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Anti-consumption Research (ICAR)

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## *Table of Contents*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Anti-Consumption in the Sailing City.....   | 2   |
| The History of Boycott Movements in Germany:<br>Restrictions and Promotion of Consumer Well-being.....  | 4   |
| The Multi-Facets of Sustainable Consumption, Anti-Consumption, Emotional Attachment and<br>Consumer Well-Being: The Case of the Egyptian Food Industry..... | 10  |
| Applying Rhetorical Analysis to Investigating Counter-Ideological Resistance to Environmentalism ..   | 15  |
| The Curious Case of Innovators Who Simultaneously Resist Giving Up Paper Bills.....   | 21  |
| Navigating Between Folk Models of Consumer Well-Being: The Nutella Palm Oil Case .....  | 26  |
| The Informational and Psychological Challenges of Converting to a Frugal Life .....   | 31  |
| Motivations, Values, and Feelings behind Resistance to Consumption and Veganism.....  | 37  |
| Shelving a Dominating Myth: A Study on Social Nudism and Material Absence .....   | 42  |
| Education for Sustainable (Non-) Consumption through Mindfulness Training? .....  | 45  |
| Creative Consumption.....   | 52  |
| Living by the Principle of Sharing .....  | 59  |
| Consumer Resistance to Improve Well-Being: Non-Smokers Perspective.....   | 60  |
| Quantifying Anti-Consumption of Private Labels and National Brands: Impact of Poor Test Ratings on<br>Consumer Purchasing Behavior .....                    | 65  |
| The Sustainability Roots of Anti-Consumption Lifestyles and their Impact on Consumers' Financial<br>Well-Being .....  | 71  |
| Product Piracy – A Meta-analyst View on Justifications to Pirate Software, Music, and Movies.....   | 79  |
| You, Me, and My Ignominy: Anti-Tobacco Discourse and Jammed Culture Jamming.....  | 85  |
| The Co-Production of Protest: The Pivotal Role of Webzines in the Framing of an Advertising Counter-<br>Campaign.....                                       | 92  |
| Living Discourse: Political Consumerism in an Intentional Community .....   | 97  |
| Understanding the Differences of Political Consumerism Between Northern, Southern and Eastern<br>Europe .....   | 104 |
| The Role of Foreign Country Images and Risk Perceptions in Country-Based Reluctance to Buy .....  | 110 |
| A Little Less Anti-Consumption a Little More Sharing Please: On How Materialism and Uniqueness<br>Influence Sharing.....                                    | 117 |
| The Four Eras of Food Production and Anti-consumption: A Consumption Chronology of a Love/Hate<br>Relationship.....   | 121 |
| Meaningful Well-Being: A Media-Text Analysis of Celebrity Materialism .....   | 126 |

## *Anti-Consumption in the Sailing City*

Consumption today is an essential part of living. In almost every context, we are consumers. We fulfill our needs via consumption, we express our identities via consumption, we define our social status via consumption, and we regulate our emotions via consumption. Yet, most of us agree that there are good reasons to practice anti-consumption; the deliberate act of rejecting, reducing, or reclaiming consumption (Lee, Cherrier, Roux, and Cova 2011). For the most critical among us, consumption is a kind of alienation from natural living and these anti-consumers refrain from satisfying artificial needs, choosing instead to reconnect with their 'roots' by downgrading consumption. Of course most of us subscribe to the claim that humankind needs to diminish consumption to decrease environmental degradation. And often it is a moral obligation to - at least temporarily - abandon consumption of specific products and brands to stop supporting companies which act socially or environmentally irresponsibly (Hoffmann 2013). There are surely even more reasons why it might be a good idea for everyone to reject, reduce, or reclaim consumption in some or another way. Yet, there is one essential question that crosses every mind when we think about anti-consumption:

Can we consume less and feel good?

Given the many virtuous reasons for anti-consumption are simultaneously accompanied by a generally low willingness to actually reduce consumption, this question seems highly relevant. The International Center for Anti-consumption Research (ICAR) is the international forum for discussing relevant anti-consumption issues. This year in early July, when the ICAR network meets in Kiel, we jointly explore the link between anti-consumption and consumer well-being. Hopefully we will learn whether we can feel good *although* we practice anti-consumption. Or whether we feel good *because* we practice anti-consumption. The links between the different forms of anti-consumption practices (e.g., voluntary simplicity, boycotting, brand avoidance) and different aspects of well-being (e.g., social, financial, mental; Sirgy, Lee, and Rahtz 2007) are diverse, complex, and colorful. And it is fascinating to observe the evolution of new lifestyles and several new forms of (anti-)consumption that try to realize the positives of consumption reduction without imposing burdens for the individual. We are thinking for example of the carmob or the growing relevance of different sharing concepts (Belk 2010; Hutter and Hoffmann 2013).

The ICAR symposium has historically been accompanied with a special issue in an internationally recognized journal. Dr Michael S W Lee, the founder and organizer of the ICAR network, has launched former special issues in the Journal of Business Research, Consumption Markets and Culture, the European Journal of Marketing, and the Journal of Macromarketing. This time, the Journal of Consumer Affairs (JOCA) has provided us with the opportunity to publish a special issue. We are very thankful to the editor in chief, Sharon Tennyson, who welcomed and enabled this cooperation to occur. We believe that there could not be a better match between JOCA and the symposium theme, since the JOCA focusses on consumer interests and well-being. One goal and characteristic of the ICAR network is the objective to jointly improve our work on anti-consumption, and to this end the ICAR symposium acts as a kind of paper clinic. We encouraged authors to submit their work early to get initial first feedback from the organizers. Authors then had the opportunity to make an early submission to JOCA to receive reviewer feedback before the ICAR symposium without the risk of being rejected at this early stage. At the ICAR symposium, the delegates again will receive more feedback from fellow delegates. After three pre-submission feedback loops the actual journal

submission process starts, with the official deadline for the JOCA special issue being set for August the 30<sup>th</sup> 2014. We hope that this extensive improvement process originates impactful work in the field of anti-consumption.

For us, the Marketing department of Kiel University, it is a great pleasure to host ICAR here in Kiel! You know that the heart of ICAR beats in Auckland (New Zealand), which is known as the City of Sails, interestingly Kiel is called the Sailing City. Therefore it is imperative that we go on a sailing trip during the ICAR symposium. We are looking forward to a good trip with you and it gives us great pleasure to warmly welcome everyone to jointly knit the ICAR net!

Stefan Hoffmann, Kiel University  
Michael SW Lee, University of Auckland

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# ***The History of Boycott Movements in Germany: Restrictions and Promotion of Consumer Well-being***

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## **Extended Abstract**

From a historic viewpoint, describing the relation between boycotting as a temporary and directed form of anti-consumption and consumer well-being as a parameter of contentment surely is a challenging task. Firstly, there is a variety of concepts of what consumer well-being actually means (Sirgy, Lee, and Rhatz 2007). Secondly, with the exception of the anti-Semitic boycotts during National Socialism (Ahlheim 2012) historic reflection on boycotts in Germany is still a research gap which needs yet to be filled (Torp 2012) And thirdly, the lack of suitable and significant records regarding consumer well-being prevents historic research from making universal assertions on this topic. The current paper approaches main lines of development of boycott movements in Germany and their significance to consumer well-being. Therefore, it is embracing a wide concept of consumer well-being.

Economic research is endorsing the assumption that people are more likely to support boycotts which come with direct benefits, as the rejection or restriction of consumption might involve social, personal or economic burdens (Sen, Gürhan-Canli, and Morwitz 2001). Certainly, boycotts did occur as a means of strengthening consumer well-being, or because individual consumer well-being has been stricken. For instance, the so called “Rote-Punkt-Aktion” (red spot campaign) was a famous example of protests against increasing fares for public transportation in the 1970s. Passengers refused to use public street cars and organized private car-based alternatives forcing the local administrations in different cities at least to reconsider the raise (Bass, 2013). As notable as it was, the “Rote-Punkt-Aktion” was only a short-term upheaval in a few cities mostly carried by leftist associations of students or pupils (ibid.).

However, consumers were also complying with boycott campaigns from which they did not benefit directly (i.e. monetarily). The year 1995 for example, which contemporaries described as “the year of boycotting” (Lessing 1996, 178), witnessed two major boycott campaigns: One against *Shell* after the company stated to sink their North Sea oil storage “Brent Spar” and, later, one against products of French origin because the country continued to test nuclear weapons (ibid.). Despite the lack of personal or financial incentives for participating, these campaigns were broadly supported by consumers and reached out widely to mainstream society. Political associations like the youth organization of the Christian Democratic Union or the Liberal Party – both not known for their affinity to civil disobedience – endorsed the campaign (*FAZ*, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 1995). Sociological analysts (Beck 1995) and lifestyle magazines (*Bild der Frau*, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 1995) alike were celebrating boycotting as a consumer trend.

These examples show that consumers support boycott campaigns for various reasons beside their personal involvement or merely financial advantages (Hoffmann 2008, 55-92). One way to understand what makes it worthwhile supporting a specific boycott campaign – or to ignore

it (Yuksel 2013) – is to shift focus from consumers who are *following* a campaign to the people who are *pronouncing* the call for boycotts. By means of their work these activists set conditions for anti-consumption (Barnett et al. 2005; Micheletti and Stolle 2007). As they are defining specific forms of consumption as politically undesirable or immoral acts, they offer *reasons against* consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2013). Campaigners need to mobilize support for their own concerns. They need to *persuade* customers to adopt those concerns and ultimately, they need to change the behavior of consumers – at least temporarily. Therefore, the reasons against consumption need to be plausible enough to justify times of individual austerity. As the cases mentioned above show financial advantages do not necessarily have to be sufficient enough for this purpose (“Aktion Roter Punkt”) and boycott campaigns might even have success despite a reduction of personal well-being – for instance by arguing on behalf of public well-being (environmentalism).

The analytical distinction between *consumers* and *campaigners* allows to ask for reasons of functioning *and* failing of boycott campaigns, and likewise to examine the impact of boycotting on consumer well-being. This distinction unburdens historic research particularly. A mere adaptation of current models explaining boycott participation (e.g. Seegebarth 2011) on the past would be anachronistic. The research on the origins of anti-consumption has to take into account its particular *historic* and *social* premises. Through their search for support, campaigners introduced non-market related issues or so called *socio-moral* categories to capitalist markets. Thereby they were transforming markets into an arena of public confrontation which involved consumers and businesses as well as politics, law, and media. Depending on the specific societal circumstances in which the boycotts took place the patterns of these confrontations varied over time. Focusing on the work of boycott campaigners helps to unveil the *agency* behind social embedded and moralized markets which was rather neglected so far (Stehr 2008).

To handle the question of the extent to which non-market related issues were socially negotiated through capitalist markets and to describe different boycott campaigns in a comparable way (e.g. to spot differences between them or to grasp the evolution of boycotts) it seems helpful to break down the central question to more precise issues – these are:

1. Who were the campaigners? One should ask about the organizational structure of the groups calling for boycotts. Also, the social structure within the campaign groups needs to be analyzed. The age, gender, and social background of the campaigners were reflected in the organization of boycotts.
2. What were the purposes of people calling for boycotts? This question refers to the socio-moral aims and reasons against consumption that were used to justify boycott campaigns. As the cases of anti-Semitic boycotts e.g. during National Socialism clearly indicate, socio-moral aims do not necessarily have to be ethically “good”. According to specific historic circumstances references to the public well-being did not include everybody’s personal well-being: Campaigners might aim at an increase of well-being of a specific group (e.g. workers, car owners, “the nation”) and thereby – simultaneously – accept or even negate the well-being of others.
3. What strategies did the campaigner follow to reach their aims? Answering this question requires researching the “public relation work” of the campaigners and looking for ways they used to approach the public and businesses, trying to gain attention. One can of course observe transitions within those strategies over time.

4. What were the consequences of boycotting? For it is not easy to estimate the “success” of a boycott in economic terms (Hoffmann 2008, 31-34) one could ask about the capability of campaigners to (a) become newsworthy for media coverage, (b) manage to be part of political agenda setting, (c) get recognized in markets as economically relevant actors, and (d) eventually change consumer behavior.

These questions can be seen as guidelines for historic research on boycott movements. The answers may vary at different moments in history. Certainly, there also have been continuities. Either way, considering the historic predecessors of contemporary boycotts is enabling the evaluation of single campaigns in their specific time (Witkowski 2010).

Regarding the case of Germany the public enthusiasm about boycotting in the mid-1990s occasionally might have lacked awareness for its historic origins. Boycotts of national significance occurred since the late 19th century. Even more important, they were socially relevant with an impact upon politics, economy, and jurisdiction. For instance, boycotts were a common practice during the German Empire. The characterization as “social democratic terrorism” (*Deutsche Tageszeitung*, July 23, 1913) indicates that the campaigns might have been socially less accepted around 1900 than in the late 20th century. Especially in industrialized cities, unions used boycotts as a means of labor disputes e.g. to force employers to accept wage agreements and thus, enhance their own well-being (Schwittau 1912). Sometimes, retailers, barbers and bakers were threatened with boycotts if they would not vote for social democrats. Other groups used boycotts in political struggles in a similar way: Conservatives refused to buy at shops which were owned by liberals, liberals followed suit the other way around. German nationalists called for boycotts against Polish products and Jewish shop owners had to cope with anti-Semitic boycotts. Moreover, historic records and juridical literature of that time are revealing that serious public debates about boycotts took place from the 1890s onwards (Kleeberg 1904; Oertmann 1906). These were often concerned with whether boycotts were constituting a disorderly conduct and thus, harming public well-being.

The range of actors applying boycott measures remained diverse in later periods, too, and so did the reasons of anti-consumption. It has not always been actors with “radical” ideologies who were resorting to boycotts (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). In addition to the cases mentioned above there were those boycotts that aimed for a protection of moral values in the 1950s, “national identity” in the 1920s, and price stability in the 1970s. Church groups and anti-communists alike relied on boycotts in the 1950s just as housewives did 20 years later. German beer was boycotted in the 1890s as well as goods of French origin during the occupation of the Ruhr or products from Nestlé in the 1970s on behalf of international solidarity. Not uncommonly, these boycott campaigns had arisen from the midst of society. The issue of whether the campaigns were effecting public well-being negatively occurred corresponding to the social status of the actors calling for a boycott.

Besides these remarks, what conclusions could be drawn regarding the general lines of development of boycotts in Germany since the late 19th century?

1. From a legal standpoint organizing boycotts was less daring in the 1990s than it had been one hundred years earlier. The imperial judiciary allowed boycotts in principle but in most cases rated them as violations of moral conventions or a vague defined public well-being. On these grounds the campaigns were forbidden and boycotters, as well as campaigners, were prosecuted or sued for financial compensation. According to a judgment of the German Constitutional Court in 1958, non-

competitive boycotts are covered under freedom of expression in most cases (Nipperdey 1958).

2. Boycotts in Germany lost their social cohesion over time. After 1945 – at the latest – the age of mass-based boycotts in Germany had come to an end. The ideological basis of the most wide-ranging boycott movements so far had either been politically incorporated – as in the case of social democrats by government participation and in that of unions by the constitutional guaranteed freedom of association – or politically delegitimized – as in the case of anti-Semitism. The number of people actually participating at different campaigns varied over time but it was generally lower than before Second World War and especially during the German Empire. Therefore, succeeding campaigns appealed much more to *moral* issues of consumer responsibility in order to justify individual sacrifices.
3. With the social cohesion of milieus waning and the impact of economic competition on buyers' markets growing, it became less possible but also less important for campaigners to hurt companies directly on a financially significant level. They were increasingly trying to attack the image of market players. According to this, strategies of defense used by companies did also change over time: Besides lawsuits and the formation of mutual insurances against boycott campaigns as in earlier periods firms were increasingly responding with reference to the own well-doing for others from the 1970s on (Curbach 2009).
4. The variance of reasons against consumption and the variety of socio-moral aims of campaigners grew over time. Not only did the concerns of campaigners increasingly include the well-being of distant others, they also addressed more abstract issues – as for instance the intertwining of global economy and civil rights. From the 1970s on boycotts transcended national boundaries and at the same time, globalized aims were integrated on a national level – as for example with reference to German companies. Thus, to be personally affected did not remain the sole motivation for boycotts. On the contrary, with the limits of the *common weal* being shifted and widened towards a more global scale aspects of one's own well-being have become part of the problematization of public well-being.

Most of the above-mentioned changes occurred with the emergence of new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Contemporary campaigns often match those patterns, too. But the concept of boycotting was adapted throughout history according to varying societal circumstances. Therefore, the causes, aims, targets, and strategies of campaigns differed over time as well as the reasons against consumption. The distinction between consumers and campaigners is a helpful tool to examine those reasons at specific moments in time. It also allows to evaluate on behalf of whose well-being boycotts were initiated and which limitations of personal well-being consumers were willing to accept. Either way, the answers were not consistent over time.

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# ***The Multi-Facets of Sustainable Consumption, Anti-Consumption, Emotional Attachment and Consumer Well-Being: The Case of the Egyptian Food Industry***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Several researchers such as Thomson, MacInnis and Park (2005) and Kim, Lee and Uldago (2005) have studied the concept of emotional attachment from a consumer perspective to identify how such attachment affects the consumer's behavior and the relative purchase decisions. Similarly, concepts of sustainability and CSR were of great attention for researchers such as Tikkanen and Varkoi (2011) and Golding and Peattie (2005). Although each topic was studied in isolation, few studies addressed the relationship between emotional brand attachment and sustainability (Liu and Aaker 2008; Dun, Aknin and Norton 2008; Sen and Bhattacharya 2001). Furthermore, anti-consumption was found to be affecting the sustainability behavior of consumers. In addition, several researchers, such as Lee et al. (2002), explained that sustainable product consumption and emotional attachment has a great effect on the well-being of the consumer. Consequently, the research gap rests in examining the relationship between emotional brand attachment and sustainable consumption in the Egyptian context as well as studying the effect of sustainable purchasing and emotional brand attachment on the consumer well-being in the Egyptian food industry.

The importance of environmental psychology and sustainability has been dramatically increasing in the recent years. Moreover, the natural environment has been widely affected by human environmental behavior which makes this importance more critical. Such concern has driven the social and behavioral science to study the relationship between the environment and the human behavior. Topics that discuss environmental psychology, such as those presented in this paper, are no longer unforeseen. Indeed, this rests in the fact that a large number of the environmental catastrophes and triggered by social issues and human behavior. Despite these facts, it is still unclear for the majority the role of psychology and human behavior in studying and approaching environmental problems (Pelletier, Lavergne and Sharp 2008). On the other hand, unsustainable development has been recognized to be caused by consumer consumption patterns; the thing that drives the importance of creating strategies and instruments to face this dilemma (Barth, Fischer, Michelsen, Nemnich and Rode 2012).

As for the environmental aspect of sustainability in specific, during the past years, the effect of consumer purchases has been identified to greatly affect the environment such that a large number of consumers have altered specific purchasing behaviors since they were marked as major causes for ecological problems. Thus, the products' effect on the natural environment has become an important consumer determinant for purchasing specific products (Mostafa 2007). A study carried out by Coddington (1993) revealed that consumer concerns nowadays are moving towards sustainable products even if this requires paying premium prices.

As for the concept of anti-consumption, it could be defined as being against consumption. Nevertheless, since this phenomenon hasn't been conventionally studied by researchers, the difference between anti-consumption and sustainable consumption, as well as the overlap between them, has been unclear (Lee, Motion and Conroy 2008; McDonald, Oates, Young and Hwang 2006).

Moving to the concept of consumer well-being, it could be said that consumers in general tend to exhibit anti-consumption behaviors towards some brands/products when they are unsatisfied with this product due to many reasons (Halstead 1989; Lee et al. 2008). Most importantly, consumers tend to exhibit anti-consumption behavior, not because they are unsatisfied with the product itself, but rather due to the dissatisfaction with some concepts that this brands encourages such as supporting materialism or engaging in activities which destroys the environment. Such activities negatively affect the well-being of the whole society and consequently, the well-being of the individual consumer. Therefore, upon explaining the relationship between sustainable consumption, anti-consumption and consumer well-being, it could be said that when consumers purchase and consume some products which they perceive as irresponsible towards their environment, they tend to exhibit anti-consumption behaviors towards these brand (Cherrier, Black and Lee 2010, 1759; McDonald et al. 2006; Sandlin and Milam, 2008).

In this study, the researchers focused on the Egyptian food industry since it is one of the fast growing industries. Furthermore, food is considered one of the fast moving consumer good (FMCGs) which consumers purchase on regular bases. Besides, food products have low involvement levels, where little effort is made to choose between them. Moreover, extensive distribution networks exist for these products which make this industry one of the main important industries in Egypt.

### **Research Gap, Aim and Contribution**

This research has three main purposes: (1) studying the relationship between emotional brand attachment and sustainable consumption in the Egyptian food industry, (2) studying the relationship between food product sustainability and consumer anti-consumption in Egypt, and (3) studying the relationship between sustainable food purchasing, emotional brand attachment and consumer well-being in the Egyptian food industry. As for the contribution of this research, it could be said that although a number of studies such as Pelletier et al. (2008) and Vlachos (2012) have discussed the relationship between sustainability and psychology and others such as (Lee et al. 2009; McDonald et al. 2006) have studied the relationship between sustainability and anti-consumption, such relationships are still not studied in the Egyptian framework in the food industry. This constitutes the research gap for this paper, which is studying emotional brand attachment and sustainable consumption in the Egyptian context as well as studying the effect of sustainable purchasing and emotional brand attachment on the consumer well-being.

### **Research Methodology**

In order to gather some preliminary data, the researchers selected an exploratory research design where a qualitative research method, represented in in-depth interviews, was used. The study consisted of seven in-depth interviews carried out in Egypt. A theoretical sampling technique was used as the data collection technique. This sampling technique initially depends

on sampling units or groups which are the most knowledgeable and considered to have the highest opportunities to get information from. These people also help the researchers to form a line of relevancies and where and how the subsequent obtained information could be pinpointed (Cayne 1997; Glasser 1978). The data collection stopped when the researchers find no more data to be obtained and data are becoming redundant.

### **Findings**

Preliminary data collection through interviews revealed the following: consumers attached to sustainable food brands don't necessarily purchase sustainable brands. That is because consumers usually don't have prior knowledge about which brands are sustainable and which are not. In addition, some Egyptian sustainable brands are overpriced which might discourage the purchase of these brands as well. For the same reasons, consumers exhibiting socially responsible consumption behavior weren't more likely to purchase sustainable food brands. Furthermore, consumers exhibiting socially responsible consumption behavior were found to be more probable to be emotionally attached to sustainable food brands in Egypt. That's usually because those who feel a sense of responsibility towards their environment tend to love these brands more than other consumers. Besides, consumers tended to discontinue using some brands when these brands don't have sustainability initiatives. However, Egyptian consumers were found to value quality, availability of products and product durability more than the sustainability level of the brand. Therefore, it could be said that consumer anti-consumption behavior isn't necessarily derived from sustainable consumption intents. Finally, preliminary results pointed out that sustainable purchasing and emotional brand attachment has a positive effect on the consumer well-being.

### **Managerial Implications**

Consumers were found to be unaware of sustainable brands. Therefore, these brands should be engaging in more marketing activities to publicize for themselves as brands which sustain the environment. Parallel to this, these brands should create some awareness campaigns in order for consumers to understand the importance of preserving our environment and our natural resources, since awareness regarding sustainability isn't still widespread among Egyptian consumers. Furthermore, companies should make use of the consumers' attachment to sustainable brands and alter themselves to be sustainable ones. This will not only benefit the company itself, but the whole society as well, since this will create a number of alternative sustainable brands in the market, therefore, consumers are more probable to purchase such brands. Furthermore, companies should strive to create emotional bonds between their brands and their consumers since such emotional bond was proven to encourage people to purchase these brands. Finally, brands should strive to be sustainable ones in order to increase the satisfaction level of consuming their brands.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study added to the existing literature by proving insights regarding the relationship between sustainable consumption and consumer emotional brand attachment. Secondly, this research has provided a comprehensive understanding of such relationship in the Egyptian context of the food industry. Moreover, it has contributed to the anti-consumption literature

through developing a framework conceptualizing the relationship between sustainable consumption and consumer anti-consumption. Besides, this research highlighted the effect of sustainable consumption and brand attachment to sustainable food brands on the consumer well-being represented in the consumer consumption satisfaction.

### **Keywords**

Emotional brand attachment, Attachment theory, Self-expansion model, Self-congruity, Sustainability, Sustainable product consumption, Anti-consumption, Consumer well-being, Corporate Social Performance (CSP), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Consumer-Company identification (C-C identity), Social identity theory, attribution theory

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# *Applying Rhetorical Analysis to Investigating Counter-Ideological Resistance to Environmentalism*

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## **Extended Abstract**

From the release of the book *Silent Spring* (Carson 1962) to the screening of Al Gore's documentary "An Inconvenient Truth", environmentalists' efforts to communicate the detrimental effects of current consumption practices on the ecological environment have impacted contemporary consumer culture, policy decisions, and fueled new discourses of ecological responsibility and sustainability. Broad sociocultural conversations have led to the development of opposing discourses about the appropriate role of environmentalism (e.g. Cherrier, Black, and Lee 2011; Taylor 2013). These oppositional discourses either focus on environmentalists' resistance to the detrimental effects of consumption on our natural environment or on resistance to the environmentalists' efforts.

One particular movement, "Resisting the Green Dragon" (RGD), has emerged to oppose the environmentalist position. The RGD movement presents itself as a counter-movement opposing the now dominant environmentalist discourse that pervades modern society. Such opposing resistance conversations are not new. Indeed, throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond, the relationship between the environment and consumption practices has been the focal point of consumer resistance conversations. Not surprisingly, multiple and often opposing cultural discourses have emerged and have sought to precipitate social change.

Given that extant research is mainly focused on anti-consumption movements and practices, the purpose of the present research is to undertake an investigation of the rhetorical and persuasive communication tactics and practices underlying the RGD counter-resistance discourse. To accomplish the central goal of the study, a rhetorical analysis is applied to identify the major ideological arguments and expressive tools employed by the RGD resistance discourse to discredit the emergent but powerful environmentalist counter-culture movement. To reach our interpretive end, the study uniquely combines three literature streams, consumer resistance, dissociative group theory, and psychological reactance. Following the theory overview, we report the results from an analysis of 26 RGD promotional YouTube videos and

arrive at emergent themes describing the persuasive rhetorical approach adopted by the movement.

### **Consumer Resistance: Two Perspectives**

Many consumer resistance perspectives stem from the writings of Max Weber and Karl Marx (Cherrier 2009) and fit within a paradigm labeled “manipulation and enslavement” (Izberk-Bilgin 2010). Mainstream consumers are often viewed in this discourse as passive, mindless creatures who are all too willing to submit to capital-holders’ ideology of consumerism as propagated through cultural intermediaries such as advertising, broadcasting, and entertainment industries (e.g. Izberk-Bilgin 2010). The manipulation and enslavement discourse poses resistance as a mass revolt in opposition to constraints against freedom, where the oppressed are able to seize power from the group that exploits them (Cherrier 2009; Izberk-Bilgin 2010). In contrast, the “agency and empowerment” paradigm (Izberk-Bilgin 2010) is a competing discourse and suggests that when the legitimacy of the dominant consumer culture comes into question, consumers can negotiate and transform of social order by distancing themselves from the marketplace and identifying unquestioned assumptions to challenge and contest the dominant consumer culture (e.g. Izberk-Bilgin 2010; Ozanne and Murray 1995).

While consumer resistance often posits that consumer well-being can only be enhanced by societal navigation away from the current wasteful dogma of modern society, a movement called Resisting the Green Dragon (RGD), initiated by the Cornwall Alliance, takes an antithetical stance. It suggests that economic and technological progress is the primary way for enhancing human well-being. Hence, the RGD campaign actually embraces consumerism and calls for resistance against environmentalism since it perceives environmentalism to diminish human well-being.

### **Method**

In 2010, the RGD movement launched a YouTube campaign which called into question the ideology and corresponding actions of environmentalists. In this study, rhetorical analysis was used to analyze the videos since the topic (environmentalism) and data (resistance to environmentalism) include a social issue, a political movement, and capitalism (Ryan 2012). Selzer (2004, 281) defines rhetorical analysis as “an effort to understand how people with specific social situations attempt to influence others through language”. Rhetorical analysis is not only useful for analyzing text but also symbols including visual art, websites, and advertisements (e.g. Selzer 2004).

Following Bush and Boller (1991), a detailed analysis of RGD website which provides a summary on their position against environmentalism was performed. Next, we conducted an in-depth analysis of 26 (approximately 48 minutes of video) RGD YouTube promotional videos to analyze the semantic and structural similarities of the videos in the campaign and to explicate ideological assumptions. The videos were viewed and re-viewed several times until the rhetorical codes became apparent (Hemetsberger 2006). Given the theoretical foundations for our investigation, the RGD YouTube videos were transcribed and then analyzed according to the following themes.

1. Challenging Motives and Goals of Environmentalism
2. Challenging Science Behind Environmentalism

3. Depiction of Environmentalists
4. Explanation of the RGD Movement
5. RGD's call for action.

## **Results**

### **Goals and Motivation for Environmentalism and the “Twisted” Worldview**

RGD proposes that the environmentalism movement has a specific goal in mind which is to protect the earth at the expense of humankind by stopping technological and economic development. Several objectives are perceived to be used by environmentalists to achieve this goal and include: (1) the adoption and promotion of anti-life policies, (2) indoctrination of children through propaganda and scare tactics, (3) infiltration of the Christian community to spread their twisted worldview, and (4) the promotion of greater governmental control at the expense of individual freedom. Environmentalist motivations include a lust for power, an innate desire to place the earth above humans, and an irrational fear of ecological disaster. The RGD campaign uses language to position environmentalism as something that is inconsistent with the modern world and isn't a philosophy that values human life. They indicate that environmentalists want to get the numbers down and “see babies just for their carbon footprint”. In traditional rhetorical fashion, the campaign focuses on environmentalists' perceived disregard for women, children, and babies in an attempt to appeal to emotions. Furthermore, the RGD campaign claims that the environmentalism movement uses Hollywood movies, TV, Internet, and school curriculum to indoctrinate children. Indoctrination and government infiltration rhetoric is used to establish that environmentalism is not just an ancillary threat, but an ideology that is pervasive in all aspects of culture and thus a huge threat worthy of resistance. In sum, environmentalists are perceived to elevate the earth above technological progress, be opponents of economic progress, view human beings as evil, and falsely believe that progress and wealth are bad for the earth.

### **Environmentalism's “Bad Science”**

To achieve their goals, The RGD movement propose that environmentalists work diligently to get broad based support for “bad” science behind global warming and that the “sins of lying and carelessness about the truth lie at the root of many false environmental scares”. Throughout the videos, the choice of words such as “half-truths“ create an image of environmentalists as self-serving, misguided individuals who do not recognize the bias in their judgments. RGD proposes that environmentalism is more based on myth than reality and that adoption of such a philosophy is consistent with the “false” or “twisted” view perpetuated by environmentalists.

### **The Villains: Environmentalists as a Fear Mongering Dissociative Group attempting to Manipulate and Enslave the General Population**

Through many RGD discussions pertaining to the environmentalist identity, there are persistent references to environmentalists as adversaries indicating that they perceive them not only to be an out-group but a dissociative reference group, thus suggesting consumption constraints of anything symbolic of the environmentalism movement (Berger and Health 2008; White and Dahl 2007). The RGD campaign demonizes environmentalists and only suggests environmentalists possess negative attributes. They refer to them in a derogatory nature as “radicals”, “twisted”, “misguided”, “bullies” and as having a “lust for political power”. Demonization is a cultural code which is stronger than traditional ingroup-outgroup thinking

and is a constituent element of oppositional discourse (Hemetsberger 2006). In the demonization process, the RGD videos use ominous tones and unnerving visual imagery. By demonizing the opposition and instilling a sense of fight, it is critical to emphasize the distinctions from the evil adversaries, thus establishing the foundation for an oppressive dissociative identity. Paul Elrich is specified as an exemplar environmentalist to reinforce the doomsdayer label given to environmentalists that make unwarranted hysterical predictions. Urgency in resistance is reinforced through the omnipresent music of the symbolic rhetorical vehicle (Scott 1990) as indicated by the presence of a ticking clock as the words “now is the time to stand and resist” are uttered. By using visual and musical cues, in addition to verbal cues, the RGD campaign further positions environmentalism as an immediate disruptive force, not to be underestimated.

### **The Heroes: Psychological Reactance and the Need to Push Back**

Environmentalism has methodically led to changes in societal values, thus threatening more traditional views on consumption. Particular adjustments in societal values which change the social acceptability of existing habits and practices may specifically spur resistance (Sheth 1981). Consistent with this contention, the rhetorical analysis revealed that RGD movement members view themselves as enlightened heroes whose goal is to restore freedoms threatened by environmentalists. Enlightenment is expressed through their view that they can see the “truth” and it is their duty to expose the “deception”, “half-truths” and “manipulation” which corresponds to environmentalism’s perceived hidden agenda of more government control. In line with psychological reactance’s implication principle, RGD members perceive that the environmentalist’s agenda is to create a society dictated by a socialist micro-managing government, thus perpetually infringing upon personal freedom. Hence, the RGD ideology suggests that if environmentalism leads to a constraint on any given freedom then society is in danger of continually losing freedoms. Hence, environmentalism is rhetorically fashioned as not a liberation but a hindrance on society.

### **Proper Action is Society and Wellbeing**

Given that the RGD campaign argues that environmentalism actually diminishes well-being, their view of proper action in society is rhetorically constructed in an attempt to strengthen the authenticity of their claims. The choice of phrases such as “we need to turn our attention back to humanities ultimate problems; not landfills, pesticide residues, or greenhouse gases” indicate that these issues are moot compared to more immediate problems. The RGD proponents propose that proper action includes “taking care of the world and making it a better place for human habitation” and suggest that economic and technological progress are essential and will lift up the poor. The RGD campaign constructs proper actions in society as actions that embrace progress and population growth while elevating the poor.

### **Conclusion**

According to RGD proponents, the eradication of environmentalism will improve consumer well-being and in particular, enhance the quality of life of the impoverished. Consistent with Izberk-Bilgin’s (2010) manipulation and enslavement discourse, the RGD campaign suggests that the underlying motives of environmentalists’ is to propagate their worldview and shape a society which greatly limits behavioral freedom. However, only antagonistic counter arguing and a one-sided perspective, void of humans’ past atrocities on nature, is presented in an attempt

to persuade individuals of the perils of environmentalism and its detrimental effects on consumer well-being. The emotional arousal and explicit attempts to convince others to join the fight and restore behavioral freedoms threatened by insidious environmentalists is consistent with other research concerning psychological reactance. While the evidence has been mounting, materialistic values in culture have kept environmental concerns from being fully embraced by all citizens (Kilbourne and Pickett 2008). Skepticism and resistance to environmentalism has further been confounded by the doomsday discourse (Shellenberger and Nordhaus 2007) and the perceived elitism and hypocrisy that some associate with environmentalism (e.g. Morrison and Dunlap 1986). While the environmentalism discourse has impacted values in the Western society, it has also fueled resistance. A common theme with divergent discourses between environmentalism and those resisting it, is the need to enhance well-being. It is conveyed via mutually exclusive sign systems within each discourse. It appears that as mentioned in earlier studies, strictly environmentalist discourses (e.g., environmental apocalypse) are not working with some audiences and, in fact, prove counterproductive (Schneider 2011). A bridging of the discourses is needed to concurrently promote ecological and human well-being.

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# ***The Curious Case of Innovators Who Simultaneously Resist Giving Up Paper Bills***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Online banking was the first system to attempt to replace the function of paper bills in providing financial information to consumers. Banks and billing firms focused their persuasive efforts on the adoption of online bill payment and electronic bills (e-bills) assuming that after adopting e-bills, consumers would give up paper bills (Andreeff et. al. 2001; Crone 1998). An e-bill for the purpose of this study is any digital form of the consumer's transactional billing information. After 20 years, limited progress toward 100% paper bill suppression has been made (Straita 2013; Nader and Lintell 2008).

When consumers do not voluntarily change their behavior, incentives or disincentives are used to encourage or discourage behavior. Financial disincentives suppressed plastic bag use, but many consumers did not develop the associated anti-consumption attitudes (Sharp, Hoj and Wheller 2010). In 2013, the Canadian Radio and Television Commission invited comments on the Public Interest Advocacy Centre application to stop paper bill fees (CRTC 2013). PIAC provided research demonstrating strong opinions toward paper bills: "83% of Canadians agree that people should have the right to get a paper bill in the mail without having to pay an extra fee" (PIAC 2013).

Anti-consumption research rarely focuses on innovation adoption attitudes and behavior. Non-adoption, resistance to adoption, and *status quo* behavior appear to be the same: taking no action to adopt the innovation (Ram, 1987; Rogers, 2003; Samuelson and Zeckhauser 1998). However, the attitudes associated with each are quite different. Consistent with an anti-consumption framing, one anticipates that the reasons for not adopting e-bills; adopting e-bills and discontinuing paper bills; or adopting e-bills and resisting discontinuing paper bills are also not the same (Laukkanen et al. 2007; NACHA CEBP and Blueflame Consulting 2011; Leiserson 2011).

Chatzidakis and Lee (2012) suggest that the consequences of negative consumption may be linked to outcomes which have significance to the user. McNeish (2010) found that paper bills are relevant not only during the payment transaction but at all stages during the financial management process as a way to maintain control over users' financial information. This study explores anti-consumption behavior through an examination of the impact of age on resistance to discontinuing paper bills.

Foote's (2001) concept of generational cohorts suggests that events impacting a generation around 14 years of age are likely to have a long term impact on their attitudes and behavior. Each of the cohorts discussed in this study experienced the introduction of one or more new payment technologies (Frame and White, 2009; Samakovitis, 2012).

Seniors (64 years of age and older) experienced the introduction of credit cards. Baby Boomers (45-63 years) witnessed the introduction of Automatic Banking Machines (ABM).

For Generation X (31-44 years), electronic funds transfer by telephone, automatic deduction and debit cards introduced more control over bill payment. Millennials (18-30 years) grew up with new payment technologies such as online and mobile banking and were freed from home or bank locations to pay bills. While Seniors had only three payment channels available to them at 14 years of age, Millennials had a choice of eight.

### **Method**

Data was collected in two stages. In a pre-test, five respondents were asked to evaluate four versions of the intention to resist discontinuing the paper bill question. All five respondents selected the same version of the question as the easiest to read and understand. Data for the second stage were collected from respondents recruited from a commercial online panel. Respondents were invited to complete an online survey if they had paid at least one bill online in the past year. After data cleaning, the final sample size was 850. Three hypotheses were tested among online bill payers: age positively influences number of bills paid each month; the length of time that a payment channel has been used; and the intention to resist giving up paper bills.

### **Discussion**

Consumers' requirement for paper documents is most often linked to chronological age (Jokinen 2006). Thus, it is curious to find strong resistance to discontinuing paper bills among online bill payers, regardless of their age since e-bills are delivered as part of the online bill paying process. This study is among the first to identify the simultaneous behavior of receiving both paper and e-bills as an observable anti-consumption behavior, and to investigate the impact of age on intentions to resist discontinuing paper bills.

All cohorts have adopted payment channels that include e-bills, yet resist giving up paper bills. While age has an influence on the strength of their intention to resist discontinuing paper bills, all but Millennials agree that they intend to resist discontinuing paper bills. Millennials did not disagree, rather were neutral in their intention. One reason for this neutrality may be the group structure used. Millennials range in age from 18 to 30. Most consumers younger than 25 years have few financial obligations, are managing less money and receive fewer bills than older adults (Lusardi, Mitchell, and Curto 2010; Nader and Lintell 2006). Thus the neutral response may not reflect a consistent intentional attitude across this age cohort.

Almost all cohorts have adopted multiple methods of bill payment, a further demonstration of their willingness to adopt and use payment innovations. Thus, psychological resistance to change cannot be presented as a reason for their resistance to giving up paper bills. Online bill payers may be signaling, through their resistance behavior, important beliefs about paper bills and the banks and billing firms who send it to them.

In addition to their role in consumers' financial management process, paper bills seem to act as a structural assurance to help consumers manage their distrust of banks and billing firms so that they can continue to transact with them (McNeish 2014). Consumers observe and interpret both the attitudes and behavior of the firms with whom they do business.

When faced with legally-imposed requirements to charge for the plastic bags, retail firms demonstrated anti-consumption behaviors. They credibly linked plastic bags fees to believable messages about protecting the environment. While their eagerness to embrace fees for plastic bags may have been less about the environment than for the generation of new profit from a

combination of cost reduction, plus the revenue earned from selling cloth bags, consumers' behavior changed.

Neither imposed fees nor environmental messages have changed consumers' anti-consumption behavior toward paper bills. This may be in part as a result of firms' insistence on original paper receipts for product returns and sending paper direct mail. In this way, firms demonstrate their own belief in the power of paper to authenticate transactions or to strengthen relationships with their customers (Yarrow 2012). Thus, by their own behavior, these firms may be reinforcing the consumers' anti-consumption attitudes and behavior.

Without the paper bills sent to them by the bank or billing firm, consumers must print or download e-bills to a location outside of the online system in order to guarantee access to them should it be required in the future. If not printed or downloaded, consumers understand that the availability of e-bills depends on access to their online account. Access to their online accounts is not controlled by the consumer, rather by the bank or billing firm and if the account is closed may not even be accessible to the organization.

Governments have a role in protecting citizens from firms who take advantage of them. Creating a budget and a monthly review of bills and statements are linked to good financial management by consumers (Granbois, Rosen and Acito 1986). At a time when consumer debt is growing and consumers increasingly challenged to manage their finances, paper bill suppression by charging a fee, seems contra-indicated. Consumers' anti-consumption behavior can be understood as a form of control over their financial affairs. Thus, governments can be encouraged to consider prohibiting the fee associated with the paper bill.

This study has two main limitations. An online panel was selected as the data collection method because it achieves a representative sample size at a reasonable cost. Online panel use has been questioned due to external validity and coverage error (Chakrapani 2007). However, an online panel is particularly suited to this study because the respondents had to demonstrate online behavior to qualify for the study. While, conducted with Canadian online bill payers, recent studies with Finnish, German and American consumers, showed a similar pattern between online bill payment and resistance to discontinuing paper bills although at different levels (Leiserson 2011).

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# *Navigating Between Folk Models of Consumer Well-Being: The Nutella Palm Oil Case*

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## **Extended Abstract**

When instances of anti-consumption occur, such as brand boycotts and other related actions against a brand (Lee et al. 2011), it is important for researchers to examine the phenomenon from consumers' point of view. Doing so can provide a folk interpretation of what is happening and clarify the types of folk models of well-being consumers have in mind when attacking or defending the brand (Moisio and Beruchashvili 2010). The case of the attacks that anti-palm oil activists have made against Nutella, the famous hazelnut spread, and the defense organized by pro-Nutella lovers provides a unique opportunity to contrast folk models of consumer well-being. Through a netnographic analysis (Kozinets 2010) of web posts dedicated to the pro-Nutella/anti-palm oil dispute, the current research highlights the ideological tensions and contradictions between two folk models of consumer well-being.

Brand-mediated moral conflicts, such as the one between Jeepers or Hummer adversaries and enthusiasts (Rosenbaum 2013; Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010) represent a unique opportunity to examine contrasting folk models of consumer well-being, or consumers' point of view on what constitutes their well-being. Folk models stand for "people's own concepts of their actions, their reasons and explanations for them and, more generally, the whole range of their notions about the social and natural world they live in" (Holy and Stuchlik 1983, 89). In general, a folk model is inter-subjectively shared by a social group: it is a statement of the commonsense understandings that people have in ordinary life that contrast with various specialized and scientific models (D'Andrade 1987).

Inscribing these phenomena in their larger socio-historical context enables the exploration of the dynamic interaction between individual understanding of well-being and the market and social systems. In this vein, individual phenomenological perceptions can also serve as instances of governmentality (Beckett 2012), which reveals indirect forms of market-social domination in apparent expressions of individual freedom.

Analysis of folk models is facilitated by consumers' tendency toward reflexivity—that is, their tendency to tell their stories and explain their actions using words. In this paper we conduct a netnography of the second type—that is, "observational netnography" (Kozinets 2010), between the start of the dispute against Nutella by anti-palm oil activists (June 2010) and its conclusion (June 2013). Because Nutella consumption is well-grounded in the French culture, our analysis particularly focuses on the impact of this critical incident in France. We analyze individual posts of consumers' opinions about Nutella and the palm oil issue from different web sources (in total, 1082 posts). We applied an ongoing and iterative "back and forth" data analysis, which led to uncover patterns within and between datasets (Spiggle 1994; Thompson 1997).

Nutella is an iconic brand recognized worldwide, including in France, where it has been linked to public debates on well-being concerns about palm oil. The event that definitively put Nutella at the core of the palm oil issue in France was the proposed measure in November 2012 to impose a 300% tax increase on palm oil because its consumption generated high healthcare costs. Though not approved, the measure, nicknamed “Nutella amendment,” placed Nutella in the middle of the media storm, provoking a strong response from Ferrero, the company owning the Nutella brand. The company placed full-spread advertisements in French newspapers in defense of its use of palm oil and, under the claim “Nutella, parlons-en” (“Nutella, let’s talk about it”), created a dedicated website and a Twitter page to provide detailed explanations to consumers on Nutella’s ingredients, nutritional characteristics, and production processes.

At this point, French consumers began actively debating, protesting, and boycotting Nutella. Below is an excerpt of material we gathered from these on-line discussions:

**aol2012:** Why don’t we say also that this super Nutella makes some monstrous damages on cholesterol levels of our youth? Adolescents aged 15 suffer [from] too high cholesterol levels due to Nutella. Not to mention the sugar.... We should even double this tax on Nutella! May be young people would eat it less....

**shackleton:** But get out of youth’s hair and leave their cholesterol alone! Any dietary restriction has ever lowered cholesterol levels and I wonder from where you take out that adolescents aged 15 suffer [from] high levels of cholesterol due to Nutella, maybe a fascist-sanitary burp? To remind, cholesterol is not a problem as affirmed too often, just pharmaceutical laboratories and nutrition ayatollahs had invented a money-making illness.... (Le Monde - newspaper)

A second excerpt follows:

*Yogic Flying:* There are so many good nutritionists in France and around the world. But how can we let a so unhealthy product also condemned in California for its noxiousness be freely consumed by our children? Let’s go, can we [make] an effort to remove [these kinds] of products which are there just because the owner is a sly adman?

*Vieuxpapiers:* Prohibiting ... extreme solutions straight away. There is anyway something simpler to do: do not buy this product. This implies of course that parents are responsible and have the necessary and sufficient character to resist [the] cries and whims of their kids in front of supermarket shelves ... and it’s not a done deal!

*SwissAlps:* Don’t buy it if you don’t like and leave in peace the others.

*Violette34:* It is needed sometimes to educate people despite themselves.

*SwissAlps:* No.

*Violette34:* When it’s about their health and Earth’s health, YES, it does!

*SwissAlps:* Always not. It’s terribly condescending, and most of the time this leads to catastrophes.

*Violette34:* It’s your ideology that leads us straight to the wall of catastrophes!! (Huffington Post - newspaper)

The Nutella palm oil case represents an example of how brands can intertwine with moral frictions in society (Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Rosenbaum 2013). In detail, amplification in the media of the different health and sustainability concerns related to palm oil consumption serves as a useful tool for consumers to approach multiple issues at stake. Nutella

engaged in convoluted discords geared toward alleviating the socio-political-moral disputes on palm oil and, in doing so, became the emblematic example of what people believed were its subtle interests, as palm oil is found even in “non-suspect” brands such as Nutella.

In the online argumentations analyzed, we identified three different ideological tensions and contradictions surrounding the debate on the use of palm oil: (1) the health–pleasure tension, referring to the alternative between nutritional and safe food and tasteful and delighting nutrition, (2) the collective–individual tension, reflecting the choice between supporting the common good and supporting individual satisfaction, and (3) external–internal control, involving the conflict between accommodating the needs of the external world (i.e., ethical company behavior related to product ingredients) and controlling one’s own interests (i.e., moderation in eating, governing own choices, freedom even to eat poorly). The integration of Nutella in moral debates on palm oil consumption provides an important angle from which to identify folk understanding of consumer well-being.

Two main folk well-being models were identified. These included the *boycotter* model, which centers on health priority, collective focus, and external control, and the *Nutella lovers* model, which is based on pleasure priority, individual focus, and internal control. The first model accommodates activists interested in advancing the common good, while the second model proposes the ideal of those who seek individual fulfillment, two irreconcilable positions as depicted by Muray (2010). In the first model, the permanent condition of doubt and even presumption (Callon, Lascoumes, and Barthe 2009) of consumers makes them extremely suspicious and progressively lose trust in food companies (Kjaernes, Harvey, and Warde 2007), which leads to urgency in defending the universal right to live a nourishing and healthful life. At the core of the second model is the right for independent choice over one’s life and the possibility of experiencing pleasure through consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982).

The Nutella palm oil case shows that anti-consumption can occur when a folk model of consumer well-being is negatively affected by markets, corporations, or brands. However, it also shows that anti-consumption based on one folk model of consumer well-being may generate a counter folk model of consumer well-being. Should researchers support one or the other folk model? Adding even more complexity to this question is that the two folk models identified herein can be interpreted as extreme poles, with people navigating between the two opposites.

The process is osmotic: not only does Nutella enter into the moral debate, but so too is the brand itself transmuted by this debate, especially in the eyes of its brand community (Cova and Pace 2006). This is an important aspect emerging from the case. Indeed, in contrast with previous works (e.g., Luedicke, Thompson and Giesler 2010; Rosenbaum 2013) that show the solidarity of the brand community around the brand while strengthening its identity in opposition to other brand communities or “un-branded”/“anti-brand” groups, in this case, the dissention occurs inside the community itself. Many of the examples cited are from converted consumers, who now avoid Nutella and refer to their “ancient passion,” or from brand lovers, proving that the two opposing groups both belong to the same former community. This brandmediated conflict is an internal conflict which could lead the consumer to a state akin to schizophrenia or MPD (Multiple Personality Disorder). Moreover, the discussions on the blogs resemble the ones of alcoholic anonyms who confess their deviations. Previous studies suggest that tribal members confess their action in relation to the ethos of the brand community (Fyrberg-Yngfalk et al. 2013). In the Nutella palm oil case, the charges brought by the anti–palm oil movement to the way Nutella lovers think about their consumption seem to have created a support group of “Nutella anonymous,” in which members can share their deviations

and be understood by others. Thus, Nutella consumers have become “fellow sufferers” united by shared struggles, as suggested by Moisio and Beruchashvili (2010). The Nutella case also reveals that brand lovers’ disdain is toward the anti-palm oil activists and not to the Nutella brand. The debate surrounding Nutella does not lead them to consider the brand negatively; rather, they consider the brand the victim, with the brand’s reputation among lovers remaining unharmed or even reinforced.

Concerning the brand, the external, internal, and individual debates lead to the generation of more brand content for Nutella; as such, they augment the bulk of meanings associated with this brand. Brown, McDonagh, and Shultz (2013, 14) argue that “the conventional brand management literature emphasizes the perils of opacity and the necessity for clarity. However, the consumer-captivating allure of ambiguity is increasingly being recognized by advertising researchers” as a way to augment brand content, because ambiguity and enigma are essential for legendary brands to build their aura (Brown 2005). This concept applies particularly to mature brands (Machieit, Allen, and Madden 1993) about which consumers hold deep meanings acquired in the course of time through multiple interfaces. From this perspective, the ambiguity that is at the core of the Nutella conflict—a debate developed around a cult brand—may even have a positive impact in terms of branding.

The main contribution of this study is its account of the complexity and multiplicity of consumer well-being and, consequently, how anti-consumption is intertwined with (over)consumption. Indeed, by rejecting Nutella, individuals intentionally exclude it from their consumption cycle (Lee et al. 2011), but at the same time, they un-intentionally foster conversations about it (the brand-mediated conflict) and, as a consequence, deepen and reinforce the brand content. Anti-consumption for an iconic brand (Holt 2004) such as Nutella is thus ambivalent.

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# ***The Informational and Psychological Challenges of Converting to a Frugal Life***

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## **Extended Abstract**

### **Acknowledgement**

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### **Introduction**

Committing to a life of frugality for an extended period of time is key to reaching financial goals. This research will help us understand how people convert to a frugal lifestyle and the challenges they face. It is based on the assumption that living a frugal life means embracing and also utilizing anti-consumption as a means for reaching important personal goals, such as long-term financial security.

The study builds upon a small body of research that analyzes dimensions and measures of frugality as a means to better understand consumer behavior (Lastovicka et al. 1999). Key themes in this literature include developing and evaluating measures of consumer frugality (Lastovicka et al. 1999; Rick, Cryder, and Loewenstein 2008; Ameriks, Caplin, and Leahy 2003; Lynch Jr. et al. 2010; Mowen 2000) and the role of frugality in counteracting social trends, such as wastefulness and drug use (Albinsson, Wolf, and Kopf 2010; Rose, Smith, and Segrist 2010).

Less effort has been dedicated to understanding the antecedents of frugality and how they influence consumers' attempts of frugal behavior. This is important to know because, as Lastovicka et al. (1999) states, many consumers "are not naturally frugal but converted frugals" (p. 96).

The purpose of this study is to shed light on cognitive biases that consumers experience when trying to convert to a frugal life. Using data from a phone survey and in-depth interviews of lower income individuals in the U.S., we aim to (1) identify levels of frugality and the change in these levels among participants in a savings program and (2) analyze the informational and psychological challenges these low-income consumers face as they attempt to start a frugal lifestyle. By using a savings program as the test bed for our study, we acknowledge that we likely measure frugal behavior both by necessity and on a voluntary basis.

We use Lastovicka et al. (1999)'s definition of frugality meaning "disciplined acquisition and resourcefulness in product and service use" (p. 96), thus including both "care in spending" and "care in owning" (Mowen 2000, 195).

### **Study Context**

We sample participants in the Individual Development Account (IDA) program, a federally-funded, social-sector based matched savings program offered in the United States and Canada (105th United States Congress 1998). It is designed for low-income families and combines mandatory savings deposits with a supportive, high-touch environment (Sherraden 1991). The goal of the program is savings for asset purchase, typically a home, business or to further one's education. We are using participation in this savings program as the critical life event that compels consumers to live frugally.

Data were collected by both phone survey and in-depth interviews. The survey data were collected at seven large IDA program agencies in the U.S. including non-profit agencies with statewide reach in Oregon, Utah, and New Mexico, a regional non-profit agency in Alabama, and inner-city non-profit agencies in Texas, Ohio, and Washington. These IDA programs represent both rural and urban low-income families, a range of assets goals for saving, and the breadth of approaches to financial education and counseling. Match rate, savings goal, and monthly savings target varied by program agency, providing at most a \$5 match for every \$1 saved, aiming at a savings goal of at most \$3,000, and the monthly savings target was at most \$166 for fast-track program participants. The in-depth interviews were conducted at an inner-city community action agency in Ohio, which offered in its IDA program a \$2 match for every \$1 saved. The savings goal was \$1,000 and the monthly savings target was \$50.

### **Study 1: Becoming Frugal – Perspective from a Survey of Savings Program Participants**

The analysis of survey data of savings program participants aims to (1) validate the frugality scale of Lastovicka et al. (1999) and quantify the level of frugality among the savings program population, (2) identify changes in frugality during and after program participation thereby considering program participation a critical, habit-breaking life event (Loibl, Kraybill, and DeMay 2011; Verplanken and Wood 2006), and (3) examine the association of frugality with not only a wide range of demographic variables, measures of family stability and subjective wellbeing, but also with concepts measuring consumer financial wellbeing, such as propensity to plan financially (Lynch Jr. et al. 2010), financial literacy (Lusardi and Mitchell 2008), and perception of material deprivation (Whelan et al. 2001).

The phone survey includes savings program participants who opened their accounts in the five years, from 2007 to 2011 (Loibl and Snyder 2012-2014). The sampling frame includes 3,544 current savers, program graduates, and program dropouts at our seven partner agencies. We were able to complete the survey with 645 individuals in 2013 and 2014, reflecting a response rate of 18.2%.

The sample consists of current program participants (37.1%), former program participants who successfully completed the savings program (45.7%), and program dropouts who left the program without reaching the savings goal and obtaining the match (17.2%). The sample is mostly female (80.2%), in their mid-thirties (36.9 years of age). About half is married or living with a partner (48.5%), about half has an at least two-year associate college degree (53.2%),

about half are white (49.5%), and all survey participants have children living in their household. The average household income is \$36,940 (26.723 Euro as of April 14, 2014).

Responses to Lastovicka et al. (1999)'s frugality scale show an average score of 35.73 for the eight items listed below, with response options ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (N=637; SD=3.755, min=19, max=40). The eight scale items were rotated during the actual phone survey interviews to avoid response bias. The scale reliability measure Cronbach's Alpha is low at 0.6689. Item statistics recommends dropping item (2) to increase internal validity to 0.7822. For reasons of comparing our study to other ones, we keep the item in the scale.

#### Items of Lastovicka et al. (1999)'s Frugality Scale

Response options: 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree

1. If you take good care of your possessions, you will definitely save money in the long run. (mean=4.81)
2. There are many things that are normally thrown away that are still quite useful. (mean=3.49)
3. Making better use of my resources makes me feel good. (mean=4.79)
4. If you can re-use an item you already have, there's no sense in buying something new. (mean=4.66)
5. I believe in being careful in how I spend my money. (mean=4.63)
6. I discipline myself to get the most from my money. (mean=4.32)
7. I am willing to wait on a purchase I want so that I can save money. (mean=4.47)
8. There are things I resist buying today so I can save for tomorrow. (mean=4.49)

In our sample, program graduates have the highest average frugality score, 36.0. It is higher than the 35.6 score of current savers (n.s.). The program graduate's frugality score is significantly higher than the 34.8 score of program dropouts ( $p < 0.012$ ).

The mean score of 35.73 of our savings program participants is within the range of frugality scores in Lastovicka et al. (1999). The average frugality score in this paper was 37.02 for 215 subscribers to the anti-consumption oriented "Tightwad Gazette" and 33.69 for a small general population sample of 164 respondents. Similarly, in a Dutch sample of 741 voluntary and involuntary downshiffters, the average frugality score was 34.0 and for 265 non-downshiffters the average frugality score was 33.2. The sample consisted of subscribers to a bimonthly Dutch magazine that addresses anti-consumption (Schreurs 2010).

These results point toward three findings: first, the scale for measuring frugality for this sample of low-income consumers has acceptable internal validity, especially if item (2) is removed. Study participants' agreement with item (2) was significantly lower among study participants, compared to the other items ( $p < 0.000$ ). It is possible that this outlier is indicative of the highly-selective enrollment process into the savings program. Second, the frugality scores of our sample compare to other studies and, third, there are higher frugality scores for program graduates, especially compared to dropouts. Interpreting these results cautiously, we find a selection of low-income families who are managing to implement a frugal life style and a beneficial influence of the savings program in making it happen.

We also examine the association of frugality with demographic, family wellbeing, and personal-finance variables and assess the savings program's impact on frugality scores in greater detail by using time variables, i.e., the number of years a respondent is currently in the

program, the number of years after program graduation, or the number of years since program dropout.

## **Study 2: Challenges of Becoming Frugal – Perspective from Qualitative Research**

In order to better understand the process of converting to a frugal life style, which is the main contribution of this study, we examine qualitative data collected during in-depth interviews with consumers who graduated from an IDA program.

We carried out in-depth interviews during May and June 2008 with former participants in the IDA program. The target asset of our sample of program participants was the purchase of a home. Participants in our study had spent an average of 18 months in an IDA program and saved on average \$1,189 during this period. This amount was matched with \$2 for every dollar saved. Savings and match, about \$3,000, were sufficient to cover closing fees on the homes. The average price paid for a house was \$73,914, the average mortgage payment was \$511 per month.

About two-thirds of participants (64%) were black, on average 40 years old, 21% had entered college, living with two children under age 18; no one was married. The majority, 64%, was employed full-time and the average annual household income was \$29,500.

Fourteen former IDA participants who had completed the IDA program at an inner-city non-profit agency in Ohio, and had successfully purchased a home were interviewed. All participants were women; which responds to national program evaluation findings of 80% female participants in IDAs. We contacted both recent and longer-term former participants to add different time horizons to the analysis. Two had completed the savings program in 2004, three in 2005 and 2006, and six in 2007.

A checklist of broad topic areas based on previous research and pilot work was used as a guide for the interviews. Open-ended questions were used (e.g., “How do you feel about...”) so as to elicit a broad range of responses and encourage participants to provide detailed accounts of their experiences. The duration of the interviews varied between 40 and 90 minutes. The analytic approach adopted in this study follows the guidelines outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) for carrying out a Thematic Analysis.

The interviews indicate that becoming frugal is challenging for savings program participants because there are a host of informational and psychological factors that impede disciplined spending and resourceful use of goods – and seem almost designed to sabotage the desire to live frugally. Low financial literacy results in missed opportunities to reduce spending. Hyperbolic time discounting leads to “present-biased preferences” that weigh the pleasures of current consumption over the pleasures of deferred consumption (Lynch Jr. and Zauberman 2006). Procrastination and naivety about this tendency contribute to savers' belief that they will live frugally tomorrow even if they are wasting resources today (O'Donoghue and Rabin 2001). Loss aversion, first proposed by Kahneman and Tversky (1979), suggests that people weigh the out-of-pocket loss of consumption more heavily than an equivalent future gain in consumption provided by matching funds.

In addition, converting to a frugal lifestyle requires the commitment of family members. This is particularly true for families in tight financial situations and particularly difficult in the presence of children. Both conditions apply to our study sample.

## Contribution

This study is one of the first to address the process of converting to a frugal life style and to using a behavioral economics perspective to explain the challenges of this process. By introducing frugality as a guiding concept, the present study also contributes the consumers' point of view to the institutional aspects of poverty alleviation programs (Loibl et al. 2010; Sherraden, Schreiner, and Beverly 2003).

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# *Motivations, Values, and Feelings behind Resistance to Consumption and Veganism*

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## **Extended Abstract**

### **Introduction**

In the contemporary model of consumption, we do not consume to satisfy essential human needs, but rather to satisfy a desire. It is through consumption that individuals affirm their identities. Although consumption is an individual act, it is also a collective act because an individual has a need to belong. The act of consumption serves to integrate the individual into respective groups. (Abrão 2009)

Some anti-consumption movements claim the current wave of consumption degrades human life, generating factors such as materialism, waste, and even illness (Austin, Plouffe, and Peters 2005). Within this scenario, the number of social groups reducing their rate of purchase grows each day.

Anti-consumption literally means against consumption (Zavestoski 2002; Lee et al., 2009). The focus always relates to consumption, or more accurately, phenomena, which are against the processes of consumption. In contrast, the focus of consumer resistance always revolves around the topic of power or, rather, power asymmetry. (Foucault, 1975, 1982).

Note: The terms “anti-consumption” and “consumption resistance” will be used in order to refer to the phenomenon in which individuals do not consume certain products and, in extreme cases, do not consume at all. (Fournier 1998).

One of the practices of consumer resistance is known as ACR (Anticommercial Consumer Rebellion), which is based on resistance to marketing practices considered manipulative. (Austin, Plouffe, and Peters 2005).

This study focused on consumer resistance to animal products. The model consisted of adherents to the movement called Veganism who totally avoid the use of products produced by or tested on animals. This includes all consumer products such as food, clothing, and all other products.

Resistance to the consumption of animal products is not a recent phenomenon – people in Asia have practiced forms of veganism for centuries (e.g. Buddhists, Gandhi, Hare Krishna’s, etc) – but it has gained strength in the last decade. Apropos, vegetarianism has been gaining in popularity since the 1970’s. The search for improvements in the well-being and health has guided the choice for this type of diet throughout the history of mankind, because of the many benefits of increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, and decreased consumption of milk, meat and other. However, there are numerous motivations allied to that.

Currently, it is estimated that there are millions of vegans throughout the world, according to the Vegan Society (2013). Therefore, it is important to understand how the process of adopting a vegan lifestyle occurs within this group, as well as verifying the origin and possibilities of development.

The general objective of this study is to analyze behavior related to anti-consumption and seek to identify and understand the motivations, values, and feelings behind resistance to consumption of animal products.

Initially, research on literature about Veganism was done. Qualitative research using an ethnographic method of data collection and analysis was then conducted, formulating ten in-depth interviews with people who do not consume animal products.

### **Methodology**

This research can be described as an exploratory study, qualitative in nature using the ethnographic method for collecting and analyzing data. The group was observed and analyzed through participant observation. The field research was conducted at 4th Annual Veganique VegSol, an event created by the organization "Veganism Brazil" at Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo, Brazil.

To better understand the profile of the respondents, the research was divided into two stages. The first stage consisted of a semi-structured interview responsible for capturing the motivations and values attached to the vegan cause. These main variables were addressed: motivations that led to the adoption of Veganism; perceptions and costs involved in the adoption of the movement; influence of family or people close to them, values, beliefs, lifestyles, habits, levels of involvement in the movement (including dissemination) of those practicing vegetarianism. The second step consisted in identifying the demographic profile of the participants through a semi-open questionnaire. The body of analysis consisted of 10 vegan respondents, six women and four men, 18-42 years old with an education level from high school up to BS/BA degree.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed in detail. Data was organized and categorized following the steps outlined by Creswell (2007): organize and prepare the data, read all data, analyze thoroughly with a coding process, segmenting sentences into categories and labeling these categories.

### **Results**

Respondents were initially selected because they did not consume any animal products. Subsequently, it was observed how long each of the respondents had been vegan. Two respondents embraced Veganism for less than one year, five respondents were vegan for 1 or 2 years, and three respondents chose the vegan culture for three or more years.

Analysis of the information collected in interviews indicates all respondents pointed to the moral and ethical issues related to rights of animals as the main motivations for having become vegans. As a way of showing love to animals and to combat cruelty suffered by them.

Other point to be considered refers to the benefits of vegan diet for health and well-being. The decreased risk of some diseases and increased willingness in everyday life were cited as important to the practice of veganism motivations. The concern with beauty and longevity are inserted in this context.

The motivation that encourages and spreads the Vegan cause also opposes the "cruel and oppressive system," which exploits the animals in exchange for financial resources.

For this group of respondents, they believe it is necessary for society to break with the ideology that considers animal property or "natural resources" available for the satisfaction of human desires. The animals must be inserted into the moral community and have their interests defended by those who are willing to be their spokesmen.

When questioned about feeling pressured to consume animal products, all of the respondents said the bombardment of information in the media, industry harassment, and the avoidance of family and friends are major influences to persuade them to abandon the vegan lifestyle. However, these "traps" do not exert enough influence to change their lifestyle.

Respondents showed enormous concern for the Universal Declaration of Animal Rights that, according to them, should be much more widespread and practiced around the world, preventing human interests to be at the front of animal welfare. This concern was far greater than lifestyle pressures.

When asked about what they thought about the consumption of animal products, the study group explained their sense of aversion to this type of consumption through the words: sadness, sickness, anger, contempt and disgust. The answers given to

Based on the statements of the respondents, the principal emotional, social, and financial costs related to the adoption of the vegan lifestyle are: prejudice, family pressure, peer pressure, jokes, causing isolation and avoidance of most parties and social gatherings.

In the opinion of respondents, Veganism can be seen as a deconstruction of a paradigm. It moves of the departure from the way of thinking that was created and taught to them, going against the grain of society, and seeking advancement in the struggle for animal rights.

In addition to concerns about the welfare of animals, there is a great deal of care about the environment as a whole and the effects caused by unbridled consumption. Practices like sensible use of energy sources, reduction of all types of pollution, and an environmentally-friendly approach to human advancement, are encouraged.

All respondents consider themselves activists in the fight for animal rights. Currently, "Online Activism" is the biggest trend of the movement. There are articles, books (e-books and conventional), and other sites to convince others that Veganism is a conscious lifestyle, enjoyable and fun.

In addition to dietary changes, there is an intense boycott on companies that do animal testing related to the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industries, and others.

The study group exhibited some habits as being characteristic of the vegan cause. These included learning to cook again, travelling with their own food in their bags and backpacks due to the difficulty in finding vegan foods, reading all product labels before buying, constantly researching and studying issues related to Veganism constantly, and spreading the ideas of movement wherever they went.

### **Final Considerations**

This study sought to deepen the knowledge about a specific category of consumer resistance: vegans, a group of people who do not consume any product that is of animal origin. Initially, we conducted a literature review to learn more about the resistance to consumption, the identities of anti-consumption, and Veganism. Following this, we conducted a qualitative research method by ethnographic collection and analysis of data, based on ten in-depth interviews with people who do not consume animal products.

The vegans who participated in this study cite the moral and ethical issues related to animal rights as the main motivations for joining and promote the vegan cause. At the heart of this perspective is the idea that animals must not be mistreated for human benefit, making it

necessary to eliminate all forms of animal exploitation, not only for food but also for testing and the production of other products used for work, entertainment, clothing, commerce, etc.

The consumption of animal products is seen as regressive, reprehensible and selfish behavior. It can only be fully extinguished when human beings understand the animal as being similar to them.

With the results in the survey, we can define Veganism as a countercultural movement in that it adopts a denial of the prevailing consumer culture and proposes a new model of relationship with animals, one that is more protective.

The survey data showed the high costs involved in adopting the practice of resistance to consumption. Respondents pointed out the emotional and social costs such as being exposed to prejudice, family pressure, peer pressure, jokes, and pranks, which cause isolation and restriction on the choice of friends. In addition, there were financial costs due to the lack of products and establishments suitable to the vegan movement.

Inherent in any investigation of this nature is that the study addressed only one type of consumer resistance (dispositional resistance) and the study had a small number of informants. For future studies, a group of situational resistance could be studied. (Situational resistance being the resistance to consumption practiced by people who feel pressured or bombarded by marketing activities of companies to develop resistance behavior as a response to consumption as an active or reactive response in relation to these corporate actions). This research could seek to discover the motivations that influence people to be a part of a particular group of situational resistance, and which beliefs, values, and behaviors they exhibit. This would allow a comparison with the group that practices dispositional resistance.

Finally, this study aims to show the importance of marketing scholars being aware of these anti-consumption groups. Despite (the growth of the) consumption resistance movements, Brazil has not achieved the same representation as other countries. However, there are many signs that some of these ideas are present within various consumer groups like those studied here.

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***Shelving a Dominating Myth:  
A Study on Social Nudism and Material Absence***

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**Extended Abstract**

The book *Tous à Poil!* (Everybody Gets Naked!), first published in 2011 and written by authors Claire Franek and Marc Daniau, depicts real characters, including a baby, the babysitter, the neighbors, the teacher, and the policeman undressing to swim naked in the sea. However, recommending *Tous à Poil!* to primary schools as means promote an uninhibited look at nudity with images of buttocks and genitals elicited austere reactions. These negative reactions combined with attempts to censor the “nude” children’s book indicate that one of the most pervasive and undisputed of all myths is that the inner self is revealed in the material presence of clothing and that exposing the naked body has moral implications. Although images of nakedness often appear in advertisements and movies, researchers note that the naked body continues to be perceived as a catalyst for impure thoughts (Barcan 2001; Daley 2005; Konstantinos 2010). The naked body exposed to public gaze is often discussed as indicative of animalism, criminality, debauchery, chaos, transgression, deviance, hypersexual perversion, erotic oases, or incivility (Barcan 2001; Daley 2005; Konstantinos 2010). The body is thus embedded in a myth of covering; even during swimming or sunbathing activities, social pressure compels us to wear at least minimal clothing. In contemporary Western culture, whilst very few laws are specifically against simple public nudity in designated areas (Gordon 1995), we are encouraged to think of covering the body as prerogative to social interactions. The covering of the body is part of “impression management, style, panache, and careful bodily representation” (Feathersome 1991, cited in Thompson and Hirschman 2011, 403). In this dominant discourse, clothes, garments, or ornaments are an expression of our identity and group affiliations.

This study analyzes the myth, or mythical elements, of the clothed body. In myths, we perpetuate our existence as a shared identity (James 2005). However, a myth is also fictive or fictional and is “in effect nothing other than the thought of a founding fiction, or of a foundation by fiction” (Nancy 1991 cited in James 2005, p. 340). What are the mythic elements of the clothed body that perpetuate its dominating presence? What is required here is the critical dismantling of the myth that structures humanity’s collective consciousness of the need to cover in public.

The analysis of narratives of social nudism unpacks the mythic construction of the clothed body. The study findings show that social nudism is more than a simple refusal to wear uncomfortable fabrics or a means to avoid suntan lines. By participating in social nudism, individuals temporarily oppose material presence during social interactions and thus put aside or dismiss the myth of the covered body that dominates our consumer culture. In experiencing the absence of clothing during social interactions, the myth of the clothed body develops into an oppressive and suffocating myth. Importantly, because social nudists continue to wear

clothes in their daily life, they neither escape the myth nor construct it as a falsehood. Rather, they temporarily and privately dislocate the myth associated with the dressed body from one of value to one of little, nil, or negative worth. That is, in opposing material presence in social interactions, social nudists temporarily shelve the myth of the clothed body and in the process become aware of its limitations. This awareness highlights the myth's existence and domination in contemporary society. The analysis shows that the clothed-body myth encompasses multiple mythic elements, and as such cannot be easily contested. The mythic elements, identified as heroic Aryan physique, display and distinction, public gaze, clothes as text, and culture versus nature, are pervasive to our current material culture.

This study shows that for some consumers certain myths do not allow, as Brown, McDonagh, and Shultz II (2013) have explained, for personalization and adaptation to individual particularities and preferences. The temporary abstinence from the consumption of clothing incorporates the shelving of a myth that is omnipresent in day-to-day life. The practice of refusing to wear clothes among others accentuates what I would name 'boundaries mythology', which contrasts with the fluidity discussed in health-marketplace mythology (Thompson 2004). Additionally, the myth of the clothed body seems to circulate as a consumer culture cliché because it resonates with a sense that meaningful social interactions take place through consumption. It resonates with the prerogatives of material presence whereby the material enflames consumer desire (Belk, Ger et al. 2003); frames communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001); inspires romantic relations (Ahuvia 2005); or helps in liminality (McAlexander, Schouten et al. 1993); self-expression (Belk 1988) or access to the sacred (Muniz and Schau 2005). For example, the Aryan physique is encoded in marketing images, promoting "a mythical, WASP-oriented world in which no one is ever ugly, over-weight, poor, struggling" (Kilbourne, 1995, 122). Marketing images link the self-expression, authenticity, self-fulfillment with modes of dress or adornment, "thus well-being is determined by the capacity for self-creation by a society or individual through objects' appropriation" (Arnould 2007, 102).

The informants' narratives prompt us to consider the problems associated with social interactions "locked in materiality" and issues of material presence versus material absence in current public policy debates and health identity position. Authors have for long suggested that material presence may not lead to satisfaction (e.g.: Baker et al. 2013), yet, whether consumers can personalize the dominance myth of material presence should be central to issues of well-being. This study shows that which the clothed environment considers achieved is at once removed in the naked environment. Absence, albeit temporally, removes power from presence. The power of absence and its effect on consumer well-being has been developed in studies on meditation, esotericism, and the complete absence of the mind and appearance (Wallace 1999). During meditation, awareness, clarity, and joy of the mind arise without the intrusion of any sensory objects. From an esoteric mythos, possession and material presence only serve to distract from finding balance and harmony within the power of the inner being and the cells of the body realigning. Absence is positioned as pivotal to experiences of well-being and discoveries of the self. Other studies note the benefits to dispose of the material (Belk and Coon 1993; Belk, Joon Yong et al. 2007; Cherrier and Murray 2007; Cherrier 2009). Yet, absence in the material as a path to consumer well-being and self-discovery remains 'in absence' in public policy debates. Social-marketing interventions or new public policies aimed at consumers' well-being should unpack current and pervasive myths that dominate and hinder social change. For example, alcohol consumption may well be founded on pervasive myths of material presence as essential to social gathering. This should include unpacking pervasive myths that inform the content of social programs as well as their design and delivery.

There is no reason, however, to proclaim that being naked instead of being covered is preferable for the individual and for society. What is to take from this study is the possible danger of pervasive myths in blinding us to other ways of living and interacting. To previous studies on consumer myths, this study emphasizes the difficulties or perhaps impossibilities for consumers to counter some of the prevalent myths that dominate our day-to-day life.

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# *Education for Sustainable (Non-) Consumption through Mindfulness Training?*

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## **Extended Abstract**

Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is considered one of the main drivers of sustainability strategies worldwide (United Nations 1992; Rieß 2006). The UNESCO names ESD as “the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the future“ (UNESCO 2002, 7). Emphasizing the importance of this topic further, they announced the “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development” from 2005- 2014. ESD encompasses more than cognitive based learning about Sustainable Development (BMBF 2009). The acquirement of specific competences is focused upon, learners of all ages shall be enabled to shape and create their lives actively in a self-directed, sustainable way (BMBF 2009). The eight (and growing) competencies are combined into the Meta competence “Gestaltungskompetenz” (shaping competency), as it is called in Germany (Transfer 21 2007; BMBF 2009). One condition for the success of ESD, according to the German government, is the application of “Gestaltungskompetenz” to thematic areas that are crucial for the advancement of Sustainable Development (BMBF 2009). Consumption, including non-consumption (accordingly: Education for Sustainable Consumption (ESC)) is one of those areas (Barth and Fischer 2012) and shall be focused upon in this paper.

The present consumption levels of a majority of population in industrialized countries are characterized by over-consumption and the resulting damage caused to the environment as well as the depletion of resources. Sustainable consumption, on the other hand, satisfies the needs of today’s population, but without endangering the basis of development of generations to come through hyper consumption (Hansen and Schrader 2001). In order to establish sustainable consumption levels, each and every individual needs to rethink and adapt their consumption behavior, especially in the mature economies. A large, basic willingness to adapt is documented in many empirical studies (e.g. European Commission 2011). However, in the daily routine, the implementation often fails due to a deficit in supply and information as well as habitualized and thus unreflected consumption patterns (e.g. Tully and Krok 2009). A growing number of people express their discontent e.g. with the way large corporations impact both the environment and society through consumer boycott or consumer resistance to fight for their ideologies (Sandıkçı and Ekici 2009). In anti-consumption research, this kind of behavior is called “intentional non-consumption for Sustainability” (Cherrier, Black, and Lee 2011, 1757), the engaging consumers are “global impact consumers” or “simplifiers” (Iyer and Muncy 2009, 2), depending on the main focus of their actions. Such engagements, however, do not translate into permanent changes in behavior for the majority of consumers. This discrepancy, the so called attitude-behavior-gap, is well known and analyzed at length in sustainable consumption

research (see Auger and Devinney 2007; Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt 2010, amongst others). One of the dimensions of “Gestaltungskompetenz” is especially relevant for this situation: The competency to reflect one’s own guiding principles and values, as well as those of the society and culture surrounding us. This competency is considered the starting point for the recognition of one’s own actions on society and the environment (Transfer 21 2007). The education of reflection competency in the context of ESC could thus theoretically decrease the attitude-behavior-gap. However, little empirical studies have so far looked into the influence or effectiveness of the practical education of “Gestaltungskompetenz” (BMBF 2009; BMBF 2012), that could prove or dismiss the theoretical relationship between competency of reflection and decreased attitude-behavior-gap. Furthermore, when considering the broader content, it seems that the temporary realization or reflection of otherwise subconscious behavior patterns is not sufficient to transform long-established routines. Building upon controlled experiments in behavioral studies of Langer (1992), the attitude-behavior-gap phenomena could be explained through the following assumption: Subconscious behavioral patterns are indeed brought into consciousness for a limited amount of time through self-reflection. An example situation would be the moment an individual fills out a consumption related questionnaire or is engaged in a consumer boycott following an environmental scandal. In the actual buying situation however, this consciousness is no longer accessible, but has slipped back over time. The individual remains ‘mindless’, as Langer calls it, in contrast to acting mindful and aligned with their values and belief systems. The concept of mindfulness encompasses the concept of self-reflection in each given moment. It thus goes much further than the definition of self-reflection, as it describes an enduring increase of consciousness of our own behavior in every moment (Langer 1989; Klatt, Buckworth, and Malarkey 2009; Bahl et al. 2013).

Langer (1989) was one of the first to describe Mindfulness and Mindlessness as concepts in clinical- and behavioral psychology. The principal of being present in the present moment however, is much older and originates in religious Buddhist traditions. Especially in the „Vipassana“-tradition<sup>1</sup>, the cultivation of consciousness for the present moment as well as the neutral, non-reactive awareness for events inside one’s self and in the outer world has been and still is trained (Kabat-Zinn 1991, c1990). In clinical research, secular forms of mindfulness training have been applied successfully for a long time in the therapy of stress related illness, chronic pain, depressions or substance abuse (Kabat-Zinn et al. 1992; Bowen et al. 2006). Apart from the clinical setting, the concept of mindfulness is gaining more and more momentum, too. A relationship between mindfulness training and individual well-being has been shown (Carmody and Baer 2008; Chiesa and Serretti 2009) and relating to the moderation of the attitude-behavior-gap, first results have been established as well. In a study by Chatzisarantis and Hagger (Chatzisarantis and Hagger 2007), the level of mindfulness influenced the relationship between intention and going-through with health related activities, such as exercising. Especially relevant for anti-consumption research are results from Brown and colleagues (2003; 2005) which show a tendency for decreased consumption levels in general with a growing level of mindfulness and thus, consumer well-being through a decrease in self-discrepancy. In the 2003 study, the authors also found a higher degree of perceived self-regulation of behavior from participants with a higher level of mindfulness. Those findings

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<sup>1</sup> Vipassana“ is one of two main meditation techniques in Buddhism and can be translated as „Insight“, the practice of a clear awareness/consciousness for the incidents of the present moment. In a traditional sense, Vipassana meditation is supposed to clear the mind of negative and „impure“ thoughts. The second area of meditation “Samatha” means the practice of inner calm- or stillness (Gunaratana 2011).

back up Langer's assumptions about a permanent rise in conscious awareness through mindfulness (1992) and might also prove relevant for other areas of shopping behavior, such as self-discrepancy related impulse shopping or overconsumption (Dittmar and Drury 2000). The ability to perceive the present moment neutral and non-reactive, as practiced in mindfulness training might help dissolve those behaviors, increasing consumer well-being on the way and creating the possibility to either intentionally consume or engage in mindful non-consumption as a "global impact consumer" (Iyer and Muncy 2009, 2). Other researchers call mindfulness competency the "antidote to consumerism" (Rosenberg 2004, 107), empowering consumers to choose to consume – or not to consume at all – in line with their values instead of driven by subconscious routines. Especially the mindfulness based neurological research, increasingly points out the link between a measurable increase in pro-social behavior through mindfulness training as well as an increased capacity for empathy and compassion (Singer and Bolz 2013).

None of the presented studies empirically analyze the relationship between mindfulness competency and sustainable (non-) consumption behavior with focus on the influence of mindfulness training. Sustainable consumption behavior in this project includes aspects such as quality of consumption, e.g. organic or collaborative, as well as quantity of consumption, e.g. through voluntary simplicity and intentional non-consumption as defined by Cherrier and colleagues (2010), sufficiency strategies or a more mindful, healthy way of dealing with consumption related addictions. To fill the research gap, the following questions will be focused upon in the research project at hand:

1. Is there a relationship between mindfulness competency and sustainable (non-) consumption behavior? Does mindfulness training support more sustainable (non-) consumption behaviors?
2. Is there a relationship between mindfulness competency and the attitude-behavior-gap concerning sustainable (non-) consumption behavior? Does mindfulness training decrease this gap?

To answer the questions, an interdisciplinary and theory driven research model will be developed and empirically tested to achieve the following aims: (I) Conceptualization of the relationship between mindfulness competency and sustainable (non-) consumption behavior (II) development of a mindfulness training that increases sustainable (non-) consumption patterns (III) empirical validation of the relationship between mindfulness competency and sustainable (non-) consumption behavior as well as the effect of mindfulness training on the consumption behavior with special focus on the attitude-behavior gap (IV) development of recommendations for action to strengthen ESC.

The first paper of the project, which this abstract is referring to, will concentrate on the part I and II, as well as presenting first results from part III.

### **Course design**

To be able to empirically measure the relationship between mindfulness competency and sustainable (non-) consumption behavior and the influence of training on it, a mindfulness training with a specific consumption behavior focus will be developed. Existing programs, such as the „Mindfulness based stress reduction“(MBSR) program, developed by Jon Kabatt-Zinn et al. (Kabat-Zinn et al. 1992) and the „Mindfulness based cognitive Therapy“(MBCT, Segal,

Williams, and Teasdale 2002) will be analyzed, their methods adapted and refined for the study's purpose.

### **Empirical design**

The empirical testing of the research questions will be conducted through a mix of (I) a quantitative Pre-/Post survey and (II) a multi-part qualitative analysis. (A) Alongside the documentation of mindfulness competence levels, on the basis of the „Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire“ (FFMQ, Baer 2006; Baer et al. 2008; Bohlmeijer et al. 2011), more general consumption behavior as well as specific sustainable (non-) consumption patterns will be considered. To be able to analyze the social sustainability for the participants, stress levels and subjective well-being will be inquired. (B) One part of the mindfulness trainings will be the individual documentation of experiences in a special journal. Those will be anonymously analyzed, alongside interviews with participants throughout the trainings and afterwards.

### **Target group**

ESC is a topic relevant for the whole of society. Consequently, to cover different important subgroups, mindfulness trainings will be conducted with three different sample groups. The first two are pupils and students, as the „custodians of the future“(United Nations 2012, 43) are especially relevant for the topic of ESC. Another very relevant group to look at, is employees. Despite being named an important target group for ESD, employees have not been sufficiently considered by theory or praxis yet (Molzberger and Rohs 2009). In the traditional adult education, the topic of (sustainable) consumption hasn't been a priority (European Commission 2012) either, despite the importance of a change in mindset and behavior of this specific part of the population (de Haan 2009). Individual mindfulness trainings will be conducted with each group throughout the project.

Building upon prior studies and existing work, it is expected that there is a positive relationship between mindfulness competency and level of sustainable (non-) consumption. Derived from the research of the last years, it is also very likely, that the level of sustainable (non-) consumption increases through mindfulness training, as values and action begin to align - The attitude-behavior-gap is expected to decrease alongside the training. As a consequence, the consumption behavior of the studies participants shall change in the long-run, whilst their stress level goes down and their perceived well-being is enhanced. The results would have long-reaching consequences for the practical organization of ESC as well as the possible angles from which to look at anti-consumption behavior. Future ESC concepts shall focus less on cognitive aspects of learning, but more on the preconditions for emotional and spiritual behavioral motivations.

Within this paper, the importance of ESC will shortly be introduced. The main part of the paper will focus on the development of a conceptual model to describe the relationship between mindfulness competency and sustainable (non-) consumption behavior with special focus on the attitude-behavior-gap. The advancement of current mindfulness training concepts to incorporate sustainable (non-) consumption aspects will be presented, too. The possible impact of the study onto the practical organization of ESC and consumer well-being research in general will conclude the paper.

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## *Creative Consumption*

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### **Extended Abstract**

As a consequence to runaway consumption, natural resources are being extracted at a rate that is 50 percent greater than 30 years ago (Worldwatch Institute 2010). The ecological footprint concept helps us understand the consequences of current consumptive lifestyles. The Global Footprint Network defines ecological footprint as the amount of biologically productive land and water associated with the production of goods and the assimilation of waste. Both Canada and the U.S. were in ecological deficits in 2010, highlighting the biosphere's ability to meet the material demands of humans and absorb waste is being exceeded. The intensive consumptive lifestyles and production required to keep up with consumer demands, has pushed annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions to quadruple over the last 50 years (United Nations Development Programme 1998). It is imperative that we find new ways of thinking about consumption, new policies, and new business models to attain global sustainability. But the question is how to reduce consumption in a context where the pursuit of growth and profit maximization breed cultures centered on having and wanting more material objects (Belk 1985, 2001)?

Consumer research in a sustainability context has offered limited modes of inquiry into how to meaningfully reduce mass consumptive lifestyles. In an overview of research in sustainable consumption, Black and Cherrier (2010) outlined three key approaches utilized in this stream of research. The first addresses sustainable consumption behaviors from the perspective of values-based individual decision-making. It focuses on individual environmental and social values in consumer decision-making contexts (e.g. purchasing choices). It has largely stayed in line with profit and growth paradigms (e.g. demand generation for 'green' products). A second stream of research deals with sustainable consumption from a broader lens. It questions the cultural systems embedded in materialism and wealth creation. The third stream is the anti-consumption literature that propels consumer research beyond the 'reasons for' greener consumer behaviors (e.g. purchase of ethical or environmental products) to 'reasons against' consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2012; Lee, Cherrier, and Belk 2013). We seek to contribute to this emerging dialogue with a creative consumption framework that identifies conditions that might deflect consumption of consumer goods while still enhancing consumer satisfaction. Our conceptual framework outlines how reductions in consumption may be facilitated through a re-integration of consumption and production. We first highlight the limitations in current ways of consuming and introduce the creative consumption framework as a way to address these limitations.

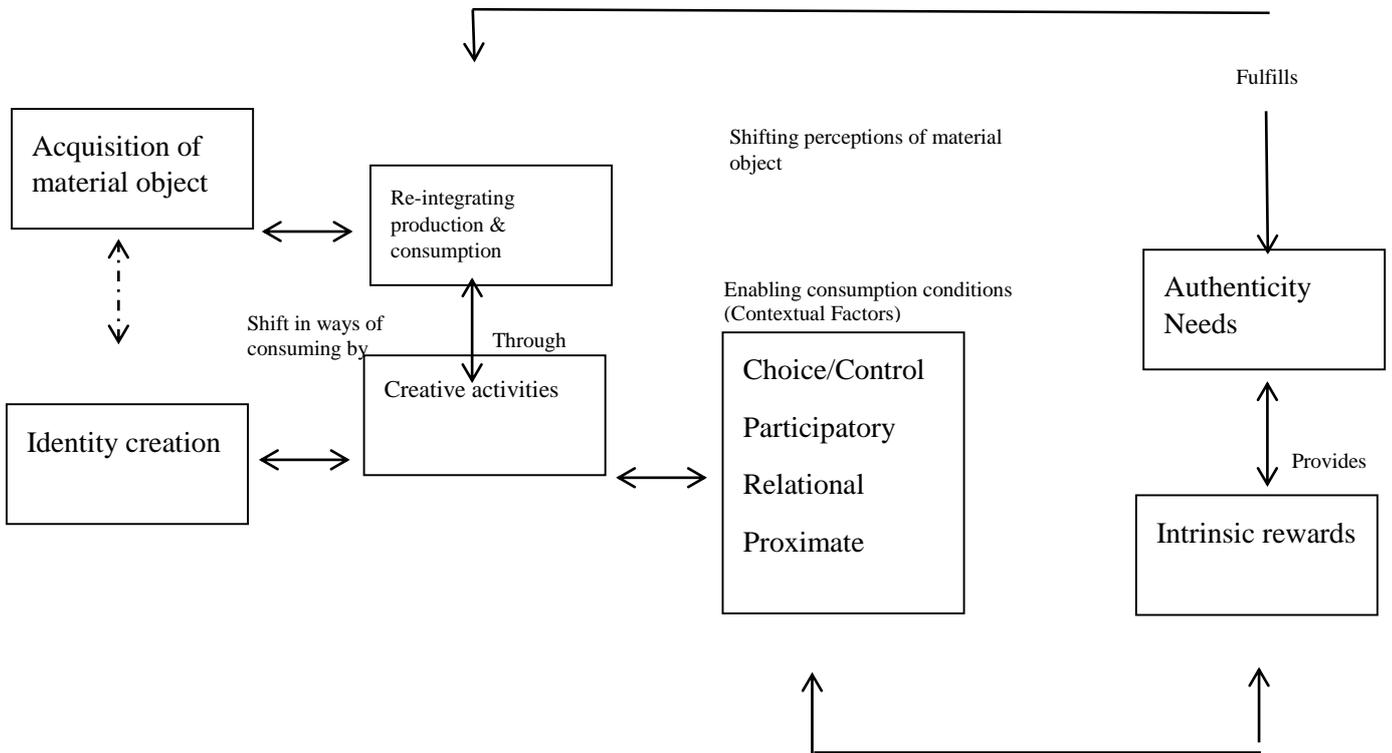
In advanced Western industrial countries, material goods have become an important source of social identity (Belk 1985, 1988). This has perpetuated a desire for objects merely for the sake of having, which Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) describes as 'terminal materialism'. This way of consuming creates insatiable appetites and encourages unsustainable patterns of consuming. The motivation to consume more material objects is spurred by

unfulfilled authenticity needs. Self-authentication arises when individuals feel in control over their life or surroundings, feel connected to others (e.g. society, community) and feel true to oneself (Beverland and Farrelly 2010; Zavestoski 2002). The search for self-authentication underlies consumers search for feelings of satisfaction. However, current consumption contexts limit individuals' ability to attain self-authentication and satisfaction because consumption experiences are often hurried, impersonal, and uninvolved.

The symbolic motivations driving current ways of consuming (e.g. perpetual acquisition of material goods) hinders the creation of a healthy self. Current consumption contexts however, provide limited means by which individuals can gain greater self-knowledge and acceptance of one's intrinsic nature, features that are necessary to fulfill authenticity needs (Forgas, Williams, and Laham, 2004). Alternative lifestyle movements, such as the voluntary simplicity movement (VSM) highlight that questions such as 'who am I?' and 'what does my existence mean?' entails a move away from material consumption (Zavestoski 2002; Arnould and Price 2000; McDonald, Oates, Young, and Hwang 2006; Alexander and Ussher 2012). Though adherents of VSM principles commit to different lifestyle changes (e.g. some may completely eliminate consumption while others work less to spend more time with loved ones) (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002; Barber 2007; Cohen, Comrov, and Hoffner 2005; Alexander and Ussher 2012), participants in VSM all share in a conscious departure away from current ways of living. These alternative lifestyle movements propels us in the right step forward but provide less direct answers on how to change current consumption contexts in order to provide individuals with greater meaning.

We assert that the propensity to divert self-identity creation through material consumption may be addressed if we are to engage individuals creatively. We argue that this occurs when production and consumption are re-integrated. In such contexts, individuals may consume sustainably through slowing down the propensity to consume frequently and perpetually. In this view consumption is a by-product of production rather than an end in itself. In the following discussion, we describe how engaging individuals in creation fulfills the search for authenticity. We describe how by, identifying conditions that may facilitate and create more intrinsically gratifying consumption experiences which we describe as enabling consumption conditions in Figure 1.

**FIGURE I**  
*Creative Consumption Framework*



The contentment flowing from work or productive activities is the essence of creative consumption. Creative acts provide opportunities for individual self-expression. Intrinsic rewards are experienced when individuals are engaged in the performance of a task or activity (Kanungo and Hartwick 1987). Hence, re-integrating production and consumption creates more meaningful consumption experiences by enabling individuals to fulfill their self-authentication needs (Slater 1998). Achieving meaningful consumption directed back to individual values and concerns is paramount to promoting responsible consumption. For these reasons, we assert that linking consumption to creation has the potential to reduce overall material consumption and ecological impacts. We draw on the voluntary simplicity movement (VSM) and the sustainable food systems to identify some of the contextual factors that may foster creative performance. We suggest that particular contextual factors need to be present for the creation of more meaningful consumption experiences when production and consumption are re-joined. The contextual factors include providing individuals with choice and control, offering environments that are participatory and relational in nature, and allowing for production and consumption to occur in close proximity.

VSM illustrates how one's self-authenticity needs are fulfilled through the provision of choice and control (Elgin and Mitchell 1977). More specifically in VSM, individuals can choose and control how to find meaning in one's life with material simplicity. Under such circumstances, individuals can re-invest in areas that provide true enjoyment (e.g. fostering social relationships, engaging in one's hobbies). Through a re-institution of control over one's personal destiny, individuals are able to fulfill authenticity needs, gained from self-

determination. This sense of control is gained when consumption shifts away from passive consumption to active consumption.

Sustainable food systems that emphasize local organic food are alternatives to the industrialized food systems. They include, farmers' markets, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, organic agriculture, and local agriculture production (Seyfang 2001, 2006; Kloppenburg et al. 2000). They are a part of a new green economics, which focus on downscaling consumption and pursuing quality of life rather than economic growth (Seyfang 2001, 2006). Based on collective action, participants in local food movements (e.g. farmers, consumers) may overcome the *powerlessness* and *individualization of responsibility* that results from participating in industrialized food systems in mass consumerist societies (Maniates 2001).

This movement highlights specific features that enable meaningful consumption experiences and sustainable consumption behaviors. Kloppenburg et al. (2000) highlight the attributes in local food systems that provide for ecological sustainability. These include, proximity (i.e. from growing food through to distribution and consumption), participation (i.e. from food production to consumption), and relational (i.e. close relationships between a network of participants such as farmers, consumers, processors):

*Proximity:* The linear approach to firm's value chain has created a distance between producer and consumer. A re-integration of production and consumption reduces the distance between producer and consumer. This entails bringing in traditional 'consumers', back into various elements of the value chain (e.g. raw material sourcing, waste management).

*Participatory.* Greater participation in food systems may be described as 'consumer based collective activism' (Little, Maye, and Ilbery 2010). As suggested by Little, Maye, and Ilbery (2010), alternative local/organic food systems allow consumers to express consumptive ethics (e.g. greater transparency). Further to this, holistic participation (i.e. from 'seed to consumption') brings greater decision making in the operation and governance of food systems. In the next discussion, we outline how the collective participation of individuals in OSS institutes shifts in governance and ownership structures.

*Relational.* The anonymity present in global industrialized food systems is reduced in sustainable food systems. In such systems various stakeholders (e.g. consumers, producers, distributors) are in direct contact with one another. In the creative consumption framework, this entails socially shared experiences between producers and consumers, and amongst consumers.

Thus, the creative consumption framework proposes how reduction in consumption may be attained in current consumerist cultures. Cultural theories on consumption suggest that businesses influence the drive to 'have' material goods as a 'way' of being. Marketers/advertisers continue to attach emotional benefits with the possession of material goods. Thus we see that organizations have created particular 'ways of consuming' that align with their own growth and profit motives. Firms perpetuate this cycle of wanting by finding more creative schemes to persuade people to buy more. The success of this approach may be seen in the unquestioned acceptance of and ongoing participation in systems where one's self-identity is linked with the consumption of material goods. This highlights that meaningful reductions in consumption requires shifts in belief and value systems that are deeply embedded in cultures, society, and individuals.

The re-integration of consumers back into production raises additional questions on elements of the business model. Individuals and collective actors are generally powerless in traditional business value chains. Traditional firms take full ownership over the various stages in the value chain (i.e. from raw material to conversion to end-product/service). The re-integration of

production and consumption opens up new potentials. But if this is to occur, the role of the firm must shift from producer to facilitator. Concepts such as open source software (Linux, Mozilla Firefox web browser) show us ways by which intrinsic rewards are derived when the organization creates consumption environments that are participatory, relational, and give control and choice back to the individual. For example individuals experience a sense of 'fun' and enjoyment out of having choice and control over what and how to contribute. This flexibility is vital in fulfilling one's intrinsic drive for ongoing participation as each contributor decides how, what and when to contribute. Most OSS projects also provide few parameters as to what and how one contributes. Users are given the flexibility to determine when one contributes (e.g. determining one's schedule) and how one defines their contributions or 'roles' (e.g. the ability to choose what part of the project to contribute to) (Roberts, Hann, and Slaughter 2006; Shah, 2006). More importantly, this context allows individuals to immerse themselves in skillful tasks, which are creative and complex in nature, all of which provide opportunities for deep satisfaction and enjoyment.

We end with one final note. Reducing consumption implies tackling deeply embedded cultural practices, beliefs and values. Such fundamental shifts entail an indefinite time horizon. However, as indicated by Schaefer and Crane (2005, 87), mass consumption in today's cultural context may be no more than "*a prop for the expression of social and cultural meaning*", a prop, which people "*have been able to do without and may conceivably learn to do without again*". A paradigm shift can occur with the collaboration of businesses, consumers, media, educators, government, and society (Maniates 2001; Princen, Maniates, and Conca 2002; Seyfeng 2005). We hope that the creative consumption framework starts the conversation on changing terminal materialism.

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## *Living by the Principle of Sharing*

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### **Keynote**

Raphael Fellmer decided to live entirely through the principle of sharing as an alternative to the unsustainable methods he saw around him. In anti-consumption and consumer wellbeing, he finds a sustainable way of life. Along the way, he established a global network to expose unethical conduct by firms, promote transparency and increase the pressure on companies to change their environmentally damaging practices.

## ***Consumer Resistance to Improve Well-Being: Non-Smokers Perspective***

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### **Extended Abstract**

Despite years of smoking cessation efforts reducing rates of smoking, tobacco use is still the leading cause of preventable illness and death in many countries across the world (World Health Organization 2013). The competition for, and successful recruitment of, new smokers is essential to the success of both individual tobacco firms and the tobacco industry (Pollay 2000). The addictive nature of tobacco makes it incredibly difficult for public policy makers to persuade consumers to give up smoking despite the abundance of smoking cessation programs and campaigns. Demarketing efforts for example are not equally effective in its utilization of the demarketing mix to encourage behavioral change (Shiu, Hassan and Walsh 2008). Thus we suggest that consumer researchers aim to advance consumer well-being by focusing on how smoking initiation can be prevented *before* addiction takes place i.e. how consumers resist smoking.

The phenomenon of consumer resistance has gained increasing attention by marketing scholars (Hemetsberger 2006; Kates & Belk 2001; Kozinets & Handelman 2004; Lee, Roux, Cherrier & Cova 2011; Roux 2007). Penaloza and Price (1993) define consumer resistance as “the way in which individuals or groups practice a strategy of appropriation in response to structures of domination” (Poster 1992, 1). Consumers therefore have the ability to resist and respond as they see fit when faced with market practices that are not desired. Research on consumer resistance has mainly focused on collective actions such as boycotts, which often exist seeking to make changes to business or market practices (Hermann 1993). On the other hand, individual acts of resistance are rarely explored and are often only described as complaining behavior, negative word of mouth, or exit (Hirschman 1970).

According to Firat and Dholakia (1998), consumer resistance aims to defy the entire consumption pattern or marketing offerings which contrast personal values and beliefs. Boycotts and complaining behavior in contrast to consumer resistance contest a specific manufacturer, retailer or marketing tactic but still encourage consumers to continue consumption but to do so within a different exchange relationship (Firat & Dholakia 1998). Kozinets and Handelman (2004) assert that consumer resistance involves any attempt to oppose, question or resist the dominant role that consumption plays within the contemporary cultural environment. However, recent studies examining resistance with conceptualizations such as resistant consumer identities reflect personal enrichment and emancipation for the individuals rather than simply rebelling against consumption (Izberk-Bilgin 2010) or a specific target of dominance. Overall, the study of non-consumers is important in providing a more holistic understanding of consumption. However this perspective is currently lacking in consumer research examining tobacco smoking.

Consequently, we seek to understand non-smokers' motives for resisting tobacco smoking and thus contributes to the anti-consumption literature by understanding reasons against tobacco smoking. Chatzidakis and Lee (2013) argue that the reasons for consumption may not be the exact opposite of the reasons against consumption. Therefore, it is important to understand the reasons against smoking in order to obtain a complete understanding of the issues around smoking. In a similar vein, Roux (2007) argues that the perspective of non-consumers can provide a more complete understanding for most consumption phenomena, especially consumers that are more economically disadvantaged or culturally marginalized. Staying smoke-free can be a complicated challenge for individuals who are vulnerable to choosing risky health behaviors such as tobacco consumption. Exploring such a positive choice is crucial to understanding the characteristics that support it. Yet, there is a significant lack of research which examines why non-smokers are against smoking and what motivates them to resist tobacco smoking.

We note that the majority of the consumer research that examines consumer well-being has predominantly been conducted in the United States and the United Kingdom. Most of these 'Western' consumers are likely to have an individuated sense of self (Mehta and Belk 1991), which suggests that findings of this prior research may not be applicable to all consumers. Thus we seek to move the field forward by examining not just consumer resistance to smoking, but consumer resistance to smoking among Tongans, who have a more collective sense of identity (Hofstede 1980). More specifically, this study will focus on Tongan women because they tend to have a more interdependent sense of self and there has been an increase in smoking amongst Pacific women (Ng et al. 2014). Hence, Tongan women present a fruitful context to explore resistance to smoking.

Smoking is the leading contributor to preventable death in the Pacific population (Statistics New Zealand, 2012). Traditionally, smoking was a predominantly male activity in the Pacific islands. However, the smoking prevalence among Pacific women is higher than Pacific men in some sub-groups of Pacific ethnicities. A longitudinal study over more than 30 years that tracked smoking changes in 187 countries found that the Pacific and Asia has some of the highest smoking rates in the world (Ng et al., 2014). In addition, the social taboo of females smoking in the Pacific was found to have weakened compared to Asia (Ng et al., 2014). Tobacco consumption contributes to socioeconomic and ethnic inequalities in health in New Zealand. There is higher smoking prevalence in low income groups, Maori and Pacific people, including Tongans, the third largest group of Pacific Islanders in New Zealand (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2011). In addition, both adult, child, and female smoking rates among Pacific peoples are higher than those of New Zealand Europeans (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, 2011; ASH New Zealand, 2012).

Smoking rates among women remains high and even increasing in other countries (World Health Organization, 2010). It is therefore essential to take account of gender when attempting to create more effective prevention programs. A multifaceted interrelation of factors such as physiological addiction to nicotine and psychological and social factors have a significant role in women's maintenance of their tobacco use despite the known risks. According to Ellickson, Hays, and Bell (1992), separating the determinants of smoking initiation from those of maintenance is a critical step in prevention research. This study seeks to explore non-smokers' perspectives to understand their reasons against tobacco smoking and how they are able to resist smoking.

Our findings indicate that participants were motivated to resist smoking for three overarching reasons, either as an approach to attaining their ideal self or a desired state or

avoiding the negative consequences of smoking or their resistance was both approach and avoidance motivated. One of the key approach motives was the perception of resistance to smoking as a means for maintaining some control of the self from a habit that has the potential to become addictive and hence remove control from the individual. A key avoidance motive was the importance of managing and maintaining the ideal self. Resistance was seen as a way to avoid an identity that was not part of their ideal identity. Thirdly, participants referred to resisting smoking to maintain control on their self and identity but also to avoid bringing shame to their families by partaking in smoking. This motive reflects the tension of having an interdependent self-construal where the self is defined in relation to others and reflects some degree of both avoidance and approach motivations which is beneficial for the individuals' well-being. In addition, despite having a more interdependent self and being more susceptible to the influence of others, the participants were able to resist smoking even though they have friends and relatives that smoke. This indicates the importance of having prevention programmes that are applicable to individuals with a more interdependent self.

Although research on consumer resistance in the marketing discipline is growing this research has mainly dealt with issues of sustainability, ethical consumption and environmental issues. Our work adds to the scant research that uses a consumer resistance framework, in order to provide innovative approaches to improve consumer well-being. Our approach has allowed us to uncover important insights into consumers' motives for resisting tobacco smoking, especially for individuals that are more susceptible to the influence of others when initiating risky behaviors. Our findings illustrate that the informants were motivated to resist smoking for personal benefit rather than opposing specific structures of domination. This finding highlights the importance of understanding consumer resistance from an individuals' perspective. Overall, this study provides a more holistic understanding of the consumption of tobacco smoking and contributes to advancing consumer resistance literature by exploring consumer well-being and the non-smokers perspective. It also has the potential to contribute to public policy in addressing issues of smoking initiation amongst individuals that are more susceptible to tobacco smoking.

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# ***Quantifying Anti-Consumption of Private Labels and National Brands: Impact of Poor Test Ratings on Consumer Purchasing Behavior***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Many consumers consider test ratings that then influence their buying decisions (Buxel and Schulz 2010). While positive test ratings tend to increase customer demand, poor test ratings may lead to consumption deprivation (Kaas and Tölle 1981) and anti-consumption (Albinsson, Wolf, and Kopf 2010). Thus, test ratings have a positive impact on consumer well-being (Marquardt and McGann 1975).

The objective of our study is to determine whether poor test ratings lead to anti-consumption in form of experiential avoidance (Lee, Conroy, and Motion 2009). In contrast to previous research on anti-consumption, key parameters of our study are quantitative measures like sales volumes, market shares, average paid prices, and promotion shares. We calculate these parameters based on a panel representing approximately 30,000 households. Thus, we address the widely acknowledged gap between expressed attitudes, intentions, and behavior (Belk 1985) by using actual purchase data instead of surveys, interviews, or experiments that are common in anti-consumption research.

In addition, our study differentiates between national brands and private labels. Due to a changing business environment, an increasing distribution of private labels (Olbrich and Grewe 2009; Grewe 2010), and differences in the perception of private labels and national brands (Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk 2009; Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk 2014), this differentiation is necessary. Private labels play an important role in increasing store attractiveness (Olbrich and Grewe 2013), and thus poor test ratings may lead to negative image effects on a retailer's brand. Furthermore, a retailer's reaction to mitigate poor test ratings, e.g., a decreasing use of price promotions, is barely discussed in previous studies (Boatwright, Basuroy, and Kamakura 2007).

Two existing literature streams are particularly relevant to analyzing anti-consumption that arises from poor test ratings. The first involves the research area of anti-consumption and non-consumption; the second investigates the question of whether poor test ratings sway consumer demand.

In general, anti-consumption can be described as “a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment or rejection of, consumption” (Zavestoski 2002: 121). Anti-consumption activities “range from specific product selection based on ethical and/or ecological considerations, to overall reduced consumption and/or boycott of specific product categories” (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002: 188).

One reason for anti-consumption is brand dislike, which Dalli, Romani, and Gistri define “as the negative judgment expressed by the consumer and/or implied in the choice not to buy” (Dalli, Romani, and Gistri 2006: 87). The authors conclude that an unfair price-quality ratio may lead to the consumers' decision to reject the purchase of a specific brand or product.

According to Lee, Conroy, and Motion (2009) as well as Lee, Motion, and Conroy (2009), anti-consumption can also result from brand avoidance. Brand avoidance differs slightly from brand dislike and is defined “as the incidents in which consumers deliberately choose to reject a brand” (Lee, Motion, and Conroy 2009, 170).

Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk (2011) emphasize that many consumers perceive private labels from different stores as a homogenous group. Hence, it is more likely that consumers avoid private labels in general if they had a negative experience with a specific private label in the past.

With regard to poor test ratings, negative information hinders the acceptance of a product, may lead to a rejection (Arndt 1967), and thus can be seen as a form of anti-consumption. Mizerski (1982) points out that unfavorable ratings have a significantly stronger effect on product performance and purchasing behavior than favorable product ratings.

During the 1930s, the comparative product test was established in the United States. Marquardt and McGann (1975) underline the importance of test ratings for consumer well-being. They state that it is less likely that consumers purchase products with poor test ratings.

Kaas and Tölle (1981) state that a negative test rating may lead to a high customer churn rate, and to a direct dissent in the form of negative word-of-mouth or complaints. Furthermore, consumers may tend to participate in consumer boycotts and consumption strikes. Thus, poor test ratings may lead to anti-consumption.

Previous research also investigates the effect of test ratings on business target values, such as revenue and sales volume. In a study conducted by Fritz et al. (1984), 82 percent of all interviewed retailers stated that sales volume declined after publication of a poor test rating. Thus, revenue decreased by 15 to 27 percent. Nineteen percent of all interviewed manufacturers recorded a significant fall in revenue due to poor test ratings. As a result of poor test ratings, 92 percent of all interviewed stores and mail order companies eliminated the corresponding products from their assortments. With regard to specialized retail stores, the percentage was only 33 percent. In accordance with another survey conducted by Hilger et al. (1984), 40 percent of all interviewed department stores lowered the prices of products with poor test ratings.

Silberer (1985) discusses the impacts and consequences of comparative product tests. The author describes the objectives of product tests as enhancing market transparency, easing the burden of product choice, strengthening the consumers’ reflection on demand, improving of the mobility of demand, and refining decision-making quality.

Objective quality information has a higher impact on perceived quality than subjective expertise and familiarity (Cordell 1997). In addition, the author points out that the perception of quality is dependent on the knowledge of the consumers. These findings support the importance of independent product test ratings for consumer well-being.

On this basis, Moussa and Touzani (2008) also highlight that test ratings are important for consumer well-being. They can reduce asymmetric information and thus consumers are able to better judge the quality of a product. As an economic result, the consumers’ intention to buy intensifies.

Simonsohn (2011) states that expert advice sways consumer demand. He underlines that this question is typically difficult to answer, because expert recommendations may be correlated with other information consumers hold. Therefore, an association between what experts recommend and what consumers do should not be interpreted causally. However, Simonsohn provides evidence that expert advice causally influences consumer demand.

The results of our study show that with regard to national brands, sales volumes and market shares decline after publication of poor test ratings, signaling a high customer churn rate and

anti-consumption behavior. This high churn rate empirically supports Lee, Conroy, and Motion's (2009) statement that avoidance behavior is connected to an increased attractiveness of competing offers. In addition, average paid prices increase and the use of price promotion declines. This observation shows that retailers reduce their sales efforts with regard to poorly performing national brands. Under these circumstances, retailers do not seem to be willing to promote national brands, perhaps due to the fear that a poor test rating may transfer to the perception of their own image.

For private labels, poor test ratings do not appear to lead to significant losses of sales volumes and market shares. However, prices increase and the use of price promotions decreases in accordance with national brands.

It is noteworthy that private labels differ from national brands in terms of changes in sales volumes and market shares due to poor test ratings. With regard to private labels, the price seems to dominate product quality from a consumer's point of view. Our analysis suggests that poor test ratings affect consumers' loyalty towards private labels to a lesser extent than in the case of national brands. It seems as if many consumers will continue to buy private labels, although they achieved poor test ratings. Our observation supports the view of researchers like Richardson (1997) as well as Nenycz-Thiel and Romaniuk (2009) that consumers perceive private labels and national brands differently.

In addition, national brands seem to eliminate their products from the market after the publication of poor test ratings, while private labels revise their products more frequently. Both reactions have a positive impact on consumer well-being, because in the long term good products will outnumber poor performers. A poorly performing product may lead to poor test ratings. This results in an anti-consumption reaction and a movement of consumers to other, well-performing products.

The results of our study have important managerial implications for manufacturers, retailers, consumers, and research scholars. With regard to manufacturers, good products prevail in the marketplace. Instead of the often seen elimination of products and the associated loss of market shares, manufacturers should consider alternatives. Revising the product and directly communicating this to the customer may reduce costs and increase brand image.

With regard to retailers, a differentiation between national brands and their own private labels is necessary. For national brands, products with poor test ratings should not be used in advertising campaigns, in order to protect the retailers' brand image. For private labels, price seems to be the key determinant of consumers' buying decision. However, due to the direct relationship between the private label and the retailer's brand, revising the product is advisable. While a retailer is eliminating or revising the product, it is helpful to abandon advertisements of the poorly rated product in favor of highlighting highly rated products.

With regard to consumers, anti-consumption and choice of other products applies pressure to manufacturers and retailers to innovate and improve their products. Thus, anti-consumption might help increase consumer well-being, because it offers the chance to substantially signal consumers' expectations to manufacturers and retailers. Carryover effects in terms of word-of-mouth and electronic word-of-mouth communication enforce arguments and customer experience. The use of product tests helps reduce quality uncertainty and supports efficient use of consumers' resources.

Our empirical findings suggest that poor test ratings lead to intentional anti-consumption of national brands as described by Cherrier, Black, and Lee (2010). By actively rejecting poorly performing products, quality-oriented consumers enhance their quality of life. Furthermore, test ratings enable consumers to better estimate the price-quality ratio and compare it to their

individual minimum requirement. By also investing purposefully in well-performing products and reducing the risk of buying a poorly performing product, consumers can improve the utility of their income. Hence, consumer well-being is improved.

With regard to research scholars, our study offers a starting point to consider the actual purchasing behavior in the field of anti-consumption research. This offers the possibility of investigating to what extent the reasons for anti-consumption that have been discussed in the literature are reflected in the actual purchasing behavior. In this context, surveys or interviews are restricted by the lack of a sufficient closeness to reality. Against the background of our study, it is likely a survey would not have yield significant differences in anti-consumption behavior between national brands and private labels. However, the observation of the actual purchasing behavior addresses the gap between expressed attitudes, intentions, and behavior.

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Zavestoski, S. (2002). Guest Editorial: Anticonsumption Attitudes. *Psychology & Marketing*. 19(2), 121–126.

# ***The Sustainability Roots of Anti-Consumption Lifestyles and their Impact on Consumers' Financial Well-Being***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Why should consumers follow sustainable-rooted anti-consumption patterns? This question ensued from the rising consumer awareness of sustainability (e.g., Shaw and Moraes 2009) and anti-consumption movements (e.g., Alexander and Ussher 2012) in recent years. There is evidence that excessive consumption lifestyles, which are associated with unsustainable consumption (Sheth, Sethia and Srinivas 2011), can have detrimental side-effects to well-being in general (e.g., Markowitz and Bowerman 2012) and adversely impacts consumers' economic well-being in particular (Schor 1999). Moreover, previous research has shown a coherence of particular areas of non-consumption and sustainability (e.g., Cherrier, Black and Lee 2011).

The purpose of this article is threefold. As an overarching conceptual framework analyzing anti-consumption from sustainability perspective is still missing, first our research attempts to further understanding of how and to what extent anti-consumption is embedded in the concept of sustainability and to identify which special forms of sustainable consumption patterns are related to anti-consumption. Our second key goal is to clarify to what extent sustainability-rooted anti-consumption (SRAC) patterns determine consumers' financial well-being and overconsumption. Third, our study provides insights into which human values determine SRAC and specifies to what extent they do so.

### **Conceptual Framework of sustainability-rooted Anti-Consumption (SRAC)**

Following Black and Cherrier (2010), anti-consumption and sustainability as well as sustainability-oriented lifestyles are related phenomena manifested by consumers' rejection, reduction or reuse activities. Against-consumption in a sustainable manner is thus a deliberate choice and a conscious, reduction-oriented consumption behavior (Black 2010). Consumers' underlying motivation to avoid consumption is manifold and varies from environmental, social and ideological concerns to individuals' self-interest and well-being (Black and Cherrier 2010; Hutter and Hoffmann 2013). In line with anti-consumption researchers in the sustainability domain, we assume that the basis of individuals' anti-consumption can be found in consumers' subjectivity (self-interest, self-identity, social and environmental motives) rather than in consumers' rational decision making (e. g., Iyer and Muncy 2009). Thus, various situational contexts may empower consumers' to express their self-concept, encompassing values, beliefs and identities, and transfer it into consumers' action (Cherrier 2007).

In the research field of sustainability, Balderjahn et al. (2013) introduced the consciousness for sustainable consumption approach (CSC), which is based on Elkington's (1997) triple bottom line concept and comprises three main areas: environmental, social and economic concerns. The economic dimension is best characterized as consumers' decision to buy or not

to buy products or services at all and represents the individual disposition to forgo consumption (Balderjahn et al. 2013). Balderjahn et al. (2013) describe three different types of sustainable consumption: voluntary simplicity (Iwata 2006), collaborative consumption (Mont 2004) and debt-free consumption (Sheth, Sethia, and Srinivas 2011). As shown in the following, except for debt-free consumption, these manifestations of sustainability can be regarded as forms of anti-consumption.

*Voluntary simplicity:* Living a simpler life in a sustainable manner (Sharp et al. 2010) enables individuals to experience a “non-materialistic source of satisfaction and meaning” (Etzioni 1998, 620), associated with increased livability (Iwata 2006) and consumer well-being. From a sustainability-rooted anti-consumption (SRAC) perspective, we understood voluntary simplifiers as consumers whose underlying motivation to select a simple lifestyle results from societal, environmental (Shaw and Moraes 2009) and economic concerns.

*Collaborative consumption:* Instead of owning a product, consumers look for the benefit or the service which that product delivers. At the individual level, sharing – and similarly renting, leasing and borrowing (Luchs et al. 2011) – in terms of anti-consumerism means that consumers reduce the number of owned products, without having to sacrifice the benefits that these products confer. Recently identified as forms of sustainable consumption behaviors (Phipps et al. 2013), these anti-consumerism types lead into the direction of SRAC.

*Boycott:* Politically motivated boycott behavior involves the willingness to purchase higher-priced products or to withhold consumption to avoid using goods from irresponsible or unethical companies (Hoffmann and Müller 2009). Consumer boycotts are modeled as either individual or collective actions (Kozinets and Handelman 1998) and often used to protest against socially, ethically or environmentally unacceptable practices of companies (e.g., Delacote 2006). Taking these social, moral or environmental motives into account, we understand boycott as a form of SRAC.

The main goal of our conceptual framework is to identify different types of sustainability-rooted anti-consumption patterns and their impact on overconsumption and individuals’ long-term financial well-being. In addition, our conceptual framework underlying our empirical study (Figure 1) models the SRAC-dimensions as consequences of human values.

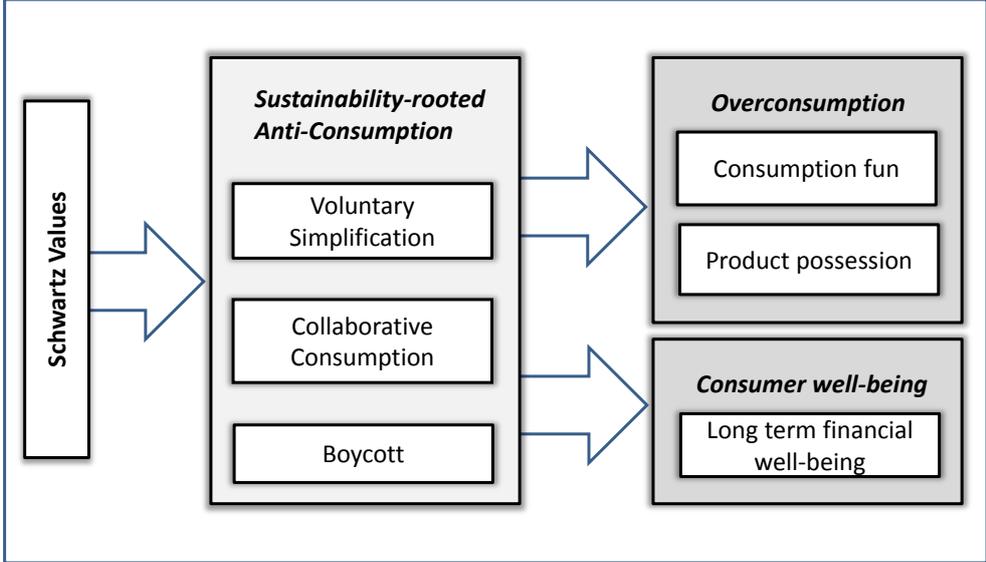


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Hypothesis Development

*Voluntary Simplicity:* Research has shown that materialism, which is directly connected to product possession (Belk 1984), has a negative influence on psychological personal well-being (Sirgy 1998). In line with our definition of voluntary simplifiers, their reduced consumption patterns (Elgin and Mitchell 1977) and replacement of expensive goods in turn increase their level of life satisfaction and therefore their personal well-being (e.g., Brooks 2003). Thus, we propose:

**H<sub>1a</sub>:** *A higher consciousness for living a simpler consumption (life-)style leads to a higher financial well-being.*

**H<sub>1b</sub>:** *A higher consciousness for living a simpler consumption (life-)style is associated with less fun in going shopping and owning products.*

*Collaborative Consumption:* As a result of sharing, renting, leasing or borrowing goods (e.g., Luchs et al. 2011), similar to frugality (Lastovicka et al. 1999), consumers limit their expenditures on goods and thus treat their personal budgets with care. Furthermore, collaborative consumption leads to reduced acquisition and less product ownership.

**H<sub>2a</sub>:** *A higher consciousness for collaborative consumption leads to a higher financial well-being of a consumer.*

**H<sub>2b</sub>:** *A higher consciousness for collaborative consumption is associated with less fun in going shopping and owning products.*

*Boycott:* Klein, Smith and John (2004) conceptualized constrained consumption (of preferred products) as a sacrifice that consumers had to accept when they decide to boycott. From our SRAC perspective, by contrast, constrained consumption is no sacrifice but a sine qua non, implying the conscious decision against a whole range of products within a specific category and explicitly excluding the consumption of product substitutes. *Thus, we propose:*

**H<sub>3a</sub>:** *A higher willingness to boycott specific products/companies leads to a higher financial well-being.*

**H<sub>3b</sub>:** *A higher willingness to boycott is associated with less fun in going shopping and owning products.*

*Values:* We argue that human values have an important impact on sustainability-rooted anti-consumption lifestyles (e.g., Doran 2009). Research suggests that frugal consumption behavior is driven by the value of universalism (Pepper, Jackson and Uzzell 2009). Moral (Klein, John and Smith 2002) or altruistic (Smith 1990) values seem to encourage boycott behavior. Therefore, we posit:

**H<sub>4</sub>:** *Universalistic value orientations have a positive impact on all three SRAC dimensions*

According to Cherrier (2009), the quest for independence and creativity motivate anti-consumption behavior patterns. Schwartz's value type of "self-direction" appears to best capture the motivations of self-reliance, independence and sovereignty. In the context of second

hand shopping as a collaborative consumption style, Guiot and Roux (2010) suggest that individuals need to be unique (self-direction) to be motivated to buy collaboratively.

*H<sub>5</sub>: Self-direction value orientations have a positive impact on all three SRAC dimensions.*

Based on the theoretical assumption of Pepper, Jackson and Uzzell (2009) that frugality is associated with enjoying simple things in life, self-enhancement values (achievement, power) could be assumed to be negatively related to a frugal lifestyle. Although these researchers could not confirm this relationship empirically, Brown and Kasser (2005) found that voluntary simplifiers are strongly oriented toward intrinsic rather than extrinsic values.

*H<sub>6</sub>: Self-enhancement values have a negative impact on Simplicity.*

### **Methodology**

Data was collected using a paper and pencil questionnaire at three German universities in the summer of 2013 (N=224). The study's sample was predominantly male (60%) and technical subject oriented (67%). The average age among participants was 24.1.

The measures of Voluntary Simplicity (Simp) and Collaborative Consumption (Collab) were obtained from Balderjahn et al. (2013). For our boycott construct we adapted measures from Klein, Smith and John (2004) to the sustainability context. Measuring Long-term financial well-being (FinWB), participants were asked whether they believe they should and whether they find it important to consider their long-term financial well-being in the context of their consumption practices. The items for Consumption Fun (CoFun) were taken from the literature on excessive consumption (e.g. Ridgeway et al. 2007), which we adapted to the aim of our study. As a measure of Product Possession (ProPo), we asked participants about their ownership of eight selected products (electronic consumer goods) and calculated a sum score of these products. For capturing values, we used a short version of the Schwartz Portraits Values Questionnaire (PVQ) with 21 items (Schwartz et al. 2001).

### **Results**

Both the reliability and the validity for all reflective measurement models (SRAC-scales, FinWB, CoFun) can be confirmed on the basis of appropriate calculations (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , explorative factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and Fornell Larcker criterion).

Note: \* = significant for p=.01, \*\* = significant for p=.05, \*\*\* = significant for p=.1.

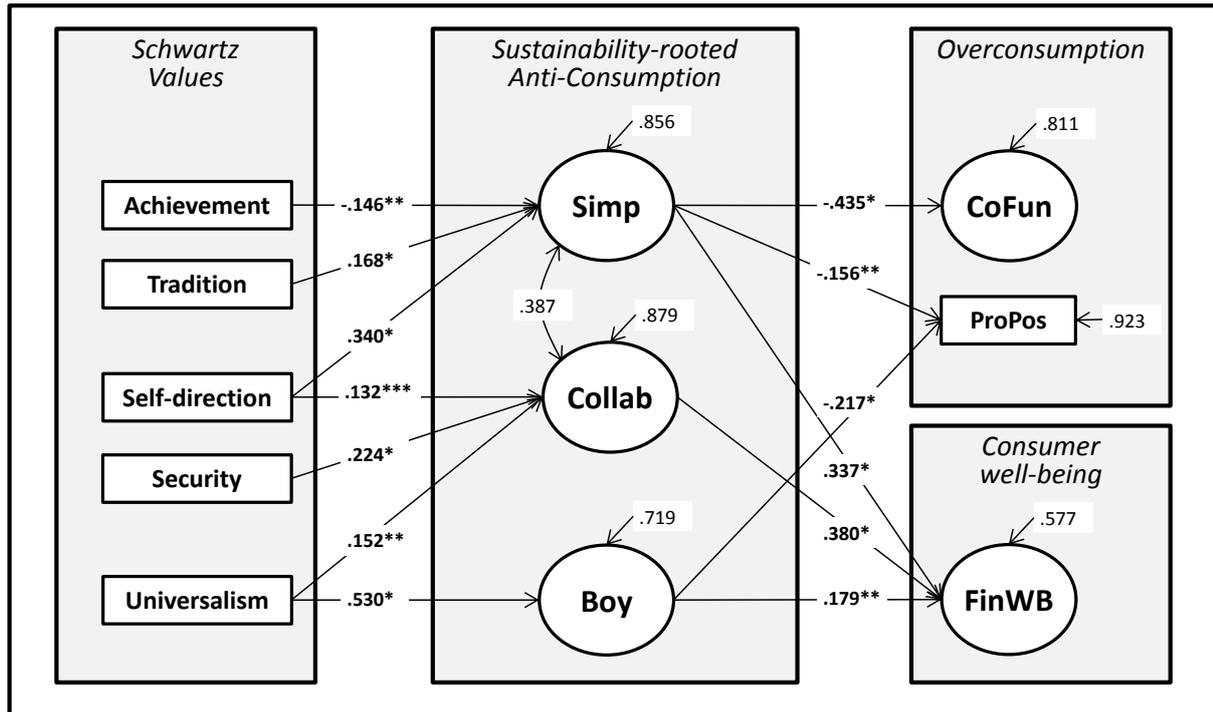


Figure 1: Results of the Empirical Model

The results of our SRAC-structural model (see *Figure 1*) yielded a satisfactory fit:  $\chi^2/df$ : 275/171; RMSEA: 0.054; CFI: 0.933; SRMR: 0.061. With respect to our initial hypotheses, the structural equation analysis (Mplus) confirms the majority of our proposed causal relationships. As expected, our three SRAC consumption concepts *contributed to a higher long-term customer financial well-being*. Unlike collaborative consumption, simplicity and boycott each exerted a substantial negative impact on the areas of overconsumption. Although Simp and Boy exhibited an influence on (high levels of) product ownership, sustainable consumers appear to be aware of the fact that fewer possessions of expensive goods are associated with an increased personal well-being. Thus, sustainability-rooted anti-consumerism is represented by a voluntarily simplified lifestyle on the one hand and collaborative consumption on the other hand. In addition, respondents' *consciousness for simpler consumption habits was associated with less fun in going shopping*. In our study, five out of ten values types of the PVQ exerted significant effects on the three dimensions of SRAC: universalism, self-direction, achievement, tradition and security (see *Figure 1*). Surprisingly, universalism does not determine a simple consumption lifestyle.

### Discussion and Future Research Directions

In line with earlier research, our findings show that voluntary simplicity has a strong impact on overconsumption (e.g., Alexander and Ussher 2012) and subjective well-being in general, as well as on the newly introduced variable of long-term financial well-being in particular. Moreover, our results confirm that consumers' willingness to boycott and collaborative consumption are two other types of SRAC predicting overconsumption and financial well-being. Interestingly, product ownership is an overconsumption consequence of sustainability-rooted boycott, whereas individuals who pursue a collaborative life do not tend to engage in overconsumption.

Although collaborative consumption is a strong predictor of long-term financial well-being, we have not found a positive effect on overconsumption. These results indicate that consumers' motivation to pursue a collaborative lifestyle is primarily economically and financially driven. Prior research (e.g., Ozanne and Ballantine 2010; Chatzidakis and Lee 2012) suggests that individuals' motivations to engage in sharing are also derived from social concerns. From a theoretical point of view, voluntary simplicity is the core type of sustainability-rooted anti-consumption, whereas boycott and collaborative consumption are less pronounced SRAC-types.

Although our research contributes important findings to the SRAC domain, this study is also subject to limitations. Overall, our study confirmed that SRAC negatively determines overconsumption. For future research, we recommended further research to evaluate all relationships between SRAC and overconsumption. Moreover, given that it was not possible to validate a direct relationship between overconsumption and a lower level of consumers' subjective well-being, the theoretical underpinnings of these associations should be examined in more detail. Finally, this study is limited due to the nature of our sample, which comprised only students.

In sum, our research gives reason to assume that sustainability-rooted anti-consumption patterns strongly determine consumers' financial well-being, and in part also affect overconsumption. Self-direction and universalism are the key values that positively affect sustainability-rooted anti-consumption.

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# *Product Piracy – A Meta-analyst View on Justifications to Pirate Software, Music, and Movies*

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## **Extended Abstract**

Piracy, the infringement of copy rights through copying, downloading or any other form of illicit usage by a consumer (e.g., Simpson, Banerjee, and Simpson 1994) is a widespread and still growing issue for multimedia companies. Particularly the extensive use of broad internet connections and download platforms led to billion dollar losses in revenues for film production firms, textbook publishers and artists. For example, according to own reports the Business Software Alliance reported a damage of approximately 63 billion USD for 2012 (BSA 2012) for software products alone. Consequently, product piracy research tried to identify the motives of consumers acquiring a copy instead of the original.

In line with recent trends of conglomerating, growing companies (e.g., trusts, multinational firms, or “global players”) on the one side and increasingly connected consumers (e.g., linked through social media) on the other, this present paper tries to introduce a new angle on piracy research. From a consumer perspective, these raising and oppositional developments may work as justifications to pirate the product instead of acquiring it. Stemming from classic theories as well as recent results, it can be possibly argued that justifications negate inhibitors of piracy consumption such as risk perception or moral evaluations and promote positive motives such as attitudes.

## **Justifications**

It's widely accepted that inconsistent cognitions raise dissonance and thus motivate behavioral reactions to overcome these cognitions (e.g., Festinger 1957). In terms of a piracy example, having downloaded a movie illegally as an unethical act may cause discomfort, if one regards piracy as illicit and unmoral. One possibility to overcome this dissonance is to search for justifications. We argue that recent trends directly and indirectly influence the existence and relevance of three justifying arguments.

### **Justification 1: Piracy hurts only the big companies**

First, consumers perceive that companies developed into dominating market forces that force consumers to spend unjustified prices for wide margins. Prices even may excel the amount some consumers can afford. Further, smaller companies or freelancers (e.g., artists, developers, or writers) are considered as suppressed. Thus, a pirating consumer can justify the act by arguing that every copy only hurts the hegemony of these rich, large companies or brands in favor of small companies or the consumer itself (Cromie and Ewing 2009). In piracy research, this justification is often called “Anti-Big Business Attitude” and lowers dissonance through

piracy behavior (“piracy hurts only the big companies”; Penz, Schlegelmilch, and Stoettinger 2009, p. 69; Schlegelmilch and Stoettinger 1999; hereafter ABB). Reducing the influence of hegemonic companies by the act of piracy further fosters competition and innovations which in turn improves consumer well-being (“piracy has positive effects”; e.g., Jenner and Antun 2005; Glass and Wood 1996). Thus, these positive effects can further lower dissonance and improve the overall attitude towards piracy. However, this justification may be weakened by consumer’ perceptions that companies try to prevent their customers from negative characteristics and consequences such as malfunctions. Since software, music, and movies are mostly distributed digitally nowadays and are widely perceived to be identical in functionality (Lysonski and Durvasula 2008, p. 168) the strength of this mitigating effect is not known so far.

### **Justification 2: Everyone pirates**

Second, as digital piracy increases, consumers gradually justify their behavior as socially acceptable (“everyone pirates”; e.g., Lysonski and Durvasula 2008) which, underpinned by norm activation theory (Schwartz 1977), in turn deteriorates moral evaluations (“piracy is morally wrong”; e.g. Goles et al. 2008). This effect may reduce the impact of social and moral norms on piracy intentions and can be reinforced by two arguments. Proponents of the consumer-based view argue that current conceptions of copyright and intellectual property rights are outdated and penalize consumers in favor of companies (e.g., Schwartmann 2012). Thus, piracy consumption can be regarded as less unmoral, because it infringes only baseless laws that were introduced far before property rights were commercialized. Further, collectivist values negate the holder of rights in favor of a higher value for society (e.g., Swinyard et al. 1990). This intercultural approach could be transferred to social media networks. If networks such as Facebook or Twitter foster the identification as an “internet society”, pirating consumers that identify themselves as part of this collective may justify piracy as who the film, music or software should be owned by, the society (social benefits, e.g., Lysonski and Durvasula 2008).

### **Justification 3: Piracy is nonhazardous**

Third, increasing numbers of piracy acts may lead to the evaluation that the probability of “being caught” is vanishing. Thus, in line with risk theory (Bauer 1960) where risk is a result of both the probability and the magnitude of negative consequences, piracy consumption is evaluated as less risky (“piracy is nonhazardous”; e.g., Mai and Niemand 2012). This justification can be reinforced as well. The impact of connected consumers and their stakeholders possibly influences legislative authorities to prevent or withdraw bills or multinational contracts aiming at stricter legal prosecutions (e.g., the stop of SOPA or PIPA in the US due to protests). Further, this movement may promote the introduction of revised and potentially less strict copyright or intellectual property right laws in the future. Yet, both arguments support the justification that piracy consumption is perceived as less risky.

However, three issues of piracy research must be taken into account to investigate the relevance of these justifications. First, piracy research is highly inconsistent (e.g., Staake, Thiesse, and Fleisch 2009). Thus, empirical studies often demonstrate different directions for the same effect. Second, to compare the relative strength of these justifications the analysis should compare them to the relevance of other highly researched variables (e.g., previous behavior, perceived behavioral control, and perceived value). Thus, additional relationships have to be investigated as well. Third, all justifications imply a time-based component. Hence,

a change in the relative impact of these justifications has to be analyzed as well. To fill the void, the following preliminary meta-analysis will address these questions.

### **Methodology**

Literature research was done in two steps. First, a systematic database search was applied for all hits in Google Scholar (which lists a majority of related full text databases such as EBSCO or SSI Web) with truncated search terms (e.g., “piracy”, digital piracy”, “softlifting”) in title, abstract or keyword sections. The resulting literature was evaluated for relevancy by two researchers independently. Second, we applied a cumulative search strategy. The references of all relevant literature were independently evaluated by both researchers to gain previously not included literature. In total, 246 empirical articles covering the period from 1990 to 2012 were included. Overall, 145 independent effect sizes (maximum: 13; minimum: 3) were coded. Furthermore, a set of 17 study characteristics including the reliability coefficients (Cronbachs Alpha, if included) for independent and dependent variables were recorded for moderator analysis. Most studies reported correlational data (correlations, standardized regression coefficients). For all standardized regression coefficients, the Peterson and Brown (2005) correction is used. Non-correlational data (e.g., F-values for main effects in experimental studies) were transformed using the formulas provided by Lipsey and Wilson (2001). Disagreements in coding or transformation were resolved through discussion. Finally, the resulting database was analyzed using the Hunter and Schmidt (2004) approach with correction of attenuation for unreliability and moderation analysis.

### **Results**

Overall, all relationships of relevant variables with intentions to acquire copies could be confirmed as statistically significant because sampling error was substantially reduced by meta-analysis. We now focus on relationships that provide information for the relative strength of the justifications. First, attitudes showed a strong effect of  $ES = .55$  ( $p = .00$ ;  $k = 12$ ). Specifically, ABB as an attitude subset was found to be comparatively less important ( $ES = .14$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 3$ ). Further, social and moral evaluations had a substantial impact on intentions as well, even though moral ( $ES = -.50$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 5$ ) were more influential than social norms ( $ES = .40$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 13$ ). Two results confirm the justifications. First, if moral evaluations were regarded as an output of decision processes (moral judgment), this output is similar effective to social norms ( $ES = .42$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 6$ ). Second, moderator analyses demonstrate that social norms as well as moral judgments vary over time. Studies before 2009 report substantially larger effects for both variables than studies since 2010. In addition, risk and value perceptions play a key role in formulating an intention to pirate. However, risk perceptions ( $ES = -.19$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 9$ ) showed a markedly smaller effect than value perceptions ( $ES = .67$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 5$ ). Finally, previous behavior ( $ES = .61$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 11$ ) and perceived behavioral control ( $ES = .46$ ;  $p = .00$ ;  $k = 8$ ) contribute substantially to intention prediction.

**Table 1:** Relationships between relevant variables and intentions to acquire copies  
 Dependent variable: Intention to acquire copies.

| <i>Independent variable</i>  | <i>Cumulative sample size</i> | <i>Number of samples</i> | <i>Effect size</i> | <i>p-value</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|----------------|
| Attitude                     | 3,734                         | 12                       | .55                | .00            |
| ABB                          | 932                           | 3                        | .14                | .00            |
| Moral norm                   | 3,526                         | 5                        | -.50               | .00            |
| Social norm                  | 5,157                         | 13                       | .40                | .00            |
| Moral judgment               | 1,602                         | 6                        | .42                | .00            |
| Risk perception              | 2,820                         | 9                        | -.19               | .00            |
| Value perception             | 2,001                         | 5                        | .67                | .00            |
| Previous behavior            | 4,412                         | 11                       | .61                | .00            |
| Perceived behavioral control | 3,152                         | 8                        | .46                | .00            |

Dependent variable: Intention to acquire copies.

### Discussion and Limitations

Taken together, the meta-analysis shows that the three justification are differently relevant for intentions. Most importantly, communicating the risk of copies seemed to be less effective due to the weak link of risk perceptions and intentions. Aside from forthcoming moderation analyses, this supports the justification that piracy behavior is evaluated as relatively less risky (Justification 3: Piracy is nonhazardous). Instead, non-justifying considerations, especially previous experiences and value perceptions are key promoters of intentions.

Moreover, the effect of social and moral norms is substantial but vanishing. This supports the second justification of social acceptance (Justification 2: Everyone pirates). In addition, the relative strength of perceived behavioral control indicates that piracy consumption is perceived as relatively easy.

In line with the aforementioned effects mitigating justifications, numerous other motives may appear. For instance, pirating music can increase the anticipated guilt that young and unknown artists must fear for their existence (e.g., Chiou, Huang, and Lee 2005). By the same token, justifications can be weakened when companies communicate that piracy endangers creativity within an industry (e.g., Schlegelmilch and Stoettinger 1999).

Finally, the small correlation of ABB and intentions indicates that consumers do use it as an excuse to justify their behavior (Justification 1: Piracy hurts only the big companies). However, in terms of relative strength, ABB is less important than the overall attitude. Considering ABB as a subset of attitude and in line with the formative measurement model approach (e.g., Jarvis, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2004), this justification may substantially contribute to the overall assessment of piracy. Further research can help to explore this explanation.

As with all empirical studies, this meta-analysis has limitations that call for further investigation. First, mediations were not considered. Further research should investigate the ways through which the aforementioned variables affect intentions. In particular, attitudes are widely considered as learning constructs and thus may mediate the effects of perceptions and norms. This objective can be achieved by using structural equation modeling with a meta-analytically derived covariance matrix. Second, the provided results, moderator effects (e.g., time, gender differences) in particular, are not yet finalized. Finally, given the limited information in primary studies, we call for more detailed data (e.g., in appendixes) provided by

subsequent research. Moderation analyses should be able to benefit from improved primary data.

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***You, Me, and My Ignominy:  
Anti-Tobacco Discourse and Jammed Culture Jamming***

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**Extended Abstract**

Culture jammers are particularly concerned about the ability of corporations to shape culture through advertising, and respond by engaging in “the practice of parodying advertisements and hijacking billboards in order to drastically alter their messages” (Klein 2000, 280). *Culture jamming* is defined as a subversive practice designed to expropriate and sabotage the meaning of commercial messages. By subversive, it is meant that culture jammers engage in practices attempting to overthrow what are typically corporate (for-profit) messages. Expropriate refers to endeavors toward transferring property from its owner to a domain of public use, whereas sabotage indicates cases of deliberate destruction.

Conventional marketing thought is to strategically ‘control’ brand communication at the various consumer touch points (e.g., see definitions of marketing management and integrated marketing communication offered by Kotler and Zaltman (1971) and Duncan (2002), respectively). Nevertheless, consistent with the idea of *détournement*, as offered by Guy Debord and the Situationists, culture jammers make an effort to reverse and ‘turn around’ the interpreted meaning, thereby countering what was initially intended by the producers (i.e., corporations and their commissioned ad agencies) of the message (Lasn 1999). The notion of *détournement* suggests that culture jammers first need an existing text or promotional message to culturally recycle, rework and reverse, which implies that much of culture jamming is an obvious demonstration of *intertextuality*. By intertextuality, we refer to the condition whereby cultural narratives and texts, such as advertising, are constructed and read through a process of sharing and cross-referencing with other narratives and texts. As noted by Fiske, “the theory of intertextuality proposes that any one text is necessarily read in relationship to others” (1987, 108) and that “the meanings generated by any one text are determined partly by the meanings of other texts to which it appears similar” (1990, 166).

In this research, we use intertextuality as a theoretical foundation to study culture jamming, and examine whether ‘turn around’, as inferred by the notion of *détournement*, is an apt metaphor for parody ads. Second, we consider how tobacco firms increasingly operate within stringent political and regulatory environments – or potentially ‘dark’ markets where marketing communication is highly limited – and the challenges this presents for culture jammers today as they have less iconic and familiar ad campaigns to culturally recycle and rework. Third, following the lead of Mick (2006) and the practice of transformative consumer research that aims to improve well-being at an individual and societal level, this research investigates how culture jamming efforts might become more effective and offers insight towards building better anti-ads with the insights of smoker informants. Tobacco use represents the single most important preventable cause of death in the world (World Health Organization 2008).

We focus our efforts on anti-tobacco discourse put forward from the Adbusters Media Foundation, which is considered “the mouthpiece of the anti-consumption movement” (Zavestoski 2002, 122). Although Adbusters has been a general focus of previous study (e.g., Rumbo 2002; Sandlin and Callahan 2009), our case illustration is seen as insightful considering the special attention the tobacco sector has received from Adbusters, its founder, Kalle Lasn, and fellow culture jammers. Lasn (1999), for example, identifies Philip Morris, the producer of Marlboro and Virginia Slims cigarettes, as his mortal enemy that he vows to take down within the dedication page of his book, *Culture Jam*. Moreover, according to Lasn, the success of anti-smoking activists has served as an inspiration to today’s culture jammers. Lasn points to tobacco as the only product or sector in which anti-ads have supposedly beaten product ads.

### **Intertextuality as a Theoretical Foundation**

Intertextuality did not appear to gain currency among scholars in marketing communications and consumer studies research until the late 1990s (e.g., Hirschman, Scott, and Wells 1998; Hitchon and Jura 1997; Kates and Shaw-Garlock 1999; O’Donohoe 1997a, 1997b). First developed and popularized during the late 1960s by French literary theorist and textual analyst, Julia Kristeva, intertextuality is defined as the passage of one (or several) sign system(s) into another. According to Kristeva, this signifying process:

...involves an altering of the thetic [sic] *position*—the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one. The new signifying system may be produced with the same signifying material... Or it may be borrowed from different signifying materials... If one grants that every signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems (an inter-textuality), one then understands that its ‘place’ of enunciation and its denoted ‘object’ are never single, complete, and identical to themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. (1984, 59-60)

There are manifold ways in which any one text is inseparably inter-involved with other texts; for Kristeva, each text, which is a structure that is put together with signs to symbolize or communicate meaning, represents a site in which a myriad of other texts are intersecting (Abrams 1993; Wernick 1991).

A central point for culture jamming is that single spoof ads need not ‘reinvent the wheel’, but can leverage copy strategies from the original advertising campaigns of corporations or brands that are the subject of parody. In this context, tobacco advertising is ripe for culture jamming given its historical pervasiveness: Federal Trade Commission data in the United States reveals that tobacco firms spent roughly \$250 billion on cigarette advertising and promotion over the period, 1940 to 2005, which averages over \$10 million being spent domestically each day (National Cancer Institute 2008). For Philip Morris’ Marlboro, over \$100 million annually has consistently been spent on advertising the cigarette brand since 1976. *Advertising Age* ranked the brand in third for best advertising campaigns from the twentieth century and the Marlboro Man was regarded as the top advertising icon of the twentieth century, reflecting perceptions that the image had the most powerful resonance in the marketplace with respect to effectiveness, longevity, recognition, and cultural impact.

Communications theory traditionally posits a sender—message—receiver framework and a process of message encoding and decoding. Intertextuality is thought to apply to both encoding and decoding moments of the communications process (O’Donohoe 1997a, 1997b). Senders rely on prior meanings of words and symbols to construct a message, and receivers similarly decode the message based on their prior experience with the same or similar textual

components. Culture jammers can anticipate and engage the intertextual codes of consumers as an expansive framework or palette for designing their parody ad efforts. The appeal of a particular cultural jamming effort will depend on where it sits in the consumer's broader cultural experience.

### **Qualitative Research Study**

Our research study is based on an analysis of texts, consists of three parts, and aims to give insight from each element of the sender—message—receiver communications model. First, to examine the 'sender' or those involved in the encoding of culture jamming messages, we conducted an in-depth interview with Kalle Lasn, roughly 90 minutes in duration, and also critically reviewed his book, *Culture Jam*. The in-depth interview with Kalle Lasn was semi-structured and the discussion guide included questions relating to factors prompting a particular brand or corporation to become the subject of culture jamming or spoof ads, how culture jamming has evolved from being the practice of parodying ads and hijacking billboards, the role of social media in social change, why Philip Morris has been identified as his mortal enemy, how tobacco consumption is similar and different from other kinds of consumption, and whether Adbusters can point to any successes both overall and specific to the tobacco industry. Additionally, Kalle Lasn was provided with copies of Adbusters' tobacco parody ads and queried about the purposes and goals of the ads, as well as who the ads are trying to influence and what is being communicated. Discussion also took place about which parody ads were thought to be most or least effective. The interview was audio-taped, transcribed, and detailed field notes were made for subsequent review, analysis, and interpretation.

Second, to examine the 'message' component of communication, we provide a semiotic analysis of three sets of parody cigarette ads – for Marlboro, Camel, and Kool, respectively – that have circulated in the magazine, *Adbusters* and continue to be posted online (see [adbusters.org](http://adbusters.org)). Semiotics refers to the theory of signs, and offers an interpretive approach to study signs and produced meanings (Anderson, Dewhurst, and Ling 2006; Danesi 2007; Leiss, Kline, and Jhally 1997; Mick 1986). We also give an example of a conventional ad for the Marlboro, Camel, and Kool cigarette brands to show how the corresponding parody ads are sharing and cross-referencing with other narratives and texts.

Third, to examine the 'receiver' of culture jamming parody ads and how they might decode and interpret the messages put forward by Adbusters, we have conducted five in-depth interviews with smokers, ranging in age from 21 to 31, and each interview was approximately 70 minutes in duration. Again, the interviews were audio-taped, transcribed, and detailed field notes were made for subsequent review, analysis, and interpretation.

### **General Discussion**

Tobacco parody ads have been put forward by Adbusters for three U.S. cigarette brands and the attention to U.S. brands does not appear coincidental given Lasn's pronouncements that "American cool is a global pandemic" (1999, xiv) and "the world needs to be liberated from American values and culture, spreading across the planet as if by divine providence" (1999, 61). For Lasn, globalization is largely equated with Americanization (and the pervasiveness of American brands), and he is concerned about determined efforts for a global economy and consequent cultural homogenization. The common targets of culture jamming activities by Lasn

and Adbusters are American brands, which are sold globally and convey the good life of America.

There is a level of irony in assessing the extent that Adbusters incorporates and applies marketing principles. Although Lasn (1999) indicates that he and his fellow culture jammers seek to stop the ‘branding’ of America, as well as consumers’ fixation on icons and brand names, they have simultaneously embraced branding principles as a part of their social movement. According to Lasn, “We [culture jammers] believe we can launch a new brand and beat America™ in a meme war” (1999, 127). It is acknowledged that meme warfare does involve imitation and generating attention by leveraging the iconic brand elements that companies have spent considerable time and resources building. Indeed, the parody ads analyzed for our research have mimicked the typography, layouts, and spokes-characters that are highly familiar from cigarette brand advertising. Nevertheless, Lasn acknowledges that a likely outcome of culture jamming efforts is ultimately a repositioned ‘brand’ and claims that “somehow we’ve [Adbusters] become a brand. I still yearn for those old wild days when we were just running on passion alone. Now it’s become a little more like a mini-corporation here” (cited in Frazier 2007).

With culture jammers’ efforts to ‘turn around’ interpreted brand and promotional meanings, the extent that spoof ads exemplify a message reversal, in the spirit of *détournement*, is questionable. In terms of ideology, identifying an apparent adversary is considered to be a key component of social movements (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), and the notion of resistance refers to taking a stand and, with intention, being against or opposed to something (Roux 2007). Philip Morris might appear as the obvious enemy of Adbusters, given Lasn’s aforementioned dedication page in *Culture Jam*, whereas anti-consumption is typified as “a resistance to, distaste of, or even resentment or rejection of, consumption more generally” (Zavestoski 2002, 121). Our review of anti-tobacco discourse shows inconsistency about whether it is likely to be situated as anti-corporate/anti-producer/anti-brand or anti-consumption/anti-consumer. When envisioning the possible transformation resulting from the efforts of the culture jamming movement, Lasn proclaims: “Were you there when Philip Morris Inc. bit the dust?” (1999, 136). Nevertheless, Lasn (1999) describes consumer culture as bloated and self-absorbed and he acknowledges that “the old American dream of endless acquisition sickens them [culture jammers]; it enervates them” (1999, 171). Lasn (1999, 135) refers to today’s smokers as “outsiders, even villains” as though this is a desirable outcome from activists’ efforts. Consistent with the findings of Kozinets and Handelman (2004), the corporate elite might seem like the obvious adversary of a movement comprised of culture jammers, yet such activists may often adopt an unflattering view of consumers and make them their opponents. Being scornful towards smokers has the potential of being mean-spirited, particularly given that most smokers initiate at 13 or 14 years old, commonly underestimate the addictiveness of nicotine, and typically regret their smoking and experience considerable difficulty trying to quit.

If the goal of culture jammers, like social marketers, is to reduce instances of smoking, there is seemingly a need to exercise a delicate balance in their strategic approach. Peattie and Peattie (2009, p. 267) observe that “ultimately the success of consumption reduction may lie in the extent to which it becomes viewed as normal.” On the one hand, social norms and cultural values shape people’s smoking-related attitudes, beliefs, and behavior (Nichter 2003; Unger et al. 2003), thus anti-tobacco discourse that contributes to smoking being perceived as ‘un-normal’ behavior appears desirable. Yet, it can also be argued that such an approach should not be executed by denigrating smokers. With the public release of internal documentation from the tobacco industry as a result of litigation, efforts to de-normalize smoking have

increasingly been directed toward the tobacco industry and instances of corporate misbehavior, rather than ridiculing smokers (Lavack 2004).

The smoker informants of our research generally pointed to the contextual temporariness of ads. Despite the tobacco industry's historically notable advertising expenditures, the product's increasingly stringent regulatory environment with respect to marketing communication suggests that younger generations may have less familiarity with the original tobacco ads being culturally recycled, reworked, and reversed. An important factor that prompts a brand or corporation to become the subject of culture jamming is iconic branding and highly successful and recognized ad campaigns, yet in many jurisdictions, today, tobacco advertising and promotion is highly limited. Moreover, for some of our (youthful) informants, the coolness of death was conveyed, and the role of brand specificity (e.g., insulting Marlboro and Joe Camel directly) prompted some smokers to say, "but it's not my brand." We will be conducting additional in-depth interviews, with smokers in both individual and group contexts, to seek their assistance in developing more effective anti-ads.

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# ***The Co-Production of Protest: The Pivotal Role of Webzines in the Framing of an Advertising Counter-Campaign.***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Communication campaigns orchestrated in the media often provide an opportunity for consumers and citizens to express their opposition and challenge the arguments underlying the advertiser's discourse. They usually take the form of a symbolic protest and involve subverting key elements of the advertisement, in order to express the direct opposite of that advertisement's original meaning. This particular kind of protest has been the subject of much consumer research (Rumbo 2002; Carducci 2006; Dubuisson-Quellier and Barrier 2007; Rémy 2007). Recently, the use of advertising as a medium of protest has spread to other movements (Dubuisson-Quellier and Barrier 2007). These new protests are facing a major problem, however: the mobilization of more autonomous individuals, often located in very different parts of the world (Sommier 2003). Under these conditions, the Internet becomes the preferred organizational mode of protest, not only the main means of recruiting and mobilizing new members but also the site of new form of collective action.

Researchers have begun to look at the use of the Internet in market protest (Bennett, 2004; Hemetsberger 2006; Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk 2009; Ward and Ostrom 2006). Yet many questions remain, notably about how protests are structured and how those involved manage the mobilization of a network of isolated agents, - how, in other words, "collective motivational frames" may be generated (Kozinets, Handelman and Lee 2010). The purpose of our research is to address this issue. In order to do so, we focus on the role the webzine plays in the marketing of protest.

Protest is found in instances where people are grouped together to assert their common interests by adopting modes of action impacting directly and visibly on the interests of others (Tilly 1986). Activists of various protest movements use the Internet not just as a tool for communication between members of the network, but also as a means of collective action. To animate this network, mobilize and recruit new members, but also attract the attention of traditional media and the general public, it is necessary to shape the political message, to make it more attractive, to ensure it is marketed effectively (Bennett 2004). The parodic alteration

of a brand's advertising symbols is a particularly effective way to convey a message, thanks not only to the playful dimension involved (Cherrier and Murray 2004; Dubuisson-Quellier and Barrier 2007), but also to the attentional and emotional benefits of the symbolic subversion (Sandlin and Callahan 2009).

From a marketing standpoint, the interest of this kind of activity is twofold: first, it facilitates the mobilization and recruitment of new players on the Internet using the possibilities of viral marketing; and second, it attracts the attention of both intermediate media (webzines) and traditional media, thereby gaining much-needed publicity used to exert further pressure on the target company. It is the passage of micro-media (blog, e-mail) to the meso-media (webzine), then the macro-media (press, television, radio), which is the main issue concerning diversion activities on the web today (Peretti and Micheletti, 2004). For the counter-campaign to succeed, its promoters must be able to rally around their claim, not only by producing a common discourse but also by staging it. This particular issue has been the focus of much research on social movements, including the theory of frame alignment (Benford and Snow, 2000; Snow and Benford, 1988; Snow et al., 1986).

The concept of frames has proved to be very useful in the study of social movements and collective action, especially for Benford and Snow, (2000), for whom the production of frameworks requires coordination, and the alignment of protest group members, who may well have varied backgrounds and sensibilities. To better understand how this process may actually work within a protest movement, we have chosen to focus on the controversy surrounding the recent launch by Hadopi of an advertising campaign against illegal downloading. Hadopi (the acronym for "La Haute Autorité pour la Diffusion des Oeuvres et la Protection des droits sur Internet") is an independent public authority created in France in June 2009 which works to counter illegal file downloading on the web. In October 2010, Hadopi launched its first advertising campaign. The aim was to explain that Hadopi was not only a law enforcement agency but also the advocate of artistic creativity.

To analyse the responses to this campaign, we used an 'observational netnography' approach (Kozinets 2002; see also (Ward and Ostrom, 2006). The main responses we found can be classified into three categories: first, journalistic style articles or informational blogs; second, dedicated sites or specific pages of personal blogs subverting the official communication campaign; and third, pages from video sharing sites (Dailymotion, Youtube, Wattv, etc.). The web counter-campaign was largely orchestrated by community webzines dedicated to the world of IT (PCInpact) and digital issues (Numerama). It was subsequently relayed by other journalists and bloggers who acted as an effective sounding board. This campaign was marked by a strong use of humour (Carducci, 2006; Dubuisson-Quellier and Barrier, 2007). A central place was given to parody, already a prominent feature of other protest movements (Carducci 2006, Dubuisson-Quellier and Barrier, 2007; Rémy, 2007).

1. In essence, the discursive practices organized around the critique of Hadopi's advertising diversion fulfill several functions:
2. a harmonization function (since it is the result of a collaboration, counter-discourse will be more easily adopted by members of the site).
3. a counter-discourse enrichment function (each contributes to the improvement of the argument).
4. a mobilization function (participation in the debate and the playful interaction of creative diversion reinforce the impression that members share common values, thereby helping to create a collective ethos (Cova and Dalli, 2008).

5. a stress relief function (the free expression of views on a threat allows users to vent their anger against Hadopi, the government and the majors); creative diversion is also an outlet for downloaders' frustrations.

Our research has two important contributions. The first is related to the way in which people are now asked to participate in protests against companies or institutions. More specifically, we emphasize in our research how members are asked to express themselves freely by criticizing and parodying the visual imagery of the advertising campaign in question. The contribution of different members is then replicated in other information or blogs in the form of more reasoned and acceptable criticism and in a more playful way. This co-production of protest will then be gradually reproduced on more popular sites and in traditional media, which will in turn facilitate the dissemination of ideas from the group but also encourage voluntary commitment by partisans in the fight against a common enemy.

The second contribution lies in the way we question the effectiveness of advertising campaigns for institutions such as Hadopi. Three observations follow. The first is related to the usefulness of running a communication campaign when it is used as a means of mobilizing current active downloaders and enlisting further support on the Internet. The second point concerns the nature of the campaign. The use of traditional media and the size of the budget spent only served to reinforce the idea that Hadopi exists to defend the interests of the culture industry. The third point concerns the style of the campaign. To reach a younger audience and anticipate possible parodies, the advertising agency used derision, in effect attempting to defuse criticism by self-deprecation. There are several reasons why this strategy did not work. The first is related to the dissonant relationship between the form and the content of the message itself. On the one hand, the form is actually rather playful, gently mocking some forms of culture, whereas the message itself indirectly blames those who download, holding them responsible for the fact that future artists will be unable to achieve their childhood dreams. However, Internet users have used the lack of legitimacy of Hadopi as an advocate of non-market culture to focus on the content and subvert it in order to unveil the real intentions concealed behind the style. On the other hand, instead of defusing the parody, it would seem that this strategy actually made it even easier for bloggers to capture and subvert the campaign.

From the perspective of consumer resistance analysis, our research contributes to our understanding of the transition from individual to collective resistance. It also highlights a new player in the dispute. Beyond the anti-brand websites or associations, webzines appear to play a pivotal role in the mobilization of actors, especially when it comes to the co-production of counter-discourse. This co-production is not only rational, but also emotional, with its use of irony, derision and parody. The limitations of this research are related to its focus on reactions to one particular advertising campaign. We are unable to account for the protest movement against Hadopi in its entirety. Only a long-term study would identify all operations framing the protest movement.

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# ***Living Discourse: Political Consumerism in an Intentional Community***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Environmental, financial and social instability have resulted in significant attitudinal shifts, consumption decisions are politicised as consumer-citizens are called upon to recognize that their decisions have social, ethical, environmental and political implications. Consumers are becoming increasingly aware of the products which they purchase and of the politics behind them (Micheletti 2003). In consumer research ethical consumption has emerged as an alternative form of consumption which addresses these issues (Harrison 2005). The ecovillage movement developed in concert with these attitudinal changes, offering sustainable lifestyles to those committed to change; the focus of the study is an ecovillage in Cloughjordan, Ireland. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), this paper examines the discourses and ideologies which lie at the heart of the ecovillage. Consumer research is concerned with the consumption or anti-consumption activities involved in ethical consumption. In interrogating the implications of using the term 'ethical consumer' in relation to these members this research revealed a heterogeneous community with a broad ideological alignment.

The paper is structured as follows: The first section discusses how consumption is framed within through ethical consumption and political consumerism and their primary differences are noted. A methodology section then delineates the research approach taken, concluding with a findings and discussion section.

### **Framing consumption**

Although ethical consumption and political consumerism are conceptually similar (for example both are informed by virtue ethics (Micheletti 2003; Barnett, Cafaro, and Newholm 2005), both have developed in response to neoliberal globalization (Micheletti 2003; Harrison 2005; Bennett 2012) and the terms have been used interchangeably there are some key distinctions.

### **Ethical Consumption**

Theoretically 'ethical consumption is the conscious and deliberate choice to make certain consumption choices due to personal and moral beliefs'(Crane and Matten (2003) cited in Carrigan, Szmigin, and Wright 2004, 401).Ethical consumption is a broad term including consumer movements such as (but not limited to) anti-consumption, anti-consumerism, slow food, green consumption and fair trade (Littler 2011, 28). Despite of the terms breadth 'ethical consumption' does not reach beyond consumption activities, it is above all, a set of consumption behaviours. Consuming ethically can be challenging, conflicting values and a broad definition result in many, often contradictory, forms of 'ethical consumption' (Littler 2011; Pecoraro and

Uusitalo 2013). Harrison et al (2005) remark that ‘ethical purchasers may have political, religious, spiritual, social, environmental or other motivations’ ( p. 2),

Methodologically ethical consumers have been defined as ‘those who consider the environment, human and/or animal welfare as important and as a consequence evaluate their consumption lifestyles to take these issues into consideration’ (Shaw and Riach 2009, 1052). Within the realms of consumer research ethical consumption is explored with the help of an army of self-identified conscientious participants, all of whom have responded to strategically placed leaflets (Carrigan, Szmigin, and Wright 2004; Newholm 2005), relevant interest magazine notices (Shaw 1999) and/or appropriate electronic notices (Kozinets and Handelman 1998).

### **Political Consumerism**

Political theorists focus on how consumption is being enacted and to what social or political end. ‘Political consumerism’, a ‘capacious term’ (Littler 2011, 30), positions consumption alongside other forms of political participation such as protesting, voting and petitioning. Stolle et al (2003) offer a general description of Political consumerism as a ‘consumer choice of producers and products based on a variety of ethical and political considerations’ (Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2003, 3). However ‘political consumerism’ also specifically includes certain types of protests (Littler 2011, 30), symbolic actions (Pellizzoni 2012) and ‘discursive political consumerism’, which is the ‘use of communication (discursive strategies) to target the market actors’ (Boström et al. 2004, 16), or more broadly ‘discursive political consumerism concerns the use of symbols and signifying practices...to communicate information and values on politics in the marketplace’ (Micheletti and Stolle 2005a, 266). It can be a highly ideological exercise (Adbusters) aimed at dismantling consumer society.

Political consumerism allows for the exploration of alternative modes of consumption in a larger social and institutional context. Political consumerism manifests as individualised collective action (Humphrey 2010, 57–58). Broadly defined it includes, localism (Dubuisson-Quellier and Lamine 2008) culture jamming (Micheletti and Stolle 2008). voluntary simplicity (Zamwel, Sasson-Levy, and Ben-Porat 2014) anti-consumption (Sandikci and Ekici 2009) and anti-consumerism (Binkley 2009).

Where ethical consumption can exist without a political motive, political consumerism is bound to politics. Political consumers aim is to ‘tame capitalism’ (Micheletti 2003, 161). Research demonstrates that political consumers are more engaged with traditional form of political participation than non-political consumers (Tobiasen 2005; Micheletti and Stolle 2005b). In addition several theorists have found a connection between political consumerist activities and social capital (Neilson, Paxton, and Ohio 2010). Micheletti (2003) argues that political consumerism ‘builds bridges across different groups in society and bonds likeminded people more closely’ (p. 154). No such connection has been theorised between ethical consumption and social capital.

Methodologically political theorists take an alternative approach to that of consumer research; a great deal of thought is given to who should be considered a ‘political consumer’. Stolle et al (2003) argue that meaningful use of this term requires three conditions: Political consumers must actually engage in the relevant behaviours (e.g. consumer resistant consumption, anti-consumption, culture jamming), ethical or political considerations must have motivated their consumption decision and this type of consumption must be frequent and habitual. Halkier and Holm (2008) emphasise the importance of political agency. Political agency has two elements – intentionality, the activities in question must have been engaged

intentionally for some societal purpose and autonomy – ‘do consumers/citizens have resources and space of action to carry out their actions with intended consequences’ (Halkier and Holm 2008, 668–669).

### **Data collection and analysis**

An ethnographic research approach was adopted in combining phenomenological interviewing and five periods of participant observation. Data sources includes several forms of documentation related to the ecovillage including electronic media, newspaper articles, the ecovillage website, internal documentation and unstructured, in-depth interviews were conducted with six members of the Cloughjordan ecovillage. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) ‘combines micro- and macro-levels of analysis to expose the ideological workings of language’ (Benwell 2006, 9) the ecovillage is borne of ideology and thus CDA is an appropriate analytical approach. Following van Dijk (1993) and Wodak (2001) discourses are described as the broader ideas which are communicated by a given text or as ‘models of the world’ (Machin and Mayr 2012, 20). Language does not merely reflect social life, it (re)produces, it is constituent of social processes and structures (Machin and Mayr 2012), put simply discourse is shaped by, and in turn shapes ideology. These discourses animated the theoretical differences which had been above identified at an etic level. Following is an exploration how these political consumers construct their identities in terms of these discourses and the related activistic practices and in opposition to mainstream consumption practices, or consumerism.

### **Findings and Discussion**

This critical discursive analysis of the interviews reveals key ideological positions of ecovillage member, which frame their consumption as part of broader political agendas. First, they frame their consumption within anti-consumerist discourse. Anti-consumerist views were expressed by all members, suggesting that it is the most openly acknowledged ideological position. Binkley and Littler (2008) differentiate between anti-consumption (consuming less) and anti-consumerism (consuming differently). Used in this context ‘consumerism’ refers to the ideology of consumer capitalism (Binkley and Littler 2008, 525), thus anti-consumerism carries political significance and bears a strong resemblance to the ideological position reflected by the political consumerist movement.

Furthermore, members problematize the notion of ‘ethical consumption’. They frame it as a ‘light green’ form of consumption, a ‘band aid’ used by consumers in search of an easily applied panacea. Participants perceive the important issues to reach beyond consumption (for example they refer to ‘the system’ as the problem and therefore merely reaching for fair trade is perceived inadequate). Anti-consumption, localism and voluntary simplicity are promoted as superior forms of consumption. This ideological position is also expressed at an organisational level; the ecovillage website clearly denigrates western style capitalism, thus reflecting a founding tenet of political consumerism. Consumption, in these circles, is a tool of social change, like protesting or voting. Participants perceive themselves as social change agents (Kirby 2003), actively participating in social transformation processes (such as educating others and acting as models for other consumers).

Finally, participants emphasised the importance of the ecovillage as a strong, supportive community. ‘Community’ is explored in terms of the bonds which the members share, social capital, or the ‘connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity

and trustworthiness that arise from them' (Putman 2000, 19). Moving beyond the individual consumer, political consumerist initiatives are known to increase levels of social capital (Pellizzoni 2012). Mechanisms which generate social capital include reciprocity expectations and group enforcement of norms, both which are well represented in the data. The consequences or benefits of its possession are numerous and include privileged access to information and a strong network of people willing to help; again these were consistently reported throughout the data.

The paper distinguishes between political consumerism and ethical consumption both etically (through a review of the literature) and emically (through the analysis of how the members of the ecovillage understand 'ethical consumption'). The emic disparity merits attention, the fact that these consumers do not just fail to identify as ethical consumers but view it in a negative light (as a pseudo, placid form of mollification or even as a concept oxymoron) problematizes our understanding of ethical consumption. This distinction is important, as political consumption implies greater levels of political engagement (Stolle and Micheletti 2005) and the generation of social capital (Pellizzoni 2012). In addition, political consumers are inclined to 'campaign' in an attempt to influence others (Micheletti and Stolle 2005a), they educate and disseminate information. In this context consumption is just one form of political participation which critical consumer citizens enact when producing societal or political change

Identity is created within discourses, thus identity is derived from society, as a result people often engage in behaviour they deem appropriate for the discourse to which they subscribe, they 'self-symbolise' (Leary and Kowalski 1990). The final part of this paper examines how these consumers construct their identities, thereby revealing the depth to which these ecovillage members are embedded in the discourses to which they subscribe. The participants' self-concepts revolved around activist identities and behaviours, one of which was alternative forms of consumption.

Ideology infuses materiality and social practice with meaning, it defines how we understand the world (Barker and GalasinÂski 2001, 66). This paper offers an analysis of how the members of this ecovillage enact their ideological positions through materiality (second hand goods/anti-consumption) and social practice (political activism, 'alternative' identities).

### **Conclusion**

The politicisation of consumption is an on-going academic discourse, one which has attracted a great deal of attention and some controversy (Micheletti 2003). 'As consumption becomes the 'new' activism political ecology narratives are increasingly shaping how 'alternative' consumption is understood' (Bryant and Goodman 2004, 334). It is argued that although the theoretical differences between ethical consumption and political consumerism are subtle, the term 'ethical consumption' fails to adequately capture the ideologies that shape the behaviours and the lives of these consumers. This paper proposes that a more capacious concept, such as 'political consumerism' would facilitate a greater understanding of these consumers, how they engage in consumption practices and to what end. It is argued that there are potentially important insights which could be gleaned from a deepened understanding of how consumers mobilise consumption in service of ideological and political agendas.

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# ***Understanding the Differences of Political Consumerism Between Northern, Southern and Eastern Europe***

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## **Extended Abstract**

In the modern world consumers face an array of brands and offered products, supplied with a constant reminder to purchase. Increasing growth of Internet technologies helps marketers and producers to supply customers with information about new products, their properties, and policy of a company. In a new era of information accessibility consumers have an opportunity to make deliberate choices in a marketplace, basing their purchasing decisions accordingly to their values and beliefs. However, the availability of such information is also a double-edged sword, since along with increase of consumer acquisition it may promote consumption withholding.

One field of studying the reasons of consumption withholding is anti-consumption, what may occur as a result of negative influence on consumer well-being by brands or marketers. Literally, anti-consumption means “against consumption”. Set in the context of consumer research, one of the main issues under consideration is causes that restrain consumers to buy certain products. Relevant topics are infinite, but one of the most conformable sub-concepts includes a branch of political consumerism which is called consumer boycotts – premeditated refusal to purchase certain product due to political, ethical or other considerations. Therefore to prevent financial damage and loss in a company managers should base their marketing strategies and policy according to consumers’ opinion and point of view. And one of the essential aspects is to reveal target group of customers for each product through examining the profile of those who act as consumers-boycotters.

An ordinary consumption is replaced by so-called “prosumers” now, by people who affect market with their purchasing decisions, requesting what to sell to them and which way it has to be marketed. Moreover, nowadays people turn to marketplace to be heard by governments, to express their moral values and beliefs through what they buy and refuse to purchase. Given its history, the study of political consumerism has resulted in a variety of definitions, but there is one which is commonly accepted by researchers, and is used now more frequently than others: Political Consumerism is a “consumer choice of producers and products based on political or ethical considerations or both” (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti, 2005 246). Consumers can’t avoid buying products, but they can implement their political influence by consuming some special items and ignoring the others to achieve their moral or political goals (Schudson 2007).

Today’s businesses should recognize that the increasing numbers of consumers are seeking to engage and influence the suppliers of products and services through their actions in the marketplace. Often responding to reports of doubtful practices such as child labour, environmental pollution and/or animal welfare mistreatment, consumer reaction is displayed in

attempts to redistribute the power between consumer and producer. The ability to punish those suppliers considered unethical through boycotting and protest and to reward those displaying veritable ethical credentials through buycotting has resulted in various manifestations of consumer empowerment directly targeted at changing traditional marketing and business behaviour.

Although sometimes organisations are rebuked of being responsible for causing environmental problems through, for example, the use of inappropriate equipment, dangerous substances, and non-recyclable materials, consumers are also blamed for their uncontrollable consumption of goods and irresponsible treatment of the environment. Thus, on the one hand, understanding the motives, attitudes, behaviour, and actions of consumers concerning ecological issues is of paramount importance in alleviating part of the problems associated with modern market. On the other hand, a deeper understanding of the characteristics incident to political consumers by organisations can lead to the design of more efficient and effective sustainability marketing programs (Rundle-Thiele, Paladino & Apostol 2008).

Producers of branded goods and distributors respond to consumers' concerns and protests to avoid blame, they actively appeal to consumers' consciousness to differentiate markets, and they are eager to demonstrate citizenship to avoid regulatory intervention from authorities (Marsden Flynn & Harrison, 2000). The internet and globalized media push producers of branded goods to be seen as ethically virtuous and consistent and to enforce their claimed virtues throughout the value chain (Vogel, 2005). In this way, political consumerism is approached and developed simply like any other market, where producers hope to build profitable niches where they can get a price above the standard products. In modern politics some of the dominant issues are racial, gender and religious identity (Mouffe 2005). Companies are already applying different marketing strategies to appeal to consumers' identity, due to the fact that their consumption is closely linked to their identity construction and representation (Baek 2010).

Boycotting is distinguished as the most important constituent of political consumerism (Young 2003), what is implied as a negative action, rejection to buy something, intertwined with the concept of anti-consumption. People involved into this activity are considered to be ethical consumers, who do not support companies producing goods or services that could do any harm for other people, animals or environment, and vice versa who encourage "green brands". Thus, political consumers use their buying power to endeavour to change objectionable institutional or market practices regarding issues of sustainability, justice, fairness, and non-economic issues that concern citizen well-being (Micheletti 2003). This process is political in its nature because the action consumers make has the same scheme as voting in political elections, when someone transfers personal beliefs to the politics favouring one specific candidate or political party (Shaw & Black, 2010). Relevant literature observation also contends that those people, who are not satisfied with the way politics and government work in the country, take their values to the market and use it as a site for political action (Micheletti & Stolle 2007).

Though the concept of consumer boycotts is the subject of many debates now, almost all the investigations on this topic have been held in the Northern countries of Europe and there is almost no information concerning Southern or Eastern Europe. Grounding on the results of the previous investigations, scholars argue that countries-leaders of this type of participation are obviously those located in Scandinavia (Ferrer, 2004; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2005), such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and additionally Switzerland, Germany, UK, while Southern or Eastern European location do not seem to be involved that much. Adverting to relevant

literature, we conclude that political consumerism is indeed an activity, widely spread in Scandinavian countries, while Southern and Eastern European countries mostly display low level of engagement.

The purpose of the present survey is to add some nuance to this critical gap in the literature. One of the suppositions of this geographical inequality lies in expected socio-demographic differences of those who are directly involved in boycotting activities – consumers. As can be seen from antecedent researches, according to the most steadfast empirical proof, the typical boycotter appears as a resourceful, young female with a high level of education, who is quite interested and active in the political sphere. However, the results of past investigations are quite muddled. As pointed out from some of them, age, education and social class emerge as the most common causes of inequality, while gender, income and occupation seem to be less related to the participation in boycotts (Gallego 2007).

Relying on the data from the fifth wave of the European Social Survey, we intend to detect socio-demographic profile of those who act as consumers-boycotters in different geographical clusters of Europe, and reveal the differences and similarities between them. In our survey we inspect not only standard and widely discussed characteristics inherent to consumers-boycotters, such as gender, age, level of education, level of income, and interest in politics. We also explore the concept of political activity deeper, breaking it down into 4 variables: voting, signing petitions, contacting politicians and taking part in public demonstrations. Moreover, we investigate yet undiscovered by scholars variable as boycotters' satisfaction with life. Thus, we provide an innovative, fresh view on image of a consumer-boycotter, which can help to resolve some questions in the world of research on political consumerism.

Though previous studies emphasized that from the global perspective gender, age, level of education and income tend to be the most powerful determinants of political participation, our results unexpectedly do not thoroughly confirm this statement. This research has found characteristics of dissimilitude between consumers-boycotters, revealing unexplored characteristics and differences.

Undertaken analysis shows that sub-concept of political consumerism, boycotting, is not a kind of political participation which engages more resourceful citizens. Rather than being an alternative kind of political participation that suits those who fall outside the conventional participation forms, political consumerism appeals to those who are well educated, politically interested and generally politically active. These findings are similar to those of other studies. However, the profile of political consumers from different countries of Europe is not the same; this investigation reveals that there are different socio-demographic concepts shaping boycotters' character between the clusters under analysis that could help understanding participation inequality. For instance, being satisfied with life has no relation with engagement into boycott actions in Northern European countries, though it seems that in Southern and Eastern clusters less happy people turn to the marketplace to boycott products. Gender inequality is not significant in Southern European countries, while Northern boycotters are presented by females, and Eastern – by males. Widely discussed by scholars parameter of age of consumer-boycotter also does not show primary importance in Northern and Southern parts of Europe, though in Russian Federation and Ukraine young people act as activists of withholding consumption movements. And what our research points out is that the same kind of activity as consumer boycott – at least that is what relevant literature analyses show – is perceived by different individuals divergently. However, an accurate profile of political consumer cannot be constructed without attention to other aspects of the behavioural and conscious constructs.

The results of this paper raise some doubts about the previous statements of the profile of political consumers and also about too often assumed hypotheses on the end of class politics in the post-modern theories of political behaviour. This implies that the emergence of new channels of political participation does not automatically mean the end of class politics, since consumers-boycotters seem to reproduce the inequality inherent to other ways of political participation. There is seen that political consumers themselves evaluated participation in boycotts as an effective means of influencing politics. Whether the respondents are right or not in their evaluation is a different, though not less important, question, which also needs further research to be answered properly.

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# ***The Role of Foreign Country Images and Risk Perceptions in Country-Based Reluctance to Buy***

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## **Extended Abstract**

### **Introduction**

This paper explores the role that foreign country images and country-driven risk perceptions play in shaping consumers' reluctance to buy foreign products. These factors may be important in order to address consumers' well-being perceptions at different levels: at a societal level, taking into account beliefs of a foreign country of origin and, at a personal level, derived from the acquisition of products from a certain country. Overall, the interest of analyzing country-based anti-consumption stems from the idea that the factors influencing anti-consumption (and their intensity) can differ substantially from those of consumption (Chatzidakis and Lee 2013). Country images have attracted considerable attention in country of origin (COO) research focusing on consumers' willingness to buy (Roth and Diamantopoulos 2009). Yet, less is known about consumers' reluctance to buy foreign products as a consequence of country images. In order to help to discern the role and importance of other countries' level of well-being in consumers' foreign product acquisition, current work proposes a new dimensionality of country image proposes the inclusion social and environmental together with politic-economic issues. On the other hand, literature suggests that psychological perceived risk will likely determine foreign product evaluations and purchasing decisions (Alden, Hoyer, and Crowley 1993; Klerck and Sweeney 2007). Arguably, country-based anti-consumption is likely to be affected by different facets of risk perceptions.

### **Theory and hypotheses**

#### **Country-based reluctance to buy**

Chatzidakis and Lee (2013, 2) define anti-consumption as “phenomena that are against the acquisition, use, and dispossession of certain goods”. This definition implies that different objects can be the subject of targeted anti-consumption practices, including specific products/brands, companies, or even countries (Lee et al. 2009). This study will consider consumers' reluctance to buy as the main outcome of interest (or dependent variable). Reluctance to buy will be assessed through the lens of a product's COO; thus, from this point onwards, the dependent variable here will be referred to as ‘country-based reluctance to buy’, which has been defined as “perceived guiltiness and tendency to avoid buying foreign-made products” (Suh and Kwon 2002, 669).

## **Country and product images, and risk perceptions**

### *Country images and foreign product judgments*

Extant research largely considers country image as a cognitive construct which denotes “the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular country” (Martin and Eroglu 1993, 193). The literature has adopted three different— although related— approaches for measuring its effects depending on the level of analysis adopted: general country image, product-country image, or product image (Roth and Diamantopoulos 2009). Other works have used the terms ‘macro’—country—and ‘micro’—product category—country image (Oberecker and Diamantopoulos 2011; Pappu, Quester, and Cooksey 2007).

In addition to most commonly applied measures of country image—covering political and economic aspects—, this work emphasizes the need to account for social and environmental issues in the conceptualization and measurement of country image (Roth and Diamantopoulos, 2009). People’s awareness and concern about social and environmental issues is increasing, and product/brand avoidance is often motivated by ethical concerns and the desire to improve global well-being (Iyer and Muncy 2009). Accordingly, public visibility of ‘irresponsible’ social and environmental policies put forward by governments might result in either a temporal boycott or permanent rejection of products from the egregious country (i.e., Ettenson and Klein 2005; Braunsberger and Buckler 2011). This argument implies that consumers may not only evaluate countries in terms of affluence or political stability, but take into consideration their levels of social and environmental protection.

### *Perceived risk*

When confronting purchasing decisions, individuals make expectations about the desirable vs. undesirable outcomes of their choices. Risk perceptions represent those subjective “evaluations of the probability as well as the consequences of a negative outcome” (Sjöberg, Moen, and Rundmo 2004, 8). Higher risk perceptions would imply lower individual well-being, hence they are likely to translate into anti-consumption practices (Hassan et al., 2013). Risk perceptions are multifaceted (Klerck and Sweeney 2007), and may affect a range of facets— i.e., performance, financial, time, social, or image (Liljander et al. 2009). However, the salience and importance of these different phenomena will be contingent on the sources of uncertainty (Liljander et al. 2009). In the field of country-based anti-consumption, risk perceptions may largely depend on the country-product dyad under analysis. Hence, taking into account current country-product dyad, this work examines the role of performance and social/self-image perceived risks.

## **Hypotheses**

The fear of potential negative outcomes of product usage may translate into consumers’ lower perceptions of self well-being (Sirgy et al. 2007). Country images are posited as external cognitive cues directly influencing consumers’ risk perceptions (Oberecker and Diamantopoulos 2011). Agarwal and Teas’ study (2001) illustrated that a positive country image can help attenuate consumers’ performance risk. Hence, it is expected that each macro country image factor—i.e., political-economic, social, and environmental—will exert a separate influence on performance perceived risk.

*H1: Political-economic, social, and environmental country images will have a negative effect on perceived performance risk.*

This work also posits that country images will influence perceived social/self-image risk; consumers may feel that purchasing—and using—products from a negatively self-evaluated country, may imply that s/he is acting against her/his own values and hence, projecting an undesirable image to other people. If the product is ultimately acquired, individuals may confront feelings of frustration as a consequence of this value-action incongruence. This is particularly the case for consumers who are aware of ethical aspects or conditions the country of origin (Hassan et al. 2013). In accordance with the previous arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2: Political-economic, social, and environmental country images will have a negative effect on perceived social/self-image risk.*

Extant literature exhibits that risk perceptions are paramount in determining product evaluations. Evidence in support for the negative prediction of—performance and financial—perceived risk for constructs such as perceived value of a product (Agarwal and Teas 2001), suggests here that consumers' expectations of performance and social/self-image risks should negatively affect foreign product judgments.

*H3a: Perceived performance risk will have a negative effect on foreign product judgments.*

*H3b: Perceived social/self-image risk will have a negative effect on foreign product judgments.*

Perceived risk is likely to act as a direct antecedent of purchasing intentions (Klerk and Sweeney 2007; Oberecker and Diamantopoulos 2011). As previously noted, consumers may be reluctant to buy products perceived as posing a potential damage or loss. Hence, the two types of perceived risk analyzed here (i.e., performance and social/self-image risks) are modeled as direct antecedents to country-based reluctance to buy.

*H4a: Perceived performance risk will have a positive effect on country-based reluctance to buy.*

*H4b Perceived social/self-image risk will have a positive effect on country-based reluctance to buy.*

In addition, previous COO research shows that foreign product judgments tend to be linked to individuals' intentions to buy (Heslop et al. 2008), more specifically country-based reluctance to buy has been found to be negatively linked to this construct (Suh & Kwon 2002).

*H5: Foreign product judgments will have a negative effect on country-based reluctance to buy.*

## **Methods**

### **Measures**

11-point Likert scales (from 0 to 10)—indicative of respondent's level of agreement and disagreement with the different statements included in the questionnaire—were used for all scales. Interviews were conducted in Spanish; thus, translation and back-translation were performed to ensure cross-language equivalence.

The measurement of country images comprised 12 items adapted from extant country image scales (i.e., Heslop et al. 2008; Oberecker and Diamantopoulos 2011). However, items from other scales were added, so as to capture consumers' social and environmental country views (i.e., Chang and Fong, 2010; Chen, 2008). Foreign product judgments scale was adapted from Klein et al. (1998), whereas country-based reluctance to buy was adapted from Suh and Kwon's work (2002). Perceived performance and social/self-image risks scales were extracted from Oberecker and Diamantopoulos (2011).

### **Study context and sample**

Apparel products were deemed appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, consumers were expected to be highly familiar with clothing acquisition and manufacturing-related issues. Second, clothing is widely considered as an important instrument of consumers' self-expression and image creation (Hogg and Bannister 2001).

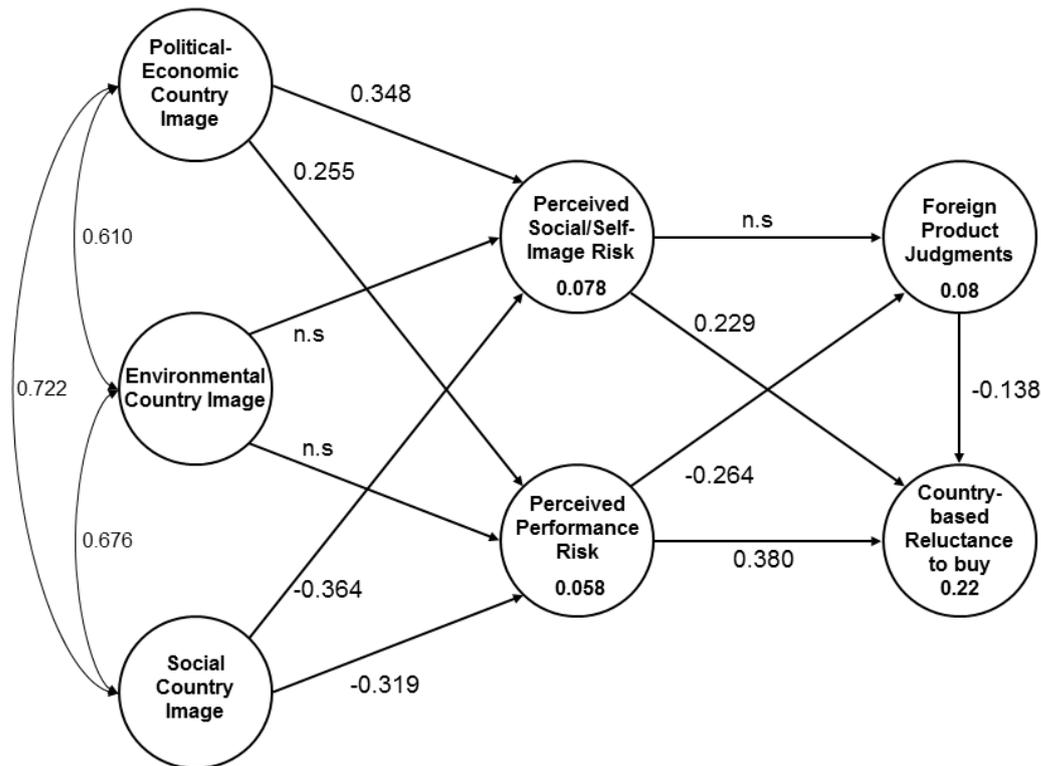
Spain was selected as the host country; Spanish people tend to show high awareness of social differences and environmental problems (Eurobarometer 2012). The selection of China as COO was a result of the pretest within a sample of 21 Spanish average consumers, who identified China as target for country-based avoidance due to a wide range of issues—including 'unacceptable or unsustainable' production practices. Moreover, some participants raised concerns about product safety and a certain loss of status—matching with performance and social/self-image risk facets—, as a consequence of acquiring and using Chinese apparel.

Data were collected between April-May 2012 in collaboration with a market research company. The final sample consists of 400 adult people and is representative of the Spanish population in terms of age, gender, and territorial distribution. Participants were randomly selected, contacted, and interviewed by telephone until the desired number of completed interviews was achieved.

## **Results**

Structural equation modeling (SEM)—using the EQS v6.1 statistical software—was applied to test the hypothesized relations in the proposed research model. The assessment of absolute fit showed that the scaled chi-square (S-B  $\chi^2$ ) was significant at  $p < 0.01$ . Given the sensitivity of the chi-square statistic to samples with more than 200 observations, alternative indices were examined. RMSEA (0.058) fell below the recommended threshold level of 0.08. Incremental fit measures also indicated a good model fit (NNFI=0.883; NFI=0.921, CFI=0.929).

Figure 1: Test of the research model



**Note:** All coefficients which appear in the figure are standardized and significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

The model was able to explain 22% of the variance in country-based reluctance to buy (see Fig.1). Both types of risk perceptions have positive influences on reluctance to buy foreign products (support for H4a and H4b); perceived risk effects were stronger for performance (std.  $\beta = 0.380$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) than for social/self-image risk (std.  $\beta = 0.229$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). As expected, foreign product judgments were negatively related to country-based reluctance to buy (std.  $\beta = -0.138$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), thus reducing Spanish consumers' reluctance to buy Chinese apparel (support for H5). As regards the prediction of foreign product judgments, it is negatively influenced by perceived performance risk (std.  $\beta = -0.264$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), but not significantly affected by perceived social/self-image risk (support for H3a; rejection of H3b).

Interestingly, each country image factor had a differentiated (separate) effect on risk perceptions associated with foreign product acquisition. Political-economic country image had a positive effect on both performance (std.  $\beta = 0.255$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) and social/self-image (std.  $\beta = 0.348$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ) perceived risks. On the contrary, social country image contributes to reducing both types of perceived risks (std.  $\beta = -0.319$ ;  $p < 0.01$  vs. std.  $\beta = -0.364$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ). Finally, environmental country image was not significantly related to either performance or social/self-image perceived risks. These results lend partial support for H1 and H2.

## Discussion and conclusions

The findings show that being reluctant to buy products from countries negatively perceived, may represent a way to avoid negative feelings and improve well-being at both general and personal level. Both political-economic and social country images relate to performance and social/self-image risk perceptions, although in opposite directions. Social country image influences consumers' perceived performance and—to a greater extent—social/self-image risk perception, highlighting the importance of moral considerations for country-based anti-

consumption. The effect of positive political-economic country image on risk perceptions is puzzling considering past research (e.g., Agarwal and Teas 2001). One possible explanation is that Spanish people might think Chinese source of growth stands on questionable manufacturing methods—i.e sweatshops. The negative weak contribution of foreign product judgments to country-based reluctance to buy emphasized the direct influence—over indirect—of risk perceptions on country-based reluctance to buy.

Overall, the results were indicative of the need to account for consumers' risk perceptions in country-based anti-consumption research, but also warn of the important and differentiated role of specific country image issues. Alternative country image factors such as country's social image will likely shape consumers' country-based anti-consumption.

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# *A Little Less Anti-Consumption a Little More Sharing Please: On How Materialism and Uniqueness Influence Sharing.*

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## **Extended Abstract**

In the last two decades, a wide range of consumer behavior has been analyzed under the lens of anti-consumption. Following Chatzidakis and Lees classification, research in this field emphasizes reasons against consumption, like ethical, environmental or symbolic concerns (2012). Thereby anti-consumption is conceptually different from forms of pro-social consumption, like alternative, ethical or conscientious consumer behavior (Lee, Fernandez, Hyman 2009).

In his theoretical review for example, Hermann (1993) deals with boycotts as a form of group exit action by discontented consumers and the therefrom deriving functional and structural implications for marketing. Hoffmann (2009) extends this non empirical approach with quantitative support by showing that for consumers boycotts are a possible behavior to express their ethical concerns towards a multinational company shifting its subsidiary from an industrialized country to a low-wage country.

As an academic reaction to the rise of a more ecologically conscious consumer in the early 1970s (Anderson, Cuningham, 1972), studies on environmental concern increase and provided value added insights for anti-consumption research. The findings help to differentiate between green consumption as a main research area in consumption research and green activism as a form of anti-consumption (Dobscha, Ozanne 2001; Chatzidakis, Lee 2012). While green-consumption manifests itself in buying eco-friendly products, consumers who are driven by green activism forces reduce their consumption completely or abstain from so called green washed products. Thus they exert anti-consumption as a reaction of their environmental concerns (Black, Cherrier 2010).

Besides ethical and ecological reasons, another form of consumer behavior which is associated with anti-consumption is the symbolic avoidance of consumption. Whereas Belk defines that one purpose of an approach behavior towards consumption is the formation of a self-concept - considering individuals regard their possessions as parts of their extended self (Belk 1988, Belk 2013) – Banister and Hogg argue that likewise avoidance behavior towards consumption were also used by individuals as a form of symbolic communication to express themselves (2004). Thus, the symbolic avoidance of consumption becomes an expression of anti-consumption or per argumentum e contrario one possible focus of anti-consumption research is on the avoidance part of consumers symbolic concerns (Kozinets, Handelman, Lee 2010), such as brand avoidance which discloses the phenomenon why individuals avoid certain brands (Lee, Motion, Conroy 2009).

As shown, the identified motivations for anti-consumption vary between ethical, environmental and symbolic concerns (Chatzidakis, Lee 2012, Iyer, Muncy 2009). Lee et al. (2009) argued that although a grand theory of anti-consumption does not develop yet, all forms

share the idea of consumption reduction. Note there is a broad understanding of the consumption concept in the marketing discipline. In general terms, consumption is understood to mean the usage as well as the purchase of goods and services. Many anti-consumption researches focus on the reduction of usage activities, from milder forms of green activism like care use reduction (Gardner, Abraham 2008) to more bounded lifestyles of voluntary simplicity (Oates et al. 2008). Yet, another important and so far little noticed issue is to focus on the reduction of purchases (Craig-Lee 2006). One possibility to reduce the purchase part of consumption is the sharing paradigm (Botsman, Rogers, 2011).

Sharing establish itself to a competitive opportunity to sole purchase as the dominant way to consume and obtain product benefits (Belk 2010; Sacks 2011; Economist 2013). An increasing number of consumers evaluate sharing as an ecological alternative to ownership (Botsman, Rogers 2010; Belk 2007). As a reaction to the increasing interest of the customer on product sharing systems, several traditional ownership-based companies are entering the sharing domain. For example, in 2011 SIXT and BMW set foot in the car-sharing market with their joint venture DriveNow. In addition, even new firms meet the demand of customers after sharing opportunities, like zipcar or freecycle (Botsman, Rogers 2010). The supply of sharing business models show, that consumers are willing to share a wide range of consumption goods, from fashion (swopsie.com) to food (foodsharing.org). For companies, sharing offers revenue and growth potential. For costumers, sharing is a possible form of purchase reduction without consumption reduction (Botsman, Rogers 2010).

Following Lee's et al (2002) conceptualization of consumer well being, research should distinguish between possession satisfaction and consumption satisfaction. Possession satisfaction is defined as satisfaction that results from the ownership of consumer goods. Consumption satisfaction is the satisfaction resulting from the use of consumer goods and services. As Sigry et al. summarize in their overview to Consumer Well Being, both sub concepts are closely related to, but distinct from each other. "The difference being that possession satisfaction focuses on positive affect that flows from ownership per se, whereas consumption satisfaction focuses on satisfaction that flows from the actual use or consumption of the product" (2007, 343). For consumers, sharing is not only a possible form of purchase reduction without reducing their consumption, but also a possibility to increase their consumption satisfaction. From this point of view, there is no antagonism between anti-consumption and consumer well-being, because anti-consumption is no longer associated with abandonment. Therefore, anti-consumption could entail ways to reduce consumption via sharing, without a decline in consumer well being.

The first purpose of this research project is to examine, to what extend individuals who reduce their consumption through sharing are driven by anti-consumption dispositions. Ozanne and Ballentine show, that one possible form of anti-consumption behavior is to share communally owned goods (Ozanne, Ballentine, 2010). Still, their findings are limited to sharing in only one product category, toys, making the generalization of the results questionable. In this regard Chatzidakis and Lee argue that half of the sample consisted of people that engaged in sharing practices for reasons other than anti-consumption, such as frugality (2012). Thus, it is possible that sharing is actually driven by motivations that are not necessarily against consumption or that sharing can be simultaneously driven by both anti-consumption and non anti-consumption reasons. Hence the second purpose is to identify further promoters and inhibitors of sharing behavior, to clarify to what extend anti-consumption and sharing are interrelated. Thus this research project tries to deliver a contribution to theory building of anti-consumption by extending research to sharing behavior, because 'anti-consumption research

can and should entail more than ways to reduce consumption' (Lee et al. 2009, 145). Sharing in turn could be an expression of anti-consumption without reducing the usage part of consumption.

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# ***The Four Eras of Food Production and Anti-consumption: A Consumption Chronology of a Love/Hate Relationship***

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## **Extended Abstract**

Food and well-being both share complex relationships with anti-consumption behaviors. Often, consumers find peril when attempting to navigate the tenuous path to well-being through a product -- food -- which provides both functional utility and hedonic enjoyment. Food is necessary, and though consumers can choose *what* or *when* to eat, the decision *to* eat is requisite. Stated succinctly, and also representing an accurate depiction of most human relationships -- 'It is complicated.'

As the population has grown, along with the seemingly insatiable desire for functional and hedonic food consumption, it was inevitable that processes of food production and technology would adapt to sustain the increased demand (Smith 2001). The direct effect of manufacturing advances during the Industrial Revolution diffused into food production, creating efficiencies to meet a booming nation's demand for food (Johns Hopkins and McKenzie 2007).

### **Evolution of Food Production and Anti-Consumption**

Currey and Hinote (2011) describe the evolution of food production technology and manufacturing, plus the accompanying processes and components used to produce food products, as the "Food-Industrial Complex" -- drawing comparisons between it and the American military-industrial complex and modern medicine. With this influx of technology and production, the increased manufacturing efficiencies bestowed society with larger yields in food (agriculture and livestock), lower food costs, and increased availability. Though these shifts in production and manufacturing may have seemed exclusively positive initially, negative societal implications would emerge in due time.

Negative externalities such as resource depletion (water use, soil erosion), pollution (air, water, soil), depressed property values, biodiversity depletion, and social costs (deterioration of rural communities, rural quality of life issues [odor, air quality]) have been some of the disadvantageous results (Keeney and Kemp 2003; Johns Hopkins and McKenzie 2007). As these issues have become increasingly salient, due to a more educated public and concerns over the sustainability of many of the popular farming and livestock practices, consumers have turned to various forms of anti-consumption for reprieve -- in hopes of reclaiming physical, psychological, and social well-being.

## **Two Currents of (Anti-)Consumption**

When considering the progression of food production and anti-consumption, it is critical to note that two distinct currents of (anti-)consumption exist. The first consists of consumers who have, in general, embraced the spoils of mass production and engage in little to none of the *active* food anti-consumption behaviors -- *passively* maintaining the status quo of food consumption.

The second current, characterized by consumers which strategically and deliberately exhibit moderate to substantial *active* anti-consumption behaviors, has burgeoned recently due to the maturation of food production technology. By engaging in such proactive and reactive behaviors, these consumers express identity, embrace specific principles or ideology, make statements to themselves, their peers, and firms participating in the marketplace, and pursue well-being for themselves and society.

As theorized, however, these currents are not static -- rather dynamic and fluid -- as consumers may vacillate between either of these currents repeatedly throughout their lifetimes, depending upon their behaviors. Therefore, these two factions may be thought of as similar to currents in an ocean -- distinct, yet perpetually intertwined and concurrent -- ebbing and flowing continually.

## **Food Anti-Consumption Behaviors and Well-Being**

Lee, Conroy, and Motion (2012) explored the controversy surrounding genetic modification, and provided support to show that consumers' avoidance could extend to categories of products -- not merely being confined to the avoidance of specific brands. The "Freegan phenomenon," as described by Pentina and Amos (2011), finds a unique collective identity construction process which occurs through a confluence of "radical" consumer resistance and market-mediated anti-consumption behavior. Freegans embrace the concept of "reclamation" of consumer goods waste, focusing on strategies which promote "sustainable living beyond capitalism" (freegan.info 2013).

Both of these food (anti-)consumption activities allow consumers the empowerment of defining, refining, and redefining their identities, while expressing disapproval (approval) of the corporate identities of food manufacturing firms, their manufacturing practices, and their product offerings and to obtain well-being -- whether real or perceived. Anti-consumption may be a manifestation -- meticulously premeditated or spontaneously compelled -- of the desire to have a "voice" through consumption (or not).

As consumer well-being is concerned, a recent article from Block et al. (2011) proposed a complete restructuring of the food paradigm, from "food as health" to "food as well-being." This proposed shift aspired for consumers to abandon the traditional emphasis on restraint and the medicinal functionality of food to a holistic, positive relationship with the food and drink which one consumes. Moreover, the authors offer a definition of food well-being (FWB), defined as "a positive psychological, physical, emotional, and social relationship with food at both [the] individual and societal level" (Block et al. 2011, 5). An extension of the FWB concept from Bublitz et al. (2013) sought to advance the understanding of food consumption through the awareness of consumer goals and consumer motivation/readiness to change.

The two studies presented above represent recent innovations in the thought processes of well-being, particularly as it relates to food. From the restructuring of an entire paradigm of food thought and perception, the gravity of the relationship between food and well-being may

certainly be inferred -- if not understood explicitly -- and underscores consumers' potentially tenuous, and delicate, relationship with food.

### **Cultural and Societal Influences**

Several prominent cultural and societal influences paralleled the rise of the Food-Industrial complex and agribusiness. Their influence collided and mingled with the evolution of technology and food production, creating a colorful narrative of culture, technology, and anti-consumption. Examples of societal and cultural influences which shaped food anti-consumption behaviors include: *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair (Sinclair 1906), a novel which was a catalyst for reformation in the meatpacking industry and shed light upon unsanitary food production techniques, war (World War I, II, Vietnam), which caused voluntary ("Victory Gardens") and involuntary (rationing) food anti-consumption (Bundy 2002; Trager 1997), and the Fitness Revolution (e.g., Tae Bo, Insanity and "fad diets" [e.g., The Atkins diet, liquid diets, The Paleolithic Diet, The Baby Food Diet, The South Beach Diet]). Moreover, specific shifts in the culture of food paradigms, such as the proliferation of fast food and fast casual establishments, the rise of genetically modified foods (GMOs), an increased demand for organically-produced food, and consumer demand for a diverse array of food labeling have affected the anti-consumption behaviors related to food.

## **Four Eras of Food Production and Anti-Consumption**

The human journey through food may be chronicled in a distinct progression, with anti-consumption behaviors as the foci. A novel proposition, *The Four Eras of Food Production and Anti-Consumption*, provides a summation of these eras.

### **1. Pre- 1820s: Passive anti-consumption**

During this initial era of food anti-consumption, humans transitioned from the role of hunter-gatherer to agrarian societies. Up until 8000 B.C., the nomadic culture was dominant and dictated a micro-level, low technology food production system. Food during this period was functional -- with little frivolity in its purpose. Therefore, food anti-consumption behaviors were largely passive -- mostly existing as a byproduct of choice -- rather than being elective in nature.

### **2. 1820s to 1920s: Low anti-consumption**

The second significant era of anti-consumption was defined, in large part, by the exponential advancement of production capabilities derived from the Industrial Revolution (1820s-1870s). As consumers witnessed the advancement of technology and manufacturing infrastructure, awareness to externalities increased and the pertinence of these issues to individuals and society became more salient. A spectrum of active food anti-consumption behaviors initially reared its head here, blossoming fully in the next two eras.

### **3. 1920s to 1970s: Moderate anti-consumption**

Within these decades, a struggle between the pragmatism of larger yields and the economics of supply and demand (and the inherent externalities of the food production) would ensue. Faced with rampant negative externalities and a desire to assert unique identities through purchase, consumers responded with more aggressive, active anti-consumption behaviors. Anti-consumption became not only a way for consumers to combat the Food-Industrial

complex's externalities, but also represented an opportunity to simultaneously establish, shape, and refine identity, pursue values, promote morals (Lee, Motion, and Conroy 2009; Pentina and Amos 2011; Cherrier, Black, and Lee 2011), and attain well-being.

#### **4. 1970s to present: High, active anti-consumption**

These years ushered in an influx of anti-consumption trends and aggregate-level consumer responses to negative externalities and changes in food composition. A diverse cross-section of consumers either became incensed with the aforementioned externalities, or decided to actively avoid entire categories/brands of food, aspiring to maintain individual and societal well-being. Consumers responded with various initiatives, in order to reclaim the quality of their food through fresh, locally-produced food products -- as opposed to packaged, mass-manufactured fare.

The high degree of anti-consumption behaviors which characterize this current era are the residual effects from each of the three preceding it. The persistence of behaviors seen currently (e.g., avoidance, boycotting) are a crescendo -- a pervasive, aggregate-level consumer response -- derived from negative externalities from the Food-Industrial complex, the complex pursuit of identity formation and expression, value, ethics, and ideological promotion, and a quest to seize personal responsibility for well-being.

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***Meaningful Well-Being:  
A Media-Text Analysis of Celebrity Materialism***

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**Extended Abstract**

**Introduction**

Consumption has emerged as a key area of research interest over the last few decades and encompasses processes of acquisition, usage, and disposal of commodified goods (including products and brands, ideas, services, and experiences (Lee, Roux, Cherrier, and Cova 2011)). A materialistic orientation to consumption generally refers to constructs of the self that are obsessively or excessively possession-centred, and more than anything else, aspired and treasured for their cost, status-value and relative exclusivity (Ger and Belk 1999). Not removed from materialism is the concept of well-being (Belk 1984; Burroughs and Rindfleish 2002; Fournier and Richins 1991). The literature addresses consumer well-being in numerous ways such as needs, motivations, symbolic consumption, or in terms of equity, quality and perceived value models (Sirgy, Lee, and Rahtz 2007; Pancer and Handelman 2012). However, not much scholarly work focuses on anti-consumption or reasons-against the acquisition, usage, and dispossession of certain goods or even aspects and issues thereof that reflect resentment, rejection, or reduction of (Lee et al. 2011) materialism, especially so in media-texts.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the diverse discourses that reveal the interconnectedness of consumption (materialism), anti-consumption and well-being as presented and enacted in discursive texts. The study draws upon discourses of opulent celebrity-lifestyles, specifically focusing upon a set of widely reported media texts on what is perceived as Kim Kardashian and Kanye West's materialistically oriented life-style, President Obama's references to the same, Kris Jenner's (Kim Kardhashian's mother) retaliation, Kanye West's response, and excerpts of blogs from the wider audience surrounding the featured news reports.

**Methodology**

The study uses discourse analysis as a method to investigate meaning in media-texts. Discourse is the study of social life as reflected in language in its widest sense such as in verbal texts, documents, non-verbal interaction, images, and symbols (Shaw and Bailey 2009).

The three inter-related dimensions of discourse are the object of analysis (e.g., verbal, and visual texts); the processes by means of which the object is produced and received (e.g.,

speaking and reading); and the socio-historical conditions which govern these processes (Fairclough 1989, 1995). These dimensions require text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation), and social analysis (explanation).

The first author conducted a search on the Internet for widely reported news-features on Kim Kardashian's lavish spending on gold-plated toilets and home furnishings. These included equally well covered reports on President Obama's reference to Kardashian's lifestyle, Kris Jenner's quotes in retaliation to President Obama's reference to Kim Kardashian's lifestyle, Kanye West's response to President Obama's reference, and readers' blog responses. The first author conducted the initial discursive theme identification and analysis. The process involved looking for key aspects and themes within the text. The initial identification and analysis was shared and refined with two experienced academic researchers.

## **Findings**

### ***Gold as a status symbol to establish belongingness to the cult of celebrity***

A discursive analysis of media-texts relating to Kim Kardashian and Kanye West's spending reveals two key aspects - one is the significant spending, and the other is the significant spending on gold in what comes across as a materialistic-oriented way. That Kim Kardashian and Kanye West make a significant investment on acquiring gold-plated toilets is the central issue.

Gold has long held symbolic meaning and cultural significance as a symbol of status and power (Bernstein 2000; Holland 2005). In relation to selected media-texts words and expressions such as "*spent £500,000 on gold-plated toilets; splashed out, shelling out an incredible splashed out a staggering*" reflect a sense of disproportionate spending, clearly of a distasteful and materialistic nature in acquiring gold for the purposes of toilet facilities. In such endeavour, gold becomes both a symbol of conspicuous consumption and crass materialism invoking expressions of anti-consumption in terms of disdain and disbelief.

### ***The crumbling of values in the traditional American dream***

Obama's references to Kim Kardashian's lifestyle in a Kindle Singles Interview were extensively covered in the media (Barack Obama slams Kim Kardashian for promoting materialistic lifestyles 2013; President Obama: Kim Kardashian and Kanye West's wealth isn't a realistic mark of success 2013; Weisman 2013).

In President Obama's view, American life in current times has become much more complex exhibiting conflicting interests in relation to values espoused and reflected. The American ideal dream risks being reduced to that of an obsession and in a state of crumble when materialistic-consumption orientations overtake traditional values and simple aspirations of the past. Especially, as President Obama observes, materialistic inclinations as reflected in celebrity consumption instil a warped and shallow view of life aspirations into the consciousness of young people (Bourn 2008; Clark, Martin, and Bush 2001; Dolby and Rizvi 2008; Halonen-Knight and Hurmerinta 2010; Martin and Bush 2000; Perry and Nixon 2005; Seno and Lukas 2007). It is this aspect of the Kardashian lifestyle that he seems to have issue with. The discourse of crumbling values in the traditional American dream thus raises questions surrounding materialism and associated values, including those of a moral nature that implicate the well-being of both individuals and the wider community.

### ***The discourse of Deservingness***

Rather than allowing herself or her daughter to be labelled as materialists, Kris Jenner talks of deservingness to justify Kim Kardashian's life-style and materialistic orientations. While President Obama talks in terms of content and substance of the American dream, she focuses on the scale aspect without much concern about substance, her mantra being '*dream big*'. She rebuts the notion of Kanye West taking a vacation, and suggests Kim Kardashian is a very hard-working person. However, the meaning of hard-work and how it is defined or measured is not established. In her view, Kim Kardashian and Kanye West fully deserve all that they possess and aspire for. The measure and worthiness of work, regardless of what it is, in her view is contingent on outcomes as measured in terms of house plot size or even possessions. From a Kris Jenner perspective, who one is becomes a matter of what one has. A materialistic orientation dominates the discourse of deservingness. Possessions become a key to defining the self. Issues relating to celebrity influences and associated-aspects as raised in Obama's quote stand marginalised in Kris Jenner's world-view. The implications for the younger generation are not considered.

### ***The place of possessions in the struggle for identity***

While Kris Jenner justifies and offers a 'deservingness' explanation, Kanye West appears to offer another view-point – centering on globalisation. He refers to life-style, creativity and consumption from a globalisation perspective to justify navigation via materialistic fulfilments. He highlights the complexity of navigating different worlds across places, cultures, passports and ethnicities (*China, Chicago, Paris; mostly White, mostly Black*). For Kanye, as Bauman (1998, 2001) notes, the acquisition of identity is complex: a task, a struggle, a quest in the age of globalisation. He makes use of cultural and material resources as signifiers to represent struggles at various levels in processes associated with globalisation and to construct a sense of identity (Ruediger 2006). The acquisition and display of wealth is a reflection of navigation related complexity in finding one's bearings and defining oneself at individual and collective levels. However, like Kris Jenner, he falls short on principles of ethics, care and social-responsibility towards the community.

### ***The wider community's quest for morals, values and well-being***

The issue relating to Kim Kardashian's lifestyle and related remarks from President Obama, Kris Jenner, and Kanye West also evoked a relatively strong response from the wider community in the form of media blog texts. Representative texts reflect President Obama's concern around values, the path forward for the younger generation, and the quest for happiness, fulfilment, well-being and service. Central to the text are values, especially as the Kardashian family represent warped measures of success, happiness, and fulfilment. The American dream is becoming too materialistic as it centres on obsessive-consumption, with people defining their worth on the basis of their possessions. Such consumption is considered to be bereft of meaning, representing a vicious cycle of coveting and owning possessions that people may not really need.

The quest for morals, values and well-being constitutes this discourse which emphasizes the essence of a meaningful life. In other words, the measure of a worthwhile and meaningful life lies in the pursuit of happiness, a fulfilling career, and giving back to the community (*happiness, fulfilment, lifestyle, well-being, service*), and it is these aspects rather than fame and grand fortune that contribute, in turn, to individual and societal well-being. Quite clearly, in line with the idea of anti-consumption (Lee et al. 2011), President Obama and the wider community are

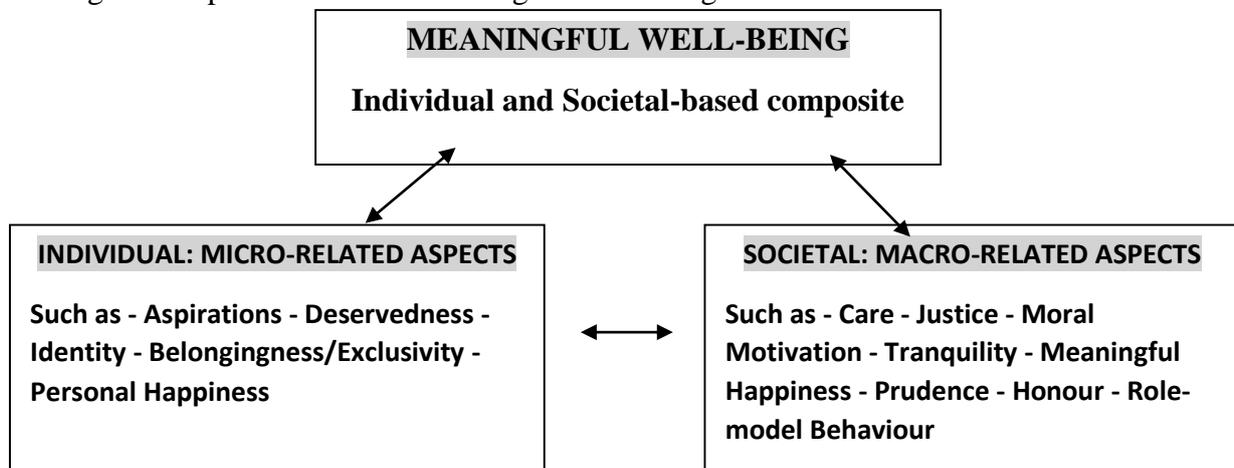
calling for a rejection and/or reduction of flamboyant consumption, and a reclaiming of the American dream.

### Discussion and Conclusion

While three discursive themes (gold as status symbol; the discourse of deservingness and the place of possessions in the struggle for identity) raise issues relating to individual measures and markers of success, self-identity, questions of deservingness, and necessarily well-being; two discursive themes (the crumbling of values in the traditional American dream and the quest for morals, values and well-being) come across as especially attention worthy from an anti-consumption perspective. The latter two propagate the rejection of hollow, ostentatious consumption choices and behaviours, while encouraging positive and meaningful choices in role-model and celebrity consumption to promote an ethic of care (Gilligan 1982; Muncy and Eastman 1998; Papaoikonomou, Valverde, and Ryan 2012).

From an anti-consumption perspective, the recognition that obsessive pursuit of acquisitions can disturb happiness, and tranquillity, is activated. Accordingly, this study proposes a composite understanding of meaningful well-being, arguing that consumption-related pursuits be conducted with prudence and honour, and proposes a model (see Fig. 1) that juxtapositions individual level micro-related aspects (as exemplified by Kim Kardashian’s and Kanye West’s spending, as also Kris Jenner’s and Kanye West’s discursive texts), with societal level macro-related aspects (as exemplified in President Obama’s and the wider community’s discursive texts).

Fig. 1 - Proposed model of Meaningful Well-being



We argue that considering one aspect of well-being without the other, only leads to lop-sided and un-meaningful visions of well-being. It is precisely at such a juncture that anti-consumption takes on the imperative of championing the balance between the individual micro-related and the societal macro-related aspects in the notion of well-being.

To conclude, consumption related decisions are not about economic resources alone but are also inextricably linked to well-being at individual, community and societal levels. As such, this paper espouses the consideration of both individual and societal needs in the definition and understanding of ‘meaningful’ well-being.

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