the development of a solid attachment (Debenedetti, Oppewal, & Arsel, 2014), which is important because of the enduring link to material possessions motivated by identity and value. Pilgrims have an enduring, ownership-based and tangible consumption attachment to those objects (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017).

In addition, the objects we found in itineraries 3 and 4 can contribute to the understanding of singularised objects and the cultural biographies of things (Epp & Price, 2010; Kopytoff, 1986). The results reveal that rosaries and statues of saints are presingularised objects, or meaningful objects for the pilgrims, even before they start to relate to the objects. This may happen because these objects have a collective meaning imbued with the mythologies of the place. To initiate consumer attachment, the objects need a blessing or consent that allows the pilgrims to use them. Thus, two topics seem to be integral to the study of the biography of singularised things: presingularised objects and consent to use the object. Our results are in line with previous findings on the agency of things (Epp & Price, 2010), in that the pilgrims devote a specific place in their living rooms to statues of saints and prefer their own rosaries to others.

Regarding the solid attachment present in pilgrimage, as Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) claim, value resides in attachment, long-standing possessions, identity and linking; the meaning of consumption is stable across contexts. Our findings fit with this definition. Some objects, such as the rosaries in itinerary 3, are representative of the pilgrim's identity and other long-standing possessions, such as the personal objects in itinerary 4 with which owners have strong attachments when on pilgrimages.

### ***Further considerations on liquidity in extraordinary experiences***

If we take liquid and solid as the poles of a broad spectrum (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017), the pilgrimage experience is a context that exemplifies different degrees of liquidity and solidity. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) identified four conditions that affect the extent to which consumption is liquid or solid: relevance to the self, the nature of relationships, accessibility to mobility networks, and the nature of precarity. Here, we reflect on each of these conditions in the context of our analysis of pilgrimages.

First, liquid and solid consumptions in pilgrimage have high relevance to the self. Some instances of consumption (e.g. rosaries, saint statues) represent pilgrims' identities, while others (e.g. shrouds, ex-votos) are part of pilgrims' temporal (fluid) past and future selves. Second, considering the nature of relationships, the objects across all the itineraries are singular in their practices (Kopytoff, 1986). Itineraries 1 and 2 involve singular objects that represent the pilgrims' blessings but with a low and finite attachment, while itineraries 3 and 4 involve objects that pilgrims singularise through sacralisation and to which they devote enduring attachments. Pilgrims also tend to identify themselves strongly with objects they have made temporary use of, as an expression of pride and gratitude for blessings received. Third, if we consider pilgrims spiritual nomads, as in the proposition of Sherry and Kozinets (2007), the pilgrimage can be viewed as a mobility system in which they constantly enjoy travel (Demangeot, Broeckerhoff, Kipnis, Pullig, & Visconti, 2015) between two points – namely, their homes and the sacred site. This movement enables the flow of people and objects from different parts of the country, thus facilitating both liquid and solid forms of attachment. Fourth, precarity (uncertainty or lack of individual agency) is a permanent feature of the lives of pilgrims, who transfer the responsibility for achieving what they themselves cannot, such as curing an illness, to God and saints. When pilgrims seek blessing, they aim to materialise this through material objects, regardless of whether their attachment to those objects are solid or liquid. Pilgrims tend to perform the extraordinary experience of pilgrimage as a way to regain a sense of stability that is not available to them in their economically difficult lives.

### **Final remarks**

In this article, we employ the ethnographic methods of 'following the thing' and 'following the people' to track the temporary mobility of consumers and objects during a Catholic pilgrimage. The contribution is threefold. First, we provide a framework of the role of a constellation of objects in pilgrimage experiences, marked by the mobility of pilgrims from their homes to the sacred site, and vice versa, where consumer attachment to objects varies along the spectrum from solid to liquid. The four itineraries represent pilgrims' ephemeral and enduring attachments to their possessions. Itineraries

1 and 2 provide examples of a liquid attachment, in which pilgrims may use objects to perform the rituals of redeeming promises, thereby fulfilling an agreement between them and the saint. By contrast, itineraries 3 and 4 illustrate a solid attachment in which pilgrims intend to secure a piece of the sacred place and bring it back home in the form of objects that represent the place. Second, we provide empirical evidence that consumers consider even liquid, temporary, more detached relationships with possessions special and of high value due to the movement of objects, power of the sacred site, and to the rituals. This is in contrast with previous research that indicates that liquid relationships between consumers and objects are perceived as less special (Masset & Decrop, 2016) and that consumers put less importance on material objects (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). We added to previous work on traditional objects, advancing the notion that liquidity is merely related to modern forms of consumption, such as the fluid nature of digital materiality, or to the ephemerality of novel consumer practices. Third, we show that the circulation of a constellation of material artefacts is fundamental to pilgrims to relate to the sacred, representing shared meanings in their culture and reflecting their relationships with the site, God and saints.

We uncovered a system of objects itineraries, and our findings add to the current debate on liquid and solid consumer–object attachment, highlighting the ways that pilgrims relate to objects to perform their intimate relationships with God and saints during their mobility. We discovered that a focus on a constellation of objects indicates more about a pilgrimage than a focus on a single object, allowing for a holistic perspective in terms of the quantity of objects to observe, instead of investigating only one focus object. The movements of pilgrims within, into and away from the sacred site are usually accompanied by various objects that express the pilgrims' intentions, which would be completely different without this material manifestation. Indeed, pilgrimage is a context in which material culture resides, in which the flow of the sacred and profane follows the steps of pilgrims and their objects.

Our research has several limitations. The context we researched is a specific pilgrimage in the Northeast region of Brazil, so we circumscribe the findings mostly to consumers who usually face scarcity and privation of basic public services, though the rituals and objects we found echo other pilgrimages in the world. The findings reveal the lived experiences of the group of pilgrims we followed, all of whom had high vulnerabilities but also high optimism. Further research should focus on understanding similar spiritual experiences in which the use of objects can provide further insights into material culture. Other contexts of worship, such as fans who 'idolise' musicians or football players, could be investigated to uncover how consumers develop strong ties to their idols, as if they were deities. These are contexts in which consumer–object attachment may be more evident and in which worship may be permeated by or demonstrated in the consumption of objects. Furthermore, in the liquid world in which the music industry has embraced digital platforms, leaving formats such as vinyl behind, the ways that fans and idols relate to each other have changed completely, and novel insights into liquid consumption may be gleaned. Accordingly, future research should focus on certain aspects that we observed during the pilgrimage to Juazeiro but which are not the focus of this article: differences in how novices and veterans perform the pilgrimage or transformations of the sacred site and its structure through time (in terms of markets, hotels, and devotional practice). Future research should also investigate topics that we only consider briefly herein, such as our assumption regarding the cultural biographies

of things in which the agency of the object reveals that pilgrims can presingularise things and that some objects may require consent to allow consumers to relate to them. Such investigation would contribute to the literature on material culture, especially with respect to the solid/liquid attachment of consumers to sacred objects.

## Note

1. *Sertão* is a hot and dry sub-region of Northeast Brazil. Pilgrims from this harsh environment demonstrate an intimate relationship with God and saints, praying for rain, good health, food, and many other material necessities.

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