Singapore Psychologist
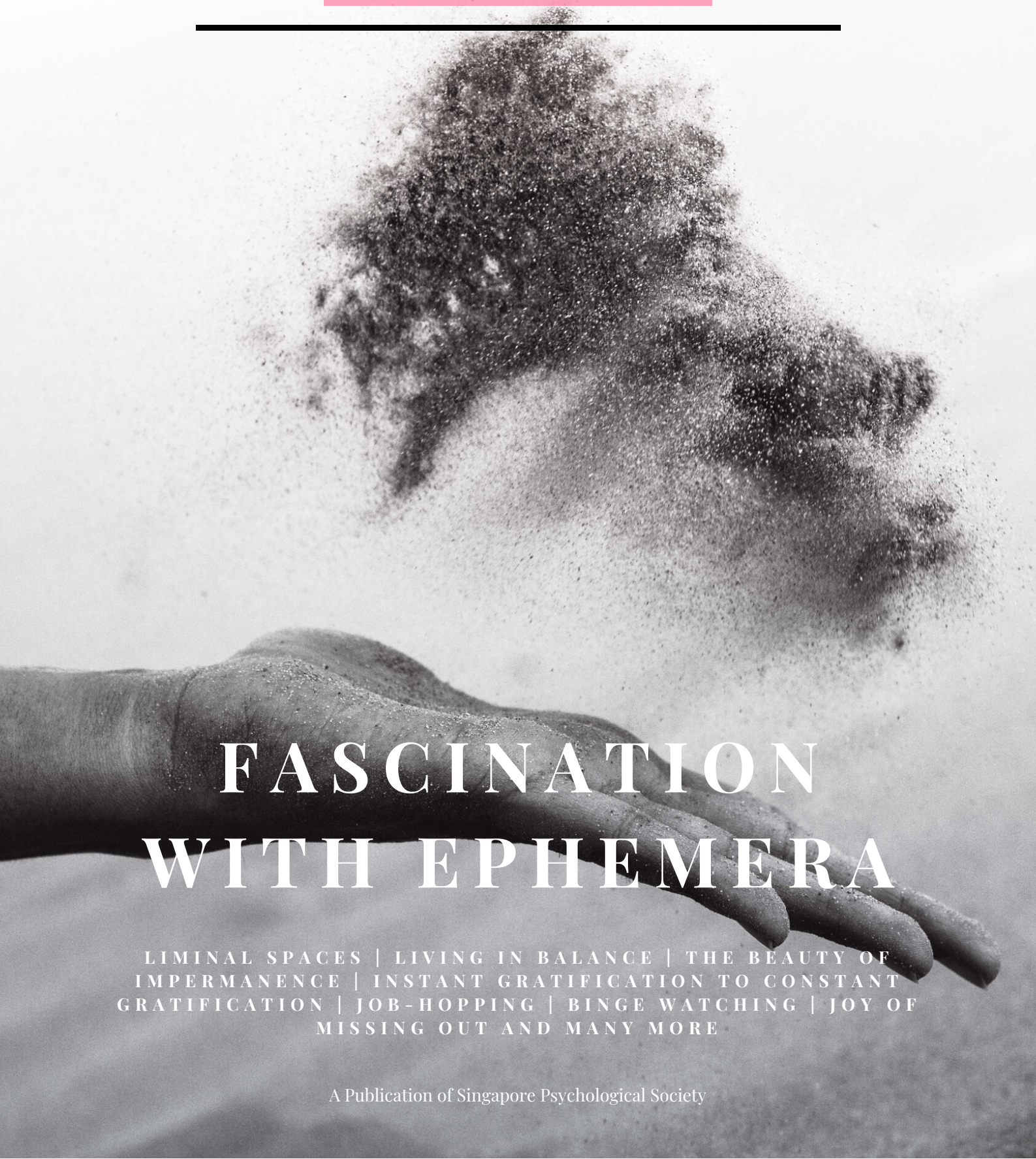
FASCINATION WITH EPHEMERA

LIMINAL SPACES | LIVING IN BALANCE | THE BEAUTY OF IMPERMANENCE | INSTANT GRATIFICATION TO CONSTANT GRATIFICATION | JOB-HOPPING | BINGE WATCHING | JOY OF MISSING OUT AND MANY MORE

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL
Denise Dillon | Editor-in-Chief
Nicole Chong | Associate Editor
Juanita Ong | Associate Editor
Amanda Tan | Associate Editor

DESIGN
Charmaine Wah | Lead Designer
Cherisse Wah (Ad-hoc)
Jasmine Chia
Jessy Yong
Jex Lin Junyang
Sameer Ehsaan

CONTRIBUTORS
Daniela Schreier
Denise Dillon
Liliana Ferreira da Costa
Paul Victor Patinadan
Rae Yi Yap
Shamini Ganasarajah
Zeb Lim Kai Kok

FASCINATION WITH EPHEMERA

Singapore Psychological Society
(Established 1979)

Editor's Note

Ephemera are things that exist in the short term, which limits the duration of their use or enjoyment. Unsurprisingly, the fleeting nature of ephemera can lead to the fear of missing out. Ephemeral content has become a feature of social media feeds (e.g., think Facebook & Instagram Stories, Snapchat), and sales are booming in the pop-up industry. It seems we crave ephemeral experiences because of their transitory nature, which lends to their attraction as sensational and captivating. There is a sense of urgency associated with such experiences; if we don't take advantage of this brief experience now, then fear of missing out arises, which can make us willing to disrupt routine to avoid that outcome. In psychological terms, decision-making processes associated with ephemeral content are affected by motivations, gratification, need for closure, and engagement (Chen & Cheung, 2019). Those of us with a high need for closure might be more strongly motivated to continue viewing ephemeral feeds to avoid that fear of missing out, and marketing companies draw on such findings to increase user engagement.

In this issue, our writers reflect on some of their own ephemeral experiences as they also seek to explain some of the motivations behind the desire for short-term enjoyment and associated feelings. They share evidence-based insights into what makes us relish the beauty of impermanence, instant (now constant) gratification, and transience. We invite you to explore the joy of missing out as an alternative to the constant grasp for experiences, achievements, or ownership. Take time to sit within the in-between spaces and find some fascination in what's around us. Read on to explore.
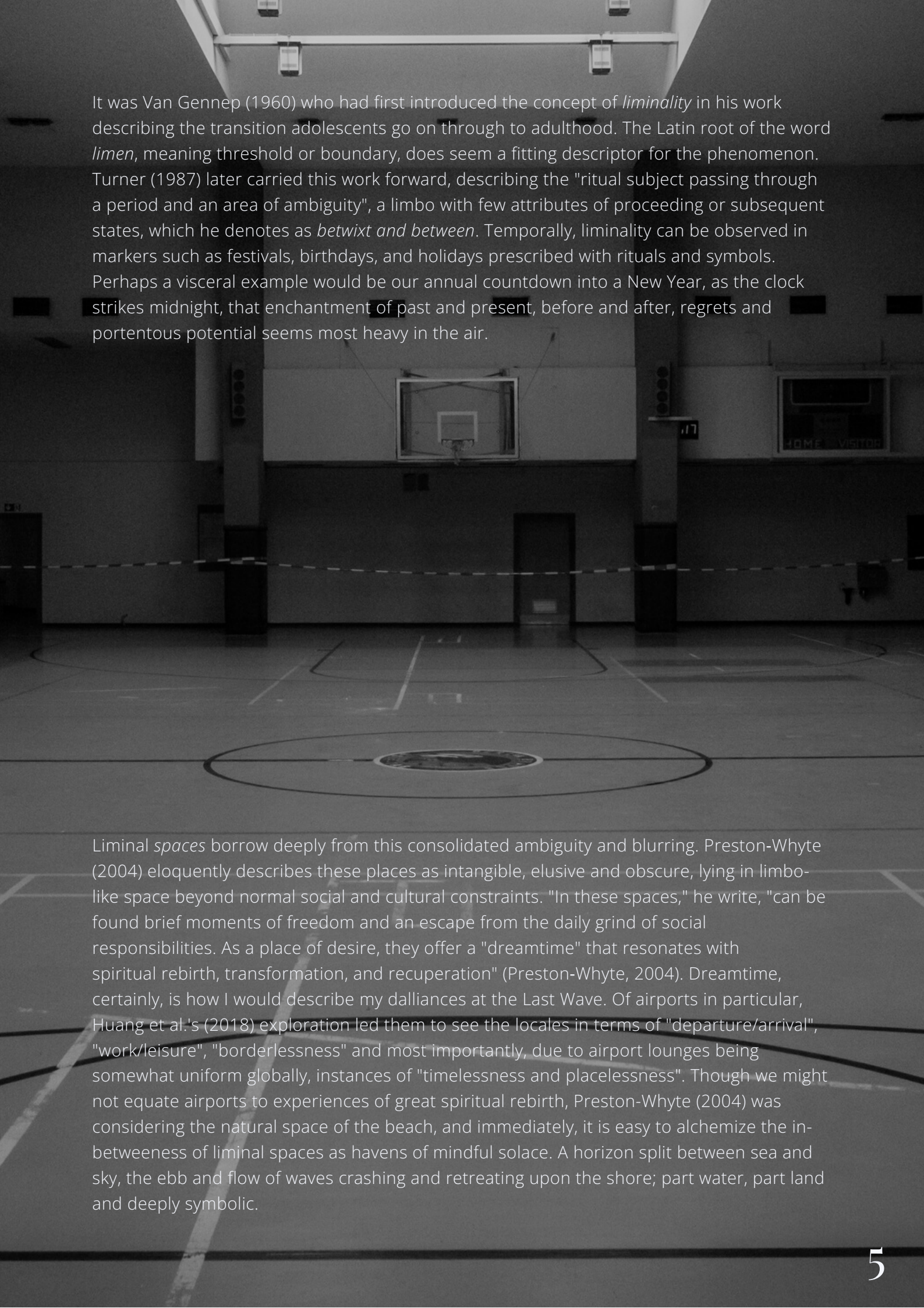
Dr Denise Dillon
Editor-in-Chief

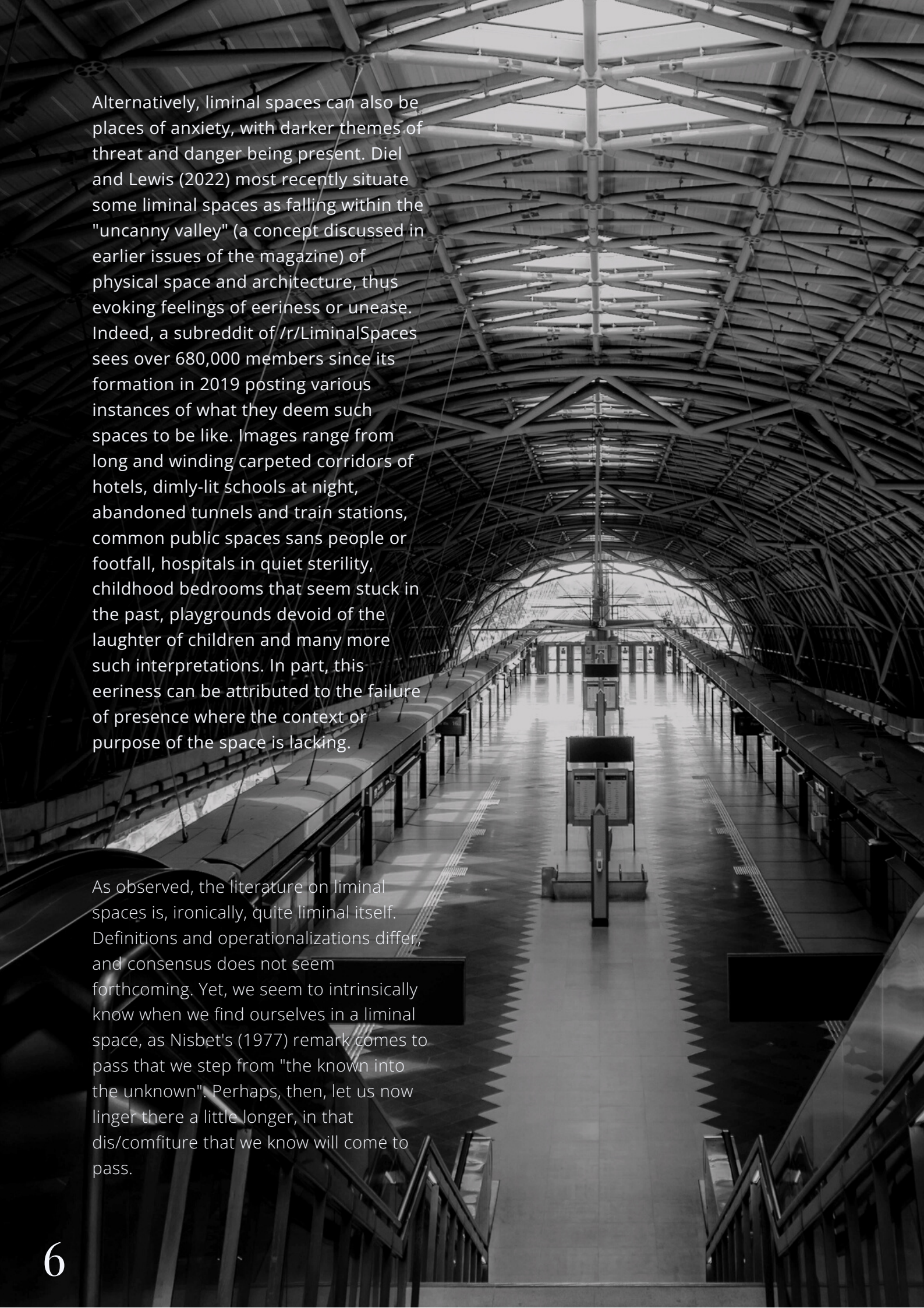# Just Passing Through: Liminal Spaces and Places In-Between

By Paul Victor Patinadan

As I bid a fond farewell to Bali's beautiful sun-drenched (or simply drenched, depending on the time of year) beaches, I make it a point to carve a couple of hours buffer time before my flight back. A quick taxi ride (brokered, of course, in broken Bahasa) from one of the many tranquil villas and I find myself thick in the harried bustle of Denpasar Airport, somewhat early. My slippered feet, sometimes still crusted with golden sand, take me inexorably towards the aptly named "Last Wave"; an airport bistro that is strangely, at once contentedly sleepy and frenetically busy. I often sit right at the white marble-topped bar, the scent of citrus and mint coalescing with the umami of a pizza or burgers resting on the counter, ready for pick up. Old re-runs of cartoons from the 90s and early 00s play on an LCD screen, and I make friendly, small-talk with the bar-staff. They ask me about my trip (obviously) and I tell them in my own personal permutation what they've probably heard a million times before. I might idly gesture at the TV, and we reminisce on childhood episodes of Digimon or Scooby-doo. Around me I hear a myriad of languages being spoken, most in laughter, though some in urgency (the gate's closing!). Chairs drag and people get up to leave, suitcases tugged along, tables are wiped clean to usher in the next wave of travelers heading home. A final ritual of a foamy, ice-cold Bintang (topped off with that Balinese hospitality), as I contemplate the end of a restful trip and prepare to jump back into the daily grind. I drag my chair, get up to leave, tug my suitcase along, and go on my way. The strange nature of the Last Wave airport bar is undoubtedly one of transition, but also one of nostalgia, an ephemeral sense of a place perhaps, that seems to exist solely between places.

It was Van Gennep (1960) who had first introduced the concept of *liminality* in his work describing the transition adolescents go on through to adulthood. The Latin root of the word *limen*, meaning threshold or boundary, does seem a fitting descriptor for the phenomenon. Turner (1987) later carried this work forward, describing the "ritual subject passing through a period and an area of ambiguity", a limbo with few attributes of proceeding or subsequent states, which he denotes as *betwixt and between*. Temporally, liminality can be observed in markers such as festivals, birthdays, and holidays prescribed with rituals and symbols. Perhaps a visceral example would be our annual countdown into a New Year, as the clock strikes midnight, that enchantment of past and present, before and after, regrets and portentous potential seems most heavy in the air.

Liminal *spaces* borrow deeply from this consolidated ambiguity and blurring. Preston-Whyte (2004) eloquently describes these places as intangible, elusive and obscure, lying in limbo-like space beyond normal social and cultural constraints. "In these spaces," he write, "can be found brief moments of freedom and an escape from the daily grind of social responsibilities. As a place of desire, they offer a "dreamtime" that resonates with spiritual rebirth, transformation, and recuperation" (Preston-Whyte, 2004). Dreamtime, certainly, is how I would describe my dalliances at the Last Wave. Of airports in particular, Huang et al.'s (2018) exploration led them to see the locales in terms of "departure/arrival", "work/leisure", "borderlessness" and most importantly, due to airport lounges being somewhat uniform globally, instances of "timelessness and placelessness". Though we might not equate airports to experiences of great spiritual rebirth, Preston-Whyte (2004) was considering the natural space of the beach, and immediately, it is easy to alchemize the in-betweeness of liminal spaces as havens of mindful solace. A horizon split between sea and sky, the ebb and flow of waves crashing and retreating upon the shore; part water, part land and deeply symbolic.

Alternatively, liminal spaces can also be places of anxiety, with darker themes of threat and danger being present. Diel and Lewis (2022) most recently situate some liminal spaces as falling within the "uncanny valley" (a concept discussed in earlier issues of the magazine) of physical space and architecture, thus evoking feelings of eeriness or unease. Indeed, a subreddit of /r/LiminalSpaces sees over 680,000 members since its formation in 2019 posting various instances of what they deem such spaces to be like. Images range from long and winding carpeted corridors of hotels, dimly-lit schools at night, abandoned tunnels and train stations, common public spaces sans people or footfall, hospitals in quiet sterility, childhood bedrooms that seem stuck in the past, playgrounds devoid of the laughter of children and many more such interpretations. In part, this eeriness can be attributed to the failure of presence where the context or purpose of the space is lacking.

As observed, the literature on liminal spaces is, ironically, quite liminal itself. Definitions and operationalizations differ, and consensus does not seem forthcoming. Yet, we seem to intrinsically know when we find ourselves in a liminal space, as Nisbet's (1977) remark comes to pass that we step from "the known into the unknown". Perhaps, then, let us now linger there a little longer, in that dis/comfiture that we know will come to pass.

Living In Balance: A Transient Journey

By Daniela Schreier

Life is a *transient* journey with change being its only constant. Permanent change requires planning, if possible, and evokes feelings of anxiety and resistance. You are familiar with life as it is—hence, anticipating and tolerating transformation is a difficult process. Why? Every major change demands that you let go of something familiar: a behavior pattern, a relationship, a career choice, or life itself. Therefore, traditionally, you crave safety, belonging, and balance (Maslow, 1943). Yet, you are magnetically drawn to one-of-a-kind novelty with an expiration date.

Past generations got excited about a one-time summer concert of their favourite band or the release of a long-anticipated movie (only in cinemas). Today, everything is at your fingertips. You want it—you see it, order it, and consume it. With fewer events on the calendar and fewer items on the menu, past generations experienced less choice pressure and fear of missing out (FOMO). For today's generation, from the cradle onward life is less insular. Online platforms open the world for immediate consumption of knowledge, exploration, and ever new "highs". Online meetings and favourite labels—inviting the first online 50 viewers to a new launch at a two-day pop-up event with that special DJ or celebrity present— are the daily chase and hype! Which of your acquaintances will have the most risqué, disappearing snapshot today? It's hard to keep up with all the drama.

Attempting to walk the fine line between a predictable home and work arrangement that equals long-term security and the titillating *rien ne va plus* (nothing goes any more) of any fugitive experience becomes more challenging and time consuming, due to the sheer availability of events. Yet mastering the journey of life means to balance between the two!

Remember, it's not a novelty that humans have an innate attraction to short-lived, elusive and exclusive excitements to spice up or escape everyday life. Pursuing slot machine wins or the sporadic affection of an inconsistent relational partner are just two age-old well-established examples. Known as intermittent reinforcement, these are patterns of reward delivery at irregular intervals that have predated modern technology. One-time-only fashion pop-ups, DJ events, limited edition purses, phones, and other gadgets are but more recent thrills.

Research still yields the same: Irregular reward delivery—aka you do not know when, for how long, or if ever again an event, person, or item will be available—makes you work harder, can be habit forming, and activates your "thrill of the hunt" instinct. Hence, modern-day buzzes such as disappearing messages and short-lived, risqué personal snapshots are just recent phenomena that mark an ancient dilemma: the human condition of opposing needs. Finding balance in duality teeters between your need for stability and for exploration of the short-lived. The path to a peaceful life is to accept the challenge and to integrate and balance both.

In closing, here are some tips to find balance in an increasingly transient life. Please have pen and paper ready to find a permanent home for your thoughts—for your thoughts, when applied to action, become the powerful wings of an eagle and will help you to take flight.

Five Tips To Find Balance In A Transient Life

PELUK (Embrace)

P – Part with the belief that more and new is always better. If what you already have does not satisfy your long-term wants, what makes you believe an additional pop-up store item, disappearing online snap, or text will do the trick? Start to search within yourself and explore your current bag called life. What do you already own or have purchased? What in your current life provides you with lasting joy, happiness, and satisfaction? Jot it down and contemplate for a while. Then begin focusing on cultivating the positive relationships, activities, and items on your list and start to say good-bye to who and what doesn't contribute positively. In this way you are creating the change you want to see—a more predictable long-term overhaul of your life. It's like consistently building a muscle—not a one-time quick fix. Take courage!

E – Embrace the reality that your choices have consequences however light-heartedly you view life. Whatever you put on your plate , it stays there; in adulthood, nobody cleans up your life or makes your bed. You overspent, you pay for it. You enjoy too much of anything, you deal with the consequences (e.g., too much stuff, you pay extra for storage; too many apps, you'll be squandering your time using them). Let "the power of choice" encourage you to be present and mindful (i.e., consciously plan your life). This includes long-term planning and fleeting pleasures alike.

L – Less is more. Let's be practical and contemplate: Who or what runs your life? Your emotions? Your need for excitement? The fear of missing out (FOMO)? Pinpoint it and then apply what Linehan (2020) calls your "wise mind"; which is a cross of your reasonable and emotional mind. Let not one of your functions run your entire life!

U – Understand that you cannot outrun change, loss, or life. You cannot, at least not successfully, cover up your feelings with fleeting excitement. Ultimately you must face reality: Everything in life is transient, even life itself will come to an end. Grieving this reality and understanding its blessings means to cherish each day by building meaningful connections with others and by investing in your community. Your legacy is not the ephemera you attended or collected, but the acts of kindness you are remembered by.

K – Keep in mind that balance is a constant, mindful effort to mediate the human condition: The push for more, new, and different and the pull to remain firmly anchored and to experience long-term stability and loving relationships. Accept and make peace with the duality of life.

The Beauty of Impermanence

By Zeb Lim

"Change is the only constant in life" ~ Heraclitus: This often-heard quote is difficult to embody, especially when dealing with unpleasant changes in our lives. We crave our dopamine hit that occurs when we experience pleasant positive experiences in our lives. Social media companies are aware of this and are quick to capitalize on our desire for constant stimulation. Let us explore the beauty of fleeting moments and impermanence in life associated with that constant change.

According to clinical psychologist Dr Rick Hanson (2021), our minds behave like Teflon towards the positive experiences in our lives but are like Velcro when it comes to negative experiences. We are more likely to remember instances of things going south than of things going well. Let's try a simple experiment: Take one minute, and freely recall as many negative experiences as you can. In the next minute, try to recall all the positive experiences. At the end of it, compare which list is longer. Chances are, populating the list of negative experiences will be easier to complete.

When you are facing challenges and difficulties in life, remember that the bad times do not last forever. After all, "Change is the only constant in life."

If you watched the movie, *Groundhog Day* (Ramis, H., 1993), you may recall the plot of the television weatherman Phil Connors, waking up day after day, caught in a time loop where he repeatedly re-lives his days, powerless to stop tragedies from recurring, no matter how hard he tries. Similarly, if things remain constant in our lives, with both good and bad experiences never changing and permanent, would it not be a boring, and tedious experience to be endured? Therefore, looking at the bigger picture of life experiences, change or impermanence can be a beautiful thing.

Understandably, when we are going through difficult moments, we may need some help to get through them. Read on to see how we can better cope with these challenging times.

Recognize Our Common Humanity

Self-compassion as conceptualized by Kristin Neff (2003) has three elements: *self-kindness*, *common humanity*, and *mindfulness*. If we go beyond our personal "tragedy", and look around us, we can see that others around us have shared similar experiences of failing their exam, having their heart broken, losing their job, etc. Taking a step away from our personal challenges and seeing the shared suffering—the *common humanity* element that Neff highlighted—can help us to put our pain and suffering in perspective. We cannot avoid the initial pain and hurt, but we can stop the mental suffering that we keep inflicting on ourselves repeatedly. Focus on the things that you do have control over, rather than the things you have no control over; you do have the ability to change things for the better.

If you find it hard to practice having compassion for yourself, seek out compassion from others instead. You can reach out to a family member, friend, coach, counsellor, mentor, psychologist, or anyone else that you feel comfortable with. It is healing to be seen and heard by others when we cannot offer help and support to ourselves just yet. Hearing the stories and experiences of others who have gone through similar pain can again elicit and remind us of the *common humanity* element (Neff, 2003).

Practice Equanimity

Zeng (2015) states: "Equanimity refers to a peaceful attitude…feeling neither greed regarding good feelings nor hatred toward bad feelings." Knowing that everything changes eventually might make us more balanced in our emotional responses to life experiences. Staying more balanced towards negative feelings that come up during unpleasant events in our life can help us transition to positive feelings faster.

Through the practice of nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment, mindfulness can lead us to increased equanimity and decreased emotional reactivity (Garland, 2010). We can learn to be less attached to the various feelings and emotions that arise and be more equanimous in facing the vicissitudes of life. We can then use our logical and analytical brain to make deliberate and measured decisions that are most optimal or effective when we are emotionally balanced.

Just Keep Swimming

Taking a leaf from the Pixar cartoon, *Finding Nemo* (Stanton, A., 2003), where Dory encourages Marlin to "just keep swimming", similarly, in life, we should just keep living. We are humans with multiple roles and responsibilities. We are a child, a parent, a student, a psychologist, a lecturer, etcetera. Even if one part of our life is not working out, we can still focus and look towards the other parts that are going well. Our life does not stay on pause; even though we encounter some setbacks, life goes on. As any good psychologist may remind their clients going through life transitions, keeping to a regular routine and structure is one way to keep things in balance and to maintain a sense of normalcy in our disrupted lives.

Another life lesson that we can learn from Dory is that, sometimes, it is useful to have a short-term memory. We should practice having selective memory of unpleasant events, discounting the negatives in our life, for our minds do have an inherent propensity to behave like Velcro when it comes to negative events (Hanson, 2021).

Practicing selective memory for the negative events is just a form of rebalancing our inner perspective to see the negatives in a more balanced way along with the positives in our life.

At the end of the day, we need to wholeheartedly embrace the fact that change is the only constant in life. Hence, whatever challenges and setbacks we encounter are all impermanent, and we can eventually heal from them and be ready to bounce back. Humans are resilient beings; we may get a few bruises from the hard knocks of life, but we can pick ourselves up again in due time. Until that happens, remember to practice self-compassion and equanimity, and just keep on living your best life.

The Evolution of Instant Gratification to Constant Gratification: Impact on Contemporary Lifestyles

By Shamini Ganasarajah

In today's fast-paced and digitally connected world, the concept of gratification has undergone a significant transformation. With the rise of instant delivery services like Amazon Prime, Grab, and the widespread availability of online shopping platforms, individuals have transitioned from seeking instant gratification to experiencing a constant stream of gratification in their daily lives. In this article we explore the psychological implications of this shift and examine how this trend has impacted the way we live, consume, and perceive the world around us.

Instant vs Constant

The age of technological advancements has ushered in an era of unprecedented convenience and accessibility. The advent of services such as Amazon Prime, with their two-day delivery guarantee, has made it easier than ever to satisfy our desires promptly. The widespread availability of instant gratification has transformed the way we navigate the world and has given rise to a new phenomenon: constant gratification.

Instant gratification refers to the immediate satisfaction of desires or impulses, providing a sense of pleasure or relief without delay (Mischel et al., 1972). It involves seeking and obtaining immediate pleasure, relief, or reward without having to wait or invest significant effort or time. Instant gratification is often associated with the pursuit of immediate pleasure or the avoidance of discomfort or unpleasantness, prioritizing short-term gains over long-term goals or consequences (Alsop, 2014). It can manifest in various aspects of life, including consumption, decision-making, and emotional responses.
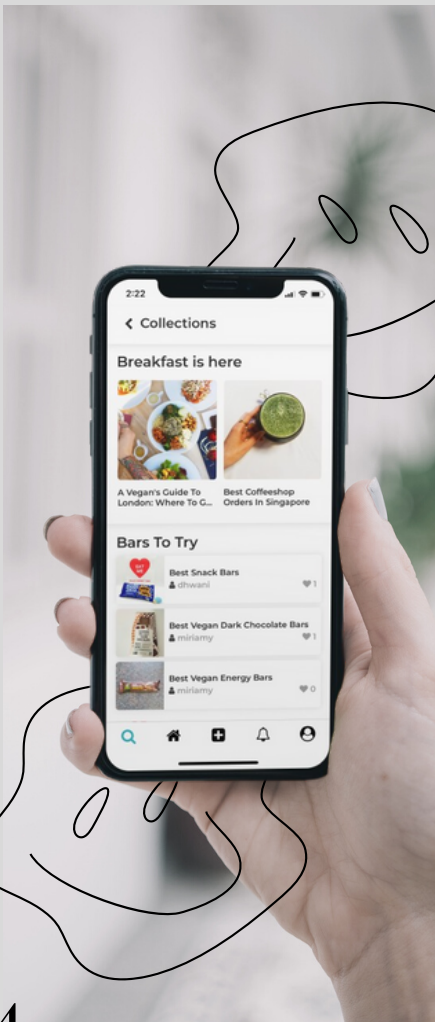
Historically, instant gratification was limited to simple pleasures, such as enjoying a delicious meal or purchasing a desired item in a physical store. However, with the rise of e-commerce and rapid delivery services, the scope of instant gratification has expanded exponentially.

Constant gratification arises from the increasing availability and accessibility of products and services that enable individuals to receive near-instantaneous satisfaction on a continuous basis (Waters, 2021). The convenience of online shopping and the promise of quick delivery have consequently created a culture of constant gratification, where individuals can effortlessly acquire products, experiences, and entertainment at their fingertips.

The shift from instant gratification to constant gratification has significantly influenced consumer behavior (O'Neill, 2022). The allure of immediate satisfaction has led to impulsive buying tendencies (Baumeister, 2002), as individuals are constantly exposed to a multitude of products and services online. The ease of purchasing has blurred the line between wants and needs, leading to increased consumption and potentially contributing to the development of compulsive buying behaviors.

Implications of Constant Gratification

The constant availability of gratification has also eroded our ability to tolerate delays or inconveniences. With heightened expectations of instant fulfillment, waiting has become increasingly frustrating, leading to decreased patience in various aspects of life. Moreover, the pursuit of constant gratification can overshadow the value of the experience itself. The anticipation and delayed gratification that once accompanied certain activities, such as waiting for a special occasion or saving up for a luxury item, have diminished, potentially lessening the overall enjoyment and appreciation of these experiences (Danziger, 2017).

The demand for constant gratification places individuals under pressure to keep up with the pace of modern life. The fear of missing out (FOMO) and the constant need to stay connected and up to date can lead to heightened anxiety and stress levels. Additionally, the pervasiveness of constant gratification has implications for social dynamics and interpersonal relationships. Immediate access to online entertainment, social media, and virtual connections can create a sense of isolation and detachment from real-world interactions. The increased focus on personal desires may overshadow the importance of genuine human connections and communal experiences.
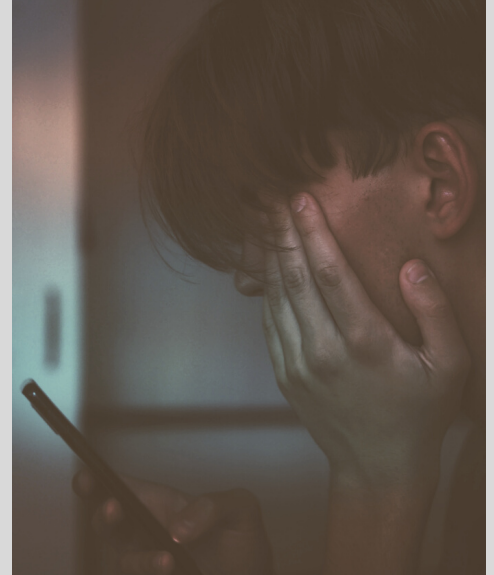
Developing Healthy Gratification Habits

To foster healthier gratification, individuals can adopt strategies such as mindful consumption (Errmann, 2022), where they develop awareness of their consumption patterns and consciously evaluate their desires to prevent impulsive purchases. By taking the time to reflect on our purchasing decisions, we can avoid impulsive buying and prioritize meaningful experiences over material possessions. Mindful consumption involves asking ourselves questions such as, "Is this item necessary?" or "Will it truly enhance my life?" This practice helps us differentiate between genuine needs and superficial desires, leading to more intentional and fulfilling choices.

Reintroducing delayed gratification can also restore appreciation for experiences and increase patience (Hodges 2001). In a culture that prioritizes instant satisfaction, embracing delayed gratification can bring back the joy of anticipation and enhance the overall value of experiences. Setting goals, practicing self-discipline, and savoring anticipation can enhance the overall quality of gratification. By cultivating patience and self-discipline, we can learn to appreciate the journey rather than solely focusing on the end result. Delayed gratification allows us to savor and fully enjoy the anticipation, making the eventual reward even more fulfilling.

Additionally, finding a healthy balance between online and offline activities can foster more authentic connections and provide opportunities for genuine engagement with the world. While the digital world offers convenience and instant access to gratification, it is essential to prioritize real-world connections and experiences. Allocating dedicated time for offline activities, such as engaging in hobbies, spending quality time with loved ones, or exploring nature, helps foster deeper and more meaningful gratification. By disconnecting from constant digital stimuli and immersing ourselves in the present moment, we can develop a richer appreciation for the experiences that truly matter.

Conclusion

The transition from instant gratification to constant gratification has had a profound impact on the way we live our lives. While the ease and convenience of constant gratification have undeniable benefits, it is essential to be mindful of the potential psychological consequences and societal implications. By fostering a balanced approach to gratification, individuals can enhance their overall well-being, maintain healthy relationships, and cultivate a deeper appreciation for the experiences that truly matter.

Look Before You Job–Hop

By Yap Rae Yi

Job-hoppers have earned a bad reputation among employers, probably due to experiences of spending valuable time and resources to onboard and train new employees, only to have them leave the company within two years. Besides practical and economic reasons, there is also a stigma attached to job-hoppers where they may be seen as uncommitted, unloyal, and unable to persevere through challenges at a workplace. Being a job-hopper myself, I have internalised this stigma after countless interviews with hiring managers expressing concerns about my short stints in various companies, and especially after an experience of being called a "grasshopper" during an interview. Looking past the shame, I felt that it was important to be curious about why I job-hop, and share about what I have learnt.

Motivations Behind Job-Hopping

Recent literature presents the increasing trend of job-hopping amongst millennials and Gen Zs, and has revealed several advantages of job-hopping, such as being able to explore different careers, to advance quicker in one's career, and to maintain positive well-being as one goes about experiencing vocations that align with their interests. Though, it is often cautioned that the intention behind job-hopping is what should be examined, and not just merely the act of job-hopping itself.

Lake et al. (2018) identified two main job-hopping motives—advancement and escape. The advancement motive refers to one's desire to change jobs frequently for the purpose of career advancements such as better remuneration and learning opportunities. The escape motive on the other hand refers to one's desire to change jobs frequently to escape undesirable working environments. It has been discussed that people who tended to adopt the escape motive might have higher levels of neuroticism and hold more negative worldviews as compared to their advancement-motivated counterparts (Hall et al., 2022). In any case, it seems both groups hold the same "grass is greener on the other side" mindset where they assume that the next job or situation would put them in a more desirable position. Leaving their current positions immediately would alleviate them from the fear of missing out (advancement motive) and their discomfort (escape motive) in the fastest way possible. As much as it is important to tune in to our needs and wants, it is also crucial to acknowledge that there may be times when we do not have to act on them quickly.

Quitting prematurely might be prompted by cognitive biases. Deciding to leave a job can be a complicated process, especially when one considers the personal, social, and cultural implications of leaving a job. This process often puts one in a position of discomfort, which might increase the likelihood of cognitive biases being activated.The action bias is the tendency to favour action over inaction. Internally weighing the pros and cons of leaving a job and not knowing the best decision immediately might make an employee perceive themselves to be in a state of inaction. Taking action by quitting their job might then be perceived as the way to alleviate the tension of being inactive. Recognising how we can be disillusioned to think that we need to make decisions quickly, here are some things I have learnt in my years of being a job-hopper.

1. Craft Space For Contemplation

Being in a fast-paced society, it is difficult to convince others and sometimes even ourselves about the benefits of slowing down. I recently attended a meditation retreat, where I detached myself from the "real world" for a few days by limiting my contact with people and activities outside of the meditation venue. It was an ironic experience, where I found myself feeling liberated, despite being confined to a space where I did nothing but focus on my own thoughts. I investigated and worked through the many thoughts and emotions that arose and ended the retreat with a clearer mind. It sounds odd when I put it this way, but it was refreshing and assuring to realise that the world continued to spin even when I was "doing nothing". It made me recognise how I tended to overestimate the urgency of some decisions, and how making clearer decisions is better than making fast decisions, especially when it comes to important matters.

2. Explore And Pursue Interests Outside of Work

Our journeys in building a career inform us about our self-identities as we learn about our interests and preferences. I am someone with many interests, and that has led me to leave jobs to explore these interests. In this process, I learnt about my drive to seek meaningful connections with others through my stint as a financial advisor, and my curiosity to learn about new cultures through my stint as a preschool art teacher in Yangon. As rich as these experiences were, they were both vocations that were not sustainable for me. Looking back, I realised that interests do not have to be pursued through formal employment. Activities such as self-studying, volunteering, or joining interest groups are also great ways to explore your interests, and might also allow you to make a more informed choice if and when you do decide to make the switch to another job.

3. Trust The Process

In the previous sections, I have recommended slowing down to make more informed decisions about staying or leaving a job. Regardless of the speed of job-hopping or how prepared one is, job-hopping still involves taking leaps into the unknown. The planned happenstance theory by Krumboltz (2009) often brings me comfort when dealing with uncertainties in my career. It recognises that career opportunities can come through unplanned or serendipitous events as long as we continue to be flexible and open to new experiences. In the various places and settings I have worked at or exposed myself to, I am grateful to have met people who continue to support me professionally by referring me to opportunities, providing me with mentorship and, best of all, friendship.

I acknowledge that I am sharing these insights from a position of privilege as not everyone gets the chance to explore career options as freely or safely as I was able to. I also want to add that much of what I have learnt about job-hopping and my job-hopping tendencies were excluded for brevity and privacy. With that said, the concept of a career and whether a person decides to pursue one is highly personal and relative. Along with the lessons I have shared, I have also learnt that having compassion for yourself and others is one of the best ways to foster safe working environments for every employee—for them to look before they job-hop.

Exploring the Allure and Impact of Binge-Watching

By Shamini Ganasarajah

It's a Friday night, work has wrapped up, and there are no other plans tonight. The latest season of a show has just been released on one of the many streaming services available. All 10 episodes are readily accessible, and binge-watching is about to commence. Binge-watching has become a widespread phenomenon in the digital age, captivating millions of individuals worldwide. This article aims to explore the psychological factors that draw people to binge-watching, while also shedding light on its positive and negative consequences. Understanding the allure and impact of binge-watching is crucial, especially within the context of people's fascination with ephemera— the transient and evanescent nature of contemporary media consumption.

The Allure of Binge-Watching

The appeal of binge-watching is driven by the unprecedented accessibility and convenience of online streaming platforms, offering entire seasons in one sitting, satisfying the desire for instant gratification and control over entertainment choices. The engrossing storytelling and compelling character development within television shows create immersive experiences, heightening engagement and emotional investment. Moreover, binge-watching provides an escape from daily stressors, offering temporary respite and emotional regulation through fictional narratives that resonate with personal experiences.

Pros of Binge-Watching

Binge-watching fosters camaraderie and social connection as individuals share and discuss shows with friends or online communities, leading to increased social support (Kaufman, 2021). Intellectual stimulation arises from analysing intricate plots and characters, enhancing critical thinking skills and encouraging engagement. Additionally, binge-watching may temporarily alleviate symptoms of depression and anxiety, providing brief relief from personal concerns.

Consequences of Binge-Watching

Excessive binge-watching can negatively impact emotional, physical, and mental health. Immersion in binge-watching may lead to a decline in face-to-face interactions, hindering social skills and resulting in feelings of loneliness and detachment. Relying excessively on binge-watching as a coping mechanism can hinder emotional regulation, personal growth, and resilience, underscoring the importance of employing healthier strategies like relaxation techniques and physical activities.

From a physical standpoint, excessive binge-watching is associated with increased sedentary behaviour, inadequate sleep, and unhealthy snacking habits, posing risks of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and musculoskeletal issues (Alam, 2021).

Mental health implications should also be considered, with several studies linking binge-watching to increased symptoms of depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders (Alimoradi et al., 2022; Sung, 2015). The COVID-19 pandemic revealed stronger associations between binge-watching, depression, and sleep problems (Raza et al., 2021). Additionally, research suggests that binge-watching may exhibit addictive behavioural patterns.

Conclusion

The allure of binge-watching aligns with people's fascination with ephemera, characterised by the transient nature of contemporary media consumption. While binge-watching offers emotional bonding, temporary relief, and intellectual stimulation, its drawbacks demand consideration. Negative health consequences and isolation from real-world interactions necessitate a balanced approach to consumption. Engaging in physical exercise, social activities, and setting limits on binge-watching can maintain a healthy equilibrium between instant gratification and overall well-being. Recognising the potential negative impact of binge-watching on individual health enables responsible and mindful media consumption.
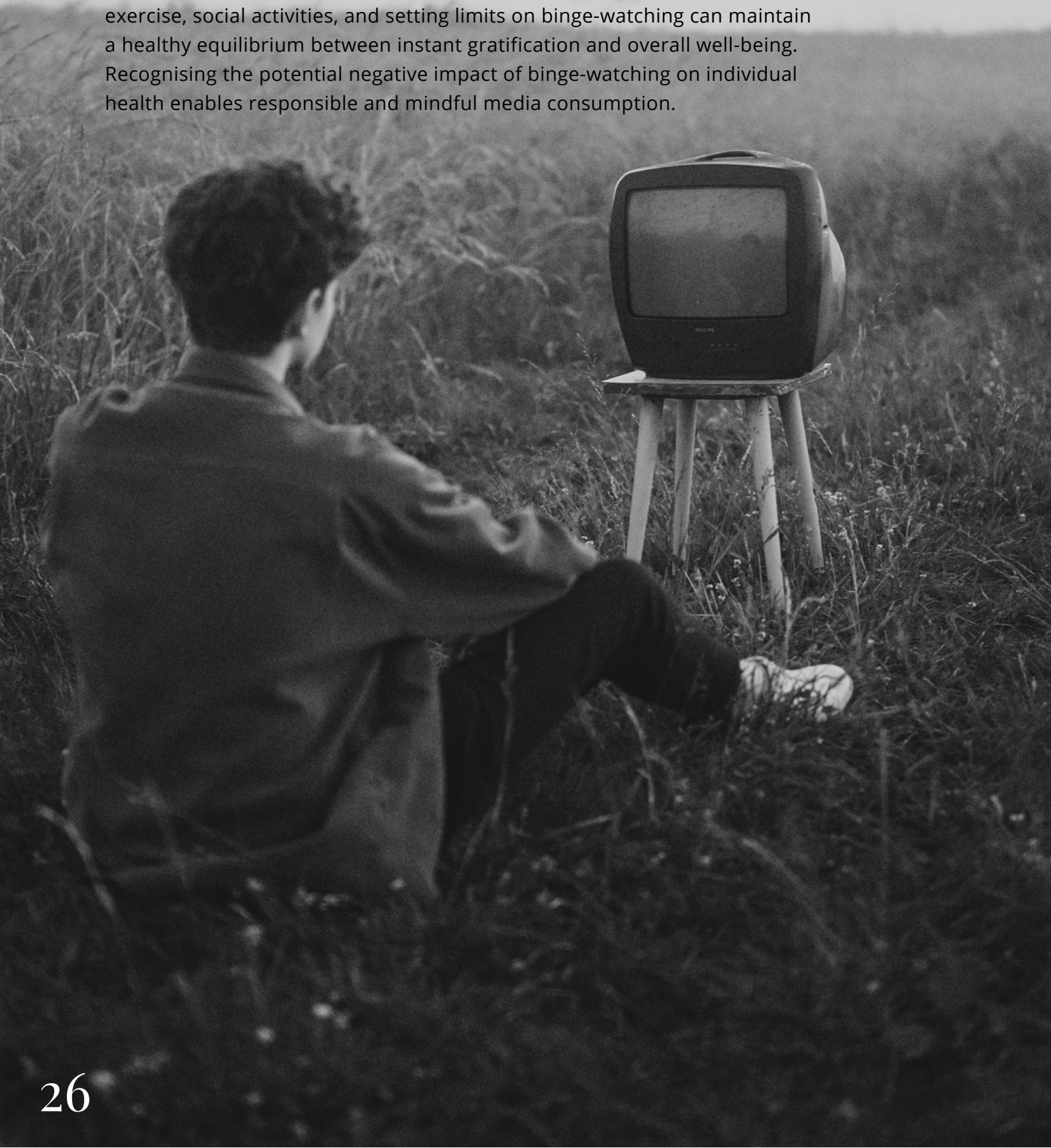
Antidote to Fear of Missing Out: Joy of Missing Out

By Zeb Lim

We live in a world of diverse choices. Can you even imagine turning on your Netflix or Disney+ platform and only seeing 10 movie options? Or going out to eat without consulting Google or ChatGPT for the best dining out options? Yet, ironically, we seem to be less happy with more options in our life. This has given rise to the term *FOMO* or *Fear of Missing Out*. It's common to think that if we only achieve or experience more in life, then we will be happier. The problem with FOMO is that we always worry that the other choice could have been the better choice.

Paradox of Choice

As humans, we like to have choices, but when presented with too many choices, we get bogged down with trying to decide which choice is the "best". Easy access to information via Google can overwhelm us with an overload of information, leading to decision paralysis, rather than clarity in our decision making.

More may mean less, folks. In psychologist Barry Schwartz's 2004 book, *The Paradox of Choice—Why More is Less*, Schwartz shares that having too many choices leads to the problem of choice overload, where people may get more anxious and depressed with too many choices at hand. Cognitive overload is a real problem. We can only handle so much information processing at any one point, despite having a brain that surpasses the best AI.

JOMO—Joy of Missing Out

The antidote to FOMO may lie in *JOMO* or *Joy of Missing Out*. Practicing JOMO involves learning to better appreciate the things we already have, rather than consuming more experiences in life. JOMO is not to eliminate our choices and options in life, but rather to keep them within a reasonable range that allows for decision making without the decision paralysis that accompanies overabundance of choices. Less can be more.

With global travel picking up again, you may come across the term *slow travel*. Proponents of slow travel advise travellers to soak in the environment, keeping oneself open to new experiences, keeping things simple amidst the "clutter" in modern life (Shackell, 2015). Practicing slow travel or JOMO in our travel can be a start for many of us who suffered from COVID-19 travel lockdown fatigue.

Take in The Good

We need to learn to savour the experiences that we already have in life. Clinical psychologist Dr Rick Hanson (2021) highlights our natural propensity to focus on the negative experiences in our life compared to the positive experiences. Hence, we may think we need to get more positive and pleasant experiences, to really be able to maximise our dopamine highs. Dr Hanson suggested a 3-step approach to counter this natural inclination. You can try to practice the steps below, to help moderate the FOMO effect and amplify the JOMO effect.

Step 1: Look out for the good experiences in your life.
Step 2: Take the time to soak in the positive experience.
Step 3: Stay with the positive experiences, for a good 20–30 seconds.

Neuropsychologist Donald Hebb (1949) states "neurons that fire together, wire together". Knowing that we are less attuned to positive experiences means that we really need to spend time to soak in the positive, to allow the neurons to create new neural pathways so that taking in the good experiences becomes a more natural and automatic process.

Pause and Practice Gratitude

Gratitude practice is another method we can use to better manage our fear of missing out when good things end. Research has shown that practicing gratitude helps us celebrate the present moment and magnifies the positive emotions that we experience (Emmons, 2010). Gratitude helps us to stay with the experience we are enjoying now, so we are not chasing after the next positive moment so quickly.

Building the gratitude muscles takes time; you can try a simple gratitude practice to strengthen these muscles through regular use. Every evening, try to identify 3 things that you can be thankful for that happened within the day, or even sometime during the week, and write them down. Writing reflections down by hand on paper can help to better recall the experience (Umejima, 2021). However, if you are someone who prefers to type on your laptop or phone, that would work just fine. It's better to be imperfect at it than to strive for perfection here. Alternatively, one can simply take a moment to just reflect and recall something that we are appreciative of if writing or typing it out is a bit too daunting.

What is Truly Important to You?

What are your values? What is important for you? Money and time are finite resources in our life. There are limits to what we can commit to doing with our time. And money can also be another limiting factor that influences our decision-making in curating the best available experience we can explore, within our budget. We can use our values to help us narrow down how we choose to spend our money and time on the experiences that really resonate with us.

The desire for more options in life can be an effective motivation, in moderation. Remember to take in the good; pause and practice gratitude; and reflect on what is truly important for you. Learning to say yes selectively to experiences may be the antidote for FOMO, so we can better experience the benefits of JOMO.

The Mirror Behind the Ephemeral Phenomena

By Liliana Ferreira da Costa
& Bernardo Corrêa d'Almeida

Ephemera: Brief moments? Media? Mirrors? Emotions? Self-concept? Dialecticism? Internal versus external positions? What can be seen by the lens of the person who needs to live and interact according to the pressure of the self and others? These are marvelous concepts that can be integrated and influenced, directly or indirectly, in the way that the person regulates emotionally, as well as feels and interacts with oneself and others—addressing to indicators of a relation with clinical psychology and psychotherapy. In this sense, according to the academic point-of-view, ephemera lends a beneficial prospect to the field of humanities and social sciences, which provides insight into a panoply of subjects—sociological, cultural, and anthropological.

Ephemera & Emotions

Ephemera can be understood as an illustration of the social dynamics which integrate social desirability, social norms, and communication, culminating in the connection between the person, the others, and the environment (Hermans, 2001; Matthen, 2018). Several perspectives and interpretations can be read from researchers, addressing cultural psychology as an example, to illustrate echo or echoed retellings (e.g., inner voices of the person, internal dialogues, external dialogues, internal versus external positions) as a particularly important and prestigious content to the subject itself—addressing the component of the content and the different positions/lens of the person. Furthermore, internal and external positions receive their significance as emerging from their mutual transactions over time, addressing dialectical statements.

It should be noted that all these positions (internal and external) are considered I-positions because they are part of a self that is intrinsically extended to the environment and respond to those domains in the environment that are perceived as "mine" (e.g., my friend; my opponent). This leads to emotions that are at the core of the emotional schema of the person, leading to indicators of emotional arousal. Thus, these tend to indicate if the person experiences some kind of difficulty or not, leading to clues for practitioners. For example, if the person experiences an excessive amount of ephemeral experiences, it can place the person in a position of vulnerability (Hermans, 2001; Matthen, 2018)

In this sense, emotions tend to be implicit in this phenomenon, addressing dialectical statements is an important part of the emotional regulation process (e.g., "I feel happy and sad", "I want to be loud and you need me to be quiet", "Things are very different now from a year ago and every day feels the same", "I feel too tired to work and I can do my work anyway"). These few examples can be indicators for practitioners to work in a therapeutic setting in multiple difficulties and psychopathologies that the person brings to the sessions—addressing clinical psychology and psychotherapy.

Dialogical Self in Ephemeral Experiences

Represented by the mind's skills to imagine different positions of the person or people to interact in an internal dialogue and an external dialogue, the dialogical self illustrates the connection between the person, the others, and these two positions, which can be understood by the involved environment. According to these assumptions, the internal position focuses on the way that the person perceives themself (e.g., self-concept, with statements similar to "I'm creative. I'm a seeker of emotions, a lover of animals, a friend to my friends"). External positions, in the lens of the individual person, concern the interaction between the individual and the people and objects (illustrating the environment) around them, demonstrating their relevance from the perspective of one or more internal positions (e.g., "My friend and colleague become important to me because I have an ambitious project in mind") (Hermans, 2001).

Adopting the form of a circle and the notion of the Moving Positions illustrating the spatial character of I-dynamic positions (Hermans, 2001), Me, Myself, and I can be represented by the inner circle of the person, which creates self-negotiations, self-contradictions, and self-integrations which results in a great variety of meanings. In this sense, dialogical positioning leads to several inner voices, representing emotions of the person, different positions, and the environment. Adopting this perspective tends to lead to the reflection behind the ephemeral phenomena that occurs nowadays, using as an illustration the object mirror.

Mirror Fascination versus Reality

Several researchers have described digital ephemera as the possibility to influence a state of vulnerability of the person/self. For example, social media and its content (e.g., Internet selfies, likes on posts) are described as forms of ephemeral digital components, leading to ephemeral fascination. Relating to Bakhtin's notion of the polyphonic novel, dialogue opens the possibility of differentiating the inner world of the person and subsequently the dialogue with others. "The transformation of an 'inner' thought of a particular character into an utterance enables dialogical relations to occur between this utterance and the utterance of imaginal others" (Hermans, 2001).

Furthermore, according to Matthen (2018), the person's perspective is organized around material objects, which represent what the person sees. However, to address the mirror metaphor, the person also tends to see beams of light, depictions, and reflections, addressing the abstract forms of things, based on what the person perceives versus what is objectively there. In this sense, "Dialectical materialism, a philosophical approach to reality derived from the writings of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, meant that the material world, perceptible to the senses, has objective reality independent of mind or spirit" (Hermans, 2001).

Consciousness & Awareness of Fascinating Ephemera

According to Hermans' theory of dialogical self (2001), society, voice, and dialogue are used as metaphors to understand the brain's social processes. However, it is important not only to not restrict the inner voices of the person, but also to include the external voices in the mind process of the person, addressing the notion of Moving Positions. Both dialogical forms are needed for a model of self and culture. According to Hermans (2001), the concept of Moving Positions lies in the spatial/physical space which tends to lead to a multiplicity of I-positions, addressing these same I-positions as the person/author of the stories. Josephs (2000) also states that I moves into an "imaginal space—which is intimately intertwined with physical space—from the one to the other position, creating dynamic fields in which self-negotiations, self-contradictions and self-integrations result in a great variety of meanings".

"Self and culture are conceived of in terms of a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can develop. This view (...) allows to conceive the self as culture-inclusive and culture as self-inclusive" (Hermans, 2001).

Smalley (2023) found that "...whilst an urban-nature dichotomy exists in landscape appraisals, acknowledging the effects of ephemeral, non-structural phenomena could have important implications for landscape research and design".

Indeed, landscape views can be dynamic, not forgetting all the elements that integrate the perspective of the person that can be changed from one moment to the next. This tends to be related to ephemeral experiences, like watching the sunrise, or a simple click in a digital ephemeral publication, leading to feelings and emotions that change in seconds, turning them into fascinating ephemeral experiences.

Ephemeral Fascination

By Denise Dillon

Human existence consists of an unfolding series of transitory experiences made up of sensations and interactions that evoke perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and memories—or not. Not everything that happens forms an impression upon us, either consciously or unconsciously, and not everything grabs our attention. Life is like that—change is inevitable, and sometimes goes unnoticed.

But there's something about change that can be fascinating, whether or not the change is expected or anticipated. Here in the equatorial tropics, we don't have such marked seasonal variations to look forward to, but we can still find joyful moments watching clouds transform into surprising shapes and sizes, or dancing with waves as they race and retreat across the shoreline. Ephemeral changes lend themselves to a sense of fascination in our human perceptions. Think of the pleasurable sensation we experience upon chancing upon a tree in full bloom—the vibrant yellow of Golden Penda or Angsana trees, the pink cherry-blossom-like blanket of the Trumpet Tree.

Brassley (1998) writes about effects on people of ephemeral changes in landscape and explains the important difference between ephemeral change versus permanent change. The former is mostly (but not exclusively) associated with non-human influences such as seasonal fluctuations and weather patterns. The latter is mostly (but not exclusively) associated with human interventions and influences such as land clearance for housing or industrial developments. Human influences can also lead to ephemeral change through farming practices, where landscapes are altered over the course of the crop cycle, from sowing to reaping and on to preparation of the ground for the next rotation.
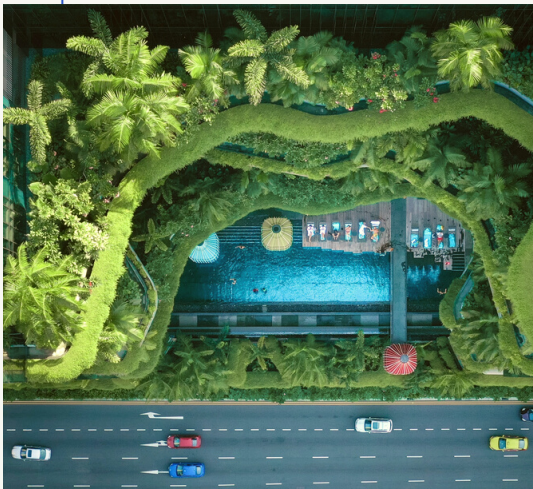
Landscapes themselves feature permanent and ephemeral components. We perceive permanence in solid rock and in large river systems even though such permanence must be considered relative to the temporal perception of the human lifespan. Rivers continue to flow, but they effect change through relentless motion, and can even wear away solid rock given sufficient time.

Ephemeral landscape components include the deciduous shedding of leaves in some tree species, and the process of flowering, fruiting and shedding that constitutes part and parcel of a fruiting plant's life cycle. Ephemeral features also include cloud formations, rain and mist (or steam in our tropical climate), wave action, the diurnal rhythm of sunrise and sunset and tides, and the nocturnal cadence of moon and stars. Landscapes also change with the seasons, whether through natural processes or through human agricultural practices.

As humans have shifted away from rural landscapes and into bustling urban metropolises, we have lost many of those direct experiences of ephemeral changes associated with food production, or with opportunities to closely observe the regular flowering and fruiting cycles of forest trees. Much of the nocturnal skyscape is obscured from view due to light pollution in cities such that we also lose our familiarity with the stars and other celestial bodies.

The flourishing and fading of plants within a landscape can signal the whereabouts of food or water to those living off the land. The motion of stars and planets across the sky can signal important seasonal changes on the way and provide navigational aids to those at sea or on the move over longer land treks.
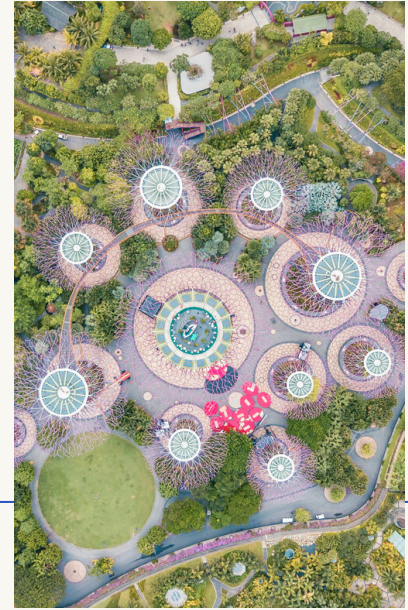
What are the urban ephemera that offer fascination or adaptive benefits for city-bound, modern humans? And are urban landscapes any less ephemeral than rural landscapes?

Architect and Professor of Urban Design and Planning Rahul Mahotra argues they are not: "...when cities are analyzed over large temporal-spans, ephemerality emerges as an important state in the life cycle of every built environment." He goes on to consider arguments and approaches suggested by other urbanists and accepts that "for cities to be sustainable...they also need to resemble and facilitate active fluxes in motion rather than be limited by static material configurations." I take that to say that cities need to be organically dynamic.

One recent example of a dynamic and ephemeral phenomenon in cities is the pop-up (Cramer, 2023). Pop-ups provide ephemeral experiences in the form of ice resorts that melt into the next season, short-term retail opportunities, blink-and-you'll-miss-it luxury travel experiences, art installations, food services, and even pop-up, outdoor replicas of office spaces from which to conduct recruitment interviews for summer internships (Cramer).

However, what Mahotra and other architects and urban designers envisage goes beyond these small-scale ephemera and towards a malleable and elastic built environment that changes according to spatial and behavioural needs. While cities themselves may well be more permanent and static fixtures in the larger landscape, we might expect features within our cities to morph and mutate in semblances of the organic landscapes from which we first emerged. The success or otherwise of such ventures could determine if our need for ephemeral fascination will be satisfied.

From "Cyclist" by Lee Tzu Pheng

Next week, perhaps,
I shall have forgotten
his reality, as his shadow
on the road now flickers, receding.
No use shading the eyes,
for this moment might be
the blur of his bicycle going past
on a chance, unseen.

Singapore Psychological Society
(Established 1979)

Website: singaporepsychologicalsociety.org
Facebook: facebook.com/singaporepsychologicalsociety
Instagram: @singaporepsychologicalsociety

Visit our website and social media platforms for more information on upcoming psychology-related events, training & development, and career opportunities.

Join us today as an SPS member and be a part of our growing community of psychologists and psychology students, right here in Singapore!

For advertising matters, please contact us at
advertising@singaporepsychologicalsociety.org

For magazine queries and writing collaborations,
please contact us at
magazine@singaporepsychologicalsociety.org

For all other inquiries, please contact our Secretariat at
secretariat@singaporepsychologicalsociety.org

Singapore
Psychological
Society
(Established 1979)