An Overview of Postmodern Research in the Consumer Behaviour Field: Towards the “New Consumer” Paradigm

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The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the research based on the Consumer Culture Theory that will help us to understand the new forms of the consumption experiences. This will provide us with a conceptual framework to define the new status of the consumer in the marketing literature and therefore understand the paradigm of the “new consumer”. Indeed, we can notice in the recent research in the consumption field the evolution of the consumer representations in the consumer behaviour literature since the consolidation of the multidisciplinary approach based on CCT. This article reviews the extensive, multidisciplinary body of French and international literature relating to consumer behaviour studies. The key outputs of this paper showed that the main behaviours of the “new consumer” might be defined according to different categories such as: experiential and hedonistic behaviour, digital and competent behaviour, paradoxical behaviour, responsible, and ethic behaviour, co-production and participative behaviour, empowerment, do-it-yourself behaviour. These concepts mainly derived from the CCT philosophy highlight the transformation of the consumer status: from a passive role to an increasingly active role within his consumption experiences.

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ABSTRACT
The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of research based on the Consumer Culture Theory CCT that will be the basis to understand the new forms of consumption experiences. This will provide a conceptual framework to define the new status of the consumer in marketing literature and therefore understand the paradigm of the “new consumer”. Indeed, the recent studies in the consumption field underline the evolution of consumer representations in the consumer behaviour literature since the consolidation of the multidisciplinary approach based on CCT philosophy. This article reviews the extensive, multidisciplinary body of French and international literature relating to consumer behaviour studies. The key outputs of this approach of the consumer behaviour highlight the transformation of the consumer role: from passive to an increasingly active role within his consumption experiences.

INTRODUCTION
The postmodern paradigm based on a cultural and a symbolic perspective in marketing and consumer behaviour research emerges from the criticism of the utilitarian logic. This logic has prevailed in the research community in marketing and thus led researchers to view the consumer as an individual essentially rational; an idea that fits with the “homo economicus” philosophy. As shown by Bergadà (2006), researchers engaged in this path consider that the role of marketing in the contemporary society has an ultimate aim to establish social bonds, which requires the mobilization of a cultural base and a specific set of values. In order to go beyond the dominant utilitarian logic so far utilized in the consumer behaviour research, the Consumer Culture Theory CCT established by Arnould and Thompson since 2005 is presented as a new revolution in the studies focusing on the consumer behaviour and the consumption field.

The main purpose of the CCT is to take into account the social representations and the cultural practices when studying the complex behaviour of the consumer. Thus, the cultural approach of the consumer behaviour highlights the need for researchers to break down with a traditional and a simplistic posture of the consumer behaviour, which arises to the implementation of a transactional marketing management (Bergadà, 2006). Indeed, the CCT states that the individual behaves and consumes in an autotelic and a symbolic way (Csikszentmihalyi, 2005) within a temporal frame, living his action as a personal experience or as a shared game (Hol, 1995). Consequently, the consumer behaviour can’t be understood without taking into account all the dimensions of his consumption such as: ideological, social, cultural, symbolic and experiential consumption in its context (Arnould and Thompson, 2005). Therefore, the CCT has contributed to the enhancement of the research methodologies and the traditional approaches in the consumer behaviour field. From a methodological perspective, the CCT focuses on the interpretive approaches that give a central place to the individual’s experience. The consumption of each cultural group is then deeply studied and analysed according to the symbolic aspect and the meaning emerging within his consumption experiences. From a theoretical point-of-view, new marketing concepts have emerged with the changing of the consumer status in the postmodern context. This change highlights the shift of power from sellers to buyers and thus the coming out of the “new consumer”.

The objective of this paper is to provide an overview of the research based on the Consumer Culture Theory CCT that will help us to understand the new forms of consumption experiences. This will provide us with a conceptual framework to define the new status of the consumer in the marketing literature and therefore understand the paradigm of the “new consumer”. Indeed, we can notice in the recent research in the consumption field the evolution of consumer representations in the consumer behaviour literature since the consolidation of the multidisciplinary approach based on CCT. This article reviews the extensive, multidisciplinary body of the literature related to consumer behaviour studies. It draws upon this diversity of research to show the scope of this fascinating area and to identify areas of commonality within and between different research studies.

The first part of this paper attempts to follow the evolution of the CCT paradigm in marketing and consumer behaviour literature. After recalling the limits of the cognitive and the procedural approach in the consumption field and the contribution of French researchers to the CCT, we will highlight the importance of using CCT to understand consumer behaviours by taking into account the cultural, experiential and symbolic aspects of his consumption practices. The second part will present the evolution of consumer representations in the marketing literature and the emerging paradigm of the “new consumer”. Indeed, understanding the consumer representations is a key factor in this research for three reasons. From the theoretical perspective, it enriches our knowledge of: the consumption practices, the competencies developed by the consumer and the meanings attributed to consumption items and experiences.

AN OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH ON THE CONSUMER CULTURE APPROACH: TOWARDS A FRENCH CONTRIBUTION
The reflection on the CCT paradigm requires a deepening, with emphasis on its origins, its mobilization in the marketing literature, its contributions to the consumer behaviour studies and the reasons of a marketing concept based on the cultural and symbolic dimensions to understand the new forms of consumption. Indeed, a set of research in marketing and consumer behaviour has followed an evolution marked by interrogations regarding theoretical, methodological, epistemological and managerial aspects. The CCT concept has then contributed to the enrichment of the research methodologies and helped researchers to overcome the rational approaches in consumer behaviour studies. From a methodological point-of-view, the CCT focuses on the interpretative approaches that give a central place to the individual’s experience.
Each cultural group is then studied in relation to the meanings he provides to his consumption practices and the symbolic dimensions he expects within his experiences. We can find this kind of research in the works of some French sociologists in particular those of Baudrillard (1970), Bourdieu (1980) and De Certeau (1990), which are partly responsible of the emergence of the cultural and the symbolic approach in the consumption field. Thus, adopting a cultural consumption posture through the CCT, allows researchers to rethink the act of consumption as a consumer or a group participation in the identity construction process. A logic far overshadowed by French marketing researchers who privileged the cognitive paradigm. Surprisingly, while the works of French sociologists are increasingly used abroad (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), they remain underused by the French marketing researchers, except some researchers such as Badot (2005), Hetzel (2002), Bergadaà (2006), Marion (2003), Roux (2004; 2005), Toulouse-Özçaglar and Cova (2008). In contrast, Anglo-Saxon marketing researchers especially American researchers seized the contributions of the French sociology to integrate it with their marketing research, and create a new approach in order to have a rich and thorough understanding of the consumer behaviour. Interestingly, the use of Bourdieu's work is already present in the precursors articles of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) on the consumer experience and McCracken (1986) on the meaning of the act of consumption.

The discussion of Bourdieu's contributions to management sciences was particularly intense during the 1990s, resulting in a proliferation of research in marketing (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Holbrook, 1999; Holt, 1995; 1997). This sociology has opened up a gap to lay the foundations for a critical approach in marketing, which the concern would not be to generate knowledge for marketing, but to create the knowledge of marketing and its effects. Using these references, French researchers in the field of marketing and consumer behaviour have recently made some French contributions to the CCT. An article of Özçaglar-Toulouse and Cova published in 2008 reported a contribution to the Consumer Culture Theory through a chronological study of its history and the key concepts related to this current.

Other French authors such as Badot (2005), Hetzel (2002), Filser, (1996), Bergadaà (2006), Marion (2003), have conducted studies in marketing directly or indirectly related to the CCT paradigm. However, the works that are explicitly linked to the consumer culture theory and emphasize the French contribution to the works of Arnould and Thompson (2005) in the consumption field remain very limited. Özçaglar-Toulouse and Cova (2008) have Thus the advantage of providing a major contribution through the presentation of a chronological overview of the main French research linked to the CCT paradigm. In their paper published in a marketing French leading journal (Recherche et Applications Marketing) titled: “French contribution to the CCT: history and key concepts”, the authors focused on the construction and the dissemination of certain key concepts or ideas that have emerged over time. This article was the first to have reviewed the main French research within the CCT. Indeed, it is a crucial reference for newcomer researchers and future researchers in marketing who deal with the CCT in their research on consumption in the French context. In their paper, Özçaglar-Toulouse and Cova have brought up together a variety of French research that is directly or indirectly related to the CCT movement. To do so, their work required the implementation of a comprehensive and an exhaustive research methodology based on the work of the French sociologist Cochoy (1999) who wrote a book on the history of marketing.

Starting from the definition of Belk and Sherry (2007, p. xiii) in the first conference dedicated to the CCT: “CCT is an interdisciplinary field encompassing macro approaches, interpretive and critical perspectives of the consumer behaviour”, the two authors presented the view of the French period from 1985 to 2005. Their methodology was mainly based on systematic analysis of articles published in French and Anglo-Saxon scientific journals in the marketing field, in addition to books and theses in marketing supplemented by Belgian and Canadian authors. Thus, the main contribution of their paper is to provide consumer behaviour researchers with a chronological history of the CCT in the French Marketing community defined according to three periods: the underground period (1985-1994), the legitimate period (1995-2000) and the consolidation period (since 2000).

From 2005 and until nowadays, a number of articles inspired by the CCT have been published by researchers mainly Anglo-Saxon. Therefore, new marketing concepts have emerged with the coming out of a “new consumer” hedonistic and experiential (Hetzel, 2002, Cova and Cova, 2004), digital and competent (Batat, 2008), paradoxical (Decrop, 2008), engaged and ethical (Özçaglar-Toulouse, 2005, 2009) co-producer (Lusch and Vergo, 2004; Bonnemaizon and Batat, 2010b), resistant (Roux, 2007), Empowered (Denegri-Knott et al. 2006), handyman (Hetzel, 1996; Marion, 2003) ...etc. This consumer transformation has been emphasized by the consumer culture philosophy followed by marketing researchers, which points out the importance of the symbolic, the cultural and the experiential aspect of the act of consumption.

The Evolution Of Consumer Representations In The Marketing Literature: Towards A Paradigm Of The “New Consumer”

Since the consolidation of the multidisciplinary current of CCT, the research in marketing and especially in the consumer behaviour field have taken a major socio-cultural, symbolic and experiential turn, which requires a new analytical approach. The starting point of the first reflections is none other than the consumer, who has changed status and even multiplied his functions and roles in relation to the meanings he attributes to his consumption. In the marketing literature, the CCT researchers highlighted the concept of active and subjective consumer. Besides this idea, the concept of the “new consumer” is now considered as a topic of research in marketing to better understand the consumer behaviour, the characteristics of his consumption and meanings of his consumption experiences.

Through a review of marketing literature, five dimensions have been identified in order to clarify this new concept related to CCT paradigm. Therefore, the main features describing the “new consumer” behaviour might be classified according to the following aspects: experiential and hedonistic, responsible and ethical, postmodern and paradoxical, appropriation and re-appropriation, resistance and empowerment, co-production and participation.

A “New Consumer”: Experiential And Hedonistic

Since the 1960s, the consumption field has gradually disengaged from an utilitarian vision, based on the value
usage. Baudrillard (1970) highlighted the fact that consumption has become, in the 70s, an activity of production of meanings and a field of symbolic exchanges: consumers do not consume the products, but rather, the meaning of these products and the image they convey. According to Baudrillard, “consumption is neither a material practice, nor a phenomenology of abundance, it is not defined by the food we digest, or by the clothes one puts on, but by organizing the whole elements within a meaningful substance” (1970, p. 32). The 1980s saw the aestheticism of everyday life and its corollary, hedonism, infiltrates the field of consumer research in marketing (Lipovetsky, 2003). The consumer is then progressively seen as an emotional individual seeking for sensitive experiences (Maffesoli, 1990) provided by his interaction with products and services of the consumption system.

There is thus incorporation of meanings under the form of experiences. In this sense, Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) theorized the consumer experience as a subjective and personal experience, often emotionally charged. Furthermore, the notion of experience constitutes a kind of cornerstone of the Consumer Culture Theory of Arnold and Thompson (2005). Indeed, emotion and subjectivity can be found at the heart of the differentiation of consumption experiences lived by the consumer. Therefore, the experiential dimension might supplement or exceed the traditional analytical framework, which suggests the rationality of the individual and his consumption. This led researchers in the consumer behaviour field (Bourgeon and Fillzer, 1995) to replace the functional and the utilitarian view of consumption by the so-called experiential view that gives a huge place to hedonistic values and subjectivity. Thus, in a large number of the activities he pursues, the “new consumer” seeks less to maximize profit and claim a hedonistic gratification in a social context. Indeed, Consumption causing sensations and emotions, instead of just responding to needs, is an integral part of the consumer's quest for identity (Badot and Cova, 2003).

It is no longer just “shopping” but “experiencing” and usually experiences called “embedded” because they appeal to every sense of the individual (Addis and Holbrook, 2001). Vezina (1999) shows that the consumer experience, “is no longer limited to a few pre-purchase activities (needs, information seeking, evaluation, etc…) nor even a few post-purchase activities such as evaluation and satisfaction, but encompasses a range of other activities that will influence the future decisions and actions of the consumer” (1999, p 56).

Moreover, if leisure and non-ordinary activities, which are emotional and memorable have been the privileged topics in the experiential consumption area, it seems that the explosion of the subjectivity is widespread in the Western societies and therefore there is “an extension of the domain of experience” to all consumption activities. Experience has also become the main basis of the “experience economy” (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) enhanced by the development of an experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999, Hetzel, 2002), which tends to provide consumers with immersions in extraordinary experiences rather than simply purchasing products or services.

This marketing is then supposed to fit with the experiential needs of the new consumer who is perceived as an emotional individual seeking for sensitive experiences (Maffesoli, 1990). Therefore, authors emphasize the increasing quest for experiences where the consumer can immerse himself and explore a multiplicity of new meanings to his life (Firat and Dholakia, 1998). Thus, it is the full immersion in an original experience that provides a unique and unforgettable pleasure to the consumer (Caru and Cova, 2006).

In the experiential perspective, the consumer is not a passive actor who responds to stimuli, but an active actor and a producer of his own consumption experiences. Therefore, companies need to assist their customers in the production and the achievement of their experiences. In this sense, it seems that the experiential marketing overcomes the simple idea of production (Caru and Cova, 2006). In the experiential marketing logic (Hetzel, 2002; Schmitt, 1999), the experience is the fourth category of the company’s offer after goods, products and services adapted to the consumer needs. Thus, the consumer experience is a common value shared between the producer and the consumer. Reinstating the idea of immersion (Firat and Dholakia, 1998), the experiential marketing suggests considering consumption as a set of extraordinary immersions for the consumer. In doing so, the experiential marketing takes up the work of the psychologist Csikszentmihalyi (1997) on the flow experience, which means a special moment during which what the individual feels, wants and thinks are in total harmony (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

However, while research in consumer behaviour (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) has conceptualized the experience as a subjective episode in the construction and the transformation of the individual, with an emphasis on emotional and sensitive dimensions rather than the cognitive ones; the experiential marketing has given the experience a much more pragmatic and simplistic definition (an offer scheduled and marketed by the company). This has emphasized the idea that the result would be something highly meaningful and memorable for the consumer. It seems for us essential to go beyond the view of the experience as totally dependent on the market offers as defined in the experiential marketing perspective.

Indeed, the sociology of consumption (Edgell et al. 1997) has identified four types of consumer experience: family experience by kinship, friendship experience by reciprocity with the community, citizen experience with the state, and consumer experience by exchange with the marketplace. This allows us to understand that the everyday individual’s consumption is made up of consumption experiences in relation or not with the marketplace.

Therefore, the consumption experience is not necessarily related to the exchange with the marketplace (Caru and Cova, 2006). For Caru and Cova, the experience of having a meal with friends is a kind of consumption experience that marketers can’t control, although some products from the market may be consumed. Similarly the consumption experience of a self-produced festival (Badot and Cova, 1995) is not manageable by professionals. The sociologists underline the fact that the social context shapes the experience (Edgell et al. 1997) and the experiential marketing biases the view of the experience because it only focused on one social context ‘the market’ in which the individual is a consumer who lives experiences related to suppliers and other consumers. Thus, by taking into account the experiential and the hedonistic aspects of the consumption experience we can highlight the salient features of the new consumer behaviours as follows: The consumer is not a consumer, the consumer is operating within situations, the consumer is searching for meaning and for this new consumer consumption is not limited to the purchase process.
A “New Consumer” Responsible And Ethical: The Value System At The Heart Of The Consumption Experience

The new consumer is very critical towards marketing and particularly advertising. He expresses a responsible behaviour and engages himself within his consumption practices. Consumer behaviour researchers who apply the CCT paradigm have studied consumer ideology and criticism of marketing. In their work, Remy (2004) and Özçağlar-Toulouse (2005) highlighted the multiplicity of the representations related to the responsible consumption while exploring the meaning that the consumer gives to this kind of consumption. The responsible consumption that gives an ethical meaning and a social utility to the act of purchase, allows the consumer to develop a thoughtful approach to his consumption.

In the marketing literature, a number of concepts such as green consumer and prosumer (Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2005) derived from the CCT paradigm are used by researchers to point out the responsible and the eco-friendly behaviour of today’s consumers. Therefore, the new consumer can no longer be passive within his consumption; it is indeed his system of values and his determination that regulates his consumption (Özçağlar-Toulouse and Cova, 2008). This kind of responsible consumption reflects the fact that the consumer who becomes aware of his economic power, decides to behave according to his own value system. His main ideology is to consume and purchase consumption items only if it is really necessary. Thus, a number of movements based on the CCT philosophy have been developed around the concept of the responsible consumer.

In the research focusing on the consumer responsibility towards the environment, marketing researchers have highlighted the profile of the “eco-consumer” who thinks in term of the social and the environmental consequences of his act of consumption. In order to behave responsibly, this consumer incorporates fair-trade goods within his consumption. The reasons that justify the motivation of the consumer to be responsible might be: “product safety, environmental impact, employees welfare…etc” (Crané, 2001, p.361). These reasons are all conscious or unconscious ways to reveal the face of political goods (Chessel and Cochoy, 2004) and build an ethic of consumption (Smith, 1990). The responsible consumption can’t be addressed through a traditional approach of marketing; it is indeed a complex phenomenon (Shaw and Clarke, 1999) characterized by a large divergence in consumer practices (Cooper-Martin and Holbrook, 1993).

In the management science disciplines, researchers explain the concept of responsibility through two postures involving two market actors: the responsibility of the consumer and the company responsibility called Corporate Social Responsibility CSR (Gillet and Batat, 2010). Regarding the first posture, the responsible consumer chooses to take the responsibility of his act of consumption and makes it “fair” (Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2005). The notion of “fairness” is at the heart of the consumer concern who wants to be fair vis-à-vis the producers through his purchases and vis-à-vis the environment through his consumption. This “fairness” refers to equality and justice of law. Indeed, through his responsible behaviour, the consumer displays his citizenship (Dickinson and Carsky, 2005) and decides to play his role of a responsible citizen in the sphere of his consumption experiences.

The second posture reflects the responsibility from a managerial perspective because the professionals are concerned by the responsible consumption and must adapt their offers by implementing sustainable strategic devices. In the management science, companies have always listened to the market and particularly to the consumer expectations, as written by Gavard-Perret: “nothing can be done without the confidence of the customer and without taking into account his high expectations for ethics, transparency and consumerist attitudes” (Gavard-Perret, 2000, p.16). The incorporation by professionals of values such as responsibility and ethic that claims the new consumer has initiated a change in the way of production and commerce (charters prohibit child labour, decent working conditions, respect of the environment, etc…).

The Postmodern Paradigm: A Theoretical Framework To Understand The Paradoxical Behaviour Of The “New Consumer”

In order to understand the foundations, the origins and the implications of the postmodernism in the field of marketing and consumption, we should first locate it into a temporal dimension by selecting the modern era as a starting point. The modernity can be understood according to two dimensions: economical and cultural. These dimensions reflect the industrialization era where cultural creations are governed by rules established by tradition. Thus, modernity as defined by Piquet and Marchandet (1998) has liberated the humanity from ignorance and irrationality. Furthermore, the modernity is characterized by the idea of the progress as liberator of the human being.

In the modern era, the knowledge is a universal project, since society is homogeneous and structured by hierarchies based on both objective reality and reason. In marketing, modernity emphasizes the rationality of the consumer behaviour because of his capacity to identify, understand and satisfy his needs. In order to cope with the consumer needs, researchers have established a marketing device “4 Ps: product, price, place, and promotion” to achieve this objective. This marketing tool has progressively been criticized due to the increase of individual’s incredulity towards the foundations of the narrative discourse in the modern era such as reason, progress, science and morality. In addition, the rising of scepticism (Cold War, Hiroshima, Nazism, genocide, gap between rich and poor, Chernobyl...) has discredited the ideological framework that gave meaning to the modern attitudes and values of the social actors. Therefore, alternative legitimate models have emerged and opened up the path to the pluralism of values and behaviours.

In marketing, authors have criticized the foundations of modernism in the field of consumption and pointed out the idea that consumption and production are not just economic acts but also cultural processes. Indeed, the modernism has transformed the individual into a hesitant actor within a rational economic system that provides less emotions, symbolism and spirit (Özçağlar-Toulouse, 2005).

The criticism of the modern consumer society has given rise to new forms of consumption underlying the transition phase of the modern era to the postmodern era. Thus, postmodernity refers to a structural change in the individual and the society related to the end of the industrial era and the advent of the Information and Communication ICTs era that we know today (Decrop, 2008). Therefore, the theoretical foundation of postmodernism defined by the sociologist Lyotard (1979) focuses on the following philosophical principles:

- The subject is fragmented: the influence of the
unconscious and socio-cultural structures versus the idea of reasonable and autonomous individual;
- The truth does not exist: the criticism of science, reason and progress;
- The distinctions disappear: juxtaposition of what was opposed.

The postmodern era offers an analytical framework adapted to new trends in the post-industrial society, which expresses post-materialist needs (Inglehart, 1990).

According to this view, new societal values have emerged such as ecology, independence, feminism, responsibility and tolerance. In his book "the postmodern condition", the French sociologist Lyotard (1979) shows that the postmodern paradigm revolves around seven major characteristics: fragmentation, juxtaposition, tolerance, hyperreality, pastiche, a-synchronism and media culture. In the management science disciplines, postmodernism appeared in the late of the 70s with the works of CCT researchers such as Arnould, Thompson, Holt, Holbrook, Hirschman, Sherry, Firat and Venkatesh who imported the postmodern paradigm from the social sciences (Baudrillard, Lyotard, Maffesoli) to marketing, and especially to the consumer behaviour field. The main objective was to broaden the traditional perspective based primarily on an interpretation of the cognitive aspect of the purchase decision-making process.

Therefore, authors in marketing have been largely influenced by the works of sociologists such as those of Lyotard to offer an adequate definition to study the paradoxical behaviour of the "new consumer". A recent article of Decrop (2008) highlights some postmodern paradoxes of the consumer behaviour according to six characteristics: the desire to be alone and together, masculine and feminine, nomadic and sedentary, real and virtual, Kairos and Kronos, and finally a quest for old and new. The first characteristic of the paradoxical behaviour of the new consumer is closely related to the Information and Communication era where internet and mobile phones are an integral part of the consumer daily life. These tools enable the consumer to stay permanently connected with friends and colleagues, and at the same time increase his isolation and the dehumanization of human relations.

The chosen or the imposed loneliness is due to the increase of individualism of the postmodern consumer. Therefore, other forms of socialization have emerged thanks to the use of Information and Communication Technologies ICTs. Among these forms, authors in marketing talk about "tribes" of consumers (Cova, 1995; 2003), which might be real or virtual. These consumer tribes get to gather individuals who share the same interests and have common passions for activities (role-playing games, food, etc.) or brands (Apple, Microsoft, Nike, etc.). This is here a willingness of the individual to reconstruct a family elsewhere when it comes to the "me first, but not alone" (Sansaloni, 2006), this explains the popularity of virtual social networks (Facebook, Myspace, etc.) in the postmodern consumer society

The second characteristic shows that the erosion of boundaries between masculine values (bravery, power, etc.) and feminine values (peace, kindness, etc.) enhances the paradoxical behaviour of the postmodern individual. Therefore, more and more women become independent and adopt masculine behaviours; men in turn are feminized (androgynous metrosexual. A metrosexual is a heterosexual urban man who enjoys shopping, fashion, and similar interests traditionally associated with women or homosexual men (Oxford Dictionary)) by adopting feminine values conveyed by advertising (Jean-Paul Gaultier's collection with the Male, the market of cosmetics for men, etc.).

The third characteristic of the postmodern consumer paradoxical behaviour reflects the need to be nomadic and sedentary at the same time. Nomadism as defined by the sociologist Maffesoli (2006) is a direct consequence of postmodernism, which liberates the individual from his traditional ties by expanding his anchor points. The postmodern consumer is then facing a paradox: of wanting to move and stay, seeking for somewhere else but like at home. For example: the first thing that the individual looks after when he is in vacation in his resort is to try to find the comfort of his home and his everyday life habits such as checking e-mails. In this sense, marketing professionals have adapted their offers to this paradox by offering tailor-made products and services such as ultra-light laptops with 3G, mini-portions (cheese, coffee, butter, etc.) that can be transported everywhere.

The kairos and kronos paradox as defined by Sansaloni (2006), reflects our relationship to time. In his book the "non-consumer", Sansaloni distinguishes between the two concepts. Kairos means the real time "the instant transformed into action" while Kronos refers to “the measurable time flowing linearly “ (Sansaloni, 2006, p. 157). From the marketing side, we can notice the example of the Italian trend of “slow food” by opposition to the American concept of “fast food”.

Another paradox “real and virtual” is based on the idea of "hyper-reality" in the postmodern society, which refers to the attribution of boundaries between the real and virtual worlds. Video games, dating websites such as Meetic and realistic games such as Second Life are indeed behind the emergence of this new paradox. Finally, the last paradox “old and new” reflects the fact that the new consumer requires "old" and nostalgic consumption items, which should be updated by including new technologies.

A “New Consumer” Competent And Empowered

Studies on the notion of competence and its managerial implications have been carried out recently to better understand the new trends and behaviours of the postmodern consumer. Although marketing researchers consider the consumer in terms of his or her competencies and not only in terms of his or her needs, the concept of the ‘competence’ has not been conceptualized in the consumer behaviour field (Macdonald and Uncles, 2007). Works that revealed positive correlations between the consumer participation and brand loyalty point out the fact that the consumer is always perceived as a competent actor within his or her consumption experiences (Sohby et al. 2009). Therefore, the postmodern consumer is perceived as competent because he disposes of different kinds of knowledge.

This supposes that the new consumer know how to select, organize, combine and integrate this set of knowledge within an environment that presents constraints and resources. Competence is then defined as a contextualized know-how. Therefore, it requires a validation of the environment as well as the recognition by others, particularly by the members of the tribe. Thus, since the consolidation of the CCT in 2005, researchers in marketing (Batat, 2006; Batat, 2008; Bonnefaiz and Batat, 2010a, 2010b) started to study the concept of competence.

These works propose to establish a conceptual and semantic transfer, which marks the transition from the
consumer expertise (the cognitive dimension defined in the traditional approach of marketing) to the consumer competence (a multidisciplinary concept related to the CCT paradigm). Following the CCT paradigm, it is suggested that the competence is the implementation of different types of knowledge, behaviours, experiences, and problem-solving process. Differentiated from the expertise, the competence can be created and used in different contexts. In this sense, the competent consumer is the one who, having acquired knowledge through his own experiences in a specific area, will be able to use it in other situations of consumption to satisfy his symbolic and tangible needs.

The consumer thus combines knowledge, know-how and social skills, which are essential to make his choice and value judgment. The typology of values proposed by Holbrook (1999) is important to clarify the concept of competence in marketing:

- The competence exists if only it is recognized by others (consumers or producers). We can’t say that the consumer is competent in the absolute, but he is competent in this field, to conduct such an activity, to achieve such an experience, etc.

- The competence is revealed in the consumer experiences. The diversity of the consumer skills is linked to the types of experiences and the fluctuations revealed by actions that cause the creative chaos and the creation of new knowledge and skills.

The competence is linked to a project or a context in which the consumer makes his experiences “group, tribe, family…” Even if the consumer is in the hedonistic state of his consumption experience, he can develop a tacit knowledge that can be used for other experiences. Nonaka and Takeuchi (1997) call this kind of learning “redundancy of the experiential knowledge” that contributes to the creation of new knowledge.

In the CCT philosophy, authors such as Denegri-Knott et al. (2006) utilize the concept of the consumer empowerment to underline the consumer ability to control his choices and get more control on the relationship with the companies. Other authors talk about the consumer agency (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), which points out the fact that value creation is closely linked to the consumer performance, which requires competencies and ability to create a sense of his consumption activity and generate a creative knowledge. This creative learning through the diversion offers a source of innovation and sustainable competitive advantage for the company.

A “New Consumer” Co-Producer: Putting Consumer To Work

In the postmodern society, the product usage requires a dual decision: purchasing the product and using it. In all cases, the consumer attempts to identify three elements involved in the decision and the usage process. The first one is the project. It's the anticipation of what he is going to do with the product. It is a more or less a clear anticipation, more or less assumed, which often changes with use. The second one is the product itself, and finally the third one is the function assigned to the product. This usage shows that the new customers are very active in creating their own culture. They invent their own culture with its codes, practices and languages. Companies thus face the development of a re-appropriation process of the consumer who attempts to escape the consumer experience imposed by producers.

The consumer becomes a producer (Cova, 2008) able to create a new meaning of the company’s offer (Certeau, 1990) to fit his needs. The joint production of goods and services between the company and the customer is not a new idea; for example fast food or supermarkets have gained some of their success through the customer participation in order to reduce production costs. Historically, consumer participation in service production was first studied as a strategy to improve productivity by using the client as a free labour, thereby achieving a lower price (Fitzsimmons, 1985; Mills and Morris, 1986).

In the CCT perspective, a number of works proposes to expand the consumer participation to the experiential domain, because it helps to guide the consumer towards an ordinary consumption experience, which brings him satisfaction (Ladwein, 2004). In this sense, co-production is related to an active participation that reflects the consumer involvement in shaping the company’s offer (Cermak, 1994).

Dujarier (2008) shows in her book “the consumer work” that the co-producer status of the consumer is a direct consequence of the consumer empowerment thanks to the use of digital equipment as well as ICTs and internet as a source of information. Indeed, with the democratization of the use of digital technologies and multimedia products, new behaviours in terms of creation and sharing information on consumption have emerged through online communities. These consumers who are co-producers of content have become more influential and are often seen as a proven source of information.

In the audiovisual and media sector, a number of the U.S. TV channels internationally renowned such as CNN have implemented the “IReporters” concept, which is a kind of citizen journalists who produce and disseminate documentaries and reports. On the CNN website, Internet users are invited to share their experiences, comments and videos on current news or other matters. The best stories will be broadcast in the CNN TV news channel and the IReporter is often invited to join the journalist and participate to the debate. Thus, CNN benefits from the expertise of these citizen journalists and reduces the costs of its professional journalists, because to produce a report they must travel, which generates financial and management expenses.

The case of IReporters is different because there is no cost and consumers work for free because they are passionate. This participation in terms of production and dissemination of information is becoming essential for media groups and the audiovisual sector who attempt to implement a policy to enhance the collaboration with the consumer who is able to produce, disseminate and influence through his online social network. However, this ideology has some limits in terms of the relevance and the value of information produced by a consumer who is not paid for this work. Indeed, in the fashion and haute couture sector, designers and luxury brands pay the influential bloggers on the web to attend their shows and provide a feedback and information on their blog to the online community through Twitter, or Facebook. These users receive in return remuneration and are considered as employees, which is not yet the case in the media and audiovisual industry.

To sum up, this literature review highlighted the specific features and main characteristics (hedonic and experiential, ethical, responsible, and paradoxical, appropriation and re-appropriation, resistance and empowerment, participation and co-production) of the new consumer explained through the Consumer Culture Theory CCT, which allows researchers to understand the paradigm.
related to the postmodern era in marketing and consumer behaviour research (Cova and Cova, 2009; Thompson, 2000; Thompson and Troester, 2002). These characteristics reflect four principle dimensions: the digital and the interactive context of the "new consumer"; the importance of meaning creation within consumption experiences in a social context, the competence and the resistance of the "new consumer" and finally the participation and the co-creation of offers and value with suppliers.

DISCUSSION

This conceptual paper attempted to synthesize a wide variety of disparate research streams and ideas emerging within postmodern research in the CCT tradition to create a "new consumer" paradigm. The outcomes of this research appreciate the nuances and textures of the contemporary consumer landscape and thus don’t attempt to generalize the "new consumer" paradigm. Indeed, we addressed work to identify characteristics of the "new consumer" but it seems more likely that what we identified is "a" new consumer among a large variety of segments of consumers. For example, one characteristic of the "new consumer" is that he uses digital media to excise and exercise the paradoxes of postmodernity. While that may certainly be resonant with many consumers in the western societies, we should take into account the technology divide even in developing countries such as Europe and the United States.

Certainly for a large group of consumers in one major developed country, this aspect of the "new consumer" has no application. On every dimension or characteristic of the "new consumer", similar observations are readily at hand that make this discussion of the "new consumer" at once provocative and at the same time feel narrow and almost modernistically monolithic and myopic. While there are certainly consumers who are "responsible and ethical" green consumers and prosumers, there are certainly large and possibly even majority segments who disregard or even actively disrespect this cultural narrative and care little of or for corporate responsibility practices.

The idea that has emerged from this paper is that there certainly exists new milieu of interwoven narratives that coalesce into "a" new consumer paradigm. Therefore, Marketing and consumer behaviour researchers should go so far as to highlight this type or kind of consumer as "the new consumer" of the postmodern era. Some consumers certainly embrace today the narratives and values of modernity such as scientific reductionism and of economic rationality. These narratives make meaning in their lives and form the ontological building blocks of their world. While they may live next door to "the new consumer," they would likely have little in common. And yet, they live, they purchase, they consume with very little resemblance to their "new consumer" neighbors. The world is more complex and filled with a variety of consumers who are ontologically disparate and who polysemically read the world around them in exceptionally nuanced and oftentimes orthogonal ways.

CONCLUSION

The six characteristics identified and related to the concept of "new consumer" are enhanced by the fact that the new communication modalities from blogs to YouTube videos to wikis to podcasts and Really Simple Syndication, to message boards and advances in technologies; have enabled new types of experiences and enhanced consumer collaboration and participation within his experiences by acquiring new and digital competencies. As a result, the "new consumer" becomes an economic market actor able to co-create value with suppliers. Thus, there is an ongoing structural shift in the why, who, what, where and how of value creation (Prhalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Research on how customers engage in the co-creation processes as envisaged by the Service-Dominant (S-D) Logic paradigm (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) is an emerging topic, and scant research has been published on frameworks for organizations to manage the co-creation process. The coming out of the new consumer who is viewed as co-creator of value has opened up discussion and stimulated new ways of thinking around a number of theoretical aspects and related managerial implications. Therefore, the idea of putting the new consumer to work is at the heart of the company’s policy and strategy.

The companies and marketers should focus more on the symbolic and the experiential behaviours of the new consumer by adapting their offers as well as co-creating and sharing value with him. In this sense, authors such as Vargo and Lusch have pointed out through their concept of Service-Dominant Logic “S-D logic”, the need for companies to get closer with their clients, recognize their abilities and get involved in the co-creation process of value with the new consumer who is empowered, well informed, competent and responsible.

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