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Exploring the Cultural Logic of Translocal Marketplace Cultures:

Essays on New Methods and Empirical Insights

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this doctoral research is to explore new forms of cultural production that are currently transforming the global marketplace cultures of today. Prior research has given rise to a number of viewpoints on how we should think about the accelerating globalization of markets and what particular cultural dynamics are at play in shaping the constantly evolving marketplace cultures. These include approaches stressing the logics of cultural assimilation or adaptation, models of cultural globalization and glocalization as well as the postmodern fragmentation of markets. This thesis maps out central tendencies in cultural theory regarding these approaches and directs attention to the logics of 'translocal' cultural production, emphasizing the role of translocal practices and communities as central constituents of transnational marketplace cultures. Digitalized and neo-tribal forms of cultural production are investigated as particular empirical examples of such emerging modes of translocal marketplace cultures. In addition, the thesis elaborates on new methods and a conceptual perspective suitable for their study.

Four essays interrogate a series of interlinked research issues and form the main output of this doctoral research. Two of the essays are methodological and two empirical illustrations of the proposed methods. Essay I investigates how netnographic methods can offer a better understanding of the transnational nature of online cultural phenomena and argues that a better understanding of the new 'translocal sites', such as transnational online communities and consumer networks, can open up new research opportunities on an increasingly global consumer culture. Essay II gives an empirical illustration of netnographic methods and investigates the nature of translocal cultural production in web-based communities by examining new forms of environmental dialogue and political participation in a global traveller website. Essay III explores how videographic methods can be used in the study of consumer and marketplace cultures, thus paving the way for the final Essay IV in which videography is applied in a multi-sited ethnography of a translocal, neo-tribal consumer culture in extreme sports. Empirical insights are based on two primary sets of data: netnographic data gathered from online community (Essays II) and ethnographic data gathered from five countries (Essay IV).

The findings demonstrate that, most importantly, consumer culture and markets can no longer be conceived or studied only in terms of national, territorial, geographical or locally bound identity or community. This research argues that a distinctive cultural logic which is inherently translocal, i.e.

transnational but local in various localities and sites, is currently transforming marketplace cultures. It views markets as gradually disintegrated, rootless and de-territorial entities that are connected primarily through sociability established via translocal practices. These practices on the other hand are constantly being produced, negotiated and contested in transnational communities of people, including online communities, gathered around particular consumption activities.

Regarding the existing literature, the proposed perspective calls attention to the ultimate site of the marketplace, re-conceptualizing it as continuously evolving and translocal 'social site' in which participants engage in. Building on practice theory, this site consists of both mental and bodily practice elements (such as doings and sayings) as well as material arrangements (setups of material objects which compose the entities where practices are carried out). This site is neither static nor bound to a location and therefore by studying it new fruitful research possibilities opens up into global marketplace cultures. In addition, new research methods including netnography and videography are proposed that are particularly suitable for analyzing translocal marketplace phenomena.

Keywords: consumer culture, marketplace cultures, cultural globalization, translocal practices, consumer tribes, online communities, practice theory, ethnography, netnography, videography

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I want to dedicate this work to my parents Kristina and Heimo, and especially to my sister Laura.

Helsinki, April 2010

Joonas Rokka

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LIST OF ORIGINAL ESSAYS

The thesis is based on the following four essays. In the text they are referred to by Roman numerals I-IV.

I. **Rokka, J.**: Netnographic Inquiry and New Translocal Sites of the Social. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34, (2010, forthcoming).

(Special Issue on New Approaches in Consumer Research)

II. **Rokka, J. & Moisander, J.**: Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities: Negotiating Ecological Citizenship among Global Travellers. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 33, (2009) 199-205.

(Special Issue on Sustainable Consumption)

III. **De Valck, K., Rokka, J. & Hietanen, J.**: Videography in Consumer Research: Visions for a Method on the Rise. *Finanza Marketing e Produzione*, 27 (2009) 81-100.

(Special Issue on Interpretive Consumer Research)

IV. **Rokka, J., Hietanen, J. & De Valck, K.**: Brothers in Paint: Practice-Oriented Inquiry into a Tribal Marketplace Culture. Previous version of this paper was presented at *Consumer Culture Theory Conference*, June 11-14, Ross School of Business, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor MI, USA.

(Unpublished manuscript)

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Rokka, J., Hietanen, J. & De Valck, K.: Brothers in Paint: Practice-Oriented Inquiry into a Tribal Marketplace Culture. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, 37, (2010) Campbell, M.C., Inman, J., Pieters, R. (eds.), (forthcoming). (Videography)[*]

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[*] Essay IV consist of two research products: a paper supported by a videography (video format research publication). Throughout this manuscript they will be referred to as one research product, except when otherwise indicated. The videography can be accessed online at http://insidevideography.blogspot.com/ or found on DVD adjacent to this manuscript.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and research interest

In this doctoral research I wish to seek a better understanding of the nature of transnational consumer and marketplace cultures of today by considering a number issues that have been brought about by new forms of cultural production linked with the *transnationalization* and *translocalization* of our contemporary lives. The point of departure for my project was simply to consider how recent cultural and technological transformations such as the increasing hyper-mobility of people, things and ideas as well as new means of digital communication and connectivity across the globe are presently changing the way we live our lives as consumers. As I was quickly convinced that these current transformations are of great relevance to researchers, managers and policymakers alike and, on the other hand, that they are extremely complex phenomena and not completely understood in the present theoretical discussions, my attention was gradually directed toward more specific questions that center on how we should come to think about and conceptualize the transnational dynamics that are currently at play in shaping contemporary consumer culture and markets.

The main interest in this thesis is on investigating the *cultural* aspects of consumption and markets. Although *consumer culture*[1] and the cultural have a variety of meanings, in my thesis they refer primarily to the distinct ways people live and make sense of their lives in the consumer society. Examples of the ways in which consumer culture influences, guides and constrains human behavior can be highlighted by questions such as: How do people make sense of their various consumption choices and practices? How do people interpret and give meanings to consumption objects and activities? How is consumption shaping identities and lifestyles? What role do products and services play in people's lives in general? Why do some brands summon global desire while others do not? How do people deal with the downsides of consumption such as environmental degradation and

[1] 'Consumer culture', in more general terms, refers to a society where consumer goods obtained through market exchange play a key role in the construction of culture, identity and social life (Hämäläinen and Moisander 2007)

unethical products? How do people seek communion and join various, often consumption-oriented groups in their search for meaningful lives?

In particular, the focus of my thesis is the *global cultural tendencies* that consumer and marketplace cultures inevitably entail. As many of the abovementioned questions highlight, it is increasingly difficult to talk about consumption without reference to global forces and cultural flows, such as those produced by global media, technology, finance, ideas and mobility. Therefore, the central argument of this thesis is that theorizing consumer culture and markets requires more attention to the new *transnational* cultural forms that are currently emerging and constantly being produced and mediated by rapidly changing global cultural flows. It may even become impossible – or to at least some degree unintelligent – to engage into cultural analyses and conceptualize markets that only reside within a certain geographical location or specific national borders.

Additionally, I wish to emphasize that it is no longer justifiable to conceive consumers only as members of a particular single culture or nationality. Instead, consumers tend to adopt and navigate between new, multiple roles and identities through which they make sense of their mundane everyday behavior, and which, at least in some instances described in this research, may remind more of cosmopolitan features than those of national. Taking into account the increasing hyper-mobility of people, boundless technological possibilities, and wealth of information that for example the internet and mobile devices are making instantly and effortlessly accessible, it is necessary to seek for new, comprehensive approaches and concepts to be advanced in this regard.

A multitude of cultural theories and research perspectives have been suggested during the years for investigating consumer culture and the globally mediated marketplaces. In addition, the transnational cultural relations have been a favorite topic among social researchers for over a hundred years now and continues to do so. Therefore, it is necessary to note that an enormous corpus of cultural theorizing can be traced back within various fields of study – ranging from cultural anthropology, cultural geography, sociology, social-psychology, cultural studies, literary criticism, postmodern theory, critical studies, media and communication studies and so forth – all of which build on diverse presumptions about what culture and cultural mean. On the other hand, I think that this may bewilder anyone attempting to engage in cultural analyses but, on the other hand, a wide-ranging theoretical base may give access to many theoretical tools and ideas that can be useful in new applications.

I wish to position this doctoral research within a fairly young research tradition dedicated to cultural approaches in consumer and market research, and more specifically Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; see Chapter 2.2.1). CCT tradition can be regarded as an emerging field in consumer research which has adopted a cultural orientation in its approaches. However, as Arnould and Thompson note, it does not represent a single theory or perspective. Instead, it is a collection or bricolage of approaches and theoretical ingredients that are borrowed, to a large extent, from other influential fields in social and cultural research. Overall, CCT brings together interpretive approaches in consumer research and addresses sociocultural, symbolic, experiential and ideological aspects of consumption. It therefore promotes a distinctive body of knowledge in consumption and marketplace behaviors (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

Although my analysis focuses mainly on the existing body of work within CCT stream, the thesis underlines that it is important to recognize how different approaches in cultural theorizing produce different sweeps of knowledge and understanding. In order to contribute to CCT tradition, I will map out and draw insights from a number of relevant and prominent terrains of cultural theorizing that have been occupied with conceptualizing transnational consumer culture: *postmodern theory*, *cultural studies and media and communication theory*. Further justifications for these choices will be presented later on in this thesis, but most importantly it can be claimed that the existing theories within cultural consumer research either have tended to borrow approaches, ideas and concepts from these selected ones (postmodern theory and cultural studies) or they are otherwise extremely potential but in some sense neglected sources of ideas (media and communication theory).

The overall purpose of my thesis is to map out what types of approaches in cultural research have so far been emphasized into *transnational* consumer and marketplace cultures and to elaborate on a new conceptual and methodological perspective that can serve as a solid and useful basis for investigating new, emerging forms of transnational cultural production. To explicate what I mean by these new forms, and more accurately to position this work, the reminder of this introduction gives an overview of the existing theoretical discussion, its central themes, concepts and key challenges that I wish to bring forward and address. Thereafter, a brief summary of the proposed thesis and its objectives are given.

Transnational Research on Marketplace Cultures

The previous work on transnational consumer culture and markets has origins in globalization debates initiated by research traditions concerned especially with international relations, sociology and cultural aspects of globalization. Since its beginnings, the debate has often been characterized problematic in the sense that it has progressed dichotomies between the global and the local, the hegemonic and the marginal and the dominant and the oppressed that may bear only little resemblance to what is actually happening in the world. In this literature, for instance, conceptions and future scenarios of global consumer culture have tended to build on two main types of reasoning: *cultural homogenization* and *cultural heterogenization* (e.g. Appadurai 1990; 1996; Kraidy 2005, 16).

Earliest commentators of the globalization debate stood in favor of the homogenization argument, stressing that the cultural dominance of certain powerful institutions like transnational media, multinational corporations and dominant nation-states have a tendency to produce global culture as a 'monoculture' in which individuals have only little room for agency. Although much of this work came from media focused studies (Hamelink 1983; Mattelart 1979; 1983; Schiller 1971/1992; 1976; Boyd-Barrett 1977; Tunstall 1977; and other perspectives Gans 1985; Iyer 1988), increased attention was directed towards a rather pessimistic view of the future often labeled as the Americanization or commodification of culture. Typical for this position was to hold a holistic conception of culture in which the individual is depicted as a kind of passive and oppressed subject at the mercy of global structures/forces. The second, more mainstream view is quite the opposite: it focuses on culture as a pluralistic phenomenon and views global culture inherently as 'multiculture' where postmodern difference and diversity is celebrated in an increasingly interconnected yet fragmented world (see for example Tomlinson 1991; Roach 1997). This view regards individuals and communities as holding an active role locally in resisting and adapting cultural meanings to fit their particular tastes, values and desires.

In the cultural consumer research and CCT tradition, it has also been acknowledged that the aesthetic snapshots of global youth and popular culture have become unmistakable signs of global culture, at least in terms of worldwide communication and brandscape (MTV, Facebook, iTunes, Nintendo Wii, Nike, Coke, Starbucks, MacDonalds, etc.). However, despite some fervent critics who may believe in 'Disneyization' or 'McDonaldization' of consumer culture and society (e.g. Ritzer

1993; Klein 2000), most of the approaches emphasize multicultural and pluralistic views of global culture, in which consumers embrace an active position in resisting global cultural forces and engage playfully in co-creating new meanings and post-modern identities from new available cultural and symbolic resources (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat 1996; Firat and Dholakia 2006) or re-negotiate global or dominant culture to fit their local socially and historically particular contexts (e.g. Robertson 1992; Wilk 1995; Tomlinson 1999; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard 2005; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Kjeldgaard and Östberg 2007; Üstüner and Holt 2007).

Several streams of transcultural research can be indentified in this regard. Interestingly, previous accounts have studied transnational consumer and marketplace cultures most often in relation to certain geographical, ethnic, national or other territorial boundaries. In particular, a large number of investigations has been occupied with studying consumption related acculturation and assimilation processes in the context of transcultural migration or ethnic minorities. In this stream, researchers have focused on identifying the ways in which immigrants adapt to their new marketplace environments as they leave another behind (Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006). The majority of these studies deals with immigrants in North America (e.g. Wallendorf and Reilly 1983; Mehta and Belk 1991; Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999), although a number of examples can be found in other contexts (e.g. Ger and Østergaard 1998; Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard 2005; Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006; Üstuner and Holt 2007).

Assimilation in these studies refers to an immersion in the culture of settlement by means of moving away from the culture of origin, whereas acculturation does not assume a loss in the values and norms of the original culture in the process of learning new ones (Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006). A common finding in these transcultural studies is that they most often assume either an unidirectional or two-directional, bi-cultural standing in their analyses. Although critique and extension to these approaches have been presented, for instance in post-assimilationist (e.g. Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard 2005) or transmigrant models (Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006), they continue to focus heavily on national and ethnic identities as key entities in their theorizations and therefore bound culture merely to a territorial location (of destination or departure).

In another important research vein, global market-mediated cultural forces and cultural adaptation or 'glocalization' processes have been the main focus (e.g. Wilk 1995; Ger and Belk 1996; Ger 1999; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Kjeldgaard and Östberg 2007; Üstuner

and Holt 2007; Heinonen 2009). These accounts have investigated how global hegemonic brand/marketscapes and structures interact with different local market cultures. Drawing largely on models of glocalization (Robertson 1992) and structures of common difference (Wilk 1995), these studies have stressed intercultural dynamics of how local cultures adapt or re-interpret global influences and market-provided meanings and consumption practices. However, this body of work also conceptualizes culture and cultural identity mainly in terms of certain national, ethnic and territorial contexts. In addition, frameworks of cultural domination, ideology and resistance characterize many of these prior approaches.

What seems to remain troublesome is that many of the existing accounts in this research stream have relied or built on models of global-local or center-periphery dynamics (although sometimes improved ones) which may have proven too simplistic. I consider this as the first key challenge in the present transnational research and concur with Appadurai (1996, 32) when he argues that the new global cultural economy has to be understood as a more complex, overlapping and disjunctive order.

The 'New' Mediascape and Global Flows

From the point of view of my thesis, the second key challenge transforming the global consumer and marketplace cultures is the rapidly changing 'mediascape'. In existing literature the notion of mediascape proposed by Arjun Appadurai (1990; 1996) has been widely used in explaining the complexity inherent in transnational cultural production.

Appadurai, who is an anthropologist and specialist in transnational cultural studies, defines mediascape as the *"distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studies), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media"* (1996, 35). It is hence described as a key vehicle in the global cultural production together with other major global flows – people, finance, technology and ideology. The suffix -scape used by Appadurai directs attention to the more fluid forms and irregular shapes of these media-created landscapes and also imaginary worlds connected to them.

The most important feature about mediascapes is that they produce "large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapes to viewers around the world, in which the world of

commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed" (Appadurai 1990, 52). Mediascapes are thus building blocks of what Appadurai (1996) has named 'imagined worlds', that is, multiple worlds that are inherently constituted by historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe. The mediascape has a tendency to circulate and disseminate cultural meanings, representations and values, in other words *cultural flows*, which are used by consumers as cultural and symbolical ingredients in their daily lives, for example in their identity work.

The lines between realistic and the fictional landscapes people see and experience therefore become blurred and the further away these audiences are from the direct experiences, the more likely they are to construct imagined worlds of their own. Although it is important to note that people around the world live in such imagined worlds and are able to contest and sometimes even subvert the 'official' imagined worlds and create their own ones, the mediascape in many cases has been argued to produce strikingly homogenous, globally spread consumer cultures. This is also pointed out by Appadurai (1990, 52) when he writes that the mediascapes tend to be produced either by private (corporations) or state interests as "image-centered, narrative-based stories and strips of reality out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives…". In most instances, previous work has regarded mediascape as an institution controlled by the multinational companies or powerful nations (e.g. Sklair 1998, Jameson 1998) stressing mediascape's decisive role as a rather unidirectional and dominating enterprise.

Despite the notion's wide application, a general finding of this thesis is that theories building on the concept of mediascape have, for some reason, neglected perhaps the biggest transformation that the media has faced so far: the internet and the social web. Whereas prior work has stressed the electronic dissemination and production capabilities of media-created images and texts (e.g. TV, radio), the nature of digital forms of production have not been considered or properly challenged before. Therefore, I argue in this thesis that the mediascape is under a fundamental change which is on its way to produce new forms of consumer agency, identity and sociability.

Most importantly, due to emerging social web, consumer empowerment and democratization of cultural production have already been recognized as important drivers of new sorts of cultural transformation (e.g. Firat and Dholakia 2006). In this sense, the worldwide dissemination of creative and cultural ideas and resources (such as values, meanings, identities and ideologies) has taken a major twist towards a new logic which is very different from that of the more traditional media (TV,

radio, news, magazines, advertising and entertainment industry). For instance, to an increasing degree, consumers are now able to access information and knowledge that is more transparent, co-created, peer-to-peer and unbiased by the global media industry. Moreover, consumers have new possibilities of communicating, participating, sharing and producing their own content in interaction with other consumers or consumer groups by means of online technologies – even from remote locations of the world. This arguably implies that the "new" mediascape has further blurred the boundaries of global and local, time, space and presence. As a result, we have been welcomed, indeed, to a whole new neighborhood and condition "where we have come closer to even with those most distant from our selves" which Appadurai himself first began to envision (1996, 178).

The Birth of Consumer Neo-Tribes

The third challenge relevant to transnational cultural production, I argue, is the birth of *consumer tribes* which has spurred considerable attention among consumer culture theorists (e.g. Cova and Cova 2002; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, 2007). Although modern society is often seen in the light of growing individualism due to the weakening of social and family bonds, local ties and more traditional forms of community, it has been proposed that new *neo-tribal* and *post-modern* forms of community will eventually replace, at least to some degree, the traditional forms of community. This observation, originally made by the French sociologist Michel Maffesoli (1988/1996), has recently inspired consumer researchers to inquire further into consumer tribes, collectives and communities that are organized around different consumption interests, lifestyles, values, practices and material culture itself.

According to Maffesoli's (1988/1996) view, the social existence of our society seems to occur more and more through the 'little masses', heterogeneous fragments of society, groups distinguished by their members' shared lifestyles and tastes. In his view, these neo-tribes cannot be understood as their more traditional counterparts, archaic tribes because they do not have similar fixity, longevity or physical boundaries. Rather they are affection-based collectivities that are fluid, ephemeral and defined only in terms of conceptual boundaries. In addition, the contemporary social life is marked by membership in multiplicity of overlapping groups in which people are free to move in-between, and in which the roles one plays become the main sources of identification.

In cultural consumer and marketing research, Maffesoli's ideas have been applied with the focus on different consumption activities. For example, consumer tribes gather around common interests and

lifestyles (e.g. Schouten and McAlexander 1995), fashion (Rinallo 2007), fandom and gaming (Kozinets 2001; Jenkins 2006; Brown 2007), leisure activities (Celci *et al.* 1993; Cova and Cova 2001; 2002; Goulding *et al.* 2002), online communities (Kozinets 1997; 2001; 2002a; Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; Giesler, 2006), iconic brands (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Holt 2004; Muñiz and Schau 2005; Belk and Tumbat 2005; Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould, 2009), retro brands (Brown *et al.* 2003) and also everyday convenience products (Cova and Pace 2005). In this context it has been argued that consumer tribes and collectives summon around products and brands that are able to link like-minded people together (Cova 1997).

More specifically the notion of consumer tribe is defined by Cova and Cova (2002) as *"a network of heterogeneous persons – in terms of age, sex, income, etc. – who are linked with a shared passion or emotion; a tribe is also capable of collective action, its members are not simple consumers, they are also advocates"*. Consumer tribes thus tend to embody the re-rooting or displacement of individuals from their traditional social context, and they are motivated by the search of shared experience, belonging and meaning – for instance in the case of rave dancers (Goulding *et al.* 2002), roller skaters (Cova and Cova 2001), or alternate photographers (Cova and Cova 2002). In addition, they are distinguished from the masses by their inherently unstable, small-scale, affectual, temporal and de-territorialized nature.

Varieties in which consumer tribes proliferate highlight the fact that these tribes are in many sense hybrid cultural forms (Moisander, Rokka and Valtonen 2010): They re-appropriate different cultural resources, modes and forms that circulate through the markets and media – including the global and local, to see what kinds of hybrid forms are forged within them (Cova *et al.* 2007). Thus, Maffesoli's neo-tribe metaphor can help us in comprehending the multiplicity of situations, experiences and logical as well as non-logical actions that constitute our global consumer society.

Arguably, this implies that more attention should be directed away from national and geographically bound investigations of consumer culture to include also transnational, de-territorialized and post-nationalistic approaches which are more in tune with neo-tribalized consumer collectives. Therefore, I argue that neo-tribal realities and their dynamics can be conceived as key forces transforming transnational consumer and marketplace cultures of today.

Summary of the Proposed Study

In this thesis, I wish to address several interlinked issues in prior research on transnational consumer and marketplace cultures. A distinctive focus is suggested in which attention is directed to the logic of *translocal* cultural production, emphasizing the role of translocal practices and communities as central constituents of transnational marketplace cultures. In doing so, a new conceptual-methodological perspective is considered which aims to overcome some of the aforementioned challenges and to produce new theoretical and methodological insights.

The proposed perspective builds on the work of Arjun Appadurai (1996) who insists that contemporary consumer culture cannot be adequately studied at the level of nation-states or local markets but needs to be theorized in terms of global cultural flows, processes and sites. In Appadurai's view, cultural globalization needs to be regarded as "transcultural" and "translocal". This means that existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and multiple peripheries) cannot any longer be used for understanding global cultural economy but rather the established boundaries between local and global are mixed and mediated in complex ways (Appadurai, 1990).

Thus, I argue for a new analytical focus which underlines that culture is inherently *translocal*, i.e. transnational and local at the same time, and is continuously being negotiated, shaped and produced by "translocal communities" (Appadurai, 1996). Translocalization of marketplace cultures therefore refers to the fact that new forms of translocal sites, practices and communities are currently emerging that are not delimited to the nation-state, geographical or territorial location, but are regarded both smaller and larger than them. As particular sites of cultural production, translocal spaces, practices and communities arise from various transnational cultural flows of analogue and digital communication as well as movement of people, things and ideas across space. What they have in common is that they create new forms of agency for translocal actors who operate in a network of various localities (both physical and virtual).

In this perspective, translocal practices are understood as new forms of entities that are organized by trans-spatially connected sites or networks of interconnected localities. This approach is inspired in part by media theorist Marwan M. Kraidy (2005, 155) who, for instance, uses the term translocal in the context of international communication studies to refer to connections between several local social spaces for exploring hitherto neglected local-to-local links as an alternative for investigating

global-to-local cultural dynamics. Similarly, Erik Kit-wai Ma (2002, 131) uses the concept of translocal spatiality in the sense of a "local-to-local" spatial dynamic which consists of a web of interconnected translocal spaces that organize and maintain translocal social practices of a community. "Translocality" is thus understood as a particular cultural dynamic between localized lifeworlds in faraway sites (Ma 2002, 133). In doing so, it illuminates and gives rise to a cultural logic in which marketplace cultures are "translocally inspired and locally accomplished" (Ma 2002).

To conceptualize and provide more concrete examples of such new cultural forms, the present thesis investigates contemporary neo-tribal cultural production as a particular form of translocal marketplace cultures. As already highlighted, consumer neo-tribes who are neither tied to any particular single location nor entirely locally embedded, employ to a significant degree new translocal spaces, such as those enabled by the new mediascape and the social web. Therefore, they can be regarded as particularly good, although by no means the only examples of translocal cultural production. Two empirical studies were conducted that serve to illustrate this crucial point both in online and offline contexts: consumer neo-tribes are not bounded by geographical, spatial or temporal proximity but rather they are established and sustained by sociability through shared translocal practices.

In contrast to the work on translocal practices by Kraidy (2005), who is primarily concerned about transnational identities and bi-cultural communication processes between nations, the present thesis directs attention towards a post-nationalistic and de-territorialized view of marketplace cultures. More precisely, my claim is that that contemporary identity and sociability are to a lesser extent determined by the more traditional social and cultural markers, such as national identity, family relations, social classes, demographics, geographical or local socio-cultural environments and community. Instead, new forms and sources of identification are emphasized that are increasingly fluid, ephemeral and hybrid in character. In this sense, an approach is considered in which marketplace cultures are conceptualized and conceived as gradually disintegrated, rootless and de-territorial entities that are weaved together primarily through sociability established via translocal practices. I argue that such an alternative approach to the existing ones brings forward a number of important yet thus far neglected possibilities for research.

Another distinction from existing work on translocality should be emphasized. Rather than focusing on translocal spatiality per se (Ma 2002), the proposed approach emphasizes the role of translocal

practices and community as central constituents of transnational marketplace cultures. By analyzing neo-tribal consumption communities, attention is directed towards the ways in which translocal marketplaces cultures are established, reproduced and are maintained primarily through translocal practices. This leads us to consider a practice-oriented approach (e.g. Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; 2001; 2002; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and Von Savigny 2001) which emphasizes that practices are in fact the fundamental site of sociability and cultural production, and therefore promising locus for any cultural analyses.

Consequently, this thesis goes as far as to elaborate on the ultimate "site" of the marketplace, and building on practice-theory, conceptualizing it as a continuously evolving and translocal *social site* in which participants engage in. This site consists of both mental and bodily practice elements (such as doings and sayings) as well as material arrangements (setups of material objects which compose the entities where practices are carried out). This perspective also points out that the marketplace is to be analyzed as a dynamically evolving social site in which marketplace activities and performances take place and which determines them intelligible, desirable or accepted. The site is under constant motion, re-organization and re-arrangement and not bound to any particular location. Understood in this way, this thesis argues that the translocal site opens up fruitful and promising ground for further transnational investigations.

Regarding the existing literature in consumer culture theory (CCT), translocality or translocal inquiries into marketplace cultures have not received considerable attention although they seem to point out important dynamics in transnational cultural production. In addition, despite the growing interest in consumer neo-tribes and post-modern communities of consumption, relatively few studies can be found in which they have been considered as particular sites of transnational cultural production, or at least we seem to lack conceptual tools in their study. Regarding the new conditions brought about by the new mediascape and especially the social web, it also seems to be true that rigorous transnational cultural analyses are almost non-existent in online environments. Therefore, this thesis argues that rather than viewing transnational marketplace cultures as global, local or glocal, it is suggested that the emphasis on translocalities (and connections between and within locales) allows us to conceptualize transnational processes that currently take place.

Furthermore, it is suggested that new methodological approaches are required that are in line with the proposed approach. First, it is pointed out that netnographic methods are especially suitable for

investigating translocal online communities. However, previous studies have not employed netnography in this regard, and therefore, a new practice-oriented netnographic approach into transnational online environments is developed. Second, in order to respond to similar challenges in off-line environments, a videographic approach was examined and improved to better capture transnational marketplace dynamics.

In conclusion, my thesis advocates for future research on translocal marketplace cultures in consumer culture theory. The central argument of my work is that diverse transnational cultural flows produced by the increasing mobility and connectivity – exemplified by for instance by the new mediascape and new forms of neo-tribal identity, community and practices – have a tendency to create translocal marketplace cultures. This sort of cultural production has given rise to new forms of translocal experiences, encounters and spaces that create translocal practices and communities that are important markers of our contemporary lives. From this perspective, and by means of four research essays, novel methodologies including netnography (Essay 1 *"Netnographic Inquiry and Translocal Sites"*) and videography (Essay 3 *"Videography in Consumer Research"*) are developed and empirical insights drawn from two empirical studies conducted both in online (Essays 2 *"Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities"*) and off-line neo-tribal marketplace settings (Essay 4 *"Brothers in Paint"*).

1.2 Research design and objectives

As this thesis consists of several research essays, a summarizing umbrella of objectives and research questions are outlined next. Then, a description of how the original papers contribute to these objectives is given, and their research design explained.

The overall research task of this thesis is to study new forms of translocal cultural production from the perspective of transnational consumer culture research. More specifically, the aim is to investigate and conceptualize the current translocal dynamics of marketplace cultures. As an illustrative example, contemporary neo-tribal cultural production is examined as a particular form of translocal marketplace culture by means of two empirical cases. Thus, the purpose of this research is to:

Contribute to a better understanding of translocal marketplace cultures by empirically exploring and theoretically elaborating on the contemporary, neo-tribal forms of cultural production that have recently emerged in the market.

In this task, a number of sub-objectives need to be addressed, including:

1. *How is transnational cultural production understood in different traditions of cultural theory, and what approaches and key concepts have been employed?*
2. *How are new forms of translocal community, identity and practices produced and negotiated in transnational consumer cultures?*
3. *How can translocal marketplace cultures be studied empirically?*

To these ends Chapter Two is aimed at mapping out the existing research on transnational marketplace cultures in cultural theory in order to grasp its origins and philosophical roots. Chapter Three builds up the theoretical perspective of the thesis as well as summarizes the empirical settings and methodological approaches from the research papers (Essays 1-4). Chapter Four concludes the thesis by discussing and summarizing its contributions.

It needs to be clarified, that although these objectives and thesis chapters are listed and reported in a rather linear and straightforward way, the research process however has very little resemblance with such linearity. In fact, these objectives are the result of iteration where the researcher has been moving back-and-forth between theory and empirical fieldwork. Such emergent design is typical for

qualitative and interpretive research (Moisander and Valtonen 2006), and through it the ideas and conclusions contained in this thesis were finally put together.

The four essays in my thesis constitute the main output of this doctoral work, although the following Chapters 2 - 4 work to contextualize and justify them, and bring them into one coherent perspective and approach which is advanced throughout this thesis. The objectives and research designs for individual essays are described below and summarized in Table 1.

Essay I *"Netnographic Inquiry and New Translocal Sites"* sets out to consider how netnographic inquiry would benefit from investigations into transnational consumer cultures. The central observation made in this essay is that prior work on the digitalized and neo-tribal consumer networks and communities has left transnational perspectives in many ways empty of theoretical and empirical work. In addition, it is pointed out that also the majority of past approaches studying global aspects of marketplace cultures have been silent on online environments, especially in terms of rigorous empirical approaches. Therefore, a novel approach, building on practice-theory and netnographic methods, is set forward addressing the aforementioned gaps and encouraging new empirical work. This conceptual-methodological essay is based on a review of literature which maps out especially post-modern, sub-cultural and online cultural perspectives in consumer research. Building on this literature (which is analyzed more extensively in Chapter Two), the essay directs attention to the transnational online communities and translocal social practices in the production of marketplace cultures. It is fair to note also that this essay was principally written on the basis of experiences gained throughout the empirical work in Essay II. Logically, Essay II was prepared before Essay I.

Essay II[i] *"Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities"* investigates empirically how transnational online communities bring about new forms of cultural practices, identities and community. A transnational online community of "global travellers" in which consumers participate from around the world was studied by means of netnographic methods. The community consisted of 139.906 registered members from 244 different countries who represent diverse personal backgrounds in

[i] Joonas Rokka was responsible for drafting and writing the article based on his original research problem as well as for conducting the empirical research and analysis. Johanna Moisander's role was decisive in formulating the interpretive and conceptual framework of the article. The findings and implications are the contribution of both authors.

terms of gender, age, professional skills and travel experience. The community site had been fairly active for more than five years, the members having posted a total of 280.169 forum entries across 45.914 forum threads at the time of data collection (2006-2008). Therefore, it was concluded that the community offers in many ways a good empirical case for exploring transnational online communities and cultures. The essay's objective is to inquire what role transnational online sites play in setting the stage for new forms of cultural production and dialogue, through which particular forms of consumer identity, community, citizenship and culture are being created and negotiated. The analytic focus is on translocal dialogue on environmental and sustainable aspects of travelling through which global travellers make sense of their travelling and negotiate 'environmental citizenship' as a form of cultural practice. The empirical analysis unfolded by examining 78 of the most active members of this group, while the final round of analysis was based on 70 selected discussion threads that were representative of the community. Hence, Essays II can be considered as an empirical case study (Stake 2003) of a transnational web-based community of consumption.

Essay III[ii] *"Videography in Consumer Research"* is the second methodological paper in this thesis. Its primary objective is to elaborate how videography could be advanced as a more formidable method to study consumer culture and markets. In addition, the essay was produced in tandem with empirical fieldwork (Essay IV) and therefore takes advantage of the insights generated in action. More specifically, the approach was to review how audiovisual methods have been used in consumer research so far and to identify what hurdles videographic research still needs to overcome in order to become a more prominent mode of study. It is pointed out that videographic methods are very attractive to the consumer research community but still rarely applied for a number of reasons. The essay works on this problem by drawing on disciplines outside consumer research, namely documentary film theory and visual ethnography, to find answers that could help facilitate future videographic inquiry. Regarding the general objectives of this thesis, this essay shows that audiovisual aspects in particular are fundamental but often neglected elements of marketplace cultures and their dynamics.

[ii] The article is based on literature review on audiovisual methodologies by Kristine de Valck and Joonas Rokka. The article benefited from hands-on experiences and insights from audio-visual methods that were applied in a research project originated and led by Rokka. De Valck was responsible for writing and putting together the final version of the article. All authors have contributed equally to the findings and implications of the article.

Essay IV[iii] *"Brothers in Paint"* explores how neo-tribal marketplace cultures come into being, how they are organized and how they evolve. Employing practice-theoretical approach and drawing especially on Schatzki's ideas, the study sets out to conceptualize translocal neo-tribal marketplace culture and its dynamics via a constantly evolving nexus of practice elements and material arrangements. The analytic focus in this essay is therefore directed to off-line, transnational cultures of which neo-tribal consumer collectives are particularly good examples. The essay reports a multi-sited ethnographic study on consumer tribes gathered around the extreme sport known as paintball. This team-based sport is currently being played in over 110 countries and provided access to a transnational, rapidly changing marketplace culture in an intriguing setting. The empirical study was significant: ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in five large-scale international paintball tournaments, in European Millennium tournaments (Malaga, Nürnberg, Toulouse, London and Paris) and in the PSP World Cup (Orlando) in 2008. In Millennium tournaments there were around 130 paintball teams from 20 countries and in the World Cup tournament in Orlando more than 500 teams participated. Our data consists of approximately 100 informal interviews, 20 videotaped interviews, 400 recorded photographs, 50 hours of videotaped paintball practices in tournaments and casual settings. Due to the videographic emphasis in our analysis, essay IV consists of a research paper and a videography (video format publication) which serves to complement and support the written paper.

[iii] Joonas Rokka was responsible writing the article based on his original research problem and interpretive framework. The article is the result of Rokka's research proposal and plan to collect data accordingly. Joel Hietanen's role was crucial as a key informant and main responsible for the collection of empirical data. The empirical fieldwork was carried out by Hietanen and Rokka. The videography was composed, produced and edited by Hietanen and Rokka. All authors have contributed equally to the findings and implications of the article.

Table 1 *Overview of Individual Essays*

Essay no.	Research questions	Research approach	Data, materials	Analytic focus
I	How netnographic inquiry could benefit investigations into transnational online cultural phenomena from a conceptual-methodological point of view? What role the new "translocal sites" such as online communities and consumer networks play in such transnational cultural production?	Elaboration on prior transnational cultural research approaches and netnographic explorations into online communities and consumer collectives. Insights are drawn from empirical work (i.e. Essay II).	Conceptual and methodological essay.	Practice-oriented netnographic methods for transnational cultural inquiry.
II	How web-based online communities bring about new forms of translocal cultural dialogue? What is the role of online sites in cultural production and in dissemination of knowledge and dialogue through which particular forms of consumer-citizenship is being created and sustained?	Netnographic study of a transnational web-based online community of global travelers consisting of 139,906 registered members from 244 different countries.	Netnographic materials collected from online community forum discussions. Data was collected in 2006-8.	Cultural practice of environmental citizenship and the negotiation of sustainable consumption practices and lifestyles.
III	How to advance videography as a rigorous academic method to study consumer culture and markets? What set of beliefs, assumptions, and practices guide audiovisual inquiry in consumer research?	Critical examination of research disciplines outside consumer research (visual ethnography and documentary film theory) and insights from empirical study (i.e. Essay IV).	Conceptual and methodological essay.	Practice-oriented videography for studying tribal consumer culture and markets.
IV	What opportunities the emerging practice-oriented approach opens up for conceptualizing tribal consumer culture and marketplace dynamics? How such marketplace cultures come into being, how they are organized, and how they evolve? What is the role of consumer tribes in translocal cultural production?	Multi-sited ethnographic study of consumer tribes gathered around the extreme sport of paintball. Fieldwork carried out in large scale-paintball tournaments in six countries.	Ethnographic materials including approx. 100 informal interviews, 20 video-taped interviews, 50 hrs of video footage, 400 photos, magazines, online discussions. Data was collected in 2008.	Practice-oriented perspective for analyzing the 'site' of the tribal marketplace culture via constantly evolving nexus of practice elements and material arrangements.

2 PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS OF TRANSNATIONAL CONSUMER CULTURE THEORIES

The objective of this chapter is to inquire into and map out some of the most promising perspectives and approaches to transnational consumer culture that cultural theory entails. The first section (2.1) gives a brief background regarding the philosophical foundations of cultural theory, discussing the principal tendencies and perspectives in social and cultural inquiry. The second section (2.2) analyzes the variety in transnational consumer culture research by mapping four prominent fields of cultural theory. In particular, the intention is to highlight the distinctive perspectives as well as ontological and epistemological stances seeking to theorize consumer culture and the global marketplace cultures.

2.1 Philosophical foundations of cultural theory

Broadly speaking, the debate in all of social and cultural theory, as well as in this thesis, is about the constitution of social life: the nature of social existence, what it consists of and the character of its transformation (e.g. Schatzki 2002, xi). It is occupied with how we should come to understand and interpret social life and action. However, different social/cultural research traditions or schools of thought are linked to distinctive *epistemic cultures*, i.e. sets of research conventions, sets of presumptions and customary practices that create certain standards and obligations that researchers are to follow. Epistemic cultures are cultures that create and warrant knowledge, and so to say arrangements and mechanisms which make up "*how we know what we know*" (Knorr Cetina 1999, 1-2). They are essentially based on philosophical foundations, including ontological and epistemological paths which guide and constrain research traditions in how they come to understand and enact empirical research, and how they contribute to theoretical knowledge and methodological advancements. Before moving on to the study of transnational consumer culture specifically, the following two sub-sections review main varieties of social ontologies in cultural theory and outline principal perspectives in culturalist theorizing.

2.1.1 Social ontologies in cultural theory

Every epistemic culture, theoretical and methodological position is governed by certain ontological and epistemological presuppositions. *Ontology* deals with the characteristics of reality, or what there is

in the world, and therefore has important consequences for research traditions. Social/cultural theory is most often divided into two distinctive, opposing ontologies of *individualism* and *societism* (e.g. Schatzki 1996; 2002, 2005; Reckwitz 2002). According to philosopher Theodore R. Schatzki (2002), the former ontology entails that individual subjects and possibly also their relations are the basis of social phenomena, whereas the latter takes that social phenomena cannot be reduced to individuals but rather complex social organizations of individuals. This fundamental divide is closely linked with nominalism and contextualism. Schatzki (2002, xiv) explains that *nominalism* contends that the character and transformation of sociality can be explained solely through the properties of and relations among the particular entities (such as self-identity) that compose social life. *Contextualism*, on the other hand, opposes nominalism arguing that these matters must be referred to a context (such as particular historical, political, and cultural conditions or structures, systems of meanings, discourses, or social practices), different from these entities, in which the latter exists. The "context" hence entails a setting or backdrop which envelops and determines social phenomena. As implied, individualist ontologies are nominalist in character whereas socialist ontologies deal with one or more contextual arrangements (Ibid, xiv). In addition, more recently, another distinction has been made between the *humanist* and *posthumanist* ontologies. This third dimension directs attention to the ways in which other entities than humans (such as technology or nature) may exert significant agency, or at least challenge the humanist agency, in social life (Ibid, xv).

Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, builds up another important foundation for a research tradition. It consists of the shared beliefs of what is considered as knowledge, how it is produced, what are its sources and limits. As depicted by Thomas A. Schwandt (2003), epistemology deals with dimensions of understanding and especially "*ways of understanding understanding*". He emphasizes the analytical importance of several features always present in any qualitative inquiry and which characterize much of cultural research: the roles of presuppositions, inter-subjectivity, reconstruction and reproduction, active engagement as well as the role of language in making interpretations about phenomena. Regarding these properties, Schwandt (2003) maps out three important epistemological stances to better understand the wide arrays of work in social inquiry: *interpetivist*, *hermeneutic* and *social constructionist*. All of these philosophies embrace different perspectives on the aims and practice of understanding human actor, different ethical commitments, and different stances of methodological and epistemological issues of representation, validity, objectivity and concerns of what constitutes knowledge and how it is to be justified. The three mentioned epistemological positions are next described in some detail.

First of all, the interpretivist philosophies take that to understand a particular social action (e.g. gift giving, marriage or some consumption activities) the inquirer must grasp the meanings that constitute that action. It means that human action is always taken as meaningful, indicating that it has certain intentional content which can only be understood in terms of the systems of meaning to which it belongs. Hence, to "find" meaning in one's action, or to understand what a particular action means, requires that one interprets a particular way what the actors are doing (Schwandt 2003, 296). The main varieties or processes of interpretation can be labeled, according to Schwandt (2003, 296-300), as follows:

- *Empathic identification* (also called as intentionalism) is a stance where the researcher tries to break out of her/his historical circumstances to reproduce meaning or intention of the actor. It is an psychological reenactment – getting inside the head of the actor to understand what he or she is up to in terms of motives, beliefs, desires, thoughts and so on. In this sense it shares, at least to some extent, an objectivist epistemology. But, Schwandt points out, for instance Clifford Geertz (1976/79) indicates that this understanding can arise also from the acts of "looking over the actors shoulders" and trying to figure out (through observing and by conversing) what the actors think they are up to rather than trying to "get inside the actors head".

- *Phenomenological sociology (and ethnomethodology)* analyzes how meaning is created in the communication, conversations and interaction between people and it studies especially how the everyday, intersubjective life world (Lebenswelt) is constituted (e.g Harold Garfinkel 1967; Alfred Schütz 1962; 1932/1967; and Erving Goffman 1959). The aim in this approach is to grasp (analyzing talk/conversation and interaction) how we come to interpret our own and others' actions as meaningful and to "reconstruct the genesis of objective meanings of action in the intersubjective communication of individuals".

- *Language games*, in turn, takes that human action is meaningful by virtue of system of meanings to which it belongs, and therefore emphasizes the role of language and social action as subjects of meaning systems. Wittgenstein's term of "language games" is usually used to refer to those systems of meaning (including institutional and cultural norms, action-constituted rules) from which understanding can be sought (e.g. Giddens 1979; 1984; 1993; Habermas 1967/1988; Wittgenstein 1958).

- *Philosophical hermeneutics* offer a critique of the interpretivist theory of human action and meaning. It presents a radically different way (compared to previous three perspectives) of representing

> the notion of interpretive understanding which, according to Schwandt (2003), is based on the works of Gadamer (1975; 1977; 1981) and Taylor (1985a,b; 1995) and was inspired by Heidegger. It stresses the importance of an iterative part-to-the-whole interpretation where the researcher needs to understand the context in order to interpret a text written in that context. Firstly, the hermeneutics contend that understanding is not a "procedure, or rule-governed undertaking"; rather it is the very condition of being human. Understanding *is* interpretation. Secondly, in the act of interpreting (of "taking something *as* something"), socio-historically inherited "bias" or prejudice is not regarded as characteristic that the researcher needs to get rid of. On the contrary, understanding *requires* the engagement of one's biases. Moreover, in this view understanding is not a reproduction of the researcher's understanding but it is produced in the dialogue, participation, conversing and encounter with the alien or what is not understood. This is a radical departure from the interpretivist idea that human action *has* meaning and that the meaning can be "discovered" by the interpreter. (Schwandt 2003, 300-2).

To elaborate a little further, philosophical hermeneutics and social constructionist philosophies (like deconstructionist, critical and some feminist theory) in turn have their origins in the movement away from an empiricist, logical atomistic and (realist) representational accounts of meaning and knowledge (Schwandt 2003, 304). *Social constructionist philosophies* aim to overcome the "representationalist" epistemologies in the sense that knowing is active instead of passive. It takes that we are all constructivist if we all believe that the mind is active in constructing knowledge, and therefore contends that human beings do not find or discover knowledge as much as they construct or make it. This can be exemplified in Potter's (1996, 98) words in the sense that "the world… is constituted in one way or another as people talk it, write it, and argue it". Along the same lines, Denzin (1997) argues that discourse is the material practice that constitutes representation and description. We hence invent concepts, ideas, models and schemes to make sense of the experience, and we constantly modify them in the light of new experiences. Further, as the hermeneutics philosophies stress, we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against our prior experiences, practices and shared understandings (Schwandt 2003, 305). To summarize, social constructionist accounts object what could be termed "meaning realism/objectivism" and (like philosophical hermeneutics) critique the meaning as an fixed object or entity, while supporting a view of individuals as self-interpreting beings and that language constitutes this being. But unlike philosophical hermeneutics the social constructionist hold that there is no truth to the matter of interpretation. (Ibid, 307).

2.1.2 Perspectives in culturalist theorizing

Next, attention is directed more specifically to the ways in which legacies of culturalist theorizing have treated the 'cultural' or the 'social' and their underlying assumptions. Leaning firmly on Reckwitz's (2002) systematic analysis, it is proposed that although cultural theories are often vaguely lumped together based on at least superficial theoretical commonalities, and because of their seemingly similar vocabularies, they tend to disguise important conceptualizations and differences in theoretical perspectives. Thus, four typical theoretical positions in cultural theory will be listed below. It is important to glance into the origins of these varieties in order to form a satisfactory overall scheme for the subsequent analysis that will follow.

In tracing the foundations based on which cultural theory at present has been built, Reckwitz (2002) first contrasts cultural theory briefly with two fundamentally different, classical schools (and their distinctive vocabularies) which have sought to explain the ways and forms of social action in the modern social theory. The first, *purpose-oriented school* emerged at the end of 18th century as a result of Scottish moral philosophy, and is often connected to the Scottish utilitarianists, the Rational Choice Theory and eventually to more recent work by Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein. In their agenda, human and social action is explained as primarily driven by goal-oriented, rational and intentional behavior of individual actors, describing the human subject as 'homo economicus'. Social order was hence created as a product of combining the individual interests in a nominalist fashion. The second school, *norm-oriented theory of action*, based its understanding and focus – as opposed to the first classical socio-theoretical school – in its socialist and contextualist contentions. Instead of looking at the motivation and individual purposes they presented the proper perspective of 'sociology' in trying to grasp the conditions of social action by pointing to collective norms and values, or to 'rules' which express the social 'ought'. This school, which is occupied with describing the 'homo sociologicus', echoes most importantly the names of Emily Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. The third classical school, *cultural theories* emerged as a result of 'culturalist revolutions' in 20th century social philosophy. It contends that social order is not a product of mutual normative expectations, but embedded in collective cognitive and symbolic structures in a shared knowledge which *enables* and *constrains* social actions. And unlike classical figures of homo economicus and sociologus, cultural theories take into account the implicit, tacit and unconscious layers of knowledge which ultimately build up "symbolic organization of reality" (Ibid., 246).

It is quickly revealed that by nature 'cultural theories' are based on different theoretical and contextual standpoints and need to be systematically and critically questioned. What they have in common in explaining and understanding social action is, according to Reckwitz (2002, 244), that they are all founded upon the premise of having "recourse to symbolic structures of meaning". However, differences arise on a very basic level regarding cultural-theoretical vocabularies and, in particular, the distinctive 'locations of the social/cultural'. Reckwitz (Ibid., 245) points out that different schools in cultural theorizing offer opposing locations of the social and conceptualize the 'smallest unit' of cultural analysis very differently: *in minds, in discourses, in interactions and in practices*. The elementary forms of these cultural genealogies can be summarized in more detail as follows (Reckwitz 2002):

- *Culturalist mentalism*, perhaps the longest tradition in cultural theories, locates the social or collective in the "minds" of people. In this view, the mind is conceived as the place for the social because the mind is the place of knowledge and meaning structures. Therefore, the smallest unit of social analysis is the mental structures. For instance, in the objectivist structuralism in anthropology by Lévi-Strauss (1950; 1962) human behavior is the result of the 'unconscious' mind. In contrast to this, subjectivist structuralism, such as Schütz's (1932/1967) social phenomenology, aims to grasp and reproduce the subjective perspective of the mental acts of consciousness. In both cases "the idea that mind is a substance, place, or realm that houses a particular range of activities and attributes" (Shatzki 1996, 22) and which can be accessed by the interpreter prevails.

- *Culturalist textualism* contrarily rejects the idea that symbolic structures are situated "inside" the mind. Instead it claims that symbolic structures lie "outside", in chains of signs, in symbols, in discourse and in communication or "texts". In order to explain structures of the social world, one must stay on the level of signs and texts and their materiality where symbolic structures must be located and not anchored in the psychological level of minds (including the conscious of the collective). In this view, mental qualities turn out to be nothing more than very specific concepts within discourse about something which is described mental. Culturalist textualism has emerged in the last third of 20th centrury as a critique to mentalism. It also includes three sub-branches: 1) poststructuralism and semiotics (e.g. Foucault 1969) which have "decentred the subject" and define the social at the level of discourses or sign-systems; 2) radical hermeneutics or anti-mentalist structuralism (e.g.

Geertz 1972) which regards culture "as texts"; and 3) constructivist theory of social systems (e.g. Luhmann 1984) which ascribe, on the social level, the quality of observing or interpreting the world to communication itself (Reckwitz 2002).

- *Intersubjectivism*, guided by the linguistic turn, locates the social in "interactions" or the use of ordinary language. The social has thus the structure of intersubjectivity, i.e. in speech acts the agents refer to a non-subjective realm of semantic propositions and pragmatic rules concerning the use of signs. Sociality therefore lies in the constellation of symbolic interactions between agents (e.g. Goffman). This critique to mentalism contends that language represents a sort of world of propositions and rules irreducible to psychological factors. Intersubjectivism, as classically formulated by Habermas (1981), takes that individuals internalize and use the content and patterns of the 'objective' realm of meanings in their mutual speech acts. Interaction is thus a process of transference of meanings which have been internalized in the mind.

- *Practice theory* places the social in the "practices" and it can be traced back all the way to the founding fathers of social and cultural theorists, such as Bourdieu, Foucault, Giddens, Heidegger, Nietzche, Taylor, Weber and Wittgenstein. According to Reckwitz (2002, 253), practice is a "routinized type of behavior which consist of several elements interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, know-how and understanding, skills, emotions and motivations". Rather than inquiring the essence of individual or collective experiences, or constellations of symbolic meaning and interaction, this stream is occupied with analyzing practices – such as a way of consuming – which consist of a multitude of single and often unique actions reproducing the practice, and which also entail certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring. As conceptualized by Schatzki (1996), practice is hence a "nexus of doings and sayings" and a "routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects handled, subjects are treated, and things are described" (Reckwitz 2002, 250). However, the 'practice turn' in contemporary social theory is still a recent development (Schatzki *et al.* 2001). Yet, it presents another distinctively different way of conceptualizing the social action.

This brief mapping thus produced a certain genealogical chart or family tree of respective cultural orientations, researchers and their connections (see Table 2). It serves as a background framework against which more recent conceptualizations of consumer culture need to be contextualized. It is

proposed in this thesis that only by working out these distinctive theoretical standpoints, presuppositions, and vocabularies theoretical and methodological advancements can be sought for the study of consumer culture and markets.

Table 2 *Cultural Theories in Historical Perspective*

Time	Perspective / school of though	Key thinkers
…	"Homo economicus"	Enlightenment philosophers; e.g. Descartes; Kant
Late 1700s	Utilitarianists; purpose-oriented theory of action	Scottish Moral Philosophers
Late 1800s	"Homo sociologicus" Sociology; norm-oriented theory of action	Weber; Heidegger; Marx Durkheim; Parsons; Simmel
1900s	"Culturalist revolution" begins	
1910s	Structuralism; as classical mentalism;	de Saussure (1916)
1920s		Heidegger (1927)
1930s	Phenomenology; as mentalist subjectivism	Schütz (1932/1967); Husserl (1931)
1940s		
1950s	Structuralism; in anthropology; as scientific/objectivist mentalism Symbolic interactionism	Lévi-Strauss (1950; 1962) Goffman (1958; 1959)
1960s	Ethnomethodology; Semiotics; as cultural textualism Hermeneutics; Wittgensteinian language games	Garfinkel (1967) Barthes (1967; 1972; 1977) Habermas (1967; 1981); Wittgenstein (1958)
1970s	"Interpretive turn" Post-structuralism; as cultural textualism Symbolistic anthropology; as cultural textualism Theories of social practices	 Foucault (1969/1972; 1973; 1980; 1984) Geertz (1972; 1973; 1983) Bourdieu (1972; 1980/1990; 1984); Giddens (1979; 1984; 1991; 1993); Taylor (1971; 1985; 1995)
1980s	Constructivist theory of social systems; as a type of cultural textualism "Linguistic turn"; intersubjectivism	Luhmann (1984); Knorr Cetina (1981) Habermas (1981), Potter (1996)
1990s	"Practice turn"; practice theory Gender studies; critical theory Science of technology studies; posthumanism	Turner (1994); Schatzki (1996; 2002 ; 2005); Schatzki *et al.* (2001) ; Knorr Cetina (1999) Butler (1990) Latour (1987; 1991/1993) ; Latour and Woolgar (1979)
2000s		

Sources: Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2002; Schwandt 2003

2.2 Transnational consumer culture research

As proposed, I will next investigate and map out in more detail four promising fields of transnational cultural theory: *Consumer culture theories, Postmodern cultural theories, Cultural studies and Media and communication theory*. Each of these fields has been largely occupied in conceptualizing the global, mediated cultural economy and are presented next in no particular order. However, Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) will be looked into first – and treated in greatest depth and detail – in order to give reasonable insight into the field within which my thesis aims to contribute.

The following mapping will rely heavily on the most often cited research publications that have already critically analyzed and brought together wide-ranging volumes of literature in transnational cultural theory within their respective disciplines. This kind of approach is necessary within the scope of the thesis, which would otherwise turn into a lifelong and still incomplete mapping exercise. It is also worth iterating that the overall aim of this chapter is the construction of theoretical positioning for the present thesis. Therefore, the task is to delve into the previous key perspectives and their analytical approaches to show how each of them can basically be distinguished as alternatives for studying transnational consumer culture and markets.

My analysis is focused on a number of questions that I consider helpful in comparing and analyzing the previous work: How is culture and global/transnational culture conceptualized in these fields of study? What are considered the focal sites of agency and central tropes of analysis? How is identity and community conceptualized and in what ways is culture "located"? Finally, what has been the main empirical focus in the existing accounts?

To help the reader, Table 3 summarizes the main findings of the mapping that follows in the subsequent sections.

Table 3 *Transnational Cultural Theorizing in Comparative Perspective*

Cultural theories	**Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)**	**Postmodern Cultural Theories**	**Cultural Studies**	**Media and Communication Theory**
Conception of culture	Pluralistic, contextual, socialist, humanist	Pluralistic, fragmented, hyperreal, fluid	Pluralistic	Synthetic
Conception of Global/ Transnational Culture	Multiculture	Multiculture (albeit in some instances monoculture)	Multiculture (albeit in some instances monoculture)	Transculture (albeit in some instances monoculture)
Central Tropes of Analysis	Dominance, hegemony, resistance, ideology, ethnicity, acculturation, assimilation/adaptation, co-creation, co-production	Liberatory enchantment, celebration of difference, co-creation of multiple realities	Dominance, hegemony, resistance, ideology, adaptation, co-production	Hybridity
Site of Agency	Consumers' personal and/or collective identities, global market-mediated structures	Individual's multiple identities and/or post-modern community	Individual identities and/or sub-cultural community, global structures	Transnational social/cultural practices
Scope of Agency	Global and/or local (in some recent instances glocal), contextual	Global and/or local, contextual, inter-contextual	Global and/or local, contextual (in most instances national and/or international)	Translocal and inter-contextual
Conception of Identity	Consumer identity project(s)	Post-modern, multiple, decentered, neo-tribal, de-territorialized identities	Sub-cultural, national or sub-national identities	National and transnational identity
Basis of Community	Local, contextual, often geographically, ethnically, nationally defined, consumption-oriented community (increasingly online and virtual forms)	Post-modern, neo-tribal, hyperreal, virtual, imaginary, de-territorialized, globally fragmented and affection-based community	Sub-cultural, often national, ethnic or sub-national community (also post-national conceptualizations exist but only few empirical accounts)	National, ethnic and transnational community
Location of Culture	In minds (or lived experiences), cultural texts, discourses and interactions	In cultural texts; discourses, symbolic representations and interactions	In cultural texts; discourses and symbolic (also visual and material) representations	Dialogical and discursive social practices
Principal Empirical Focus	Relationships among consumers' personal and collective identities; the cultures created and embodied in the lived worlds of consumers; underlying experiences; processes and social-cultural structures	Production and reproduction of discursive, textual, inter-contextual, symbolic and material worlds and consumer society	Symbolic representation, signifying practices, negotiation, articulation and reproduction of meaning (with emphasis on material, institutional and political forces)	Transnational discursive and textual (and to a lesser extent material) practices and communication processes
Representative Accounts	e.g. See reviews in Arnould and Thompson (2005); and Section 2.2.1	e.g. See reviews in Firat and Venkatesh (1995); Holt (1997); Goulding *et al.* (2002); Firat and Dholakia (2006); Cova *et al.* (2007); and Section 2.2.2	e.g. See reviews in During (2007); Barker (2008); and Section 2.2.3	e.g. See reviews in Kraidy (2005); and Section 2.2.4

2.2.1 Consumer culture theories (CCT)

Consumer culture theory is most consumption oriented of all cultural theories, and has its origins in the interpretive turn in consumer research which emerged in the 1980s. The early days of marketing science, from which consumer research eventually developed, can be dated back to 1930s when the *Journal of Marketing* (est. 1936) was established. It was in the 1970s that the focus in marketing gradually started to turn towards consumers and consumer behavior as important research domains. As a result, the birth of *Advances in Consumer Research* (est. 1969) and *Journal of Consumer Research* (est. 1974) soon started to challenge the more traditional marketing bedrock which was essentially based on the positivist philosophy of science outlook. Yet, it was not before the beginning of 1980s that we could see movements towards interpretivist inquiry, for example, in the form of *humanistic* and *naturalistic* approaches to consumer culture (cf. seminal works by Hirschman 1986; Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988). The interpretivist consumer research was particularly influenced by the social constructivist movement in the US in 1970s (e.g. Foucault, Derrida), and towards the late 1980s, hermeneutics, phenomenology and critical theory also entered the field.

The so-called second generation of interpretive consumer research stream has been iconized with the label "Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)" coined by Eric J. Arnould and Craig J. Thompson (2005). Although prior reviews of interpretive consumer research have sought to map out different methodological and analytical approaches (Anderson 1986; 1988; Arnold and Fischer 1994; Bristor and Fischer 1993; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Hirschman 1993; Ozanne and Murray 1991; Sherry 1991), and domain-specific contributions (e.g. Belk 1995; Sherry 2004), CCT provides a thematic framework across interrelated consumer research domains.

CCT label pays tribute to the past 20 years of interpretive consumer research addressing sociocultural, symbolic, experiential and ideological aspects of consumption, although with a particular focus on articles published in *Journal of Consumer Research*. According to Arnould and Thompson (2005), in part, the CCT was designed to de-bunk enduring misconceptions about nature and analytical orientation of this theoretically and methodologically fragmented interpretive research tradition and to promote a distinctive theoretical body of knowledge in consumption and marketplace behaviors. In doing so, the introduction of CCT can also be seen as an attempt to better communicate the relevance of interpretive consumer research tradition as well as its research agenda outside its own community, for example, to research practitioners and marketers. All in all,

CCT has recently been fervently debated, promoted, and cited as one of the key markers of contemporary consumer research.[2]

CCT does not refer to a unified, grand theory but rather to a family of theoretical perspectives that address dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 868). This implies that CCT researchers nonetheless share a common theoretical orientation towards the study of cultural complexity, which is illustrated in the following definition of 'culture' as understood by Arnould and Thompson (2005, 869): *"(r)ather than viewing culture as a fairly homogenous system of collectively shared meanings, ways of life, and unified values shared by a member of society… CCT explores the heterogeneous distribution of meanings and the multiple overlapping cultural groupings that exist within broader sociohistoric frame of globalization and market capitalism."* Besides having recourse and interest in the distribution of marketplace mediated symbolic meanings, the analytical focus here is directed to explore 'multiple overlapping cultural groupings' such as consumer communities or collectives as important analytic units.

More specifically, according to Arnould and Thompson (2005, 869), CCT defines 'consumer culture' as *"a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and materials on which they depend, are mediated through markets"*. This view takes a further assertion that consumer culture is in fact "a social arrangement" which is somehow mediated by the marketplace. Therefore, the definition implicitly points out that also social order is governed or "arranged" by the marketplace dynamics. Yet it seems to remain somewhat unclear in what way do the authors consider this arrangement to take shape: does it refer to a regularity or pattern of social life; does it entail stability of some sort or does it merely point out interdependencies from which it is constituted?[3]

Several other facets of consumer culture are further highlighted by Arnould and Thompson (2005): First, CCT research assumes the centrality of consumption of market-made commodities and desire-inducing marketing symbols to consumer culture (e.g. Holt 2002). Second, it most often

[2] In addition, Consumer Culture Theory Conference has been introduced since 2007 as an annual event to attract researchers and interdisciplinary approaches into contemporary consumer culture.

[3] These constituents (regularity/pattern, stability and interdependency) are most commonly used to depict social order (Schatzki 2002, 6-10; 24-5).

conceptualizes consumer culture in an interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts, and objects that groups use to make collective sense of their environments and to orient their member's experiences and lives (e.g. Kozinets 2001). Third important feature is that consumer culture, due to its complexity and fragmented nature, is not some "causal force" which determines consumer action but rather takes the form much like a game which *"frames consumers' horizons of conceivable action, feeling, though, making certain patterns of behavior and sense-making interpretations more likely than others"* (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard 2002; Holt 1997; Kozinets 2002b; Thompson and Hirschman 1995; cited in Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869). This argument goes on to point out that culture so to say prefigures what is considered as intelligible and appropriate social action, and therefore it determines social life in a different form than causality (Schatzki 2002, 44-5; Moisander and Valtonen 2006).

The conception of consumer culture in CCT can also be viewed in terms of the relevance, dominant thrust and commitment of CCT research. Arnould and Thompson (2005, 870) postulate that *"consumer culture theory is organized around a core set of theoretical questions related to the relationships among consumers' personal and collective identities; the cultures created and embodied in the lived worlds of consumers; underlying experiences; processes and structures; and the nature and dynamics of the sociological categories through and across these consumer culture dynamics are enacted and inflected."* Several presuppositions underlie this claim in my view: Firstly, it needs to be noted, that now focus is directed explicitly towards the study of both individual and social identities implying that they are key entities in consumer culture. Secondly, implicit reference is given to phenomenological understanding of consumer culture by stressing the "lived worlds and experiences" and their "embodiment". Thirdly, emphasis is placed on sociological understanding where the processes, structures and social categories (such as class, gender, and community) are granted a primary focus. Thus, it can be remarked that the conceptualization of culture is now gaining more concrete although plural forms.

'Globalization' is conceptualized in this CCT view in the sense that *"consumer culture describes a densely woven network of global connections and extensions through which local cultures are increasingly interpenetrated by forces of transnational capital and the global mediascape"* (Appadurai 1990; Slater 1997; Wilk 1995; cited in Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869). This is to say that the global cultural forces and the mediascape go hand in hand. Although globalization may work to erase local cultural particularizes by bringing the global ways to localities (e.g. Thompson and Arsel 2004), CCT does not treat globalization as a universalizing process or an extreme force that sweeps out local cultures and tastes. Rather it is taken

as a point of reference through which consumers have begun to live their lives or a concept which has a tendency towards 'global unicity' (Robertson 1992; Tomlinson 1999, 10-12).

Within CCT, globalization is most often treated in connection to Robertson's (1992) conceptualization of global but localized, i.e. 'glocal', structures which serve as a kind of blueprint of how to live and act in a consumer society. This notion is also closely related to Wilk's (1995) idea of 'global structures of common difference' referring to consumers' tendencies to appropriate and translate global cultural structures such as youth culture (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006), coffee culture (Kjeldgaard and Östberg 2007) or beauty contests (Wilk 1995) to fit the local socio-historical structures and particularities. In addition, globalization is theorized in connection to postmodern fragmentation. This means that rather than diffusing and forcing seemingly uniform and dominating styles or forms, globalization is the diffusion of seemingly *competing* styles and forms around the world (Firat 1996). Accordingly, the role of global media flows (together with flows of people, finance, and technology) is prompted crucial in circulating cultural and symbolic resources to consumers around the world (Appadurai 1990).

In terms of thematic categorization, Arnould and Thompson (2005) insist that CCT has advanced consumer behavior knowledge by investigating sociocultural processes and structures related to of *four principal research projects* outlined as 1) consumer identity projects, 2) marketplace cultures, 3) the sociohistoric patterning of consumption, and 4) mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. Next, each of these programs will be summarized and discussed and the underlying approaches and logics they entail will be analyzed briefly[4].

Consumer identity projects refers to the premise that marketplace has become a resource of mythical and symbolic resources through which people construct narratives of 'self identity' (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 871). In this work consumers are conceived as co-productive agents who are identity seekers and makers. Consumer identity projects are typically considered as goal-driven (e.g. Mick and Buhl 1992; Schau and Gilly 2003), although aims pursued may often be tacit in nature and vaguely understood, and marked by points of conflict and contradiction. Attention is also directed

[4] It needs to be emphasized once more that the CCT research programs represent only general characteristics and agendas in this stream of research. However, it makes sense to analyze them to uncover tendencies in their approaches and conceptions.

towards to relationship between consumers' identity projects and the marketplace arguing that markets provide consumers with certain positions through brands and products that consumers may choose to inhabit. While consumers are perceived as active subjects in coping with, modifying and personalizing these positions (e.g. Kozinets 2001), the cultural scripts by which they live are molded by structural imperatives of global economy (e.g. Belk *et al.* 2003).

Although the premise of CCT tradition seems to build on the collective and social dimensions in its examinations, it is somewhat suprising (as Moisander *et al.* 2009 note) that much of the work tends to build on existential-phenomenologist approaches which primarily focus on the individual subject, his/her lived experiences and (goal-oriented) identity project as the center of inquiry (e.g. Thompson, Locander and Pollio 1989; 1990; Thompson, Pollio and Locander 1994; Thompson 1997; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Thompson and Troester 2002; Thompson and Haytko 1997). This is the case especially in the first research program, where also other approaches exist (e.g. Belk 1988; Mick and Buhl 1992; Hirschman 1992; Holt 2002; Schau and Gilly 2003; Murray 2002).

As Schwandt (2003) has pointed out, phenomenologist epistemology draws from the presumption that the researcher tries to access the individual subject's lived experience, or "life world", and its meanings, rendering it close to culturalist mentalism of sort. Such an approach seeks to study human experiences as they are "lived" and conceived by the "person in the world" in particular context(s) and in a holistic manner. Thus, the experience is defined as a pattern that emerges from contextual setting, and it can be studied through interviews that reveal and describe individual experience and the linked personal cultural meanings (Thompson *et al.* 1989). It is hence a particular "epistemologically viable world view for exploring human experience" (Thompson *et al.* 1989, p. 135) which focuses (with the help of phenomenological interviews) on the individual, first-person subject (e.g. Moisander *et al.* 2009). This feature is also congruent with the main data collection method applied: the phenomenological interview, in which the subject is asked to reflect and introspect upon personal experiences. The nature of such evidence is basically information of what people are thinking, feeling and experiencing.

In terms of its conception of culture, existential-phenomenology therefore concurs with culturalist mentalism, where the cultural is situated in the individual's mind. It takes that the researcher, almost as an instrument, is able to unveil the lived meanings in the subjects lived worlds (e.g. Thompson *et al.* 1989). However, the approach is often augmented with as hermeneutic models (e.g. Arnold and

Fischer 1994; Thompson 1997) in that the role of pre-understanding of studied phenomena, personal values and reflexivity are important for researchers when making interpretations.

Such hermeneutic models of interpretation are closely connected to the culturalist tesxtualism, when they state that "human understanding is organized in terms of culturally shared narrative forms, such as stories and myths" (Thompson 1997). In such an approach, which is prominent in CCT, narratives or stories as "cultural texts" provide an important linkage between hermeneutic tenets and the practice of hermeneutic interpretation, together with phenomenological interviews. They give rise to a model of understanding which is able to highlight important aspects of contextualizing consumer experiences by bringing together complex cultural backgrounds of historically established meanings and personalized cultural frames of reference through which consumers construct conceptions of their self-identity.

Marketplace cultures, the second research program of CCT highlights important aspects of marketplace-culture intersection, and thus center theme of this thesis. Especially, this stream contrast the previous individual and experience-centered approach with the focus on the collective and material worlds of the marketplace in its approaches. In general it highlights the consumption activities which foster collective identifications interwoven in shared beliefs, meanings, myths, rituals, social practices and status systems. In addition, as opposed to viewing members of a marketplace culture as "culture bearers" it conceives consumers as "culture producers" which is more in line with postmodern ideas.

Guiding this line of research is the task of understanding how consumption shapes and configures the cultural blueprints for action and interpretation. This stream has in part paid attention to how marketplace cultures have influenced the processes by which consumer culture is instantiated in particular cultural environments (f. ex. in Third World countries). In addition, it has addressed the ways in which consumers forge feelings of solidarity and create distinctive cultural worlds such as consumption subcultures, microcultures, or tribes through the pursuit of consumption interests and lifestyles. In other words, the analytical focus is largely in the various ways and forms of sociality as a result of consumption interests and lifestyles (e.g. Celci, Rose and Leigh 1993; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Cova 1997; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Kozinets 2001; Kates 2002; Thompson and Troester 2002).

The work on marketplace cultures draws heavily on the anthropological and ethnographic understanding of consumer culture which has origins in naturalistic and humanistic inquiry

(Hirschman 1986; Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf 1988). This view stresses the importance of understanding consumption from the consumer's point of view, and the use of participant observation and other ethnographic methods in consumer research. By studying the 'naturally occurring' (Lincoln and Cuba 1985) material world of consumers, this approach assumes the researcher role as empathetic investigator in the anthropological sense. Relying most often on market-oriented ethnographic methods (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994), where the researcher immerses oneself into the context/phenomena of consumption by observing consumers in their natural surroundings, gains a "rich understanding" and thereafter writes an account, a "thick description" (Geertz 1973) of the phenomena under study. In this sense, the interpreter is primarily interested in learning a group's construction of reality (Hirschman 1986). Underlying the interpretation and understanding of subjective meanings of social action is the "emphatic vision" of the researcher, which has also been the main point of critique towards this stream (e.g. Holt 1991), and which is once more reminiscent of Schwandt's (2003) intentionalist approach. Hence, the culture is depicted here along the same lines as with ethnographers Geertz (1973) and Malinowski (1967).

Research on marketplace cultures has sought to understand especially cultural production, assimilation and acculturation processes in particular cultural environments (e.g. Peñaloza 1994; 2000; 2001; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard 2005; Belk, Ger and Askegaard 2003; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006; Üstüner and Holt 2007). In these accounts, grounded on ethnographic fieldwork, the driving interest has been on understanding how consumers (or marketers) such as immigrant groups or ethnic minorities adapt and integrate to dominant marketplace cultures, how the dialogic and dynamic interplay between marketers and consumers constitute marketplace cultures and how the sociocultural structures influences it (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007). The conception of culture here derives from a 'dialogic negotiation' and acculturation process between the hegemonic and marginal cultures, where both consumers and marketers play active roles in negotiating and inscribing meaning. In another important vein, marketplace culture research borrows nuanced views from cultural studies and postmodernist thinkers, that are discussed in more detail in the next two sections. This group of researchers therefore builds on ideas either from culturalist textualism or postmodernist (pluralist) conceptions in their treatment of consumer culture.

Sociohistoric patterning of consumption, the third research program in CCT, address the institutional and social structures that systematically shape consumption. In this view consumers are seen as enactors of social roles and positions. Drawing from sociological ideas, this stream of research seeks to understand what is consumer society and how it is constituted and sustained. In its analyses, it is highlighted how consumption behavior is shaped by social structures (e.g. Holt 1997; 1998; Wallendorf 2001; Allen 2002), gender (Bristor and Fischer 1993; Dobscha and Ozanne 2001; Fischer and Arnold 1990; Thompson 1996; Thompson and Haytko 1997), ethnicity (Belk 1992; Reilly and Wallendorf 1987; Peñaloza 1994; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999) and other social groupings like families (e.g. Wallendorf and Arnould 1991).

In these accounts, according to Holt (1997), the underlying logic in consumption, cultural reproduction and patterning is tied to collectivities who have socialized in similar conditions (e.g. similarities in peers, education, work or just exposure to mass-mediated content), embedded in similar social relations, and tend to have similar cultural understandings. Such collectivities are not (always) formally organized and sometimes wildly dispersed and ambiguous unities. In addition, they are not necessarily a conscious phenomenon. The social patterning hence renders consumer culture as constituted and sustained in social processes – i.e. it is socially constructed (Holt 1997). Classical markers of this line research is the analysis of consumption across various social classes in society (e.g. Holt 1998) which build on, for example, Bourdieu's (1984) and Veblen's (1899/1970) work.

It is shown by this program that consumption plays an important role in social organization. Brand communities (e.g. Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schau *et al.* 2009) for instance have broken some of the more traditional forms of community in terms of their geographical location, temporality, and weakened social ties. Like this example has shown, the traditional applications and theoretical frameworks in the sociology of consumption and marketing have become increasingly unuseful in the contemporary era. Therefore, there has recently been a call for postmodern approaches, such as poststructuralist or social constructionist lifestyle analyses in the field, as suggested by Holt (1997). However, it can be argued, that the analytical unit in this conception of consumer culture has always embraced the social/collective and its symbolic-expressive dynamics, as well as the relationships among consumer experiences, belief systems and practices and their underlying institutional and social structures (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumer's interpretive strategies, constitutes the final CCT research program. This stream of research studies consumer ideology – systems of meaning that tend to

channel and reproduce consumers' thoughts and actions (e.g. Hirschman 1993). The question guiding this research tends to come from critical and media theory (e.g. Fiske 1989; Hall 1993). It examines how consumers make sense of the mass-mediated messages and formulate critical responses (e.g. Hetrick and Lozada 1994; Hirchman and Thompson 1997; Murray and Ozanne 1991; Murray, Ozanne and Shapiro 1994). Much of this work conceives consumers as 'interpretive agents' whose meaning-creation activities may rise from consumer identity and lifestyle ideas either from dominant mass-mediated representations or from deviant and resistant ideologies (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

Although in the early days of cultural critics consumers were viewed as passive and oppressed subjects, CCT has highlighted how various forms of identity play can entail transformative possibilities, resistance, and exert agency over the corporate capitalist ideologies and marketing as an institution (Holt 2002; Kozinets 2002a; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Murray 2002; Thompson 2004). However, CCT research has also highlighted how economic and cultural globalization is shaping consumer identity projects and identity defining patterns in different social interaction across contexts (e.g. McCracken 1986; Wilk 1995; Belk *et al.* 2003; Thompson and Haytko 1997; Thompson and Arsel 2004).

Mass-mediated marketplace ideologies research project can be traced back to cultural and media studies, and critical theory where the marketplace ideologies, and systems of meaning and representation (e.g. Hall 2003) have been given a primary analytical focus. Mass media, as the central inter-mediator in these accounts, tends to occupy a rather tenuous and in some respects a homogenizing role of spreading and circulating marketplace ideologies and cultural forms through global technologies and moments of representation. Consumer culture here relates to theoretical understandings of various market-mediated cultural forms and dispositions as well as their effects in consumer society.

To conclude this section, CCT stream is first of all characterized by a plethora of approaches to consumer culture which entail different ontological and epistemological positions. The family of CCT researchers and their conceptions of culture hark back to diverse theoretical perspectives which are rooted in anthropological, sociological, phenomenological, postmodern, critical and media theorist orientations. CCT features consumer culture as pluralistic, heterogeneous, and contextual social organization where the distribution of meaning and symbolic cultural resources are mediated by the marketplace, and where consumers' personal and collective identities and lived experiences as

central analytic categories are the dominant focus. As a result, CCT embraces an inherently pluralistic, contextualist and socialist view of culture.

2.2.2 Postmodern cultural theories

To begin with, it should be noted that many CCT views of consumer culture borrow ideas also from postmodern thinkers.[5] However, the postmodern cultural theories are neither a coherent or by any means unified body of theory. In this review, some of the most influential postmodern cultural critiques of consumer society and global cultural economy are outlined (e.g. Appadurai 1990; 1996; Baudrillard 1979; Featherstone 1991; Friedman 1990; Jameson 1991; 1998; Lash 1991; Sklair 1998; Tomlinson 1999) and their connections to cultural consumer research emphasized (e.g. Brown 1993; 1995; Cova 1997; Cova and Cova 2002; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat 1996; Firat and Dholakia 2006; Goulding *et al.* 2002; Holt 1997).

Postmodernity and postmodernism are both important aspects of our time. It needs to be clarified that *postmodernity* refers to our historical era in time and it exists only through its counterpart of modernity (which begun with the Enlightenment and the invention of scientific methods). Postmodernity is therefore a particular condition which has evolved from that of modern condition and era. *Postmodernism*, in turn, needs to be understood in terms of cultural style, knowledge, theory and philosophy. It hence refers to cultural conditions – or a 'cultural logic' (Jameson 1991) – that are associated with postmodernity (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). As a cultural style postmodernism is demarcated by flavors of postmodern consumer culture: hybridity, fluidity, multiplicity, fragmentation, juxtaposition, pastiche, irony, intertextuality, de-territorialization, rootlessness, genre blurring and bricolage of cultural styles and forms (such as identities and communities) (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat and Dholakia 2006). It is often connected to the aesthetic and stylistic eclecticism present in artistic or pop-cultural production where there are "no rules" in combining influences or mixing styles and genres.

The philosophical foundations of postmodernism draw from multiple sources, as Firat and Venkatesh (1995) stress. According to them, on one hand, postmodernism can be aligned with post-

[5] In fact, many of the CCT researchers also publish in *Consumption, Markets, and Culture* (est. 2001) which has adopted perhaps more critical orientation as its edifice compared to *Journal of Consumer Research*.

structuralism influenced by Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida as well as feminist thinkers (e.g. Harraway, Kristeva, Butler). In this sense, postmodernism rejects Saussurean structuralism, meaning that there are no 'structures' that render people passive, oppressed or without agency. In addition, it denies the idea common to structural linguistics that stable structure finds meaning through, for example, fixed binary pairs (e.g. beautiful-ugly). Rather, for post-structuralists, meaning is unstable being and always deferred and in process (and historically contingent) and, therefore, it cannot be confined to single words, sentences or texts but it is the outcome of intertextuality (Barker 2008, 18). On the other hand, postmodernism is influenced by cultural critiques of capitalism (e.g. Jameson) and contemporary consumer society (e.g. Lyotard, Baudrillard). In this way, postmodernism also concurs with many early critics of modernism, including Freud (unconscious subject), Hegel (phenomenology), Nietczhe (power and truth), Weber (rationality), Marx (alienated subject, capitalism as an ideology of production) and Heidegger (existential subject). Furthermore, postmodernist influences have been put forward by arts and architecture in their critiques of modernist principles of functionalism, rationalism, universalism etc. (Firat and Venkatesh 1995).

Firat and Venkatesh (1995) note that postmoderist perspectives coincided with consumer research about two decade ago, playing an important influence during a period of debate, self-study and rejuvenation in the field. The modernist-postmodernist divide has ever since been an influential frame of reference in consumer research (e.g. Brown 1993; 1995; Featherstone 1991; Firat 1990; Firat and Dholakia 2006; Firat and Schultz 1997; Hirschman and Holbrook 1992; Holt 1997; Sherry 1991; Thompson and Troester 2002). Firat and Venkatesh also contend that that similar postmodern epistemologies have been considered also in other domains such as anthropology (Clifford 1988; Crapanzano 1991; Marcus and Fischer 1986), cultural studies (Fiske 1989; Grossberg *et al.* 1992), geography and cultural spaces (Harvey 1989; Soja 1989), psychology (Gergen 1991) and sociology (Lash 1991; Turner 1990).

In consumer research, postmodernism has challenged many fundamental, taken-for-granted conceptions that are of interest in my thesis such as the *consumer, consumption, markets and consumer culture*. The origin and basis for these hallmark marketing concepts, according to postmodernists, rests upon a general historical and philosophical notion known as *modernity* (e.g. Lash 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Postmodern cultural tendencies, in this regard, problematize the modernist flavor and underpinnings of the mentioned key concepts by introducing different sensibilities, new conditions into marketing and consumer research. Most importantly, central to postmodernism are

ideas of culture, language, aesthetics, narratives, symbolic modes, literary expressions and meanings, whereas in modernism these are all considered secondary to economy, science, concrete objectifications, analytical constructs, essences and metaphorical representations[6] (Firat and Venkatesh 1995).

A number of implications arise from postmodernist-modernist considerations regarding the *consumer subject*. As Firat and Dholakia (2006) suggest, the modernist view has a tendency to portray and envision human subject and the consumer as a rational, unified and cognitive subject who looks into the future to commit and build his or her often one-tracked life project. However, in the postmodernist thinking, the consumer is not a mere cognitive agent but suspicious to pluralism of viewpoints and projects, play, juxtaposing of alternatives, mixing of genres and conspicuous behaviors. Consumer is not a passive agent who collects material possessions, chooses between given alternatives or expresses him/herself with products. Rather the (post)consumer is active, communicative and creative in constructing his/her own alternatives, producing experiences and symbolic meanings, negotiating his/her identity or identities, while remaining non-committed to any single perspective, order or way of being. Moreover, the post-consumer is a communal being, who inhabits fragmented, temporal, affection-based and market-mediated post-consumer communities and tribes. In this view, it is only through such collectives that post-consumer is able to seek substance and meaningful experiences in life. Thus, the postmodern subject is considered in some sense de-centered and fragmented. (Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Firat and Dholakia 2006).

A contradiction arises also regarding how *consumption* is understood. In the modernist thinking consumption is considered as the opposite of production. In this sense, it is the last phase in the production cycle where the goods are either consumed, destroyed or where the product's value is eaten up, rendering it worthless. In the postmoderist view, however, consumption is a moment in a continuous loop of co-production and 'doing things'. Consumers for instance employ, communicate and co-construct symbolic resources or myths from advertising to create and navigate meaningful experiences. Consumption is primarily regarded as a means for creating meaning and substance in life where the co-production of images, meanings, values or experiences play a central role. In

[6] In modernist use representation refers to "objective" or observable scientific representation. Therefore, it should not be mixed with the term associated with systems of representation which is a key framework employed for example by Cultural studies researchers.

addition, consumption is perceived as purposeful action rather than simply economic. (e.g. Firat and Dholakia 2006). In addition, the postmodern view emphasizes the signifying sense (rather than economic exchanges) of consumer culture and markets (Featherstone 1991; Firat and Venkatesh 1995).

Accordingly, globalization is conceived primarily as the *fragmentation of markets around the globe*. It refers to the fact that the global marketing and media technologies are currently circulating and creating desires, cultural forms and styles globally. Products and brands seem to be able to cross national boundaries and find consumers even in remote places of the world despite major cultural, political and social differences. In this sense globalization is sometimes viewed in cultural imperialistic terms. However, as Firat (1996) points out, this does not necessarily mean that there is a production of universal or homogeneous markets around the world but rather a tendency of 'globalization of fragmentation'. In other words, all kinds of marketable commodities – for example food products from different ethnic or national cultures – have come to occupy fragmented niches in the global scale of markets. Thus, postmodern fragmentation brings about increasingly global and pluralistic experiences that are reflected through various forms, styles, images, simulations, sensations and representations which do not always fit together but are celebrated as a multicultural 'mosaic' rather than 'melting pot' (Firat 1996).

Globalization is therefore not a condition where only one cultural style dominates and eradicates others but where various different and competing forms simultaneously blossom. Global mediascape plays a crucial role in the cycles of postmodern cultural production as a crucial provider and a source of cultural and symbolic resources (Appadurai 1990; Firat 1996). It also operates as an enabler of identity play and co-creative construction of experiences as well as post-communities and tribes (Firat and Dholakia 2006). Consumers who are exposed to such different possibilities, representations, products and cultural styles tend to want to experience them, challenge them, twist and reproduce them in a manner that not only one way of being or experiencing remains a viable alternative. Understood in this way, globalization refers primarily to fragmentation of markets into smaller and smaller segments and therefore the proliferation of a greater number of products to serve the increasing number of segments as well as the fragmentation of life experiences and consumer society (Goulding *et al.* 2002).

According to Goulding, Shankar and Elliot (2002), it may also be argued that there are two main kinds of postmodernist camps which can be divided by the extent to which they grant control or

agency to the consumer. That is, whether the consumer is oppressed or liberated/re-enchanted by the hyperreal, simulated, spectacularized and fragmented marketplace realities in the postmodern condition. The first, critical postmodernism, views consumer society as 'dystopian and alienating' where consumers are seen as manipulated victims of the marketing code. This rather pessimistic approach, which is based for example on Baudrillard's (1988), Debord's (1967), Jameson's (1990; 1998) and Sklair's (1998) work, is skeptical about the human society and dislikes the negative consequences of postmodern conditions such as the endless commodification and commercialization, loss of commitment to worthy causes, hedonism and the general loss of social compassion (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Thus, they depict consumer culture as governed by the marketer created fashion systems and consumption signs, symbols, spectacle, simulacra and the superficial, which attract and stimulate fragmented consumers subjects (e.g. Goulding *et al.* 2002), and sometimes also create what has been called as "false needs". The second, so called liberatory postmodernism is a more optimistic perspective portraying the postmodern fragmentation as a possibly liberating force, in the sense that consumers can exert, to some degree, agency and choose not to subsume mass-mediated cultural conformity (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Goulding *et al.* (2002, 264) also note that both of these tendencies seem to co-exist still in the everyday lives of consumers; "one is never (or rarely totally) alienated and manipulated, but at the same time, "liberation comes with it consequences".

As indicated in the introduction of this thesis, there is also a growing tendency of the latter form of postmodernism to build on ideas of emerging post-consumer communities and collectives as new conjoined entities that shape the whole mode of life in the postmodern era. This has sparked interest on studying postmodern *consumer tribes* (Cova and Cova 2002; Cova *et al.* 2007) by elaborating on Maffesoli's (1988/1996) argument that in contemporary society there is a transition away from mass-media produced individualism towards alternative forms of social arrangements called 'neo-tribes' or 'post-modern tribes' (Goulding *et al.* 2002). According to Maffesoli, the social existence of our society seems to happen more and more through these heterogeneous fragments of our society, groups distinguished by their members' shared (postmodern) lifestyles and tastes.

Neo-tribal forms cannot be understood as their more traditional counterparts, archaic tribes because they do not have similar fixity, longevity or physical boundaries. Rather they are affection-based collectivities that are fluid, ephemeral and defined only in terms of conceptual boundaries. In addition, it is emphasized that the contemporary social life is marked by membership in multiplicity

of overlapping groups in which people are free to move in-between. Maffesoli's (1988/1996) views have been adapted to the study of consumption. For example, consumer neo-tribes gather around common interest and lifestyles (e.g. Schouten and McAlexander 1995), fashion (Rinallo 2007), fandom and gaming (Kozinets 2001; Jenkins 2006; Brown 2007), leisure activities (Celci *et al.* 1993; Cova and Cova 2001; 2002; Goulding *et al.* 2002), (iconic) brands (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Holt 2004; Muñiz and Schau 2005; Belk and Tumbat 2005), retro brands (Brown *et al.* 2003) and also everyday convenience products (Cova and Pace 2005).

In conclusion, postmodern theories offer a fluid and complex cluster of concepts with varying perspectives – there is no single approach or philosophy. In general terms, however, postmodern views oppose foundationalism, essentialism, realism, canonical descriptions and the possibility of grand (or meta) narratives. They also have a great influence on all of cultural research as a critique aimed at taken-for-granted assumptions. Postmodernists accord that knowledge is always perspectival; it is not metaphysical, transcendental or universal but rather specific to particular times and language games, and therefore all knowledge is viewed as some sort of product of language or discourse. From this perspective, we both require and have multiple viewpoints (or truths) by which we come to interpret the complex and heterogenious human existence.

2.2.3 Cultural studies

This section brings about yet another closely related research terrain in cultural theory. Cultural studies (CS) makes no exception in that it is also a crossroad of heterogeneous and interdisciplinary research orientations. It does not entail a clearly-defined research methodology or fixed set of research questions or agenda. Instead, it is regarded as a particular tendency of doing cultural studies that declares an interest in critical research. Next I will describe this tendency – particularly its variant born in Britain – which has greatly inspired consumer researchers, not least by its commitment to sub-cultural studies.

This group of researchers is occupied with the study of *contemporary* culture. This means that they are not as much interested in the cultural production related to what might be called 'high-culture' than the very mundane, ordinary culture such as soap opera, television series, movies, popular music and literature. Such cultural forms and modes of production are considered crucial in providing symbolic raw-materials, narratives, scripts and roles of social action and other cultural ingredients through which people make sense of their lives.

Cultural studies first appeared in Great Britain in the 1950s as an important break from sociology. It has its roots in the 'new left' political movement which was amongst other things concerned about the conditions of poor working-class in post-war Britain. This theme also became one of the founding works in cultural studies; Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1957), semi-autobiographically written work, showed how changes in working-class life affected an individual's 'whole way of life'. In its early days, cultural studies mainly addressed long-term shifts in British post-war society and culture, in a retrospective manner and historical glance. Hoggart's view of culture in which social action needs to be interpreted and analyzed only in terms of socially, historically, economically and politically contextualized frameworks soon came to characterize also the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), which he founded in 1964 at Birmingham University.

Soon after its birth, British cultural studies arguably turned into at least three main directions. First, there was a shift in focus from the study of literature and long-standing local cultural forms to the new forms of cultural production that were proliferating at the time. For instance the emerging 'cultural industries' of music, film, radio and television broadcasting brought about new cultural modes, urban styles and genres (jazz, rock and so on) – mainly from overseas – which came to influence the local lives of people in significant ways. This turn was highlighted for instance in *The Popular Arts* (1964) by Paddy Whannel and Stuart Hall, and later in *Crossroads: The Drama of Soap Opera* by Dorothy Hobson (1982), in *Reading the Romance* by Janice Radway (1984), and in *Watching Dallas* by Ien Ang (1985). (e.g. During 2007, 4).

The second, highly important twist was the attention to the interdependency between cultural production and politics (and ideology) which was at the time a largely neglected perspective. As illuminated by the historian E.P. Thompson in his seminal book *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963; see also Williams 1965; 1979), it soon became clear that cultural identity had always had a strong political and conflictual component. As a result, culture came to be seen as a form of 'hegemony', a concept originated by Italian Antonio Gramsci. Hegemony refers to relations of domination which are not perhaps visible as such. This means, for example, that the dominating and ruling class in society could employ hegemonic forces through cultural production by appealing to people's interest of what is considered as desirable in life (way of life, family ideals, material possessions etc.), for instance, through the education system. Cultural studies thereafter took up the aim of exploring larger systems of domination, meaning that culture was thought about less in terms

of its local expressions of local communal lives and more as an apparatus within a large system of domination and its hegemonic effects (During 2007, 4-5).

The third main direction of cultural studies was born when the linguistic turn directed the attention of cultural studies towards structuralist (and later poststructuralist) ideas in which language was seen as the privileged medium for cultural production and a means through which we form knowledge about ourselves and the social world (Barker 2008, 75). In order to understand culture this view takes that it is necessary to explore how meaning is produced symbolically through the signifying practices of language. This sort of cultural critique relied by far on forms of semiotic analyses, represented for example in Hall's work *Encoding, decoding* (1981). This entailed that culture was basically broken down into discrete messages, signifying practices or discourses which were distributed by particular institutions and media (e.g. During 2007, 5). Semiotic analyses directed attention away from the rites of passage and 'ways of life' towards the study of signifiers in market-mediated and produced images such as ads and the ways in which symbolic meaning was coded, recoded and 'articulated' in them.

From the cultural studies perspective, the most important invention of the semiotic approaches was the way in which a particular signifier (i.e. form or medium of signs) always has more than one meaning, because 'meaning' is an effect of differences within a larger system. The *polysemy* of signs and meanings (i.e. idea that signs do not have fixed meanings) came to play an weighty role in leading cultural studies to describe how cultural products may be combined with new elements to produce different effects in different situations (During 2007, 7). The cultural production hence became to be seen as cultural re-production and negotiation, also hybridization. Significant contributions in this most recent development, which was also influenced by poststructuralists Foucault and Derrida, led cultural studies to theorize on important concepts of cultural identity, cultural representation, signifying practices, articulation and the cultural economy (e.g. Hall 1997/2003; du Gay *et al.* 1997; du Gay and Pryke 2002).

This line of work has proven extremely influential in consumer culture research perhaps because it came to treat economic processes and practices – such as advertising, branding, fashioning, or product design and innovation – as inherently cultural phenomena. In this view, meaning is produced at 'economic sites' – at work, in shops or advertising agencies – and circulated through economic processes, practices and mediums no less than in other domains of existence in modern

societies (du Gay 1997). Meaning is articulated in the various moments of the 'circuit of culture' which encompass production, consumption, regulation, representation and identity.

From the consumer research point of view, important area of work in cultural studies was produced by the so-called 'subculture group'. To date, possibly the most influential work on subcultures came from CCCS[7] (Goulding *et al.* 2002), exemplified in the book *Resistance through Rituals* by Hall and Jefferson (1976), and the work of Willis (1977; 1978; 1990), Grossberg (1992), Clarke *et al.* (1976), Hebdidge (1979) and McRobbie (1991). These scholars sought to locate subcultural movements within a framework of social resistance and reaction against dominant hierarchies of control (Goulding *et al.* 2002) by investigating the cultural classification of individuals into social categories (especially 'youth'), demarcations of class, race and gender, as well as questions of style, taste, space, media and meaning (Barker 2008, 406-7). From this perspective, cultural studies have hitherto examined youth and subcultures as diverse as the 'Mods', (Hebdige 1979), 'Teds' (Fyvel 1997/1963), 'punks' (Frith 1997/1980), 'hooligans', 'skinheads' (Clarke 1973), 'lads', drug users, bikers and counter-cultures (Willis 1977; 1978; 1990), working-class girls (McRobbie 1991), raving (Redhead 1993) and clubbing (Thornton 1996).

A guiding premise across these sub-cultural studies has been the intention of giving 'voice' to marginal and sometimes deviant groups of society. It can be said that these studies have tended to explore the more spectacular youth cultures, the visible, the loud and the radical. At the same time youth as an ideological signifier has come to play a role (as resisting, troubling, ambivalent and even violent) which also involves and is manifested by creative styles, rituals and meanings. It is emphasized that subcultures do not exist as authentic objects but rather 'ways of life' or 'maps of meaning' which make the world intelligible to its members. In addition, the 'sub' always has a binary referent (usually the dominant class or mainstream society) from which it is distinguished and differentiated, and to which it always depends on (e.g. Thornton 1996; Barker 2007, 410).

Despite its great influence, the subcultural theorists have faced fervent criticism. Firstly, substantive problems may result from over-commitment to the category of subculture which identifies social

[7] In this connection, the Birmingham CCCS is also influenced by the Chicago School of critical studies (headed by Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess, and Louis Wirth) who made breakthroughs in establishing urban studies as a specific field of inquiry.

class and particularly the powerlessness of the working class as the main catalyst (e.g. Cohen 1972; Lave *et al.* 1992; Goulding *et al.* 2002; Barker 2008, 417). For example, Bennett (1999) lays out a comprehensive postmodern critique by pointing out that working class resistance and the implied normalization of deviance are not sufficient to explain the nature of subcultural experiences in what might be termed postmodern society. Subcultural studies have also been critiqued for being largely restricted to investigating the category of youth (Lave *et al.* 1992) and for ignoring women (McRobbie 1991) as well as racial interconnections (Gilroy 1987).

Secondly, many critics have asserted that cultural studies have tended to find resistance to hegemony in subcultural styles all too easily. For example *Resistance through Rituals*, a collection of essays by various authors, is almost exclusively concerned with developing theory of hegemony. They try to grasp how the traditional working-class is fragmented in various ways, for example between those with skilled jobs and those with less skilled, low status jobs. They claim that these subcultural communities, especially in the latter case, negotiate, fetishize and hybridize certain hegemonic cultural forms as modes of expression and opposition. Because of this the subcultures are primarily viewed in terms of symbolic struggle with the larger social system, thus flattening them out to plain political questions. (During 2007, 9; Barker 2008, 416)

Thirdly, a major issue is that subcultural styles and elements are most often played out only in terms of their respective nation or society (and perhaps too often in Britain). This has also raised important questions about global or transnational subcultures; how should youth cultures or subcultural styles be understood and interpreted within the frames of global cultures? The emergence of global brands and international media icons, celebrities and pop stars and trends have, for some critics, come to represent the commodification and even homogenization of youth culture, and for others, the interconnections of global and local cultural developments are more complex and chaotic (Barker 2008, 423).

Thus, cultural studies is largely driven by perspectives that examine the relations of culture and power or ideology. It is basically concerned with all those practices, institutions and systems of classification through which culture is inflicted in a population. In this view, culture is essentially concerned with culturally shared meanings which abound and are rooted in from the grounded terrain of practices, representations, forms of common sense, languages and customs of a specific society. However, the meanings are not just floating 'out there' to be discovered but they are continuously being contested and negotiated through signs, signifying practices and most notably

language. This can be pointed out from a large portion of studies exploring questions of representation, that is, on how the world is socially constructed and represented to and by us in meaningful ways (e.g. Barker 2008, 6-7). The individual subjects as well as sub-ordinated groups are considered as active agents who partake in the negotiation and reproduction of meaning through signifying practices and processes.

The mediascape is primarily seen as an important dominating and hegemonic device through which power operates. Electronic media and the *cultural intermediators* (Negus 2002), such as marketers and advertising agencies, are primarily viewed as producers and conveyors of cultural and symbolic resources to the people but also as distributors of hegemonic structures (such as lifestyles or ideals) that guide and constrain social action. The focus on media within cultural studies has been prominent especially in theorizing media reception and message content (e.g. Morley and Brunsdon 1978; Morley 1980; 1992; Ang 1985; Hobson 1982; Radway 1984; Morley and Robbins 1995). Although recognizing the dominant role of the mediascape, however, cultural studies has played a key role in articulating audience's possibilities of negotiating and opposing the structures of dominance that media entails.

Cultural globalization has received attention largely as a hegemonic force which is spurred by the transnational corporations and world capitalist economy. However, globalization in this context refers to a global cultural production where both global and local forces are at work, and where individuals are seen active in inscribing and negotiating meaning. Because of this, the present cultural studies have come to embrace a pluralist and postmodern view of culture where there is a movement away from post-colonialism and questions of whether globalization produces homogenizing cultures or reduces global cultural differences. Consequently, focus has been directed towards the study of how globalization is articulating all cultures and communities to one another in a process which allows for new fragmentations and mixes, new niches and local markets as well as new opportunities for self expression and co-production.

Although culture is understood in cultural studies to be a facet of place which is often times linked (or locked) within boundaries of a nation or ethnicity, the cultural dynamics of globalization has led many writers to think of culture, identities and identifications as always a place of borders and hybridities rather than fixed stable entities (Bhabha 1994; Barker 2008, 27). As a result, new perspectives have highlighted how local articulations of global cultural flows are negotiated and contested, such as youth cultures, as a form of glocalization or to global-to-local cultural dynamics

(Robertson 1992). More recently, attention has also been directed to a new form of cultural dynamics in the work of Erik Kit-wai Ma (2002). In a study on alternative music subculture in Hong Kong, Ma (2002) illustrated how a web of interconnected translocal spaces of clubs, discos, hip-hop fashion shops, bandrooms and other localized spaces organized a subculture by analyzing a form local-to-local spatial dynamics and the reproduction of spatiality. Although this is a rare example with a focus on translocal cultural production, it serves to point out promising yet so far neglected directions on transnational cultural research.

2.2.4 Media and communication theory

Media and international communication research is treated here as the final field of cultural theory for two important reasons. First, this orientation has been most occupied with theorizing transnational flows of information and communication studying both the sender (or content) and the receiver (or uses of communication) aspects. Second, the objective to critically understand the cultural complexity and polyvalence of intercultural relations including questions of global homogenization and hybridization has been inherent to this research stream. The purpose of this section is therefore to draw attention into prominent media perspectives to consumer culture that sometimes go unnoticed within consumer research but which have a long tradition of and strong commitment to systematic analyses of transnational cultural production. It needs to be reminded here that this stream of research draws also central ideas from cultural studies discussed earlier.

The present mapping draws substantially from the communication theorist Marwan M. Kraidy (1999; 2002; 2003a; 2003b; 2005) who has not only directed attention to this literature but who has done a remarkable job in synthesizing wide-ranging interdisciplinary works in relation to questions of transnational cultural production. Especially Kraidy's book *Hybridity* (2005) will be used. In the book he came to identify and trace two particularly influential paradigms in media debate which have sought to explore various scenarios of global culture. Next, these two orientations will be briefly revisited – cultural imperialism and active audience studies – as they come to set yet another background for the argumentation in this thesis.

The first global media theory orientation, often labeled as 'the cultural imperialism thesis', can be traced back to the critical political economy of international communication. Emerging in the early 1970s as a radical critique of functionalist international communication research (see Tomlinson 1999), the cultural imperialist position was among the first ones to make claims about the existence

of or tendency to global culture. Central to it is the understanding of media that originates from the Institute of Social Research and Frankfurt School of critical theorists including Horkheimer, Adorno, Lowenthal, Marcuse and Habermas, who build their work Marx's and Gramsci's critique of capitalism (Kraidy 2005, 33). Cultural imperialism is hence firmly rooted in the critical political economy tradition which was in its gloominess poised by the totalitarian experiences of Nazism in its early phases. The focus in this nascent stream was on issues such as capital, infrastructure and politico-economic concentration of power as determinants of international communication processes. Against this backdrop, a systematic social critique was originated claiming that economic and political relations create vast inequalities (also cultural) between nations. Founding texts of this 'cultural imperialism thesis' include Herbert Schiller's *Mass Communication and American Empire* (1971/1992) and *Communication and Cultural Domination* (1976), Jeremy Tunstall's *The Media are American* (1977) and Armand Mattelart's *Multinational Corporations and the Control of Culture* (1979). Influential were also Ariel Dorfman and Arman Mattelart (1971), Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1977) and Johan Galtung (1971). (Kraidy 2005, 22).

Cultural imperialism school focused on the nation-states as primary actors in international relations, claiming that rich Western nation-states exported their cultural products and imposed their socio-cultural values on poorer nations in the developing world (Schiller 1971/1992). According to Kraidy, this group also demonstrated that the flow of broadcast news and entertainment was biased in favor of industrialized countries. This is true in the sense that most media flows were exported by the wealthy Western countries and their content was also mainly portraying images and news in favor of their exporters. (Kraidy 2005, 22-23).

The cultural imperialism did not stem from rigorous theoretical definition, because as a notion the term suffered from polysemic ambiquity that wrapped the thesis itself in controversy (Kraidy 2005, 25). The founding narratives mentioned above contained a variety of definitions. According to Schiller (1976, 9), *"the concept of cultural imperialism […] best describes the sum of the processes by which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even to promote, the value and structures of the dominating center of the system"*. Already this definition reveals what was considered central elements of transnational cultural production, although these were also being contested.

Similar to Schiller's definition, many of the cultural imperialists conceived culture as a holistic, organic entity that is closely tied with the nation-state (Kraidy 2005, 26). It was also strong in its

claims that individuals in the media audience were treated as passive cultural agents, and therefore critics were quick to point out faults in its edifice. This critique usually came from within the thesis founders themselves emphasizing that the cultural impacts of proliferating media need to be addressed in more detailed, justified and well-defined meanings in their full complexity (e.g. Fejes 1981; Kraidy 2005).

The cultural dominance perspective was soon – at least to some extent – redirected by shifting attention into multiple levels of structure and agency, hybrid forms of cultural production and more nuanced understandings of culture in the political economy (Kraidy 2005, 29). Critical works as *Media Imperialism Reconsidered* (Lee, 1980), *The Decentring of Cultural Imperialism* (Sinclair 1992), *Beyond Cultural Imperialism* (Golding and Harris 1997), *Media Imperialism Reformulated* (Boyd-Barrett 1998) and *Media Imperialism Revisited* (Chanda and Kavoori 2000) soon come to challenge the imperialism thesis.

The second orientation in global media studies is usually called 'active audience school', although it is also referred to as 'cultural pluralism' or 'cultural globalization'. It is based on media reception theory as well as cultural studies in a sense that it sits between approaches that stress media persuasion power (which again originates from the Frankfurt School) and approaches that render audience an active role (Kraidy 2005, 33). On the other hand, active audience studies directed attention away from the study of media content (and the attribution of powerful media effect) to the study of the whole communication process and understanding 'what people do with the media' (e.g. Merton 1946; Katz and Lazarsfield 1955; Katz 1959; Morley 1992). On the other hand, it first split into sub-disciplines including behaviorist or functionalist ('uses-and-gratifications') tradition (e.g. McQuail 1984) and cultural studies critique of the former (e.g. Ang 1991; Hall 1981/1993; Morley 1980; 1992).

The shift from studying media content to studying audience activity is highlighted in cultural studies scholar David Morley's work. Morley's (1980) study of the television programme 'Nationwide' was one of the first ethnographic explorations of not only media content but an audience (During 2007, 8). It was ethnographic in the sense that it did not simply analyze the Nationwide programme but engaged with meetings and interviews with its viewers. Morley's effort was fundamental in challenging the idea that there is a large 'mass audience' which was often the basic assumption in global media studies. The study also came to contest the limits of textualist and structuralist approaches in media studies which could not capture the polysemy and heterogeneousness of the audience and its viewing preferences, opposition and responses in general.

Even if the cultural imperialist and pluralist theorists conceive culture in different ways, they both recognize that global culture has been in the making for centuries. They also acknowledge that the global cultural production necessarily entails elements of both cultural homogenization and hybridization. However, the approaches are juxtaposed in their view of culture as either holistic monoculture or as pluralistic multiculture. In the former view, the central focus of analysis is global cultural dominance which stems from institutional, political and economic structures, while in the latter view the analysis is on the resistance and adaptation of hegemonic structures in local and contextual sites of agency of individuals and/or communities. In addition, the focus on media in the cultural imperialist mode is on the production and distribution of cultural meaning whereas in the pluralist mode it is merely emphasizing message/text reception and response strategies. (Kraidy 2005, 149-150).

Regarding more recent approaches, my interest was captured by Kraidy (2005) who suggests a critical alternative for theorizing intercultural relations: 'Critical transculturalism' framework emphasizes a *synthetic* view of culture and a *transcultural* view of global culture – rather than monoculture or multiculture. This means that in contrast to multiculturalism's assumption of co-existing plural cultures, transculturalism characterizes a mixture of several cultures. In doing so, it aims to move beyond commonplace models of hegemonic dominance and resistance by stressing transcultural *hybridity* as the central trope of analysis. Building on cultural theorists such as Mikhail Bakhtin (1981) and Homi Bhabha (1994), who are credited for borrowing the concept of hybridity from biology to language and culture, Kraidy (2005) understands hybridity as an articulation of transcultural links that communication processes create between power and meaning in the context of cultural transformation. In this way, hybridity is redefined to reflect cultural fusion in social issues. It targets agency in terms of people's ability to accomplish things in the world in which they live, as Kraidy (Ibid., 151) remarks: *"[i]f culture represents the meanings, ways of action, and ways to evaluate the value of actions in a society, and if cultural hybridity entails a change in those meanings and actions, then attention ought to be paid to hybridity's ability or inability to empower social groups to have influence over the course of their lives".*

Critical transculturalism takes a more integrative view than its predecessors by examining the active links between production, text and reception in the moment of cultural reproduction and acknowledging the material and discursive consequences of these links. It stresses an active intercultural exchange that leads to mutual transformation of both sides. In doing so, critical

transculturalism places agency in *social practices* (such as communication processes) – whereas in the cultural imperialist view agency is located in the global structure and in the cultural pluralist view it is sited in local individuals and/or communities. In addition, drawing from Appadurai (1990; 1996), an important characteristic of this framework is that it examines communication practices *translocally* and *intercontextually* in contrast to studying them globally or locally. This means that in this view social practice, acting transculturally and intercontextually, is the site of agency. (Kraidy 2005, 148-152)

Critical transculturalism thus focuses on power in intercultural relations by integrating both agency and structure in its analyses. In its view of culture, however, it is not posthegemonic. Kraidy's (2005) perspective, directs attention the political and economical conditions in which hybridity – for example, in the form of media texts – is produced require critical understanding and orientation in analysis. In other words, power always operates in the production of hybridities. This means that the political and economical structures and changes within them cannot be ignored in analyses of critical transculturalism.

However, Kraidy's (2005) perspective is largely tied with the idea of national identity. His aim is to study the negotiation of *translocal identities* across various communities by analyzing hybrid media texts and their production. This means that hybridity is studied only in relation to national identification. In contrast to postmodern ideas of identity, this approach always assumes the fixity of national identity and thus fails to acknowledge the multiplicity and ephemeral forms of identification that are not necessarily tied to something like the place of birth or residence. For example, in postmodern consumer studies consumer identity is played out in multiple ways (where both time, place and social background begin to obscure and lose significance). This raises questions whether in the global, mediated marketplace there are also other interesting hybridities to be explored. It needs to be added to this that the existing media accounts have heavily emphasized the traditional electronic media (especially television, radio and press) neglecting the role of online media in the production of hybridities.

3 STUDYING TRANSLOCAL MARKETPLACE CULTURES

The present chapter presents the overall theoretical and conceptual positioning of this thesis as well as the methodological aspects and analytical principles connected to it. The purpose of the sections below is to outline the positioning of this thesis (see 3.1), to summarize the principal empirical methods that are employed in this thesis (see 3.2), to argue for the selected empirical cases, to describe the empirical settings and the analytical process adopted as well as the materials collected in the fieldwork (see 3.3).

3.1 Theoretical positioning of the thesis

To position the present thesis, it is worthwhile to return to the basic 'riddle' of this thesis: *How can new forms of translocal marketplace cultures be understood, conceptualized and studied empirically?*

By empirically exploring and theoretically elaborating on contemporary, neo-tribal cultural production as a form of translocal marketplace culture, this thesis sets out to contribute to the existing literature on Consumer culture theory (CCT). In this regard, a distinctive focus is outlined next in which attention is directed to the translocal sites of cultural production from a practice-based perspective (see 3.1.1). Accordingly, the marketplace is conceptualized as a translocal site which consists of a set of interconnected translocal practice elements and material arrangements that are established, produced and negotiated by translocal communities (see 3.1.2).

The proposed perspective contributes to the existing literature on transnational consumer culture by highlighting that new forms of translocal sites, practices and communities are currently emerging that are not delimited to the nation-state, geographical or territorial location, but are regarded both smaller and larger than them. As particular sites of cultural production, translocal spaces, practices and communities arise from various transnational cultural flows of analogue and digital communication as well as movement of people, things and ideas across space. What they have in common is that they create new forms of agency for translocal actors who operate in a network of various localities (both physical and virtual).

Regarding the CCT literature review in the previous chapter, prior research has brought up a number of viewpoints concerning the cultural dynamics that are at play in shaping the transnational cultural production. It was pointed out that many of the existing accounts have studied transnational

consumer and marketplace cultures as entities tied to certain geographical, ethnic, national or other territorial boundaries. In particular, large number of investigations have been occupied with studying consumption related acculturation and assimilation processes in the context of transcultural migration or ethnic minorities. In this stream, researchers have focused on identifying the ways in which immigrants adapt to their new marketplace environments as they leave another behind (Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006). Majority of these studies deal with immigrants in North America (e.g. Wallendorf and Reilly 1983; Mehta and Belk 1991; Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999), although examples have emerged also in other contexts (e.g. Ger and Ostergaard 1998; Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard 2005; Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006; Üstuner and Holt 2007).

Assimilation in these studies refers to an immersion in the culture of settlement by means of moving away from the culture of origin, whereas acculturation does not assume a loss in the values and norms of the original culture in the process of learning new ones (Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006). A common finding in these transcultural studies is that they most often assume either a unidirectional or two-directional, bi-cultural standing in their analyses. Although critique and extension to these approaches have been presented, for instance in post-assimilationist (e.g. Askegaard, Arould and Kjeldgaard 2005) or transmigrant models (Ücok and Kjeldgaard 2006), however, they continue to focus heavily on national and ethnic identities in their theorizations and therefore bound culture merely to a territorial location (of destination or departure).

In an other important research stream, global market-mediated cultural forces and cultural adaptation or 'glocalization' processes have been the main focus (e.g. Wilk 1995; Ger and Belk 1996; Ger 1999; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Kjeldgaard and Ostberg 2007; Üstuner and Holt 2007). These accounts have investigated how global hegemonic brand/marketscapes and structures interact with different local market cultures. Drawing largely on models of glocalization (Robertson 1992) and structures of common difference (Wilk 1995), these studies have stressed intercultural dynamics of how local cultures adapt or re-interpret global influences and market-provided meanings and consumption practices. However, this body of work also conceptualizes culture and cultural identity mainly in terms of national, ethnic and territorial contexts. In addition, frameworks of cultural domination, ideology and resistance (akin to cultural studies) characterize many of these prior approaches.

Finally, it can be said that postmodern perspectives have been influential in directing attention to globalization of fragmentation dynamics. In addition, it has been highlighted that new postmodern

forms of consumer identity and community are currently emerging (Firat 1996; Firat and Dholakia 2006). These affection-based and consumption-oriented communities and neo-tribes have been studied as alternative social arrangements which are inherently unstable, fluid and de-territorialized collectives driven primarily by common interests and lifestyles (e.g. Kozinets 2001; Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Cova and Cova 2002; Goulding et al. 2002; Firat and Dholakia 2006; Cova et al. 2007). Moreover, it has been shown that consumer neo-tribes have a tendency to employ the 'new' mediascape in important ways. For instance, postmodern communities and tribes gather online around brands (e.g. Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Brown et al 2003; Schau and Muñiz 2005; Cova and Pace 2006; Schau et al. 2009), fandom (e.g. Kozinets 2001), collective innovation and consumer collaboration (e.g. Kozinets, Hemmetsberg and Schau 2008) as well as other sorts of social activities.

Considering the previous approaches in consumer culture theory, however, it can be said that translocality or translocal inquiries into marketplace cultures have not received considerable attention although they seem to point out important dynamics in transnational cultural production. In addition, despite the growing interest in consumer neo-tribes and postmodern communities of consumption, relatively few studies can be found in which they have been considered as particular sites of transnational cultural production, or at least we seem to lack conceptual tools in their study. Regarding the new conditions brought about by the new mediascape and especially the social web, it also seems to be true that rigorous transnational cultural analyses are almost non-existent in online environments. Therefore, this thesis argues that rather than viewing transnational marketplace cultures as global, local or glocal, it is suggested that the emphasis on translocalities (and connections between and within locales) allows us to conceptualize transnational processes that currently take place. In the following, the conceptual framework of this thesis is further explicated and justified.

3.1.1 Practice perspective on translocal sites

The proposed conceptual framework adopts a practice-oriented approach and directs attention to the logic of translocal cultural production, emphasizing the role of translocal practices and communities as particular sites of cultural production. By adopting a practice perspective, the framework is inspired by so called practice turn in contemporary theory (see Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 1996; 2001; 2002; Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and Von Savigny 2001; see also 2.1.2).

In this sense, the present study contrasts with accounts that emphasize meanings, symbols, individuals, communities, interactions or social structures in their approaches. It also suggests that

transnational cultural phenomena is to be studied and analyzed via practices, and not for example by analyzing individuals or groups of individuals. Actions are embedded in practices and thus constitute individuals and social groups (Schatzki 2001). Therefore, the central idea in the practice-oriented perspective is that it treats practices as the "site of the social" and as a specific context where, and apart of which social life transpires.

As understood by Reckwitz (2002, 249), a practice is defined as *"a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge."* In this sense a practice such as showering (Shove 2003; Hand *et al.* 2005), walking (Shove and Pantzar 2005), eating out (Warde 2005), researching (Knorr Cetina 1999), banking or stock trading (Schatzki 2002) forms a kind of 'block' or arrangement whose existence necessarily depends on the existence and interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of those elements.

Advantages in analyzing practices lie in the fact that the focus is on culturally and socially instituted "ways of doing and saying" in comparison to, for example, a focus on what one's identity or membership in a community means. In this way, practice-perspective allows for investigations that go beyond meaning-making processes and narratives in their analyses, in other words, approaches typical for consumer culture literature. In the present view, practices are to be conceived as entities that are made by and through their routine reproduction and they are "routinized ways in which bodies are moved, objects handled, things are described, and the world is understood" (Reckwitz 2002, 250). Such practices in their simplest condition deal with arrangements and arrays of human activity through which people make sense of their life and themselves (Schatzki 2001; 2002). Furthermore, practices are understood as routinely reproduced activities which entail shared beliefs, habits, knowledge, competence and desires (Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2002; Shove and Pantzar 2005; Warde 2005).

The analytic focus of the present framework is on practices that are produced and negotiated in "translocal communities". Practices of primary concern in this study are the ones emanating from new emerging neo-tribal collectives with members from different cultural, social and national backgrounds. Thus, the attention is directed towards "translocal practices", that is, specific contexts that are transnational but local at the same time (Appadurai 1990; 1996). These sites are not spatial but particular contexts that serve as an arena for sets of events and activities to take place. To say

that a site or a location of culture is translocal, is to agree with Appadurai (1996, 178) in the sense that culture is produced by translocal communities that are not bound by spatial proximity but by some form of shared, imagined and mediated culture. Understood this way, translocality is viewed primarily as relational and contextual rather than spatial. Also, it is essentially a social achievement which is sometimes enabled and maintained by technologies of interactivity.

Translocal practices are understood as new forms of entities that are organized by trans-spatially connected sites or networks of interconnected localities. This is to concur with Ma (2002, 131) who uses the concept of translocal spatiality in the sense of a "local-to-local" spatial dynamic which consists of a web of interconnected translocal spaces that organize and maintain translocal practices of a community. In other words, translocality refers to a cultural dynamic between localized lifeworlds in faraway sites (Ma 2002, 133). In doing so, it illuminates and gives rise to a cultural logic in which marketplace cultures are "translocally insired and locally accomplished" (Ma 2002). In this sense, the present approach is also inspired by Kraidy (2005, 155) who also uses the concept of translocal practices to explore connections between several local-to-local links as an alternative for investigating global-to-local cultural dynamics.

In contrast to the work on translocal practices by Kraidy (2005), who is primarily concerned about transnational identities and bi-cultural communication processes between nations, the present thesis directs attention towards a post-nationalistic and de-territorialized view of marketplace cultures. More precisely, my claim is that that contemporary identity and sociability are to a lesser extent determined by the more traditional social and cultural markers such as national identity, family relations, social classes, demographics, geographical or local socio-cultural environments and community. Instead, new forms and sources of identification are emphasized that are increasingly fluid, unstable and hybrid in character. In this sense, an approach is considered in which marketplace cultures are conceptualized and conceived as gradually disintegrated, rootless and de-territorial entities that are weaved together primarily through sociability established via translocal practices.

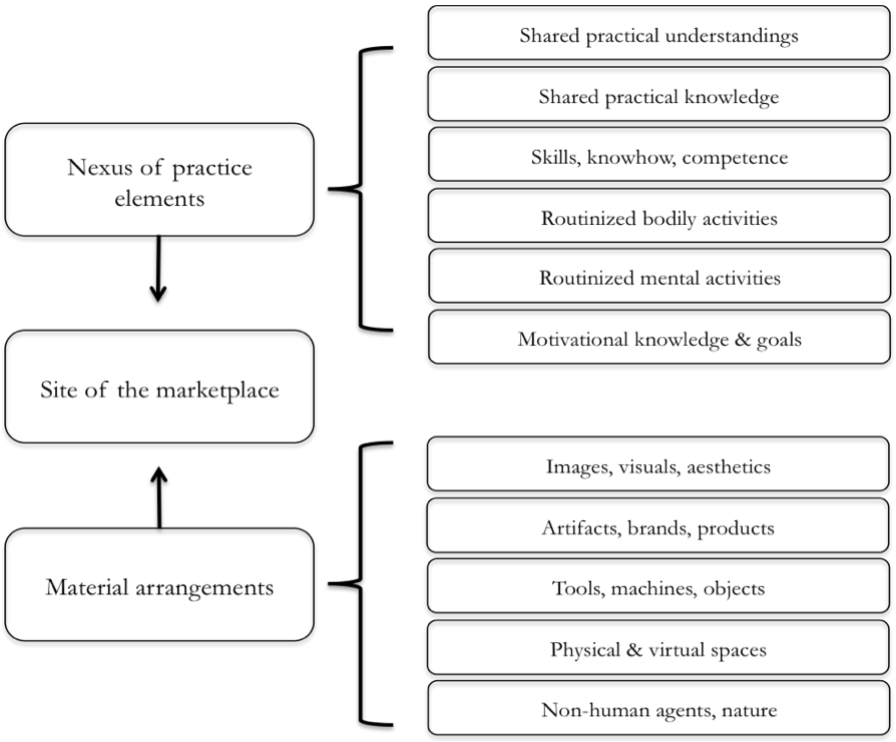
Finally, in the current approach the translocal social site consists of a nexus of social and material practices – and therefore includes both discursive and material practices (as well as online and off-line ones) – that are constantly produced, maintained, transformed and contested in social interaction and activities. Thus attention is directed towards both human and non-human agency. In addition, practices are subject to constant re-organization and re-arrangement, rendering practices by no means static.

3.1.2 Marketplace as a translocal site

The ultimate "site" of the marketplace can therefore be re-considered and conceptualized as a continuously evolving *social site* in which participants engage in and where marketplace activities and performances take place. This site is a specific context of human and non-human co-existence consisting of both mental and bodily practice elements (such as doings and sayings) as well as material arrangements (setups of material objects which compose the entities where practices are carried out). Conceptualized in this way, therefore, it is no longer necessary to conceptualize the marketplace in a particular geographical or national location rendering it inherently translocal.

Accordingly, the marketplace culture, i.e. the social site, forms a kind of arrangement of interconnected practice and material elements whose existence necessarily depends on the existence of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of those elements (e.g. Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2002). On the other hand, practices are collective achievements and coordinated entities that consist of behaviors and understandings that appear in different locations and points of time and are carried by different body/mind unities (Warde 2005). Thus, individual consumers act as the "carriers" and "performers" of the marketplace practices by doing and understanding things, using skills, knowhow, and motivational knowledge according to it. Therefore, it is taken that marketplace practices steer processes of consumption – the manner of appropriating items, the processes of learning, identifying, appreciating, desiring, and doing things in consumers' lives. The presented framework is illustrated and summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Site of the Markeplace*



Marketplace cultures are therefore depicted as particular sites including sets of interconnected components that both determine how marketplace activities – such as doings and sayings – are carried out and performed. Thus the framework forms a particular blueprint that embeds and mediates cultural production and illuminates the conditions and settings for intelligible actions. Consequently, it is at the heart of this conception that such marketplace culture "influences without controlling" (Wolcott 1995, 83-84). This viewpoint stresses culture in terms of field of practices that constitute the conditions for possibility of consumer agency and subjectivity. Therefore, to understand consumer behavior it is necessary to understand the cultural forms this marketplace practice makes available and offers.

Furthermore, this perspective points out that the marketplace is to be understood and investigated as a dynamically evolving social site in which marketplace activities and performances take place and

which determines them intelligible, desirable or accepted. The site is therefore under constant motion, re-organization and re-arrangement and not bound to any particular location. Because of this, the evolution of transnational marketplace cultures needs to be grasped in terms of constant change arising from the fact that practices as well as their wider and looser configurations with one another (not to mention micro and macro level arrangements) are inherently interwoven, co-determined, and co-determining (Schatzki 2002, 246). Therefore, different human and non-human doings constantly perpetuate and alter different components of the practices, and thus marketplace cultures. In addition, as Schatzki (2002, 246-54) points out, a number of dynamic forms and mechanisms characterize the evolving marketplace-dynamic: Most notably, practices progress through contagion, i.e. the rapid spread of practices which is often facilitated by the global information networks and technologies. As noted, practices or their configurations do not develop independently of one another but they have a tendency to blend, mix and link – and also conflict – in multifold of ways. This creates new hybrid forms, assemblages and analogues of practices and marketplace cultures that require constant attention.

The proposed theoretical lens brings into consideration that practices co-evolve and are co-created in the interplay of consumer-marketer exchanges (e.g. Shove and Pantzar 2005). If consumption occurs as items are appropriated in the course of engaging in particular practices (Warde 2005) it follows that the marketplace is inherently tied to and dependent of such practices. Therefore, it is via interconnected consumer and marketer practices – and via their changes and transformations – that a marketplace culture is fundamentally constituted and defined.

It is also important to note that the current approach is not necessarily post-hegemonic. Although some critical consumer research accounts in this field (e.g. Peñaloza 1994; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Holt and Üstüner 2006) are concerned about how globalization processes always involve power and hence they may cause inequalities in society, the recent work on postmodern consumer tribes (Maffesoli 1988/1996; Kozinets 2001; Cova and Cova 2002; Cova *et al.* 2007; Firat and Dholakia 2006) resides in some sense outside such 'critical imagination' (Ozanne and Murray 1991; Murray *et al.* 1994). This approach agrees that politico-economical forces will most certainly continue to shape transnational marketplace cultures. For instance, it seems evident that not all people share the same possibilities for (uncensored) internet connection or even using a computer.

As a final note, it is clear that the theoretical perspective presented here runs throughout the thesis and the following essays. However, it can be remarked that the individual essays work to adapt and

inform the proposed framework to fit particular empirical research contexts discussed next: online (Essay I *"Netnographic Inquiry and New Translocal Sites"* and Essay II *"Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities"*) and off-line investigations (Essay III *"Videography in Consumer Research"* and Essay IV *"Brothers in Paint"*).

3.2 Contemporary ethnographic methods

The thesis employs and builds on contemporary ethnographic methods and techniques that have a key role in obtaining, analyzing and communicating cultural marketplace knowledge in cultural consumer research (e.g. Arnould and Wallendorf 1994; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Moisander and Valtonen 2006). Ethnography refers, in more general terms, to a "research process in which the researcher closely engages in the daily life of some social setting and collects data using ethnographic methods of observation and participation – an experience labeled as the fieldwork – and then writes accounts of this process" (Moisander and Valtonen, 45). Whereas the initial project of ethnography was originally designed to study distant, exotic and unfamiliar places (e.g. Geertz 1973), nowadays ethnographic approaches are increasingly directed towards the study of close, everyday and familiar contemporary cultures and realities.

However, ethnography has not evolved radically from its earlier forms, as noted by Wolcott (1999) when he quotes Frake's early definition: "A description of a culture, an *ethnography*, is produced from an *ethnographic record* of the events of a society within a given period of time… To describe a culture… is not to recount the events of a society but to specify what one must know to make those events maximally probable. The problem is not the state what someone did but to specify the conditions under which it is culturally appropriate to anticipate that he, or persons occupying his role will render an equivalent performance. This conception of a cultural description implies that an ethnography should be a theory of cultural behavior in a particular society…" (Frake 1964, 111-112; cited in Wolcott 1999, 35-36). The present thesis adopts and is sympathetic especially with Frake's (1964) conceptualization of ethnography. However, the methodological approach of this thesis is not occupied with particular (national) societies or cultures but inherently transnational and translocal ones.

In addition, it needs to be emphasized that ethnography is not only a research *process* but also a *product*, and in addition as Wolcott (1999) argues, a particular *way of seeing*. Therefore, learning ethnography by simply reading guide books might prove difficult or sometimes impossible (Wolcott

1999, 15). Rather, the present thesis regards ethnography as a way of learning and seeing through the perspective of the culture that is adopted and, consequently, finding appropriate ways of gathering data accordingly. In doing so, also novel ways need to be considered actively, as will be suggested in the following.

In most cases using ethnographic methods such as participant observation, in-depth interview techniques, introspection and reflection, the aim of the *ethnographer* is to gain an insider's perspective of a given culture, and then to produce a "thick description", a written account of this other "culture" (e.g. Moisander and Valtonen 2006). The field of consumer research has increasingly applied market-oriented ethnographic methods (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) in which the researcher immerses him/herself into the consumption and/or marketing phenomena by observing and studying consumers in their natural, everyday surroundings.

In the light of this study, the focus is on new ethnographic varieties including netnography (Kozinets 1997; 1998; 2002a; 2006a, 2006b; 2010) and videography (e.g. Belk and Kozinets 2005; Kozinets and Belk 2006). The former is developed in the Essay I *"Netnographic Inquiry and New Translocal Sites"* and employed in an empirical context in Essay II *"Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities"*. The latter is elaborated in Essay III *"Videography in Consumer Research"* and applied in Essay IV *"Brothers in Paint"*. It is argued in general, that ethnography is necessarily a combination of methods since a focus on particular aspects or elements marketplace culture (e.g. online, textual or visual) offer only limited possibilities for the ethnographer to understand a given culture. The conceptual framework progressed in this thesis, for instance, directs attention to the various interconnected practice elements and material arrangements which underlie marketplace dynamics.

3.2.1 Netnography

To summarize briefly, netnography or online ethnography adapts ethnographic methods to study cyber cultures of online environments such as personal websites, online/virtual communities, discussion forums, chat-rooms and blogs (Kozinets 2002a; 2006a; 2010). In the recent years, a number of authors have discussed netnographic challenges, opportunities and varieties (e.g. Catterall and Maclaran 2002; Langer and Beckmann 2005, Kozinets 2006a; 2010) as well as presented fieldwork on different consumption-oriented online activities and collectives (e.g. Kozinets 1997; 2001; 2002a; Kozinets and Handelman 1998; Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; Giesler 2006; Schau *et al.* 2009; Tikkanen, Hietanen, Henttonen and Rokka 2009).

This thesis applies a practice-oriented netnographic variant that is well-suited for investigating the emerging transnational online sites of cultural production.

3.2.2 Videography

Videography or video ethnography has recently attracted interest among interpretive consumer researchers. It consists of audiovisual methods that are used for ethnographic purposes in the study of consumer culture and markets. The method employs video not only to register evidence from ethnographic fieldsites, but also to analyze and present findings (Belk and Kozinets 2005; Kozinets and Belk 2006). Most importantly, videographic methods have emerged in consumer research to overcome particular challenges in dominant textual approaches, and to better capture the visual and aesthetic aspects of culture that are pervasive in our consumer society. In addition, videography allows investigations to go beyond what consumers think and tell to include what they do and say. Although videography has been embraced by CCT researchers it still remains a severely under-represented and unfamiliar method in marketing and consumer research traditions.

In the present thesis videography is employed especially because it enables practice-oriented explorations to include doings (such as routinized bodily activities and ways of handling objects) and highlight the role of material arrangements (equipments, objects and visual aspects) that are central to the presented conceptual framework. Furthermore, it is employed as a part of multi-sited ethnography supported by more traditional ethnographic methods.

3.3 Data, data collection and empirical analysis

A brief description is given below regarding the empirical work and analysis of the thesis. To provide evidence and to elaborate on the proposed conceptual framework, two empirical case studies (Stake 2003) were conducted. As the objective is to investigate the cultural logic of translocal marketplace cultures by exploring neo-tribal forms of transnational cultural production, several criteria were used to evaluate and choose appropriate empirical settings: Most importantly, empirical cases were selected that 1) represent new forms of neo-tribal cultural production, 2) offer in-depth insights into transnational marketplace phenomena with reasonable scope, 3) give access for the researcher, 4) enable both online and off-line investigations and finally 5) allow the development and experimentation of new methods.

The first empirical case study set out to examine a translocal marketplace culture in the context of traveling (see Essay II *"Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities"*). By means of netnographic methods, a transnational online community of "global travelers" in which consumers participate from around the world, was studied. The selected community was ideal for the study of translocal cultural production because it consisted of 139.906 registered members from 244 countries. The community was considered inherently translocal because of its nature: the members being active travelers who were constantly on the move around the globe while simultaneously participating in the online dialogues at the community website. Therefore, the participants took part in the translocal cultural production, for instance, by posting comments on discussions around a variety of topics as well as by reporting travel experiences or images from different parts of the world.

To provide some additional insights and background information that cannot be found in the original paper, Appendices 1-3 give further details concerning the studied community and its members. For instance, it was possible to retrieve rather detailed information about who the travelers were, where they came from as well as how they travelled around the globe. Based on this data, it can also be concluded that the traveler community offered an excellent opportunity to study the production of transnational cultural forms and practices.

The empirical research was carried out in 2006-2008 by employing two principal research strategies: First, the researcher observed the community activities and discussions during a period of two years in order to gain an insider's perspective in the community. Second, the researcher gathered data and recorded field notes concerning particular transnational cultural practices and dialogues related to sustainable travelling. In addition, it was possible to identify the most active community members (see Appendix 3) for cross-sectional analyses that provided useful insights for understanding the essence of the large community. All data was also coded thematically using NVivo7 software (by QSR International Pty. Ltd.). However, the software was utilized mainly for organizing the gathered data. As the data corpus consisted of a total of 761 pages of downloaded forum discussions on sustainable aspects of travel, 70 representative threads (see Appendix 4) were chosen for the analysis reported in Essay II.

The second empirical case study set out to investigate a neo-tribal marketplace culture in the context of an extreme sport of paintball (see Essay IV *"Brothers in Paint"*). By means of a practice-oriented, multi-sited ethnographic study, a translocal paintball marketplace culture was analyzed. Paintball, a team

and tournament based sport was chosen for the empirical investigation primarily because it is currently played in over 110 countries and it provided access to a transnational, rapidly changing marketplace culture in an intriguing setting. The translocal nature of the sport was present due to the international tournament based format: Recurrent tournament events, games and training sessions in various countries organized and reproduced paintball as a translocal practice in which international participants engaged. As illustrated in the videography included in this thesis, a strong sense of community seems to connect the transnational paintball tribe.

Briefly put, paintball is a sport where players advance on a field shooting each other with paintball markers. It is a highly competitive, high-tech, fast-paced and exiting sport requiring athleticism and skills. Paintball therefore requires countless hours of practice, commitment, effort and team-work to master. The sport has also become a multi-million euro industry supported by a large number of companies, brands and equipment manufacturers. In the United States alone, it is estimated that there are over 10 million paintball players. Despite having suffered from negative attitudes related to war-like features of the game, paintball has recently gained more public awareness due to such things as mainstream media coverage (e.g. ESPN) as well as having adopted into computer games (e.g. NPPL Championship Paintball 2009, Microsoft Xbox 360).

Although paintball has undergone some significant changes since its early days, the present form of paintball is played in competitive tournament series consisting of large scale events with trade shows, spectators and hundreds of teams (for instance, over 150 teams of more than 15 nationalities in a typical Millennium event). The largest paintball tournament series in Europe is the Millennium Series yearly spanning five events across Europe. The United States has two competing large-scale tournaments series, the PSP and the NPPL of which the former hosts the largest single international tournament of the year, the PSP World Cup.

The empirical study was significant: ethnographic fieldwork was carried out in five large-scale international paintball tournaments, in European Millennium tournaments (Malaga, Nürnberg, Toulouse, London and Paris) and in the PSP World Cup (Orlando) in 2008. In Millennium tournaments there were around 130 paintball teams from 20 countries and in the World Cup tournament in Orlando more than 500 teams participated. The data consists of approximately 100 informal interviews, 20 videotaped interviews, 400 recorded photographs and 50 hours of videotaped paintball practices in tournaments and casual settings. In addition, netnographic

materials were collected from paintball online communities and over 100 paintball-related publications were reviewed.

Paintball was chosen for the study partly because during my doctoral studies, I had an excellent access to paintball and key informants via my co-author who had been participating in the sport for over 14 years on the international amateur level. The research team consisted of three members with varying levels of paintball expertise. During the project, I experienced paintball on-field for the first time and sought to gain an insider's perspective into the sport. This was achieved by participant/practitioner-observation (on and off-field), triangulation of perspectives with the research team as well as by analyzing the collected ethnographic materials.

4 CONTRIBUTION AND IMPLICATIONS

The thesis consists of four articles published (or forthcoming) in refereed international journals. Since one of the papers is a video format publication, an additional unpublished written essay manuscript was compiled to support the video[8]. In the following pages, the main contributions of this thesis are outlined and suggestions given for further research.

4.1 Theoretical

The main contribution of this thesis is the conceptualization and empirical exploration of a new perspective for studying transnational marketplace cultures which gives rise to a cultural logic of translocality. Based on the findings of my research, I argue that cultural consumer research, and more specifically consumer culture theory (CCT), would benefit from transnational investigations which take into consideration the logic of translocal cultural production of contemporary marketplace cultures. This thesis argues that diverse transnational cultural flows produced by the increasing mobility and connectivity of our lives has a growing tendency to create and reproduce translocal marketplace cultures, which is so far a fairly under-researched phenomena.

The thesis suggests a new conceptual perspective emphasizing that culture is inherently translocal, i.e. transnational and local at the same time, and is continuously being negotiated, shaped and produced by "translocal communities". Drawing on insights gained from two empirical investigations of contemporary and neo-tribal forms of cultural production, the thesis proposes that transnational consumer culture and markets can no longer be conceived or studied only in terms of national, territorial, geographical or locally bound identity or community. Instead they need to be understood increasingly as gradually disintegrated, rootless and de-territorialized entities that are connected primarily through sociability established via translocal practices.

Translocalization of marketplace cultures in this view refers to the fact that new forms of translocal sites, practices and communities are currently emerging that are not delimited to the nation-state, geographical or territorial location, but are regarded both smaller and larger than them. As particular

[8] Video format article received an international award, "the Jurors' Prize" at the *North American Association of Consumer Research Conference* in 2009.

sites of cultural production, translocal spaces, practices and communities arise from various transnational cultural flows of analogue and digital communication as well as movement of people, things and ideas across space. What they have in common is that they create new forms of agency for translocal actors who operate in a network of various localities (both physical and virtual).

Prior research on transnational marketplace cultures has given rise to a number of viewpoints stressing the logics of cultural assimilation or adaptation, models of market-mediated cultural globalization and glocalization as well as the postmodern fragmentation of markets. I argue that new research possibilities can be discovered by directing attention also to the logics of translocal cultural production, emphasizing the role of translocal practices and communities as central constituents of transnational marketplace cultures. Therefore it is argued that rather than viewing transnational marketplace cultures as global, local or glocal, it is suggested that the emphasis on translocalities (and connections between and within various locales and sites) allows us to conceptualize new forms of transnational cultural production that are currently emerging.

Several findings were brought up by the empirical studies conducted in this research. The study investigating an online community of global travelers illustrates how the new mediascape plays an important role in setting the stage for new forms of translocal cultural production such as the dissemination of environmental knowledge and environmental dialogue through which particular forms of ecological citizenship is being created and sustained. It was also shown how the online communities may work out an agenda for sustainable consumption practices and lifestyles and create new forms of consumer citizenship. In particular, the study illustrates and elaborates on the ways in which the various roles, responsibilities and duties of ecological citizenship are actively negotiated in the online environment. As a form of translocal cultural practice, this consumer citizenship is understood primarily as a de-territorialized and political citizenship – a kind of cosmopolitan version – indicating that the social web may empower consumers to construct new sustainable ways of lives.

In different empirical context, the neo-tribal marketplace culture of paintball was studied by analyzing and elaborating on how it is organized and constituted as translocal practice. The study illustrates the cultural dynamics at play in the production of translocal marketplace cultures by pointing out interconnected practice elements that are not bound to a location but are organized translocally from various localities, including international tournaments and events. Furthermore, the empirical study served to demonstrate a number of evolutionary aspects that practice-oriented approach may open up. Therefore, translocal marketplace cultures should not be considered static

but subject to constant re-organization and re-arrangement. Prior accounts on marketplace dynamics have also shown this but they have relied heavily on discursive, dialectical and narrative based approaches. Practice-approach would seem to suggest a distinctive evolutionary logic in this respect.

By building on a practice-based perspective, the thesis contributes to the literature of marketplace cultures by conceptualizing the ultimate site of the marketplace as a continuously evolving and translocal social site in which participants engage in. This site consists of both mental and bodily practice elements (such as doings and sayings) as well as material arrangements (setups of material objects which compose the entities where practices are carried out). From this perspective, the marketplace is to be analyzed as a dynamically evolving social site in which marketplace activities and performances take place and which determines them intelligible, desirable or accepted. This site is not bound to a location and therefore, this thesis argues, interesting research possibilities will emerge into globalizing marketplace cultures.

Furthermore, this thesis argues that the emerging neo-tribal consumer collectives may require further theoretical and empirical attention. Existing literature on consumer neo-tribes has not considered transnational cultural dynamics in any systematic manner or by means of rigorous empirical investigations. It is proposed that this may be due to the fact that we lack conceptual tools and methods in their analysis. New insights are given in this regard in that the neo-tribal cultures have been the focus of the present thesis. Thus by investigating the site of the tribal marketplace culture this thesis contributes to the marketplace culture literature by illuminating the elements that inherently shape and transform neo-tribal practices. In addition, similar observation can be made regarding the study of neo-tribal online collectives. The present thesis elaborated on the changing mediascape and brought about critique of prior transnational studies in their neglect of the new forms of cultural production particular to the social web. In this connection, it is argued that the new forms of online production may eventually empower and enable consumers in resisting dominant and unidirectional cultural flows.

The prior discussion on neo-tribal collectives, as described in particular by Maffesoli (1996), has depicted them in principle as small-scale, unstable, ephemeral and temporal entities, where there is only relatively little commitment to the community by its members. My research shows in two empirical settings that neo-tribal marketplace cultures may also take other, more profound shapes: The online community of travelers I studied included nearly 140.000 members from over two hundred countries and the extreme sport community of paintballers expanded to over 110 countries

with thousands of players and teams. Both of these examples set the discourse on neo-tribes on a new ground, which requires further investigation. Neo-tribes cannot be understood anymore as "little-masses" or obscure groups of enthusiasts but rather as relatively stable, empowered and organized marketplace constellations that can grow up into multi-million euro industries.

Based on the literature review, in which the philosophical roots of distinctive traditions of transnational consumer culture research were analyzed, compared and contrasted, the thesis brings forward findings that may help future researchers, for instance, to recognize and draw connections between them. In addition, new directions were pointed out by identifying potential weaknesses or strengths in the existing approaches that have been utilized in the otherwise fragmented field of transnational research. Most importantly, the thesis suggests that practice-theoretical approaches offer a promising ground for transnational cultural investigations. However, it is also pointed out that practice approaches still suffer from problems related to their empirical application due to disagreement and confusion regarding their scope and analysis. In this respect the thesis provides one feasible perspective which is developed and applied in two empirical settings. This tentative framework would naturally benefit from further investigations and developments.

Finally, I wish to consider justification issues considering the arguments made in this thesis. All social and cultural theories face the question: how can a particular perspective or ontology be justified as superior, better or more preferable than others? Schatzki (2002, xvi), for instance, outlines three main ways of such justification: through arguments against its rivals; through demonstrations of its compatibility with the social world; and through its ability to underwrite first-rate social investigation. The first strategy articulates theoretical arguments. The second presents plausible descriptions of empirical phenomena in the terms of the ontology, thereby using these phenomena as examples to illustrate the latter. The third strategy provides useful descriptions, explanations and interpretations of social affairs on the basis of the ontology. In this sense, the first is only occupied with pointing out deficiencies of alternatives while the second and third exhibit the plausibility of one's own account and the advantages of approaching social life trough it. The current thesis basically wishes to implement all of these strategies in its positioning: by comparing the existing approaches (Chapter 2 and Essay 1 *"Netnographic Inquiry and New Translocal Sites"* and Essay 3 "*Videography in Consumer Research"*), by employing empirical demonstrations and useful descriptions and interpretations of the social world (Essay 2 *"Environmental Dialogue in Online Communities"* and Essay 4 *"Brothers in Paint"*).

4.2 Methodological

The presented theoretical-methodological framework implies several contributions regarding methods for analyzing transnational marketplace cultures. It is emphasized that newly emerged sites of cultural production require novel methodological approaches. In particular, questions arise regarding how can translocal marketplace cultures be studied?

In the context of online investigations, it is argued that the presented practice-oriented perspective would insist on a distinctive analytic and methodological focus. Rather than investigating communities or groups, research methods directed towards analyzing transnational practices opens up new possibilities for future research. In the empirical cases, for instance, the analytic focus is on what constitutes a particular way of doing and saying – such as the practice of sustainable travelling – rather than exploring what a community stands for or what it means to be a member of it. In this way, practices are analyzed here both as co-ordinated entities of temporally and spatially dispersed doings and sayings as well as performances – i.e. acts of carrying out practices. Therefore, the analysis must be shifted onto practical activity and its representations and what individuals or groups 'do'. However, it needs to be kept in mind that to speak of practices in this way involves recognizing that the nexus of a practice 'hangs together' as coordinated by its components – particular understandings, procedures and engagements (Warde 2005). Consequently, research methods for translocal cultures need to study cultures translocally.

Accordingly, it is proposed that practice-oriented netnography of transnational online communities and translocal practices would bring into consideration transnational cultural dynamics that have received only limited attention so far. The thesis proposes that the present approach would be beneficial for studying translocal marketplace practices that are currently emerging and spreading globally via the new mediascapes. Therefore, this study continues to develop netnographic inquiry as a methodological approach by directing attention to phenomena that netnography is so well suited to study: transnational cultural production.

In addition, the thesis addresses issues regarding videographic methods in consumer research. In theorizing marketplace cultures, it is necessary to a move away from textual and narrative analyses of marketplace cultures, to the extent that it is possible, in order to illuminate also the doings and material arrangements that inherently co-determine the site of the marketplace. Audiovisual research methodology is explored and developed in this respect by providing insights and empirical examples

of how videography can enrich our knowledge about marketplace culture phenomena. In terms of future videographic productions, the thesis draws from visual ethnography and documentary film theory in seeking answers to help tackle existing hurdles in videographic research. In particular, fundamental questions regarding the role of theory and truth, the role of the researcher and the role of the viewer are elaborated.

4.3 Managerial

Although not widely discussed previously in this thesis, a number of important implications for companies and policy-makers will be presented next in terms of the proposed perspective and methods.

Most prominently, this thesis gives rise to a change in common managerial thinking about products, brands and markets. For instance, a bulk of marketing and management literature has been directed to companies in order to help them direct, develop and market products, services and brands. These guides stress the importance of understanding the competitive positioning, product benefits and meanings as well as what customers value. In contrast to this dominant view, it is argued that companies therefore seem to underestimate the cultural conditions underlying the ways in which consumers/customers do things and use products.

Therefore, it is suggested that the current focus of management actions towards designing, offering, delivering and selling a product or service (such as a phone or a healthy food product) by developing its features and message to match the needs of target customers needs should be reconsidered. These actions should rather be directed increasingly towards activities enabling, monitoring and facilitating emerging marketplace practices, i.e. the ways in which consumers/customers do things (e.g. connect with their friends) and make sense of their actions (e.g. living a healthy lifestyle). Ultimately, this line of thinking would boil down to the fact that companies would need to think about their businesses more in terms of culturally embedded marketplace practices than products. Thus, understanding how particular marketplace practices emerge, spread, evolve, transform as well as what they constitute of becomes crucial. This point is also what Shove and Pantzar (2005) note, when demonstrating that products and practices do not spread across cultures in a similar manner.

For example, such "ways of consumption" as social networking, healthy living, snacking, dieting, weight watching, body building, grooming, travelling, shopping, sporting or leisure activities, eating,

clubbing, interior design, housekeeping, cleaning, brand endorsing, fandom, raising children, elderly living, budget living, investing and managing funds, and ethical and environmental consumption need to be considered and analyzed as practices that consist of interconnected and increasingly translocal practice elements and material arrangements that build up contemporary marketplace cultures. Therefore, it is argued that a sole focus on investigating and developing new product attributes may prevent companies from enriching their understanding of markets as well as pursuing new pro-active and co-creative strategies that would instead create and facilitate new marketplace practices (and thus new business).

It is also fundamental for businesses to understand how marketplace practices, especially new ones, proliferate around the globe. In this study, transnational online and tribal marketplace practices were analyzed as particularly good examples of such phenomena. It was concluded that in many cases practices are not tied to a particular location and that they will emerge and spread increasingly via new forms of transnational communities and social networks. This would call more attention to the challenges of understanding such complexity, for instance, in the issue of how companies or researchers can study multilingual and multicultural environments.

In regards to new forms of marketplace practices – such as the practice of sustainable travelling or extreme sporting activities explored in the empirical studies – both marketers and policymakers need to be alert. On the other hand, new (hopefully sustainable) marketplace practices need to be encouraged and facilitated, for instance, by means of creating transnational collaborative online communities in which information, knowledge and skills about (sustainable) practices can be shared and co-created. On the other hand, new and emerging practices need to be constantly monitored and explored in order to anticipate future challenges and possibilities. In this regard, the methods proposed in this study can be of considerable help. They give particular emphasis to the audiovisual and online aspects which are of fundamental importance for both researchers and companies in understanding and conceptualizing marketplace cultures and consumer society at large. Surprisingly, it is indicated that the dominant methodologies seem to have a profound tendency to ignore them, or at least regard them in many ways as secondary.

APPENDIX 1 *Members by Country*

Europe

Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
Åland	50	59	32	0	Liechtenstein	6	318	40	0
Albania	108	210	177	1	Lithuania	140	417	384	6
Andorra	77	301	218	4	Luxembourg	31	859	152	2
Austria	447	4797	4067	15	Macedonia	58	212	102	3
Belarus	60	164	56	3	Malta	105	501	248	7
Belgium	1403	4514	1631	25	Moldova	41	80	33	1
Bosnia And Herzegovina	57	410	200	3	Monaco	9	1182	249	0
Bulgaria	182	762	613	16	Montenegro	4	34	120	1
Croatia	262	1579	1913	36	Netherlands	1866	7241	3372	56
Cyprus	64	765	224	7	Northern Ireland	107	132	245	6
Czech Republic	242	3594	3077	20	Norway	1426	2688	2462	22
Denmark	513	3782	903	12	Poland	540	2125	1251	25
England	3412	1852	3409	48	Portugal	600	2470	1609	45
Estonia	170	790	448	4	Romania	386	760	996	35
Faroe Islands	4	48	30	1	Russia	407	2030	3394	39
Finland	549	2543	1117	23	San Marino	0	101	3	0
France	1338	16954	10080	50	Scotland	577	749	1512	37
Georgia	33	131	139	2	Serbia	164	617	468	9
Germany	1936	11783	6869	42	Slovakia	163	877	203	7
Gibraltar	13	512	42	2	Slovenia	182	806	370	13
Greece	364	4353	3408	41	Spain	1810	10641	11634	93
Greenland	6	108	33	0	Svalbard	1	31	0	0
Guernsey	10	73	28	0	Sweden	964	4240	2089	24
Hungary	200	2202	1271	7	Switzerland	571	5527	2395	23
Iceland	99	612	386	10	Turkey	665	3110	4121	76
Ireland	2505	3629	3485	52	Ukraine	145	469	642	15
Isle of Man	12	46	17	1	United Kingdom	15403	22245	12324	84
Italy	1377	10921	12996	96	Vatican City	17	469	174	3
Jersey	16	123	19	0	Wales	288	484	493	10
Latvia	104	544	326	4	**Total Europe:**	**42289**	**149576**	**108299**	**1167**

Oceania

Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
American Samoa	18	28	12	0	Niue	2	11	0	0
Australia	8549	12469	39753	132	Norfolk Island	3	16	1	0
Christmas Island	2	20	0	0	Northern Mariana Islands	1	14	5	1
Cocos Islands	3	18	9	0	Palau	4	41	19	1
Cook Islands	5	233	271	6	Papua New Guinea	10	118	174	2
Fiji	45	1042	1614	12	Pitcairn Islands	4	13	305	2
French Polynesia	8	345	612	1	Samoa	3	93	59	2
Guam	17	169	17	1	Solomon Islands	8	70	104	1
Kiribati	4	10	15	0	Tokelau	4	8	0	0
Marshall Islands	3	28	18	0	Tonga	6	80	113	3
Micronesia	21	37	24	2	Tuvalu	4	15	0	0
Nauru	4	8	2	0	Vanuatu	12	168	452	3
New Caledonia	4	202	45	2	Wallis and Futuna Islands	9	9	1	0
New Zealand	1853	4422	18960	68	**Total Oceania:**	**10606**	**19687**	**62585**	**239**

North America

Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
Bermuda	34	197	38	1	Saint Pierre and Miquelon	3	14	0	0
Canada	7610	11587	8445	107	USA	27402	42429	41241	251
Mexico	936	5439	7729	64	**Total North America:**	**35985**	**59666**	**57453**	**423**

Members: Number of online community members from country
Visited: Different countries visited (times)
Photos: Number of photos downloaded online
Travel Helpers: Number of local travel helpers

Appendix 1 *(Cont.)*

Asia

Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
Armenia	44	73	241	2	Maldives Republic	51	298	154	6
Azerbaijan	35	95	57	3	Mongolia	45	349	1327	5
Bangladesh	190	129	367	8	Myanmar	59	272	687	10
Bhutan	44	51	192	9	Nepal	263	774	3308	43
Brunei	16	165	124	0	North Korea	2	45	109	2
Cambodia	29	1684	7423	20	Pakistan	495	334	326	23
China	1311	4374	18899	141	Philippines	1228	1180	9812	36
East Timor	7	62	27	2	Singapore	1229	5103	3040	55
Hong Kong	447	4333	4123	24	South Korea	208	1406	2991	11
India	4200	3255	14754	281	Sri Lanka	198	477	1043	20
Indonesia	626	2084	5972	44	Taiwan	255	1022	1307	14
Japan	286	3941	8650	36	Tajikistan	6	35	2	0
Kazakhstan	19	119	192	1	Thailand	679	6823	20620	86
Kyrgyzstan	11	88	117	1	Turkmenistan	1	47	26	1
Laos	13	1011	4738	12	Uzbekistan	33	132	133	1
Macau	9	436	417	3	Vietnam	363	1868	14726	61
Malaysia	2015	3428	7397	90	**Total Asia:**	**14417**	**45493**	**133301**	**1051**

South America

Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
Anguilla	27	54	22	1	Falkland Islands	2	70	20	0
Antigua and Barbuda	21	233	63	1	French Guiana	3	59	8	0
Argentina	690	2503	11292	49	Guyana	23	63	103	1
Bolivia	74	1004	5827	14	Paraguay	14	219	265	2
Brazil	854	2719	7594	65	Peru	391	1968	12540	39
Cayman Islands	11	435	101	2	Suriname	6	63	38	2
Chile	306	1925	5625	28	Uruguay	127	533	1061	8
Colombia	321	1172	2644	11	Venezuela	164	819	592	13
Dominica	12	89	47	2	**Total South America:**	**3161**	**14849**	**53995**	**253**
Ecuador	115	921	6153	15					

Middle East

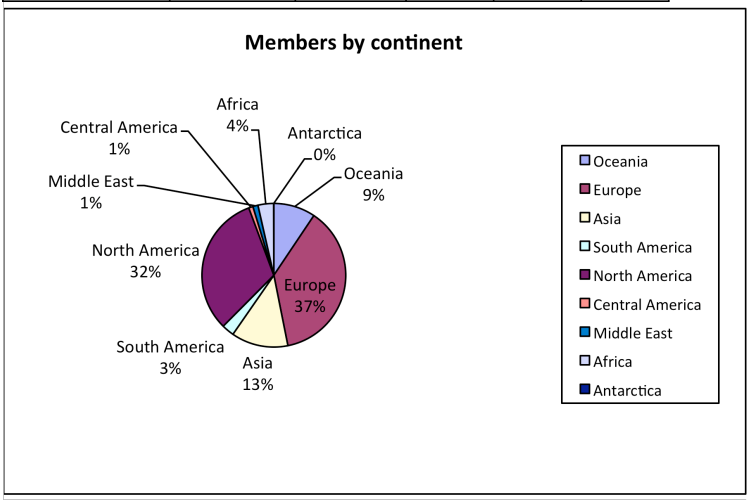
Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
Afghanistan	215	167	92	3	Oman	29	260	194	7
Bahrain	28	370	19	2	Qatar	16	362	66	2
Iran	166	279	965	9	Saudi Arabia	99	312	49	3
Iraq	37	172	122	1	State of Palestine	2	85	45	1
Israel	412	1284	1127	21	Syria	39	254	252	3
Jordan	70	598	774	6	United Arab Emirates	66	1973	754	10
Kuwait	35	212	37	2	Yemen	15	76	28	3
Lebanon	68	234	55	9	**Total Middle East:**	**1297**	**6638**	**4579**	**82**

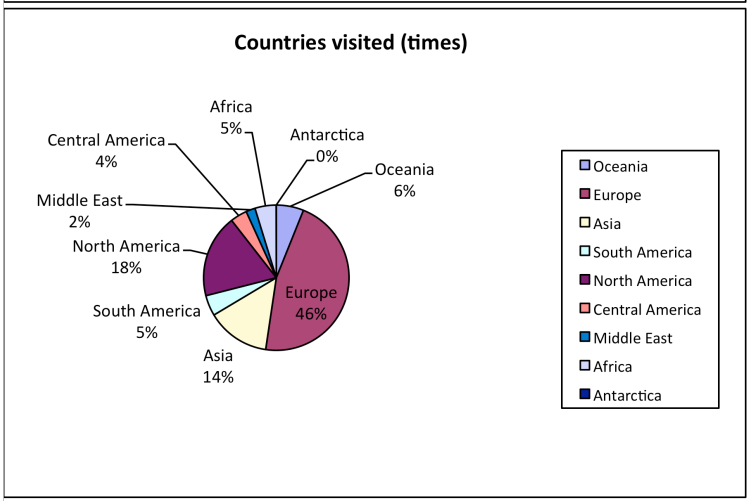
Central America

Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers	Country	Members	Visited	Photos	Travel Helpers
Aruba	32	312	55	1	Martinique	1	238	1	0
Bahamas	43	899	385	3	Montserrat	2	44	13	0
Barbados	45	435	184	6	Netherlands Antilles	10	246	1237	4
Belize	37	645	789	5	Nicaragua	31	426	1738	3
British Virgin Islands	55	184	31	1	Panama	57	749	1430	13
Costa Rica	137	1295	3863	29	Puerto Rico	82	767	101	2
Cuba	47	977	1153	14	Saint Barthélemy	0	17	1	0
Dominican Republic	59	881	553	7	Saint Kitts and Nevis	7	105	40	1
El Salvador	44	256	360	6	Saint Lucia	9	231	123	1
Grenada	6	117	45	2	Saint Martin	0	29	5	0
Guadeloupe	11	184	2	0	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	7	72	29	2
Guatemala	68	850	3531	16	Trinidad and Tobago	67	198	199	7
Haiti	10	181	15	1	Turks and Caicos Islands	4	93	160	1
Honduras	22	531	1183	8	United States Virgin Islands	108	349	248	1
Jamaica	86	752	261	8	**Total Central America:**	**1087**	**12063**	**17735**	**142**

APPENDIX 2 *Summary of Traffic*

Continent	Number of Countries Represented	Members by continent	Countries visited (times)	Photos	Travel Helpers
Oceania	27	10606	19687	62585	239
Europe	59	42289	149576	108299	1167
Asia	33	14417	45493	133301	1051
South America	18	3161	14849	53995	253
North America	5	35985	59666	57453	423
Central America	29	1087	12063	17735	142
Middle East	15	1297	6638	4579	82
Africa	59	3971	15234	20557	318
Antarctica	1	43	106	401	1





APPENDIX 3 *Summary of Members Analyzed*

ID	Age	Sex	Postings	Blog posts	Triplogs	From where	Joined	Longest trip	Occupation	Status
1	54	Female	10513	1	0	Illinois, USA	01/19/2005	N/A	Graphic designer	Moderator
2	39	Female	8465	1	0	USA	01/15/2005	N/A	N/A	Moderator
3	36	Male	8353	0	11	New Zealand	11/14/2005	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
4	27	Female	5402	16	24	Dublin, Ireland	06/15/2005	20367	Business Analyst	Travel Guru
5	34	Female	5246	19	15	Montreal, Canada	08/17/2004	1473	Copywriter	Travel Guru
6	22	Female	4741	29	24	Ireland	01/18/2005	11218	Assistant Editor	Travel Guru
7	27	Male	4113	3	1	Glasgow, Scotland	09/21/2004	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
8	38	Female	3098	0	0	Ireland	08/29/2006	N/A	N/A	Travel Guru
9	41	Male	2906	0	0	Sydney, Australia	09/20/2002	N/A	Accountant	Travel Guru
10	30	Male	2819	74	49	Netherlands	07/22/2002	34918	Self employed	Administrator
11	25	Male	2789	0	13	Netherlands	6/5/05	N/A	Student	Travel Guru
12	34	Female	2782	2782	21	Florida USA	01/18/2005	N/A	Accountant CPA	Travel Guru
13	28	Male	2743	78	17	Netherlands	07/15/2002	43310	Web Developer	Administrator
14	32	Male	2318	1	17	Dublin, Ireland	01/18/2005	N/A	Filmmaker	Respected Member
15	28	Male	2317	0	9	Malaysia	11/9/07	N/A	Forum Janitor	Moderator
16	33	Female	2305	30	13	Ireland	03/16/2004	N/A	Customer service	Moderator
17	30	Male	2112	13	37	Netherlands	2/8/06	40969	Traffic planner	Travel Guru
18	28	Male	2080	102	91	Sweden	01/18/2004	6626	Cartographer	Travel Guru
19	36	Male	2006	104	17	Canada	07/15/2004	23381	Consultant	Travel Guru
20	24	Male	1683	2	2	Canada	07/31/2004	4210	Freelancer	Respected Member
21	33	Male	1603	3	0	Canada	12/19/2004	N/A	Systems engineer	Moderator
22	22	Female	1591	0	9	Iceland	3/12/04	N/A	Student	Respected Member
23	28	Female	1586	12	24	United Kingdom	09/28/2004	N/A	Student	Respected Member
24	41	Male	1558	1558	84	USA	03/24/2005	N/A	Photographer	Travel Guru
25	28	Male	1361	0	0	Malaysia	03/25/2005	N/A	Freelancer	Respected Member
26	N/A	Male	1296	14	3	Netherlands	4/2/05	94447	Web Developer	Travel Guru
27	22	Female	1285	0	0	United Kingdom	6/9/04	N/A	Retail Supervisor	Travel Guru
28	28	Male	1256	0	27	Netherlands	02/21/2005	N/A	Researcher	Travel Guru
29	34	Male	1247	170	1	UK	01/21/2005	75337	World Traveller	Travel Guru
30	23	Female	1119	4	2	UK	03/16/2004	62610	Student	Moderator
31	24	Female	1106	40	4	UK	08/27/2004	N/A	Designer	Respected Member
32	28	Female	1042	0	9	Singapore	4/9/04	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
33	46	Male	994	0	0	Illinois, USA	05/27/2005	N/A	Brewmaster	Moderator
34	27	Male	989	9	18	Brighton, UK	10/13/2004	13786	N/A	Travel Guru
35	54	Male	958	2	1	Australia	10/20/2004	11297	Analyst	Respected Member
36	28	Female	957	0	22	Germany	4/12/05	1178	Government	Travel Guru
37	58	Male	954	0	12	Las Vegas, USA	6/5/05	N/A	Retired	Travel Guru
38	34	Male	923	5	45	UK	02/26/2005	13918	SDH engineer	Respected Member
39	26	Female	922	0	0	Canada	04/27/2004	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
40	38	Female	903	7	35	New Zealand	05/18/2005	N/A	Management	Respected Member

Appendix 3 *(Cont.)*

ID	Age	Sex	Postings	Blog posts	Triplogs	From where	Joined	Longest trip	Occupation	Status
41	28	Female	762	10	25	Germany	10/3/05	N/A	Student	Respected Member
42	32	Male	759	0	19	Scotland	01/16/2004	N/A	Web Designer	Travel Guru
43	26	Male	745	0	0	Australia	02/15/2006	N/A	Student	Moderator
44	31	Male	741	0	6	Netherlands	3/1/07	4005	Music Manager	Respected Member
45	39	Male	516	2	18	United Kingdom	05/27/2004	N/A	Tour operator	Respected Member
46	29	Female	446	19	28	Lund, Sweden	06/27/2005	11857	Manager	Travel Guru
47	60	Male	446	7	10	Malaysia	9/10/05	N/A	Media Consultant	Respected Member
48	31	Male	445	10	11	Colorado, USA	01/31/2005	10823	Public Relations	Respected Member
49	N/A	Male	445	0	0	USA	09/17/2005	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
50	23	Female	444	0	3	Calgary, Canada	4/7/03	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
51	26	Male	422	422	0	USA	10/21/2004	N/A	Photographer	Respected Member
52	30	Male	418	0	0	New Jersey, USA	09/26/2003	N/A	Robotics	Respected Member
53	56	Male	414	414	0	El Salvador	2/7/05	N/A	Retired	Respected Member
54	54	Male	412	0	25	California, USA	09/14/2004	N/A	IT Mgmt Consulting	Respected Member
55	43	Male	412	3	2	Sidney, Australia	9/5/04	18805	Company Director	Respected Member
56	32	Female	410	3	9	Andorra	04/15/2006	19153	Hotel Manager	Respected Member
57	63	Female	379	0	0	Netherlands	1/1/06	N/A	Director	Moderator
58	31	Female	366	0	16	United Kingdom	4/7/03	N/A	IT	Respected Member
59	32	Female	358	36	12	Indonesia	09/24/2003	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
60	22	Male	343	0	3	UK	01/30/2005	N/A	Nomad	Respected Member
61	28	Male	338	0	1	Canada	04/14/2006	201304	Student	Respected Member
62	29	Female	338	1	0	Wales	11/21/2005	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
63	33	Male	295	0	0	Australia	9/10/05	N/A	Computer technician	Respected Member
64	21	Male	294	0	4	USA	11/19/2005	27285	N/A	Respected Member
65	30	Female	290	0	1	St. Louis, USA	04/21/2005	32839	Singer	Respected Member
66	36	Male	255	0	0	UK	7/12/03	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
67	23	Female	215	0	9	Austria	7/10/04	N/A	Teacher	Respected Member
68	31	Female	202	0	0	Italy	6/2/06	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
69	40	Male	181	0	0	UK	1/3/05	N/A	Recruitment	Respected Member
70	22	N/A	148	0	0	Canada	10/16/2005	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
71	35	Male	107	37	2	Wales	11/7/06	38657	IT	Respected Member
72	25	Female	60	130	0	UK	03/14/2005	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
73	22	Male	50	87	3	Netherlands	08/17/2002	37265	Editor	Moderator
74	38	Male	24	94	1	UK	6/8/05	10060	N/A	Respected Member
75	29	Male	9	29	3	Australia	12/15/2006	75069	Travel agent	Respected Member
76	25	Male	1	50	29	Portland, USA	10/18/2005	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
77	N/A	Male	0	152	44	Ecuador	4/5/05	N/A	N/A	Respected Member
78	54	Female	0	192	0	USA	11/28/2006	N/A	N/A	Respected Member

APPENDIX 4 *Summary of Discussion Threads Analyzed*

Nr	Thread name
1	52 Countries in 1 year
2	Anti American Experiences
3	Anyone just plain fed up with work
4	Arthur Frommer on travel web sites
5	Bangkok Hilton prisoners
6	Being Identified as American
7	Budget airlines improve tourism
8	Cheap transatlantic flights, environment
9	Considering Your Carbon Footprints
10	decsions decsions
11	differences between a backpacker and a tourist
12	Do politics sometimes influence your travels
13	Eco
14	Eco tourism
15	ECOTOURISM
16	End of a road
17	Ethical Considerations on the Environmental Impact of Travel
18	Ethical reasons
19	Favella tour in Rio
20	First deleted World Heritage
21	Getting sick of travelling
22	Global Warming... what are we doing
23	Going global with no money
24	Guidebook is bible
25	Have you ever felt like moving for good
26	Helping Plan Others Travel
27	How to be an ethical, sustainable consumer on a tight budget.
28	How travelling can change your life
29	How would u define racism
30	Inca Trail
31	Inspiration for those who want to start REAL travelling
32	Is this normal
33	Is travelling selfish
34	is travelling some sort of a rite of passage
35	Islam and terror
36	Losing culture to tourism
37	Love Tourism
38	Meeting Tp persons
39	men and there thai women
40	Meta sites
41	Mobility
42	Most Dangerous Country in the World
43	Most disappointing travel destination
44	Next step the world
45	Our Changing World
46	Politics and travelling
47	Religion and Politics
48	Religion anyone
49	rtw tickets
50	Severe moral dilemma
51	sign this petition
52	Starbuck
53	Stats ...
54	Sustainable Tourism Cambodia
55	Sustainable travel ...
56	Sustainable travels Co2
57	The Backpacker bubble
58	The Environment
59	The ethics of prostitution
60	The future
61	The Future, help needed
62	The merits of user mediated info
63	The travelling pay off
64	The War in Iraq
65	Tipping in poorer countries
66	To stay sitting at this desk or go travelling
67	Travellers lifelist
68	Ranked 11
69	Travelling and Human Relationships
70	Ugh can you believe
71	Westerners guilt
72	Whaling
73	what do you know about Iran
74	What global warming
75	What has your experience of travel been 2
76	What is your glacier doing
77	What made you want to travel
78	Why do we travel what happens after
79	why do YOU travel
80	Why not go to China
81	Wikipedia on backpackers
82	Virtual friendships
83	Your choice career or travel

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ORIGINAL ESSAYS

ESSAY I

Netnographic inquiry and new translocal sites of the social

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Netnographic inquiry and new translocal sites of the social

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Abstract

As consumers' lives are increasingly gliding into online worlds and global information networks, researchers face a range of important methodological questions particular to the digital times. In prior research, online ethnographic methods or netnography has been suggested to address some of these challenges, especially when new forms of post-modern and sub-cultural consumer collectives and cultures have been the focus. Extending this work further, the article investigates the transnational nature of online cultural phenomena, and suggests a theoretical-methodological approach as a netnographic variant well-suited for accessing its logics. In doing so, the article argues that a better understanding of the new "translocal sites", such as transnational online communities and consumer networks, can open up new avenues for research on the ever globalizing and tribalizing consumer culture.

Keywords

Netnography; online communities; consumer culture; globalization; cultural practices

Introduction

Production of consumer culture has undergone a dramatic transformation due to proliferation of Web 2.0 technologies and online environments such as online/virtual communities, online social networks, chat rooms, discussion forums, virtual multi-user game worlds, and blogs (e.g. Kozinets, 2002; 2006a; Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Zwick and Dholakia, 2008). Such highly interactive, participatory, and social environments give rise to a specific logic of consumer culture in which chameleon-like, globally spread, and emotionally connected consumer collectives play a central role (e.g. Kozinets, 2001; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Cova and Cova, 2002; Cova *et al*., 2007; Rokka and Moisander, 2009; Moisander, Rokka and Valtonen, 2010). For instance, these consumer tribes and networks are no longer bounded by local, spatial, or temporal environments but rather their communion is inherently connected with the possibilities provided by online computer-networking.

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Given such profound "infotransformation" of the markets and society (e.g. Zwick and Dholakia, 2008), important questions arise regarding contemporary consumer culture and the transnational cultural tendencies it entails: What is the nature of emerging transnational online sites of consumption? To what extent should they be regarded as global and/or local? What sorts of cultural flows and resources are circulated and mediated by them? How are they transforming everyday consumption practices? How should consumer researchers access, conceptualize, and analyze them? Finding some preliminary answers to these questions forms the basis of this article.

Not surprisingly, web-based research methodologies have gained a growing interest among consumer researchers trying to grasp complex and fast paced online cultural production. In the field of cultural consumer research (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006), netnographic inquiry, originally proposed by Robert V. Kozinets (1997; 1998; 2002; 2006a), has been extremely successful in furthering our understanding and knowledge about the online cultures. Netnography, which descends from anthropological understanding of culture, adapts ethnographic methods to study cyber cultures of online environments such as personal websites, online/virtual communities, discussion forums, chat-rooms, and blogs (Kozinets, 2006a). Recently, a number of authors have discussed netnographic challenges, opportunities, and varieties (e.g. Catterall and Maclaran, 2002; Langer and Beckmann, 2005; Kozinets, 2006b; Sandlin, 2007), presented netnographic fieldwork on consumption-oriented online gatherings and activities (Kozinets, 1997; 2001; 2002; Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; Giesler, 2006; Rokka and Moisander, 2009), and even studied brand-oriented online communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Brown *et al.*, 2003; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Schau, Muñiz and Arnould, 2009).

This article continues the development of netnographic inquiry as a methodological approach and research orientation. However, rather than pointing out further features and challenges of the previously outlined method (Catterall and Maclaran, 2002; Langer and Beckmann, 2005; Kozinets, 2006a; 2006b), attention is directed to the nature of phenomena that netnographic inquiry is so well-suited to study. It is argued that, despite wide-ranging success of netnographic inquiry, important aspects of transnational cultural production and globalization have so far been under-theorized and somewhat neglected at least in terms of empirical netnographic studies. This being the fact, the article suggests that netnographic inquiry, with the help of its multi-modal adherents such as videography (Belk and Kozinets, 2005; De Valck, Rokka and Hietanen, 2009), may provide consumer researchers with valuable insights into the global consumer culture and marketplace

realities in which emerging consumer communities and computer-mediated communications come into play.

The purpose of this article is, therefore, to investigate how netnographic methods can open up new possibilities to study the global mediated marketplace. To this end, answers are sought by elaborating the nature of transnational online consumer communities as sites of cultural production. In doing so, these sites are conceptualized as new "translocal sites of the social", i.e. specific contexts where, and apart of which, social life and global marketplaces transpire. It is claimed that analyzing these online sites as "translocal" (Appadurai, 1990; 1996), i.e. not global or local but as contexts which are both transnational and local, is fundamental for investigations seeking to understand global cultural tendencies. These insights are largely based on author's previously published empirical work (Rokka and Moisander, 2009).

In the following sections, a brief introduction is given to recent approaches in cultural investigations into the contemporary and computer-mediated marketplace environments. Thereafter, theoretical-methodological framework and a netnographic variant – one which is designed for exploring the new forms of transnational consumption community – are developed. Finally, conclusions are drawn and several practical recommendations are given for further research.

Studying the globally mediated marketplace

The global interconnectedness of today's world and the social relations it involves is a constant concern of consumer researchers. Regarding the current approaches in the stream of cultural consumer research (e.g. Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006), better understanding of contemporary marketplace cultures has been sought from various perspectives, in particular, those mapping the communal forms of affinity, such as consumption-oriented sub-cultures, youth cultures, fan collectives, brand enthusiasts, virtual/online communities, and new neo-tribal realities. Among these current tendencies a growing number of researchers have applied post-modern and sub-cultural frameworks of interpretation in their theorizing. As a result, foundations of these approaches are based on cultural and social inquiry in which culture is conceptualized primarily through ethnography (Canniford, 2005).

On the one hand, drawing on post-modern ideas, communities of consumption have been conceptualized as consumer tribes (Cova and Cova, 2002; Cova *et al.*, 2007). This stream builds on Maffesoli's (1988/1996) argument that in the contemporary society there is an ongoing transition

away from mass-media produced individualism towards alternative forms of social arrangements, called "neo-tribes" or "post-modern tribes" or transitory groups, which are neither fixed or permanent (Goulding, Shankar and Elliot, 2002). In this view, the social existence of our society seems to occur more and more through the "little masses", heterogeneous fragments of society, groups distinguished by their members' shared (post-modern) lifestyles and tastes. Such "new" tribal forms cannot be understood as their more traditional counterparts, archaic tribes because they do not have similar fixity, longevity, or physical boundaries. Rather they have been conceptualized as affection-based collectivities that are fluid, ephemeral, and esoteric. Within them, furthermore, social life is largely marked by a membership in multiplicity of overlapping groups in which people are free to navigate between (Cova and Cova, 2002; Firat and Dholakia, 2006).

Maffesoli's (1988/1996) observations have inspired consumer researchers to launch explorations on neo-tribes embedded within different consumption activities and contexts. For example, they have been charted around common sources of affection and interest, including hobbies and leisure activities (Cova and Cova, 2002; Goulding *et al.*, 2002; Rokka, Hietanen and De Valck, 2010), iconic brands (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Brown *et al.*, 2003; Belk and Tumbat, 2005; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Schau *et al.*, 2009), and also common everyday products (Cova and Pace, 2006). Active and co-creative in their consumption, these tribes produce a range of identities, social practices, rituals, meanings, and even material culture itself. For instance, consumer tribes "re-script, absorb, twist, improvise, and resist meanings and identities ascribed in pre-packed products and brands", and they rarely consume brands and products "without adding to them, grappling with them, blending them with their own lives and altering them" (Cova *et al.*, 2007, 4).

On the other hand, to date, research into marketplace cultures has been largely influenced by British Cultural Studies (e.g. work of Hall and Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979). This has led to sub-cultural analyses of consumption communities (e.g. Celci, Rose and Leigh, 1993; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Kozinets, 1997; 2001; Kates, 2002) which tend to locate sub-cultural movements within frameworks of social resistance and reaction against dominant hierarchies of control (Goulding *et al.*, 2002). They also give rise to cultural classification of persons and groups into social categories (especially "youth"), including demarcations of class, race, and gender, as well as questions of style, taste, media, and meaning.

A guiding premise across the various sub-cultural studies has been the intention of giving "voice" to marginal and sometimes deviant groups of consumer society (e.g. Kates, 2002). It can also be said

that these studies have tended to explore the more spectacular youth cultures; the visible, the loud, and the radical. At the same time youth as an ideological signifier has come to play a role – as resisting, troubling, ambivalent, and even violent – which also involves and is manifested by creative styles, rituals, and meanings. It has therefore been emphasized that subcultures do not exist as authentic objects but rather "ways of life" or "maps of meaning" which make the world intelligible to its members. In addition, the prefix "sub" has always a binary referent (usually the dominant class or mainstream society) from which it is distinguished and differentiated, and from which it always depends on (Thornton, 1995).

Despite their notable influence, both the post-modern and sub-cultural theorists of consumption have also faced criticism. Regarding the latter view, substantive problems may result from over-commitment to the category of sub-culture which identifies social class and particularly the powerlessness of the working class as the main catalyst (e.g. Goulding *et al.*, 2002). In addition, many critics have asserted that cultural studies have tended to find resistance to "hegemony" in sub-cultural styles all too easily. Their assertion followed that these sub-cultural communities, negotiate, fetishize, and hybridize certain hegemonic cultural forms as modes of expression and opposition, and thus, are primarily occupied with engaging in symbolic struggle with the larger social system. Therefore, it has been argued, sub-cultural studies may eventually face difficulties with the sole focus on symbols, representations, sub-cultural capital, and by overinflating the concept of style, for example, over elements of play, pleasure or fantasy (e.g. Barker 2008, 416-17).

Regarding the postmodern view, perspectives on consumption have hailed, from diverse grounds, more and less pessimistic about the consumers' possibilities (e.g. Goulding *et al.*, 2002). In connection to consumer neo-tribes, postmodern theories are flavored by "emancipatory" and "liberatory" tendencies in consumer culture demarcated by hybridity, fluidity, multiplicity, fragmentation, juxtaposition, irony, intertextuality, deterritorialization, rootlessness, genre blurring, and bricolage of cultural styles and forms (such as identities and communities) (e.g. Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Cova *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, they often stress aesthetic and stylistic eclecticism present in artistic and pop-cultural production where there are "no rules" in combining influences, styles, and genres.

Consequently, research into online consumer communities has also stressed similar analytical viewpoints: on one side, post-modern neo-tribal approaches have been adapted to study online tribes (Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Cova and Pace, 2006; Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Cova *et al.*, 2007),

while on the other, analyses have stemmed from sub-cultural interpretive frameworks (e.g. Kozinets, 1997; 2001). More recently, empirical studies have stressed the importance of topics such as online consumer empowerment (e.g. Rokka and Moisander, 2009), co-creation and creativity (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008; Schau *et al.*, 2009), and collective innovation and consumer collaboration (Kozinets, Hemmetsberg and Schau, 2008). Central to these accounts is the idea that communal forms of consumption are rapidly spilling out into online computer-mediated spaces which necessitates new internet-adapted approaches and methodologies for their study.

Furthermore, although cultural consumer research (e.g. Arnould and Thompson, 2005) has otherwise been keen on theorizing various aspects of globalizing marketplace cultures, media flows, and brandscapes (see e.g. Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat, 1997; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Canniford, 2005; Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006), web-based online environments and consumer communities have received relatively little attention as particular sites or locales of global cultural production. However, this is not to say that the globalizing "mediascape" (Appadurai, 1990; 1996) – the global cultural flows of mediated images disseminated by newspapers, magazines, TV, and the Internet – has not been understood as a key vehicle in the contemporary cultural production. After all, consumer culture is often conceptualized in this stream as a "densely woven network of global connections and extensions through which local cultures are increasingly interpenetrated by forces of transnational capital and the global mediascape" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, 869).

To sum up this section, it seems evident that much of the meaningful consumption takes place in communal, tribal and online environments. It can be said that through these virtual spaces consumers can meet their kind basically from anywhere at any time without much effort. Not only online communities seem to allow consumer collectives to collaborate more effectively and in many novel ways but they also form new locales for cultural production. Among other things, this calls for more attention to the transnational dynamics of online cultural production and new modes and methods of research. With this in mind, the following section outlines one particular theoretical-methodological approach addressing such concerns.

Netnography in globalized marketplace cultures

As highlighted previously, many prior approaches into contemporary consumer culture have, on one hand, been founded on the anthropological understanding of culture and, on the other hand, on

ethnography and local knowledge of a geographically defined, sometimes distant and exotic places (e.g. Geertz, 1973; 1983). Using ethnographic methods, such as participant observation, in-depth interview techniques, introspection, and reflection, the aim of the ethnographer is to gain an insider's perspective of a given culture, and then to produce a "thick description", a written account of this "other" culture (e.g. Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). Similarly, the field of consumer research has increasingly applied market-oriented ethnographic methods (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994) in which the researcher immerses him/herself into the consumption and/or marketing phenomena by observing and studying consumers in their natural surroundings.

Netnography (Kozinets, 1997; 1998; 2002; 2006a) is an application of ethnographic methods to study online cultures. Following common ethnographic principles, netnography is both a process and a product of online research (Kozinets, 2002; 2006a). To briefly summarize, the process includes a series of stages that the netnographer undertakes: (1) investigating potential web-field sites (such as discussion forums, blogs or chat-rooms), selecting, and making a cultural entrée; (2) collecting data from the field site through observation and more or less active participation in the online community; (3) ensuring trustworthy interpretation and analysis after long-term engagement in the community; (4) conducting ethical research; and (5) providing opportunities for feedback from community members. The netnographic account is then written up as the product of netnographic fieldwork.

A number of authors have helped to further the success of netnography by detailing and addressing some of the key strengths and weaknesses of the method (Catterall and Maclaran, 2002; Langer and Beckmann, 2005; Kozinets, 2006a; 2006b; Sandlin, 2007). Basically, according to Kozinets (2006b), the method can been considered faster, simpler, and much less expensive than its off-line counterpart. In addition, compared to some other common market research methods, such as interviews, focus groups or surveys, netnography is viewed as a more naturalistic and less obtrusive way to collect consumer data as it "provides a window into the cultural realities of consumer groups as they live their activities" (Kozinets, 2006b, 282). Regarding the challenges of the method, massive amounts of online data available and its textual and virtual nature of communication may overwhelm the netnographer and invite poor quality research and hasty interpretations.

Furthermore, arguments have been presented about the extent to which it is necessary, or possible, for the researcher to engage with the online sites as a participating member (see e.g. Langer and Beckmann, 2005). Kozinets (2006b), who is an anthropologist by training, favors the position of

active participant-observer because in his view it is the only way researchers can fully immerse themselves into the online culture and to ensure trustworthy understanding of the studied phenomena. Langer and Beckmann (2005), however, assert that sometimes the researcher does not have to participate as an active member in online activities, especially so, when sensitive research topics may require a covert role from the researcher. Also, in this connection, the ethical codes of conduct have been debated extensively (Kozinets, 2002; 2006a; Catterall and Maclaran, 2002; Langer and Beckmann, 2005).

Netnographic studies have sought to advance the field of consumer research around a variety of topics and contexts: X-Files and Star Trek fans (Kozinets, 1997; 2001), consumer boycotting and new social movements (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; 2004), retro-branding (Brown *et al.*, 2003), online food culture (De Valck, 2005), cosmetic surgery (Langer and Beckmann, 2005), Apple's electronic devices (Muñiz and Schau, 2005), Napster file-sharing community (Giesler, 2006), virtual world Second Life (Bonsu and Darmody, 2008), and ecological citizenship (Rokka and Moisander, 2009).

Despite the growing number of netnographers exploring the online worlds, it can be argued that, past investigations have not yet employed netnographic methods to the fullest potential in theorizing aspects of cultural globalization. In the following, one particular theoretical-methodological perspective and some practical suggestions are presented for netnography in globalized marketplace cultures.

Online communities as translocal sites of cultural practice

As Arjun Appadurai (1996) reminded us, contemporary consumer culture cannot be adequately studied at the level of nation-states or local markets but needs to be theorized in terms of global cultural flows, processes, and sites. Therefore, the theoretical-methodological framework presented here is to be understood in the sense that it regards cultural globalization as "transcultural" and "translocal". This means that existing center-periphery models (even those that might account for multiple centers and multiple peripheries) cannot any longer be used to understand global cultural economy but rather the established boundaries between local and global are mixed and mediated in complex ways (Appadurai, 1990). Thus, the analytical focus promoted here underlines the fact that culture is inherently translocal, i.e. transnational and local at the same time, and it is continuously being negotiated, shaped, and produced by translocal communities (such as those enabled by online computer-networks) (Appadurai, 1996).

In this perspective, translocal communities are not bounded by geographical, spatial, or temporal proximity but rather they are established and sustained by sociality through shared "cultural practices" (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Rokka and Moisander, 2009). Such cultural practices in their simplest conception deal with arrangements and arrays of human activity through which people make sense of their everyday social life and themselves (Schatzki, 2001; 2002; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). Furthermore, they are understood here as routinely reproduced activities which entail shared beliefs, habits, knowledge, competence, and desires (e.g. Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2005).

In the translocal online sites, the cultural, social and material practices (including cultural discourses) are constantly produced, transformed and contested in social interaction (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006, 8). Taking this interpretive perspective, attention is directed to the translocal cultural practices and processes through which new forms of global consumer culture are produced in the computer-mediated marketplace. Accordingly, translocal online communities would seem to open up interesting perspectives for studying globalizing consumer culture. Next, the transcultural netnographic research process is described in some detail.

Step 1: Sample transnational online consumer communities

It is recommended, following Kozinets (2006a), that in the first stage of netnography the researcher has a set of potential consumption-related topics specified before the online research journey begins. Thereafter, various online search engines (for example, those designed for blogs) can be used to sample related online communities with most traffic or specific subject areas. In addition, inquiries can be posted on familiar social network sites to gain ideas. Several main forums for online communities should be considered, including discussion forums, chat-rooms, blogs, micro-blogs, multi-user online dungeons, and virtual worlds. For research into transnational cultural practices and dynamics, online communities with members from multiple countries, geographical regions, and socio-cultural backgrounds would naturally offer most attractive opportunities.

This is, of course, not to say that multicultural online communities have not been studied before (e.g. Rokka and Moisander, 2009). Rather, more rigorous and critical approaches are required to conceptualize the nature of transnational cultural production within various social and historical contexts.

Step 2: Identify and analyze transnational consumption practices

Netnographic approach discussed here pays attention to transnational practices that translocal online communities enable and empower. In this sense, it contrasts with accounts that emphasize meanings, symbols, individuals, interactions, language systems, or social structures in exploring online communities. It suggests that any social phenomena need to be studied and analyzed via the field of practices, and not, for example, by analyzing individuals or groups of individuals as "units" of analysis. Actions are embedded in practices and thus constitute individuals and social groups (Schatzki, 2001). Thus, the central idea in this practice-oriented approach is that it treats practices as the site of the social and, therefore, a specific context where, and apart of which, marketplace cultures are produced and formed.

In this way, the interpretive focus is aimed at identifying and analyzing consumption/sociality via cultural practices such as those of ecological citizenship (Rokka and Moisander, 2009), collective innovation (Kozinets *et al.*, 2008), or education and learning (Sandlin, 2007), co-creation of value (Schau *et al.*, 2009), or doing extreme-sports (Rokka *et al.*, 2010). Advantages in analyzing cultural practices lie in the fact that the focus is on culturally and socially instituted "ways of doing and saying" compared with, for example, a focus on what one's identity or membership in a community means (Warde, 2005).

Step 3: Collect practice data

In a practice-oriented approach the focus of data collection also differs: the practice elements that include forms of bodily and mental activities and competences, as well as material arrangements (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2002; Rokka *et al.*, 2010) imply the application of creative, multi-modal, and multi-sited methods such as participant/practitioner-observation, practitioning, interviews, and textual/visual analyses. Kozinets (2006a) also stresses that netnography is, in essence, a multi-method. It is up to the researcher to decide what methodological means would be most beneficial, depending on the research question and task at hand. In addition, the rapid development of new online spaces and environments, such as the 3D virtual worlds and image/video-sharing sites, opens up many opportunities for netnographers.

Using audiovisual and videographic techniques (e.g. Belk and Kozinets, 2005) to collect, interpret, and also to present data should not be excluded from netnographer's tool kit. Netnography, in its earlier forms, offers only limited possibilities for the researcher to learn about the community under

study, largely because of textual nature of the online data. The visual aspects of online and off-line consumption practices and the interconnected material arrangements would therefore provide a more complete ethnographic insight, although they have been largely ignored in consumer studies so far (Belk and Kozinets, 2005; De Valck *et al.*, 2009).

Step 4: Ensure trustworthy interpretation and ethical conduct

Quality measures of netnography must include those of any rigorous cultural analyses: insightfulness and relevance, methodological coherence, sensitivity to phenomenon, trustworthy interpretation, and ethical conduct (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). According to Kozinets (2006a), immersion into the online research phenomena through long-term engagement is most crucial in allowing the netnographer to "speak with authority" when making interpretations and conclusions. In addition, it is emphasized that netnographic investigations should always involve rapport with the community through member feedback via face-to-face or online meetings (Kozinets, 2006a).

To avoid mere description of online discussion boards or groups, moreover, rigorous and critical netnographic approaches are encouraged which locate their analyses always within larger historical and social contexts, so that they may acquire theoretical insight and significance and provide a basis for critique and transformation of existing practices and social meanings (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006).

Discussion

The objective of this article was to develop netnographic inquiry further and to reconsider how it may provide new opportunities to study the transnational dynamics of contemporary, computer-mediated consumer cultures. The general conclusion is that netnography is not to be regarded only as a substitute for more traditional consumer research methods – such as interviews, focus groups, or participant observation – as a less costly, fast, and naturalistic research approach. Rather, it is argued that netnography can be used to study the constantly transforming consumption practices and cultural forms that transnational online environments may bring about. It is therefore the nature of online phenomena – transnational cultural production and flows – that requires further attention.

Compared with earlier writings on the netnographic method, the article stresses the importance of conceptualizing online communities as essentially translocal sites of cultural production. Understood this way, they are considered as computer-mediated spaces through which global cultural flows of

meaning, practices, and identities are circulated, negotiated, and made available for people around the globe. Therefore, netnographic inquiry is presented as a helpful tool in analyzing new forms of translocal practices and sites of the social.

Past netnographic investigations into online communities have emphasized most often post-modern and/or sub-cultural frameworks in their analyses. On one side, this has given rise to neo-tribal descriptions where post-modern co-production, creative mixing and fragmentation of tastes, styles, and cultural forms have been the analyzed (e.g. Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Cova and Pace, 2006; Cova *et al.*, 2007). On the other side, netnographies have explored the negotiation of sub-cultural identities, meanings, and rituals in online groupings (e.g. Kozinets, 1997; 2001). However, perspectives or methodological approaches that explore global cultural dynamics and flows in online communities in a more systematic manner have largely been ignored.

Furthermore, the analytic focus of netnographies so far has tended to emphasize individualistic (for example, identity projects) or collective (social groups, tribes, subcultures) terms in their analyses. Instead, the approach presented here locates the social in the practices of consumption, and therefore analyzes cultural practices – i.e. "routinized ways in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, things are described, and the world is understood" (Reckwitz, 2002, 254) – rather than individuals or groups. In doing so, insights are sought into social formations (cultural practices) and their conjunctures which are inherently tribalized and globalized.

In other connections, it is worth noting, many authors have explored the globalization of consumer culture but left online environments without major empirical focus (e.g. Firat, 1997; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Canniford, 2005; Firat and Dholakia, 2006; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006). In addition, many of such accounts have relied or built on models of global-local or center-periphery dynamics which may have proven too simplistic, as Appadurai (1990) notes when arguing that the new global cultural economy has to be understood as a more complex, overlapping, and disjunctive order. Therefore, more research is encouraged with emphasis on global cultural flows, processes and sites which are inherently translocal – including the online environments.

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ESSAY II

Environmental dialogue in online communities: negotiating ecological citizenship among global travellers

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Environmental dialogue in online communities: negotiating ecological citizenship among global travellers

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to investigate how web-based online communities bring about new forms of environmental dialogue. We suggest that these online sites play an important role in setting the stage for new forms of cultural production, dissemination of environmental knowledge, and environmental dialogue, through which particular forms of ecological citizenship and consumer culture are being created and sustained. Based on an empirical study of an online community of 'global travelers' carried out using netnographic methods, the study shows how environmental knowledge is being disseminated, negotiated and made sense of in the online environments of the global marketplace. Our findings illustrate, in particular, how online communities may work out an agenda for sustainable consumption practices and lifestyles, and create new forms of consumer-citizenship. Regarding the environmental policy implications of our study, we argue that there is a need to facilitate the creation of online environments where consumers can participate in the construction of active consumer-citizenship.

Keywords

Consumer culture; ecological citizenship; netnography; online communities; sustainable tourism

Introduction

In green political thought and environmental policy –oriented consumer research, many of the traditional market-based and liberal democratic political solutions to sustainable development have been recently problematized. Policy initiatives that deploy fiscal measures to encourage consumers to choose ecologically sound alternatives in the markets have been criticized for not inducing deep enough changes in consumer attitudes, social value systems and other institutional structures that would result in a significant shift towards more sustainable consumer culture/society (Dobson and

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Valencia Sáiz, 2005; Dolan, 2002; Moisander, 2007; Valencia Sáiz, 2005; Seyfang, 2005). Moreover, since environmental problems such as the consequences of travel and tourism are essentially global in nature, it is argued, sustainable development calls for new transnational political solutions that do not rely on the centrality of the nation state as the core of political community and citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Valencia Sáiz, 2005). Hence, increasing attention is focused on the new roles that civil society could play in achieving green political objectives and the need for more participatory, grass-roots solutions and initiatives that are based on the active role of consumers as political citizens has been emphasized (Auld, 2001; Casimir and Dutilh, 2003; Collins, 2004).

In this paper, we draw from recent theoretical discussions of ecological citizenship (Dobson, 2000; 2003; Dobson and Valencia Sáiz, 2005; Valencia Sáiz, 2005; Seyfang, 2005) to explore the new roles that consumers may play as political agents in the global marketplace. More specifically, our aim is to investigate the ways in which web-based consumer communities may bring about new forms of environmental dialogue and create a political space where consumers can participate in the construction of active consumer-citizenship for sustainable development.

Our analysis unfolds by elaborating on 'ethical' ecological consumption practices in the context of travel and tourism which have gained a growing interest among consumers, marketers, and researchers (e.g. Butcher, 2003; 2008; Dolnicar *et al.*, 2008). Taken that the global environmental and cultural consequences of travel are of immense importance,[1] it provides a fruitful perspective on exploring ecological citizenship. For example, the previous academic literature has identified new, alternative forms of travel such as 'ecotourism' (Ziffer, 1989; Fennell, 2003), 'new moral tourism' (Butcher, 2003), or 'justice tourism' (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008) which give rise to individual forms of 'life politics' embedded and manifested in contemporary consumer lifestyles (Butcher, 2008). In this view, it is via consumption – not political parties – that people have come to voice their interests and demands for a more sustainable and just global order.

By means of a case study of global web-based consumer community, where keen travelers look for information, share their experiences, and meet their kind, we illustrate how a sense of political community is created around an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1984) of global ecological

[1] It is estimated that today some 700 million people are traveling internationally per year for no other reason than leisure, and by 2020, there will be close to 1.6 billion international tourists (Butcher, Jim, 2003, p. 6).

citizens in the discussion forums of the website. Our study suggests that online communities may play an important role in setting the stage for new collective forms of cultural production and environmental dialogue, through which particular forms of ecological citizenship and consumer culture can be created and sustained. Our findings illustrate, in particular, how web-based consumer communities may work out an agenda for sustainable consumption practices and lifestyles and create new forms of consumer-citizenship.

Overall, our aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the notion of ecological citizenship by illustrating and elaborating on the ways in which the roles, responsibilities and duties of ecological consumer-citizen are actively negotiated in online environments and how a sense of global political community may be created through environmental dialogue in online environments. In the sections that follow, we first take a cultural perspective (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006) to ecological citizenship as the interpretive framework that guides our analysis. Then we illustrate the ways in which members of a web-based consumer community of global travelers engage in an environmental dialogue and create an imagined community of ecologically concerned global citizens, which serves as a symbolic site for consumer participation and political engagement in the private sphere. We conclude by suggesting some ways of supporting this dialogue so as to assist ecological citizenship in becoming a more formidable political force in the global economy.

Theoretical Background

Ecological citizenship and environmental politics

The recent years have seen a rapprochement of environmental politics, citizenship and consumer culture, symbolized by the concept of 'ecological citizenship' (Dobson, 2003; Valencia Sáiz, 2005; Seyfang, 2005). While this form of citizenship is still somewhat undervalued as a theoretical or practical concept in environmental policy (Dobson, 2003), there exists a lengthy tradition of work related to the social and political dimensions of consumption during the past three decades (see Uusitalo, 2005; Trentmann, 2007).

Several challenges for environmental policy have been outlined. Globalization, in particular, has influenced and shaped our understandings about environmental problems: First, it is evident that as a result of global commerce and consumption environmental problems (e.g. global warming) and their effects are global rather than local or national. This fundamental challenge to environmental

politics suggests different, global approaches into defining social problems and their political solutions (e.g. Dobson, 2003; Valencia Sáiz, 2005). Second, it is argued that globalization may benefit local-global relationship and contribute to the realization of sustainable society – as nowadays it is possible to 'think and act globally and locally at the same time' (Valencia Sáiz, 2005; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Although important work on the idea of environmental or ecological citizenship has been done over the last ten years (e.g. Steward, 1991; Delanty, 1997; Barry, 1999), more systematic development of the concept has recently been carried out by Andrew Dobson (2000; 2003).

Dobson (2003) elegantly shows how ecological citizenship can be derived from ecological political theory. He traces ecological citizenship from the traditional and contemporary conceptual architectures of citizenship, especially those of liberal and civic-republican. In much of the existing work, the ecological citizen is depicted mainly as rights-claiming and responsibility exercising subject, who occupies the public sphere, and takes the nation-state as the political 'container' of citizenship. Dobson (2003) stresses, however, that ecological citizenship needs to be distinguished as an independent and novel concept.

Rather than viewing citizenship as contractual and restrained to national membership, and hence geographical territory, Dobson (2003) contends that ecological citizenship is a type of 'post-cosmopolitan', de-territorialized citizenship. This means that from the ecological point of view it is required that citizenship is closely related to global 'ecological footprints' and justice in terms of governing the size of these footprints. Therefore, it is argued that ecological citizenship entails also non-contractual, 'feminine' virtues, such as compassion and care, and that they operate to a large degree in the private as well as the public arenas. Dobson defines ecological citizenship in the context of environmental sustainability as "both an example of post-cosmopolitan citizenship and a particular interpretation of it". It possesses all the basic features of post-cosmopolitan citizenship, such as its stress on responsibilities rather than rights and its determination to regard these responsibilities as non-reciprocal rather than contractual, and thus stands in contrast with both liberal and civic republican articulations in its sense that these virtues need to be drawn from the private as well as public arenas (Ibid., 139).

While Dobson's (2003) theoretizations open up novel ideas about how to think about sustainability and ecological citizenship it leaves room for doubt around a number of questions. His solution relies heavily on the role of public formal education system as the prime 'teacher' and encouragement of

ecological citizenship. We argue, however, that Dobson does not focus adequate attention on the possible active roles of consumer-citizens, which is problematic for supporting the 'post-cosmopolitan citizenship'. In addition, Dobson's theorizing unveils practically without any empirical evidence. In this paper our aim therefore is to study empirically the possible active roles of consumer-citizens in the construction of ecological citizenship.

Environmental citizenship as a cultural practice

Previous environmental consumer research is dominated by the 'rational or utilitarian approach', in which consumers are viewed merely as maximizers of individual value/utility in their consumption choices (Moisander, 2000; Uusitalo, 2005; Rokka and Uusitalo, 2008). In much of this literature, emphasis has been laid on consumer rights and responsibilities (of both consumers and companies) in consumer policy. Similarly, to date, research on environment-friendly travelers and tourists has tended to rely on survey methods and environmental attitude models (Budeanu, 2007; Dolnicar *et al.*, 2008). However, such a perspective lacks the ability to take into account the social-cultural and communal aspects of consumer culture through which consumer behavior can be explained. Next, we draw from cultural consumer research (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006) to see what opportunities it may open up for ecological citizenship.

From this perspective, ecological citizenship can be conceived as a 'cultural practice' through which people make sense of reality and themselves. We therefore take that ecological citizenship is something that is constantly under construction, and is negotiated in both political as well as private arenas. Although culture can be defined in numerous ways, we regard culture as a complex system which includes culturally shared and standardized discourses (or cultural discourses) and the everyday discursive, social and material practices (everyday practices) through which meaning and cultural artifacts are produced, and through which people express themselves, interpret each other and make sense of their everyday, social life (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006, 8). These everyday cultural practices and cultural discourses are constantly produced, transformed and contested in social interaction.

So what does ecological citizenship as a cultural practice mean? We propose it is a practice of giving meaning to and making sense of the rapidly changing world and environmental problems as well as of one's role in sustainable development. It is a cultural identity that is maintained and made sense of through particular ways of thinking about and acting upon environmental problems. In this sense, ecological citizenship entails and enables action and thinking: it is through socially instituted

practices that people manage their life and make it meaningful. These social practices put aside the individual and 'rational' subject in the sense that they direct attention to the socially shared norms, values, ideas and meanings that people use to make sense of their socially and culturally particular ways of life, including consumption behaviors.

In the subsequent analysis of our empirical case we briefly re-examine and illustrate this communal and social aspect of ecological citizenship in the contemporary marketplace. Studying the ecological citizenship as a cultural and socially instituted practice and by drawing on recent work on the so called "new" web-based communities of consumption (e.g. Cova, 1997; Kozinets, 1997; 2002; Cova and Cova, 2002; Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, 2006), we wish to problematize the taken-for-granted views of ecological citizenship and to offer new perspectives on environmental policy.

More specifically, we illustrate how a global online community of travelers builds a form of transnational political community, by creating and sustaining what Anderson (1984) calls an "imagined community". Drawing on this anthropological understanding of a community, it is a particularly useful way to describe and analyze complex communities. Anderson suggests, it allows us to think about the communities not the way they should be distinguished, either false or genuine, "but the style in which they are imagined" by the members of the community (Ibid., 6). In this definition, communities are viewed as socio-historical constructs and cultural artifacts of particular kind. We argue that the concept of imagined community can also help us to better understand the nature of the global traveler community where the ecological citizenship is being negotiated.

Ecological citizenship as a membership of transnational imagined community

Research design

To illustrate our argument, we report findings from an empirical study that focuses on a global online community of travelers. We present it as a case of the new forms environmental dialogue that is currently taking place in online environments. The web-based community that we analyze can be described as a social network or tribe of consumers who engage in online interaction via computer networks (Kozinets, 1997). These consumer networks are commonly described as rather weakly bound, de-territorialized, and ephemeral communities in which consumers participate in discussions that take place in discussion forums and chat rooms of web-sites around emotionally shared

interests and experiences (Cova, 1997; Cova and Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2002). These communities are distinguished by their members' shared lifestyles and tastes, sense of belonging and collective consciousness, common rituals and practices, emotional links, and even shared moral responsibilities (e.g. Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001).

The online community we studied is designed to help dedicated travelers in planning their trips, sharing travel experiences in forums or blogs, and to offer a comfortable means of booking trips and accommodation. The community consists of 139,906 registered users from 244 different countries, with diverse personal backgrounds in terms of gender, age, professional skills, and travel experience. Typical community members can be characterized as dedicated, enthusiastic, and experienced lifestyle travelers who also express their concern for the negative consequences of ever growing tourism. Our investigation of the most active members indicates that this group is also fairly heterogeneous in terms of their backgrounds: students, internet-workers, low-budget travelers, managers, elderly, and retired people – a diverse group of 'digitally literate' consumers. The community site has been fairly active for seven years, the members having posted a total of 280,169 forum entries across 45,914 forum threads, and the rate of new users signing up per day was approximately about 160 users.

We analyzed the online community by means of netnographic methods. Netnography is a variation of ethnographic research strategy developed for the study of online cultures, originally proposed by Robert Kozinets (1997; 1998; 2002). It may be described as a "written account of on-line cyberculture, informed by the methods of cultural anthropology" where cyberculture refers to culture that is mediated by online communications technology (Kozinets, 1997, 470). The aim of the researcher in this approach is to gain an 'insider's perspective' – faithful to the perspectives of the participants – in the online field site he or she is studying (Moisander and Valtonen 2006, 51). Although netnography has gained a lot of popularity in the field of marketing- and consumer research, hitherto, it has seldom been applied in environmental research. Netnography is used in this study because it opens up new possibilities for studying environmental consumption practices.

Our analysis was carried out first by examining the community and its members: how they represented themselves in the discussion forums, blogs and individual websites. In analyzing the data, we focused on the "words, concepts, ideas, images, classifications, norms, values, role expectations and signifying practices that are used to refer to and represent knowledge about objects, people and events of all sort" (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006, 194). Accordingly, with the

cultural approach taken in this study, we analyzed empirical materials (discussions in the online forums) as cultural texts which provide access to the cultural forms and understandings through which people make sense of their world.

Our primary data set consisted of naturally occurring textual data obtained from the online discussion site of the community. It was gathered and downloaded from the community forums and discussion sites to understand the essence of the community: what is the community all about, how is it represented in texts and images. As the community included members from all over the globe, it provided an excellent opportunity to study how environmental dialogue and ecological-citizenship are produced and negotiated in a transnational context.

We focused our empirical analysis, especially, on the discussion areas where the members of the community engaged in collective exchange of experiences, interpretations and outlooks on travel, lifestyle, politics, ethics and everyday life – in other words, in building an "imaged community" for themselves (Anderson, 1984). We centered our attention to the different ways through which ecological-citizenship was negotiated and contested in the environmental dialogue that took place in the course of the discussion. We stopped analyzing further data when we reached a saturation point, i.e. when the gathering and analyzing of new materials did not produce any significantly new insights. Next we report the analysis of 36 threads representative of the community's environmental dialogue and ecological consumption practices.

"Imagined community" of global travelers

> "…To travel means to meet other people, experience their cultures and to make, but also to keep good friends. By bringing more people together - albeit before, during or after travelling - we will create more understanding for different cultures and countries and ultimately a better world for everyone to travel in." (Traveler community principles)

As the extract above illustrates, the online site creates travelers an important virtual space and means of engaging in discussions about their travel experiences and other aspects of life. The discussion forums, postings and individual web-sites, texts and images, form a constellation of cultural meanings, values, and artifacts from which the sense of the community can be traced back. It is through these numerous strips of stories, images, and signifying practices, that the global community is formed.

From our perspective, the community creates and maintains also a political space through the creation of an imagined community (Anderson, 1984), which is played out in and enabled by

computer-networks. First, the traveler community is imagined in the sense that in the discussions and images shared by the members the lines between 'fact' and 'fiction' may be blurred. The further away the computer-mediated images and landscapes of the world are from the direct experiences of people's everyday life, the more likely they are to construct their own 'imagined worlds' (Appadurai, 1996), which may well be visionary, aspirational, and at least partly fictional or fantastic. However, such 'imagined worlds' are also very real; they are constantly being produced and documented by people in different forms of practices, texts and images, and eventually circulated in the media. There is also a constant 'battle of imagination' (Appadurai 1990, 304) which is driven by global disjuctures between different landscapes, which are not stable but irregular and fluid, constituted, for example, in the on-going interplay between the marketplace actors.

Second, this imagined community makes visible to us the ways in which the tremendous complexity at hand – such as the ecological, cultural, and technological developments – is being made sense of by common people. They gather together strips of facts, experiences, opinions, and myths about how they live their lives, and make statements about how they should live. In a way, they help the community to tackle the overwhelming issues of global economy they are faced with, by offering explanations and materials to identity negotiation. The discussions, hence, provide particular kinds of cultural scripts of reality, sometimes even in forms of statistical reports available in the net, to build up the imagined worlds.

Third, the community that we analyze is necessarily imagined because there is no possibility for the members to meet each other face-to-face. Anderson (1984, 6) describes that the members of an imagined community will almost never know, meet or even hear of their fellow-members but in the minds of each member lives an image of their communion. This is also the case with the traveler community with members from all over the world. Hence, the nature of the community becomes best described by conceptual rather than physical boundaries as the network of members becomes increasingly ephemeral, de-territorialized, and virtual (Cova and Cova, 2002). For this reason, Anderson (1984) emphasizes how the role of media is an important resource for constructing the imagined community – which is also true in our example.

Given the technological possibilities of online social networking, consumers may now stay in contact in ways before unimaginable, creating new forms of community (Kozinets, 2002). Constantly on the move around the globe, and instantly messaging to each other through computer-mediated networks, the traveler community brings about a multitude of landscapes of encounters and

experiences, creating a virtual transnational and multicultural setting of a particular kind. By means of the members' interaction, and the transnational dialogue they produce, the travelers not only educate each other in planning and preparing for trips but also help others to deal with various problems and dilemmas. As someone on the forums put it:

> Travel is the great educator and moderator of life. It tends to put issues and people in perspective and to defuse difficulties between nations. Travel as often and as far as you can. Lessons will be learned that are otherwise unattainable… [16th Aug '06, 12:53]

In the following section, we briefly illustrate how environmental knowledge is disseminated in the community and how ecological citizenship is negotiated through environmental dialogue.

Environmental dialogue and negotiation of ecological citizenship

As the members of the traveler community are globally mobile and thus have broad experience of international environments and multicultural settings, they feel at home wherever they go, moving comfortably within the standards of several cultures. But being faced with the ever growing mass tourism and its visible consequences, including waste, pollution, and climate change, the community struggles in front of numerous ethical dilemmas and pragmatic inconveniencies in trying to make sense of its consumption practices and lifestyles.

> I definitely am torn. On the one hand, travelling is a passion and something that would not be easy to give up. On the other hand though, I'm convinced we all need to take steps to minimise our environmental impact and it's hard to go past one of the largest single contributions we make privately, which is recreational travel. My personal response is to do all I can to minimise my impact… [31st Dec '06, 02:15]

In their discussions, the travelers distribute environmental knowledge, sharing personal views and information about "facts", statistics and policies concerning the environment. In doing so they sometimes present thought provoking and knowledgeable insights, such as the following posting:

> Today I heard on the news that the EU transport ministers are close to reaching an agreement with the US about far-reaching liberalisation of the transatlantic sky routes, which is expected to result in "a 30% increase of transatlantic commercial air traffic". […] air travellers themselves are now more responsible than ever to care for the environmental consequences of their ultra-mobility. What do you think? [22nd Mar '07, 05:28]

The community also discusses the negative environmental consequences mass tourism and mass consumption in general. Faced with complex environmental problems, cultural degradation, poverty, and inequality the community tries to find appropriate ways of dealing with them through a dialogue, in which the roles and responsibilities of travelers are shaped. In this respect, the online dialogue reflects Butcher's (2003) depiction of the 'new moral tourist' who expresses altruistic

motives by seeking to experience and sustain cultural and environmental difference, and by voicing critical views on modern 'progress' of society. For instance, the prevalent ways in which the "ecologically conscious" travel should be conceived is contested in the environmental dialogue of the community, as the following quote illustrates:

> Yes, I too fly occasionally, and yes, my ecological footprint is way too large, too. However, I sincerely try to limit my flights (I cross the oceans roughly once a year), don't fly intracontinentally at all, and try to 'compensate' for the burden I exert on the environment by making other people aware, volunteering in a number of environmental initiatives, etc. Of course I am not saying that no-one should fly, even though that would be a most effective way to reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses. I merely want the travelling community to think about the way they move around, and not just consider the world your own cultural snackbar that you can go to, eat at, pay and leave behind your rubbish, so to speak. And that doesn't just apply to the environmental impact of travellers' behaviour, but also to cultural and economical effects. [7th Jun '06, 02:06]

In this way the members of the community seek and negotiate responsible ways of traveling, looking into the issue from various perspectives, and giving multiple meanings to sustainability and 'sustainable lifestyle'. This necessarily involves more than simple rules of thumb, rights, or duties. Emotional and virtuous responses can be found throughout the discussions; also more 'feminine' type of virtues, such as compassion and care (Dobson, 2003) seem to characterize the traveler community:

> Just look at the amount of experiences, stories and information that is shared between fellow travellers around the globe. Through this forum alone, we gain a greater understanding of different cultures and experiences that everybody has gained through travelling. My conclusion - sharing is caring and travelling, if done appropriately, is not selfish. [17th Jun '06, 04:28]

In their discussions, the community depicts an environmentally concerned traveler who is torn between the positive experiences gained through travel and the negative effects they have on the environment and local cultures. Through dialogue, the community seeks alternative solutions to the common ethical dilemmas such as the harmful effects of flying:

> It's a tough question. I think cutting down on flying is the only real solution. […] At the very least, offsetting your trip is a good thing to do. [10th Mar '07, 02:07]

In the discussions, many of the received ways of thinking about sustainability become problematized and also politicized. For example, similar to other critiques directed towards environmentally sensitive and socially responsible tourism (e.g. Butcher 2003; 2008; Mowforth and Munt 1998), the community members are often skeptical about the 'ecosell' and 'green-washing' of tourism, or 'ethical add-ons' commonly fashioned by the marketers. The online community thus functions as a site for open debate and dialogue, as the comment below illustrates:

> Everybody now is into eco-tourism, be it state forest departments, state tourism development corporations, state forest development corporations, state industrial development corporations, tour operators, the hospitality industry, big and bigger business houses, NGOs, local communities, foreign consultants, research and academic institutions ... everybody is in the fray. Everybody seems to believe that eco-tourism is a magic wand that will help them get that piece of cake. […] So, rather than changing what you are doing, the solution has been to simply change what you call it. Not tourism, but eco-tourism! [22nd Apr '06, 07:23]

To conclude, through this the transformative dialogue on the role of consumers in sustainable development the community gradually becomes a kind of virtual political space, and creates a 'container' for the sort of citizenship that can be practiced and exercised in the private sphere. And the community serves as a 'teacher' of this form of ecological citizenship:

> To be honest, I think that some of the benefits of travel outweigh some of the harmful effects. I agree that travelling is severely detrimental to our environment, but I think that the social awareness it can bring outweighs that. Travel is usually selfish, but it can also help develop people who are less selfish. Most people I see trying to help out less privileged people in other countries have had to travel to be aware of the problems in the first place. Watching it on TV simply doesn't have the same effect. [Peter, 6th Jun '06, 21:14]

As summarized in Figure 1, through discussion and dialogue the web-based consumer community of global travelers offers its members a variety of narratives, repertoires of images, and cultural models for making sense of environmental problems. It also helps them to invent and identify appropriate political and practical roles for themselves as consumers in the pursuit of sustainable development. The environmental dialogue carried out at the website creates and maintains the community and enables its members to form affective ties with each other, which is needed for shared cultural meanings — and resources — to emerge. Out of this dialogue a notion of ecological citizenship as a socially instituted practice emerges. As a cultural practice, this form of ecological citizenship is closely linked with socially accepted norms, meanings and values, or rules that define the appropriate and understandable ways to behave and act in particular situations and contexts.

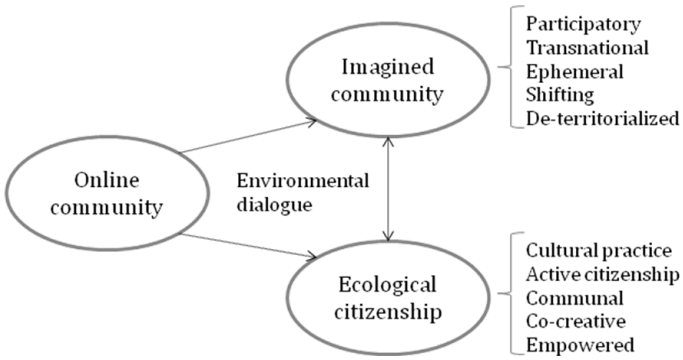

Figure 1 *Framework for environmental dialogue in online communities*

Discussion

In this paper, our aim has been to shed light onto the role of web-based consumer communities as sites of cultural production and political participation. We argue that computer-mediated social networks may empower people to build the sort of "imagined communities" that are needed to invent and create sustainable forms of cultural identity for consumers as ecological citizens.

Moreover, our analysis highlights the important role of community and consumer participation in the private sphere in the construction of sustainable consumer cultures. Although the previous theoretical work (Dobson, 2003; Valencia Sáiz, 2005) has argued that the political space for ecological citizenship is not the state or the municipal, the private sphere as a political, ideological and participatory space has received only little attention. Therefore, we propose that in addition to formal public education and more traditional governmental policies active consumer-citizenship be facilitated and encouraged, for example through computer-mediated social networks, to assist sustainable development.

Theoretically our study contributes to discussions of (1) ecological citizenship, (2) production of global, online consumer cultures, (3) tribal aspects of sustainable consumerism, and (4) the application of netnographic methods in environmental research. Drawing on cultural consumer research, we suggest that ecological citizenship be regarded as a cultural practice through which people give meaning to and make sense of their roles in sustainable development. It is a cultural practice in the sense that it is constantly under construction and negotiation through cultural

dialogue in the political community it entails. We argue that such cultural practices and resources influence environmental consumer behaviors by opening up the possibilities for intelligible action, through enabling and constraining culturally accepted behaviors. This perspective directs attention away from the idea that ecological citizenship can be encouraged simply through financial rewards, environmental labeling, or formal education. Our findings would also seem to suggest that a better understanding of the tribal and communal aspects of consumption, accentuated by the social online media, is important for promoting environmental consumerism and ecological citizenship.

In part, our findings also problematize Butcher's (2008) conceptualization of ecotourism as 'life politics' which emphasizes the more individualistic forms of politics "within which the ethical consumption is prominent" (Butcher, 2008, 317). In contrast, we suggest that the site of politics can have new collective or tribal forms as a part of which consumer lifestyles or citizenship emerges. Such collective forms as web-based communities may also open up new possibilities for bringing about change through policy making. As an example, we suggest that environmental research may benefit from the application of netnographic methods (Kozinets, 2002) for better understanding environmental consumption practices.

While promoting ecological citizenship is undoubtedly a highly challenging task, owing to the tremendous complexity of ecologically sound consumption (Moisander, 2007; Rokka and Uusitalo, 2008), our study reports some evidence of the possibilities of creating more active forms of ecologically oriented consumer-citizenship. More empirical research, however, is required on the processes of participation, empowerment, and social involvement that facilitate the construction and development of ecological citizenship.

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ESSAY III

Videography in consumer research: visions for a method on the rise

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Videography in consumer research: visions for a method on the rise

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Abstract

Consumer researchers increasingly adopt the method of videography to study consumers and markets. In this paper we discuss how theory and practice in documentary film and visual ethnography may strengthen the use of this method. We test our insights on a videography about the paintball marketplace culture.

Introduction

"A picture is worth a thousand words"; this old adage has lost nothing of its resonance in today's world that is increasingly dominated by visual messages and media. We can choose among hundreds of television channels, thousands of videos, DVDs, and computer games, millions of YouTube movies. We have embraced the cameraphone and multimedia messaging. We have adopted videoconferencing and created avatars in 3D virtual worlds. We have bought digital cameras, camcorders, and editing equipment to capture our lives and to illustrate our blogs, MySpace or Facebook pages. In short, we live in a highly visual culture in which we are not only consumers, but also avid producers of images.

Images have an immense power to grab attention and evoke emotions. Marketers have long known so; this is why there is a multibillion euro advertising industry. In politics, image has become everything: politicians work as much on their media profiles as on their policies. Also educators use images to captivate their audiences; this is why text books come with DVDs. And in business, PowerPoint presentations are more and more sophisticated. Images are easier to remember and recognize, images speak a universal language, and images can convey things that are hard to capture in words.

Although images have permeated all facets of our communication practices, there seems to be one bastion left that is practically devoid of images: academia. Academic articles and presentations rely on the written and spoken word to expose and explain. Images, in the form of figures, tables, and graphs, are mere illustrations of theories or data. Despite their importance in communicating and

understanding findings, images take up an inferior position compared with the written text. In article submissions, the text comes first, while images are put at the very end, almost as an afterthought.

However, in recent years a small, audiovisual revolution has been unleashed in the field of interpretive consumer research with the rise of the method of videography (e.g., Belk and Kozinets 2005a, Borghini, Carù and Cova 2009; Martin, Schouten and McAlexander 2006). It consists of using audiovisual methods not only to register details of one's field site, but also to analyse and present findings. As a result, there is a growing number of video productions that, alone or accompanied by written materials, serve as academic texts meant to further our understanding of consumers, tribes, markets, and culture.

The ardent advocates of the method, Russell Belk and Robert Kozinets, have underlined the importance of videography as a communication tool by pointing out that visual expectations in today's image economy have never been higher (Belk 2006, Kozinets and Belk 2006); "whether we are consumers, managers, researchers, or teachers, those of us who ignore the visual image and think only in terms of written words and numbers, do so at our peril" (Belk 2006, p. 194). Indeed, video has become an assumed requirement, both in the boardroom, as well as the classroom. Sunderland (2006) describes how corporate clients of ethnographic research increasingly demand video, besides, or even instead of written reports. Thus, many consumer research firms and corporate research departments now have professional videographers on their payrolls. Likewise, in our course evaluations, students consistently ask for "more videos", considering traditional lecture-style classes without moving illustrations as "boring".

The problem with this demand for videographic work is that its status as a source of academic knowledge is still disputed (Kozinets and Belk 2006). Rather than a demand for insightful and intelligent audiovisual texts, the request for videographies, therefore, seems to be a demand for entertainment. As Sunderland (2006, p. 375) poignantly describes: "when we switch to the moving imagery of video, assembled audiences may not only smile and sit back in their chairs, but also seize upon those moments as the time when they can stop paying attention to the presentation". This behavior is prominent among managers and students alike. Similarly, a visit to the film festival during the Association for Consumer Research conferences oftentimes serves as a welcome break from attending the "more serious" paper presentations.

Various researchers have addressed the doubtful status of the (audio-) visual in the academic tradition, and they have suggested ways to improve it (e.g., Belk 2006, Heisley 2001, Kozinets and

Belk 2006, Moisander and Valtonen 2006, Oswald 2003, Peñaloza and Cayla 2006, Sunderland 2006). In this paper, we join their ranks to build a case for videography as a rigorous academic method to study culture. We do so by critically examining two research disciplines outside consumer research in which audiovisual (re)presentation and analyses are primary ingredients, i.e., documentary filmmaking and visual anthropology. Our goal is to investigate the set of beliefs, assumptions, and practices that guide audiovisual registration, analysis, and presentation in these respective research disciplines, and to discuss how this may inform the method of videography in the field of consumer research. In order to complete the audiovisual revolution, videographies need to be taken as serious as articles and conventional presentations by our fellow researchers, our students, and our clients. The aim of this paper is to help the videographic method, and the researchers using the method, gain the necessary credibility.

This paper is built up as follows. First, we discuss the status quo of videography in consumer research. Then, we present insights from documentary film theory and visual ethnography. In particular, for each of these research disciplines, we discuss their paradigmatic stance on the relationship between the audiovisual text and reality versus theory, the relationship between the audiovisual text and the spoken and written word, and the roles of the filmmaker and viewer in the creation and reception of the audiovisual text. Finally, to move our investigation beyond a theoretical level, we apply our insights to an ethnographic study where videographic materials were collected to examine consumer tribes gathered around the extreme sport of paintball.

Videography in consumer research

Despite the fact that the first videographic research already dates back to the consumer behavior Odyssey in 1986 (Wallendorf and Belk 1987), it is only since a couple of years that the method has gained traction among interpretive consumers researchers. Undoubtedly, the rising popularity of videography is largely due to the efforts of Russell W. Belk and Robert V. Kozinets, who have initiated the Film Festivals at the Association for Consumer Research conferences, and who served as guest editors of two special DVD issues of the journal Consumption, Markets & Culture (2005b, 2007) dedicated to videographies. Besides their involvement in creating outlets for videographic work, Belk and Kozinets have also played an important role in educating interested fellow researchers about the method. They have organized several hands-on videography workshops, and

they have propagated the method in various journal articles and book chapters (Belk 2006, Belk and Kozinets 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2007, Kozinets and Belk 2006).

As advocates of the method, Belk and Kozinets have put a lot of emphasis on discussing the rise and relevance of audiovisual research techniques. In this respect, they point to the importance of the audiovisual in consumer experiences. Deliberating consumption choices; browsing and purchasing products in stores, markets, and malls; consuming, using, and disposing products; and discussing purchases and service experiences with others; all these actions go hand in hand with colors, shapes, noises, motions, and sounds of people and things in interaction. As Kozinets and Belk state (2006, p. 335):

> "Consumer culture is bright and noisy. […] However, consumer researchers have tended to downplay or ignore the importance of visual and audio literacy in their own works, and thus to under-represent the lived visual and auditory aspects of the experience of living within a consumer culture. This is a loss not only in terms of representing the world of consumers, but also in terms of conveying the vision and melodies that comprise the researcher's potential contribution".

The visual tradition in consumer research consists in the first place of using visuals as stimuli to elicit responses from those who we study (cf. Belk 2006, Peñaloza and Cayla 2006). In experimental settings, images are used to visualize advertisements, packaging, logos, product-, store-, and web designs. In interpretive research, images are used to elaborate interview responses; an example being the use of the photo- and video-elicitation techniques (Heisley and Levy 1991, Sayre 2006). Moreover, (audio-) visual material is commonly accepted as part of the qualitative data collection process, especially so in the cultural and ethnographic approaches (Moisander and Valtonen 2006). Fieldnotes are complemented by photographs and recordings for details and richness. Similarly, individual and group interviews are put on audio- or videotape to capture information otherwise lost. However, it is only rarely that these (audio-) visual stimuli or data are included in published articles. The visual is, thus, mostly used as input data to generate another type of output data (cf. Peñaloza and Cayla 2006).

What are the hurdles we need to overcome to make the visual tradition stronger? Many consumer researchers would agree with Kozinets and Belk that the audiovisual allows us to go beyond what consumers think and tell to include what they say and do. This is important if we care about understanding consumer behavior holistically. Many would also agree that showing what they say and do is more informative and powerful than describing it. Nevertheless, many academics (still) resist the visual. Deborah Heisley (2001, p. 46) listed seven reasons that nicely summarize why this is the case: (1) researchers feel visual work may be seen as less serious by the academy, (2) visual

interpretation is "open". This loss of control can feel uncomfortable and threatening for a researcher, (3) consumer researchers may lack familiarity with high-quality video products, (4) researchers are influenced by the general population's bias toward viewing the written word as being more intellectual than the visual, (5) there is no peer review process in place to legitimize the work, (6) the work is not included in traditional journals, so it does not benefit from the signaling of quality that a respected journal can confer, (7) it is a lot of work.

In recent years, Belk and Kozinets have worked hard to take away some of these hurdles. To increase familiarity with the method of videography, they have addressed how (audio)-visual techniques can be used to collect, interpret, and present data. Specifically, Kozinets and Belk (2006) have pointed out how much easier and cheaper it has become to produce high-quality videos due to constant upgrading of recording, editing, and distributing equipment. Producing videographies is still a lot of work, but so is producing articles. Today's video technology is so advanced that anyone can master the necessary skills to produce a video relatively easily on his own without the need of employing a large technical crew. To educate consumer researchers about the options and formats that they can choose to incorporate videography in their work, Kozinets and Belk (2006) have described six different types of videography, i.e., (1) videotaped interview, (2) observational videography, (3) autovideography, (4) collaborative videography, (5) retrospective videography, and (6) impressionistic videography. However, they are quick to state that these six formats are neither mutually exclusive, nor exhaustive.

Belk and Kozinets have also taken major steps in developing a peer review process for videographies. In various writings, they have advocated evaluation criteria to judge the quality of videographic work (Belk and Kozinets 2007, Kozinets and Belk 2006), pointedly summarized by the Four Ts of topical, theoretical, theatrical, and technical standards. Consumer or marketing videographies need to center on a topic that is of interest to consumer research (excluding, for example, political and social explorations with no consumption context), and they need to make a contribution to our understanding of the consumption phenomenon that it treats. Filmic conventions demand that the videography contains some sort of "story" with unfolding tension and denouement. Moreover, quality videographies are well-constructed; like articles, they need to be readable or "viewable", which requires some mastery of filming and editing. Currently, these evaluation criteria are used to select entries to the ACR Film Festivals. With more researchers

exploring the method, and, thus, with a bigger pool of comparative material, it is likely that these evaluation criteria will evolve.

By explaining the method, training researchers, creating outlets, and developing evaluation criteria, Belk and Kozinets have taken a pragmatic approach in breaking resistance to the audiovisual. Nevertheless, deeper, epistemological doubts about the value of images remain to be taken away. Compared to words, images always seem to get the negative part of modernism's dualisms; words are objective, images are subjective; words can offer theoretical abstraction, images can only reflect reality; words convey information, images evoke entertainment; words equal science, images equal art (cf., Kozinets and Belk 2006, Sunderland 2006). These dualisms devalue the potential of the audiovisual, and hinder the acceptance of videography as a legitimate method and presentation format of consumer research. In our opinion, there are four key issues that need to be addressed to better reflect the strengths and weaknesses of audiovisual texts.

Firstly, what is their relationship to reality versus theory? Can videographies be more than the compelling presentation of data? Secondly, what is their relationship to words? In this respect, Kozinets and Belk (2006, p. 338) raise the following important questions;

> "Should audiovisual representations be best thought of as accompaniments to written material that treats its research topic in a more conventional fashion? Does audiovisual material depend upon written material to gain credibility or acceptability? Or should it be treated as a different and entirely independent medium? Do audiovisual and written works provoke different types of understanding and, if so, should one type of understanding be considered more valid than the other?"

Thirdly, what is the role of the filmmaker as narrator? Kozinets and Belk remind us that videographies are narratives just as written texts, i.e., they are constructed documents that allow the researcher to inscribe meaning via editing, titles, subtitles, music, narration, etc. Moreover, they acknowledge that the dramatic presentation possibilities of video make videographic texts probably more susceptible to manipulation than the written word (2006, p. 339). To what extent should this manipulation be made apparent in the videography or its accompanying material? Finally, what is the role of the viewer? Watching a movie is different from reading an article or listening to a presentation. How can we overcome the habit of audiences to move into "entertainment" mode as soon as the lights go out and the film begins? (cf., Sunderland 2006).

To advance our thinking about the nature and value of videography for consumer research, we now turn to the presentation of insights on these four issues taken from documentary film theory and visual ethnography. For each of these disciplines, we have selected a key publication from an

authoritative researcher, i.e., *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (1991) by Bill Nichols for documentary film theory, and *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research* (2007) by Sarah Pink for visual ethnography.[1] Table 1 gives an overview of the key take-aways from each discipline.

Table 1 *Overview of Key Insights from Documentary Film Theory and Visual Ethnography*

	Documentary Film Theory	**Visual Ethnography**
Reality versus theory	Argumentation above representation	Intersubjectivity and multivocality
Relationship to words	Words in the form of commentary take dominance over images, guiding their interpretation	Written and filmic text co-exist and result in complementary, equally valuable, understandings
Role of the filmmaker	Four modes of representation: expository, observational, interactive, or reflexive	One mode of representation: reflexive
Role of the viewer	Expectations about the role of the viewer vary between the modes of representation	Viewers are expected to be reflexive

Insights from documentary film theory

What is documentary? Documentaries take shape around an informing logic which requires a representation, case, or argument about the historical world. Nichols uses the label 'historical world' to distinguish the documentary text from fictional texts which represent an imaginary world, however closely based on actual events or characters (Nichols 1991, p. 12).[2] Documentaries, instead, address the real or lived world. To further distinguish documentaries from fictional texts, Nichols stresses that fictions tell stories, whereas documentaries present an argument. Documentaries operate in terms of problem-solving. Thus, in terms of structure, documentaries are very similar to research texts. Like research texts, documentaries aim to show us things in a new, fresh light, and to make associations between things and events that we were not aware or conscious of. However,

[1] We acknowledge the limitation of choosing a single source per discipline, and, therefore, present our insights as representative of the views of the respective authors rather than the entire discipline.

[2] In the rest of this section we refer only to the page number of Nichols' 1991 book.

differently from research texts, most documentaries stand for or represent the views of individuals, groups, or agencies of individual filmmakers with the overt or hidden aim to act in their behalf. Researchers are expected to be independent of any agency and to act only in behalf of Knowledge.

How, then, do documentary and videography relate, and why is it relevant to investigate documentary film theory for our purpose? Documentaries are firmly anchored in the lived world of actions and events. Videographies are specifically attractive for consumer research because of their ability to capture, analyze, and present multisensory lived experiences. Documentary and videography texts also share the objective to document and present an argument. However, as a research text, videography's argument should not only be anchored in the lived world, but it should also be connected to a body of relevant theory. Documentary film theory has much to offer in terms of teaching consumer researchers how to document the lived world of consumers, and how to present an argument about it on the basis of images rather than words. But more than offering practical guidelines, documentary film theory is interesting for its long history of reflecting upon the practice. Many of the questions that we pose ourselves about what audiovisual texts "should be" and "can do", and about the "actions" and "mind-sets" that are expected of filmmaker and viewer have been addressed and conceptualized by our confrères in film studies. Moreover, documentary film theory offers us an existing jargon to classify, evaluate, and discuss nonfictional audiovisual texts in terms of the styles, strategies, and structures used. In the following paragraphs, we address some of the concepts and terminology that seem most pertinent for videographic practice in consumer research.

Relationship to reality versus theory. As we have discussed above, audiovisual material is widely accepted as raw data in consumer research. We acknowledge the value of (moving) images as records of actions that have occurred and things that have been said. Skeptics of the method of videography would claim that their value stops there; videographies can represent observational data, no theoretical abstraction. Documentary film theory refutes this idea of the filmic text as only being descriptive. Nichols states: "While documentary begins with the concrete representation of people and places, situations and events, it depends for its success far more on its ability to induce the viewer to derive larger lessons, broader outlooks, or more overarching concepts from the detail it provides" (p. 29). Thus, the documentary text represents not simply what exists in the world, but it presents the meaning, explanation, or interpretation that should be assigned to what exists in the world (p. 116).

A relevant topic that Nichols discusses is the extent to which indexical images provide evidence of the historical world. Images are considered "sticky" because they refer to things and events that exist and happened "for real". Nichols argues (p. 160-161), however, that:

> "[t]his stickiness requires recognition by the viewer before if can come into play. If we lack familiarity with the historical events whose semblance attaches to the sounds and images we view, then these images lack the referential power documentary requires of them. [...] Recognition involves a sudden click or shift of levels as information, sensory impressions, arrange themselves into a larger gestalt. For example, the shift is from the recognition of a human figure to its placement as a particular historical figure".

Because research texts are expected to make a theoretical contribution, videography's evidence should not only be considered authentic in light of the historical world, but it should also click with existing notions of theory and concepts. An often occurring practice to evoke this click is the insertion of still shots of article headings. But referentiality does not only depend on images, but also on larger textual effects. Continuous labeling may be necessary to identify the theoretical interest of the images that we see. This is where the relationship between images and words comes into play.

Relationship to words. Arguments require a logic that words are able to bear far more easily than images. Therefore, documentary relies heavily on the spoken word in the form of commentary by voice-over narrators, reporters, interviewees, and other social actors. Nichols considers argument to be the general category for the representation of a case and subdivides this category into two major parts, perspective and commentary (p. 118).

Perspective is the way in which a documentary text offers a particular point of view through its depiction of the world. This perspective differentiates the documentary text from 'mere film' or raw footage. It leads the viewer to infer a tacit argument. Perspective in documentary is akin to style in fiction film; the argument is implied by rhetorical strategies of organization that rely on cinematographic techniques. Combinations of images – through editing, intertitles, and the juxtaposition of images and sounds – can present a tacit argument, but most documentaries rely on commentary to convey their abstract argument. Whereas the indexicality of images provides the evidence, it is the commentary that guides the viewers towards those aspects of the image that are most important to the argument (p. 154). Thus, commentary is how a documentary offers a particular statement about the world or about the perspective it has tacitly presented. Commentary is always at a more "meta" level than perspective. It is a more overt and direct form of argumentation.

Because research texts contain arguments, this may also be expected of videographies. If the researcher chooses for an argumentative videography, the distinction between perspective and commentary allows her to think through the construction of the videographic text on these two levels. How should the argument be made by means of cinematographic techniques? What should be addressed in commentary? Is commentary necessary or can the argument be made with images and their sounds alone?

Role of the filmmaker. The role of the filmmaker can be captured by the four essential modes of documentary practice: expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive. These modes represent different concepts of historical representation, and they vary in terms of complexity and self-awareness.

The expository mode takes shape around commentary directed toward the viewer ("voice of God"); images serve as illustration or counterpoint. The expository mode emphasizes the impression of objectivity and of well-sustained argument. It supports generalizations since the voice-over commentary can readily extrapolate from the particular instances offered by the images. Exposition can accommodate elements of interviews, but these tend to be subordinated to an argument offered by the film itself. The filmmaker's role is that of an I-know-it-all authority, and viewers expect at the end of the film to have found the solution to a problem or puzzle (p. 34-38).

The observational mode stresses the non-intervention of the filmmaker. Rather than solving a puzzle, the observational documentary gives an exhaustive depiction of everyday life. Editing serves to enhance the impression of lived or real time. In its purest form, voice-overs, music external to the scenes, intertitles, interviews, and reenactments are completely eschewed. The observational mode is empathetic, nonjudgmental, and participatory, in contrast to the authoritative posture of the expository mode. If affords the viewer the opportunity to look in on and overhear something of the lived experience of others (p. 38-43).

Whereas observational documentary conveys the sense of an unmediated access to the world, the interactive mode stresses the presence of the filmmaker. Textual authority shifts from the filmmaker to the interviewees: their comments and responses provide the central part of the film's argument. Editing operates to maintain a logical continuity between individual viewpoints, but usually without the benefit of an overarching commentary. The filmmaker's felt presence leads to an emphasis on the act of gathering information and building knowledge (p. 44-55).

Finally, the reflexive mode focuses not so much on the historical world, but on the question of *how* we talk about the historical world. Reflexive documentaries are self-conscious about form and style (as poetry), but also about strategy, structure, conventions, expectations, and effects. Emphasis is not on the encounter between the filmmaker and the interviewee, as in the interactive mode, but on the encounter between the filmmaker and the viewer (p. 56-68).

As an alternative to the typology of videographies offered by Kozinets and Belk (2006), these modes can serve as more formal classifiers of videographic work. They may help videographers to make informed choices about how their research topic can be best communicated to a particular audience by means of an audiovisual text. For example, if their videography is intended for the consumer research community at large, it might be wise to choose an expository mode that closely resembles the authoritative nature of most research texts. Likewise, if the topic requires a lot of theoretical framing, exposition might be necessary to get one's point across. If the videography deals with behavior that is very familiar to us, like grocery shopping in a supermarket, an observational mode that emphasizes images over commentary might be the best way to zoom in on details and aspects of the shopping context that are hard to capture and analyze in written work. Finally, if the research question allows for it, and the researcher is willing to put herself on stage, the interactive or reflexive mode offer attractive alternatives to the standard analysis and presentation of disembodied, universalized knowledge that is published in most academic journals.

Role of the viewer. Nichols writes: "The distinguishing mark of documentary may be less intrinsic to the text than a function of the assumptions and expectations brought to the process of viewing the text" (p. 24). What are the assumptions and expectations that characterize the viewing of videographies? As we have sketched above, the problem here may be very well that there is no particular viewing practice yet, and that audiences, therefore, rely on the viewing practice they know best, i.e., watching entertaining movies and television shows. Sunderland (2006) describes this problem in the context of the reception of corporate consumer documentaries.

The four modes of documentary practice give some insight into the role that is expected from the viewer. The expository mode demands viewers' engagement with finding a solution to the argument that is presented. Closure is inscribed in the text, thus, viewers just need to pay attention to what is shown and said. Observational documentary is much more vulnerable to the predisposition of its audience. Since there is no guiding commentary, viewers will assess what they see according to social assumptions and habitual ways of seeing, including biases that they bring to the text (p. 93). Viewers

or interactive documentary should expect to be witness to the historical world as represented by one (i.e., the filmmaker) who inhabits it and who makes that process of habitation a distinct dimension of the text. An extension of the shown encounters into more generalized ones must be achieved through viewers' own engagement with the text rather than the text making the generalization for them (p. 56). Reflexive documentaries prompt viewers to a heightened consciousness of his relation to the text and the text's relation to that which it represents (p. 61).

When viewers (also: reviewers) have expectations that don't match with the mode of the text, the videography cannot be understood and appreciated correctly. Presumably, with time and repeated exposure, our audiences of fellow researchers, students, and clients will become more accustomed to videographic texts, and, thus, better able to view and value them for what they are worth. Until so, it is the task of the filmmaker to assure that her audience is equipped with the necessary viewing skills. Choosing the more conventional modes or providing accompanying written materials that aid the viewing process of the less conventional modes seem to be good strategies.

Insights from visual ethnography

What is visual ethnography? Pink offers the following definition of ethnography: "rather than a method for the collection of data, ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture, and individuals) that is based on ethnographers' own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality; instead, it aims to offer versions of ethnographers' experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations, and intersubjectivities through which knowledge was produced" (Pink 2007, p. 22)[3]. Visual ethnography, in its broadest sense, pays particular attention to visual aspects of culture (p. 21).

Interpretive consumer research makes extensive use of the ethnographic method. Therefore, we cannot go by the theories and practices that are developed in the fields of social sciences and humanities applying visual ethnography. Different from documentary film, the ethnographic film shares with videography its scientific character. This makes it particular relevant to study how other disciplines have handled the "problematic status" of images compared with words in the context of making scientific contributions. However, there are also differences between visual ethnography and

[3] In the rest of this section we refer only to the page number of Pink's 2007 book.

videography. Why did Belk and Kozinets not just adopt this existing label for the audiovisual method and presentation format that they call videography? We will see that visual ethnography is firmly anchored in a scientific paradigm where, as Pink formulates it: "the impact of the "postmodern turn" has been assessed and put to rest leaving as its legacy a reflexive approach to ethnographic and visual research that these works insist on" (p. 4). The more neutral label of videography does not prescribe reflexivity as dominant mode. Thus, videography in consumer research is not positioned as an exclusive interpretive method. Although it is this particular community that has been the first to experiment with videography, it is very well feasible, even desirable, that a much broader base of consumer researchers will adopt it.

Relationship to reality versus theory. Although ethnographers have a long history of bringing photo-, film- and video equipment to the field, the use of visual images and recordings has not been without controversy. From the 1960s to the 1980s, many social scientists resisted visual research in ethnography, claiming that as a data collection method is was too subjective, unrepresentative, and unsystematic. As a reaction to this critique, visual ethnographers like Margaret Mead adopted a non-interventionist approach, leaving the camera to film continuously to produce "objective materials".

During the postmodern turn of the 1980s, anthropologists started to question the assumption that "reality" could be observed and recorded. The acknowledgement of the constructedness of written research texts helped pave the way for a more acceptable position of the visual in ethnographic research. However, it was only in the 1990s that anthropologists and sociologists started to rethink the theoretical implications of photography and video as research methods. Publications of this era attributed power to the camera as an agent that overturns the realist paradigm. Authors implied that an appropriate application of visual images and technologies in ethnography could be developed as a force that brings new meaning(s) to ethnographic work and social science (p. 16). Key to this development is a continuing reassessment of the relationships between vision, observation, and truth. Rather than trying to overcome the limitations of images compared with words for a scientific theorization, contemporary visual ethnographers see these limitations as an opportunity for new ways of "seeing" and understanding. Visual ethnography, therefore, is now firmly grounded in a reflexive approach that focuses on subjectivity, creativity, and self-consciousness (p. 17).

The interpretive turn in consumer research resulted in the acknowledgment of the potential of film and photographic material to deepen analysis and understanding (e.g., Sherry, Belk and Wallendorf 1988), but few researchers actually adopted the method for representation purposes. Recently,

Peñaloza and Cayla (2006) call for a more visual approach that is characterized in exactly the same terms as visual ethnography's key ingredients of subjectivity, creativity, and self-consciousness. Their article highlights a couple of key areas in which this visual approach is most appropriate/wanted, i.e., for the study of consumption venues such as malls and markets; for the study of consumption artifacts including logos, designs, packaging, advertisements and web sites; and for the study of bodily aspects of consumption. Although the article focuses on the practices of "writing pictures" and "taking field notes", its argument can be easily transferred to the practice of videography, and therefore, it is an excellent source for videographers who want their work not only to be theoretically relevant, but also epistemologically innovative.

Relationship to words. According to Pink, the purpose of visual ethnographic analysis is not to translate visual evidence into verbal knowledge, but to explore the relationship between visual and other (including verbal) knowledge (p.119). She writes (p. 120):

> "This implies an analytical process of making meaningful links between different research experiences and materials such as photographs, video, field diaries, more formal ethnographic writing, local written or visual texts, visual and other objects. These different media represent different types of knowledge that may be understood in relation to one another. [...] During fieldwork I use each of these media to represent the various stories of the research in different ways. Each medium evokes different elements of my fieldwork experience. Therefore, the photographs do not simply illustrate the field notes, and the video is not simply evidence of conversation, interviews or actions. Rather, images and words contextualize each other; forming not a complete record of the research but a set of different representations and strands of it".

Pink observes that, to date, there is no cross-disciplinary consensus about how video might participate in academic discourse. Some suggest arts practice is the way forward, while others argue for an approach that is scientifically informed. Pink's view is to combine these practices to produce reflexive texts and presentations that juxtapose different types of knowledge, subjectivity, epistemology, experience, and voice in ways that complement one another (p. 176).

Kozinets and Belk (2006, p. 338) asked: "do audiovisual and written works provoke different types of understanding and, if so, should one type of understanding be considered more valid than the other?" If we adopt visual ethnography's stance on this issue, the answer is "yes, they provoke different types of understanding, but these different types of understanding should be considered of equal importance". It is probably fair to say that there is not one best way to combine these different types of knowledge, understandings, and narratives into one, or several, text(s). The ACR Film Festivals evidence that consumer researchers are experimenting with various types of audiovisual representation formats including reenactments, "talking heads", voice-over narrators, captions,

intertitles, photo-essays, as well as expressive and realist uses of images. Moreover, the two special issues of *Consumption, Markets and Culture* have shown that there are many possible combinations of videographies with accompanying written material, or traditional articles with accompanying audiovisual material. For the moment, there are no stringent guidelines that prescribe the format of our audiovisual endeavors as precisely as our written output, so let's benefit from this freedom and produce creative, multi-text documents that are relevant and resonant (cf. Belk and Kozinets 2005b). The bigger the movement, the more difficult it will be to ignored by gatekeepers of academic journals, tenure track committees, and scientific research funds.

Role of the filmmaker. The reflexive approach requires visual ethnographers to collaborate with informants to help them draw out, reconstruct, and represent relevant experiences in a way that is meaningful to them, and to the researcher (p. 107). Collaboration could include handing-over the camera to let informants film their own lives, co-editing, as well as viewing footage together to actively discuss the images with informants and examining how they situate themselves as viewers of the footage (p. 112). Academic meaning-making may not be given hierarchical superiority above the meaning-making of informants. Instead, the ethnographic film can become a context where researchers create or represent continuities between these diverse worlds, voices, or experiences, and describe or imply points in the research at which they met or collided (p. 144).

Reflexivity is a known concept to interpretive consumer researchers (e.g., Anderson 1986, Bristor and Fischer 1993, Firat and Venkatesh 1995, Hirschman 1993, Murray and Ozanne 1991). Even so, in the majority of articles, the authors do not explicitly reflect on how subjectivity and intersubjectivities have influenced their research. It goes as a tacit understanding that the production and interpretation of the text is a result of negotiations and shared meanings among researcher, informants, readers, and research community (Joy, Sherry, Troilo and Deschenes 2006). No matter how much collaboration has occurred between researcher and informants during data collection and interpretation, in the final written text it is ultimately the voice of the researcher that is heard "loudest". Videography offers an unprecedented opportunity to literally bring in other people's voices. Laura Oswald addresses the appeal of videography's multivocality potential as follows (1993, p. 6):

> "By capturing multiple points of view on a setting, by creatively juxtaposing sound and image, by letting respondents speak for themselves, the researcher can inscribe an interpretation onto a consumption event, while exposing the inherent contradictions and ambiguities in the event and the researcher's participation in the event".

Of course, bringing in these other voices does not necessarily make videographies reflexive (see Joy *et al.* 2006 for an excellent account of the complexities and levels of reflexive thought). And we may wonder if democratic multivocality is even possible – is the researcher not just using informants to make her own point (Josephides 1997, p. 29). Nevertheless, maybe more easily than written text, videography offers researchers a chance to experiment with multivocality and reflexivity. And this is an opportunity that some consumer researchers (but probably not all) may want to seize upon.

Role of the viewer. Pink states that reflexivity is not only required of the researcher and of the text that she produces, but also of the viewers of her text. Therefore, ethnographic reflexive texts should invite readers to question self-consciously the content and meanings of the representation (p. 142). Whereas documentary film theory focuses mostly on stylistic means to inspire reflexivity, visual ethnography focuses more on the content. Specifically, Pink explains that ethnographic film viewers are presented with two subject positions: those constructed by the filmmaker on the one hand, and by the represented subjects on the other. Individual interpretive practices, therefore, depend on how the relationships between these different subject positions is constructed in the film text, an in viewers' *own* interactions with these subject positions (p. 177). Moreover, Pink notes that these interpretations also depend on the circumstances of viewing, including the interactions between audience members and the intersubjectivity between viewers (p. 178).

Reader/viewer agency is applicable to all sorts of texts; written, (audio-) visual, (non-) reflexive, (non-) academic, et cetera. But ethnographers face a particular challenge and that is the possibility that readers/viewers bring ethnocentric or racist ideas to the text. It is part of ethnographers' duty to protect their informants from misunderstanding, denigration, and mockery. This is true for written accounts, but maybe even more so for film in which individuals are "fully" exposed. Also consumer researchers that create videographies should be aware of the harm they could do to their informants by including them recognizably in their films. The reflexive approach does not guarantee that viewers interpret the text "ethically", but it does stress the importance of creating texts that inspire viewers to be critical of their interpretation practices.

An empirical application

Now that we have envisioned how documentary film theory and visual ethnography could be of use for the development of videography in consumer research, it is time to test our insights "behind the camera". With Belk (2006), we believe that "what visual marketing and consumer research should

attempt to accomplish […] are to a large degree questions that can only be answered in practice". Therefore, after having accomplished one of Belk and Kozinets' hands-on videography workshops, we have thrown ourselves into the adventure of producing a videography (Rokka, Hietanen and De Valck 2010). The videography is part of a larger, ethnographic study about the marketplace and consumer culture around the extreme sport of paintball. Paintball is a team based sport that is currently played in 110 countries and that counts more adherents than snowboarding or rugby. Nevertheless, it eludes wide recognition as a sport having suffered from negative attitudes from the mainstream – it is a sport where players engage in shooting each other – even if it is now packaged as a high-technology athletic sport played in front of crowds. Our ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in international paintball tournaments in six countries, and our data consists of approximately 100 informal interviews, 20 videotaped interviews, 400 recorded photographs, 50 hours of videotaped consumption practices in tournament and casual settings, and over 100 reviewed paintball-related publications.

This methodological paper about videography has been developed in tandem with our ethnographic fieldwork, data collection, and analysis. First versions of the empirical work have already been presented at the Consumer Culture Theory conference 2009, as well as the Association for Consumer Research conference 2009. Currently, we are working on further improving both the audiovisual and written output of our study. In the remainder of this section, we will follow the four key issues addressed in the previous sections (relationship to reality versus theory, relationship to words, role of the filmmaker, and role of the viewers) to show how our theoretical insights about the methodology have informed our videography, or how they can help to discuss its strengths and weaknesses.

What is our videography about? The objective of our study is to explore what opportunities and challenges the emerging practice-oriented approach, or practice-turn in contemporary theory (Reckwitz 2002, Schatzki 2002, Warde 2005) opens up for conceptualizing tribal consumer culture and marketplace dynamics. The prominent approaches in prior consumer tribe research have emphasized subcultural (Kozinets 2001), microcultural (Thompson and Troester 2002), postmodern (Cova and Cova 2002), and sociological (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001) frameworks of interpretation which give rise to and focus on the kinds of contemporary identities and communities consumers construct. The analytic focus on consumer tribes has stressed the importance of understanding the meaning-making processes and systems of signification involved, i.e. what particular consumer

identities "mean" and how this meaning is negotiated. By drawing on Schatzki's (2002) work, we direct attention to and conceptualize tribal consumer culture and marketplace dynamics via "social/cultural practices". In this perspective, practices are routinized types of behavior which consist of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, "things" and their use, background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge (Reckwitz 2002, p. 249). Because the practice approach emphasizes the role of doings, performances, and material arrangements rather than meaning-making processes we think that it is particularly suited for a videographic analysis and presentation. Likewise, we have chosen paintball as our field site because of its attractive visual appeal. Thus, we have tried to combine a theoretical approach and an empirical application that will allow us to exploit the visual to its full potential.

Relationship to reality versus theory. In thinking through what had to be the aim of our videography it quickly became clear that the immediate appeal or accessibility of our audiovisual material contrasted sharply with the inaccessibility of our theoretical frame: looking at tournament paintball is fun, while understanding Schatzki's practice-theory is difficult. To prevent that our videography would be a documentary about the sport of paintball, and, thus, too "real" or specific that it would escape theoretical abstraction, we decided that the theory was to be our guide about what we would show and tell. Furthermore, we determined that we would produce a videography and a paper that would be closely aligned, with basically the same objective, so that readers/viewers could go from one document to the other to arrive at a fuller understanding of what practices constitute and how these determine marketplace dynamics. In line with Pink's suggestions, we exploit the strengths of each medium; the videography is strong in showing the consumption practice of paintball to an extent that would take too much space to describe, however, the paper is strong in explaining details of the theory that are difficult to convey in images, for example, referencing to relevant literature. Thus, both texts serve to complement each other.

Relationship to words. The challenge we faced was: how do we turn all the material that we collected into a meaningful story that meets our objective? And, for the videography, how do we tell this story audio-visually? Because of our limited experience with the audiovisual medium, we fell back to the medium that we know better, i.e., writing academic papers. Thus, before we started to edit, we developed an outline that closely followed the standard built-up of journal articles: introduction, research question, theoretical framework, methodology, findings presented in three key themes, and

conclusion. Then, we selected material that fit with each of these "chapters". We now realize that this approach set us up for trouble. By starting with the way stories are told on paper, the images were immediately reduced to illustrations. As a consequence, we had to rely on a considerable amount of voice-over, intertitles, and on-screen figures to make the story transparent and the transitions smooth.

An additional problem we faced was the quality of our audiovisual material. The tournament field sites are noisy places; our recorded interviews were oftentimes inaudible because of repeated gun shot noise and cheering crowds. Moreover, the small camera that allowed us to film unobtrusively also resulted in shaky shots because of our unsteady hands. Because we were uncertain about the self-explanatory power of our material, we turned to words to guide the viewer. Thus, in terms of Nichols' distinction between perspective and commentary, we rely a lot on the latter, while the former plays a secondary role. We realize that much of this could have been prevented with better preparation, and, probably, experience. Pink's book actually contains a chapter about planning visual methods that offers valuable advice for the beginning videographer. Ultimately, videography forces you to think in images rather than in words. It might require some practice for the untrained eye, but visual opportunities are everywhere, and good material will "speak for itself" as the saying goes.

Role of the filmmakers. In this project we are three authors; each with a varying degree of connection to our field site. The third author has been a semi-professional paintball player for 15 years. He has introduced us to all the field sites and most informants. For the purpose of our study, the second author has become a participant observer, who has taken part in paintball practices and friendly matches and thus gained paintball experience in practice. The first author has taken up the role of non-participant observer; she has attended tournaments, but not physically experienced the game and accompanying camaraderie. These three subject positions have been extremely valuable in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. For example, when the third author dismissed filming behind the scenes as "uninteresting", the second author insisted and filmed our most compelling material about how a team, as smooth machinery, handles their equipment, and the tension before a match. As an outsider, the first author was critical about the contradiction between "doings" and "sayings" of players, for example, regarding the game's resemblance to military combat. Discussions about differing interpretations forced us to be reflexive about the various positions between insider and outsider that we took up, and about how that influenced the meanings that we attached to the data.

The version of the videography that we have currently produced does not give any evidence to this reflexivity. We have created an audiovisual text that mostly relies on the expository mode. The purpose is to show what practice theory is and how that can help us understand the tribal culture around paintball. We do so, as explained above, in chapters that start with intertitles and that end with voice-over commentary that summarizes and interprets what is shown in relatively long, observational-type of scenes. Armored with the insights that writing this article has given us, we think that the way forward is to rethink our videographic text in terms of a reflexive mode as explained by Nichols and Pink. Thus, we should make much more use of the tensions between statements and actions of informants, as well as our differing interpretations of these statements and actions in order to create a deeper understanding of the paintball culture and its marketplace dynamics.

Role of the viewers. The expository mode and the prominence of commentary dictate viewers of our videography what they see and how they should understand it. Nevertheless, we cannot be sure that viewers will not make up their own story. Particularly, the long scenes in which the game's front- and backstage is exposed, combined with interview material in which players express themselves about the sport, their teams, training practices, and playing matches could lead to divergent interpretations. Because of the "rough" nature of the sport and its contested status as a "war game", we might do harm to our informants by exposing them to viewers who transfer their negative attitude towards the sport to the videography and the players that it features. We admit that we have not accounted for this while producing the first version of our videography.

Since we have not shown the videography to anybody without us, the authors, being present, we have always been able to contextualize it, and to address questions and concerns of audience members. Embedding the showing into a longer seminar about practice theory has allowed for a more 'controlled' viewing, because attention was directed more to the theory than to the sport. But what will happen if our videography is shown without us being present to direct attention and contextualize? How will audiences other than participants in a research seminar, e.g., YouTube viewers, react? We agree with Pink that enforcing a dominant viewing (i.e., resulting in preferred interpretations) is not desirable, if even possible. Therefore, an alternative version of the videography that is more reflexive in nature could also invite viewers to be more reflexive about the possibly tainted perspective they bring to the film. If we succeed in creating such a document, we

could send our videography into the world to serve its cause as research output, teaching aid, or socio-cultural map of the paintball culture.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper was to help pave the way for videography to become an accepted method to study culture. We have looked beyond the field of consumer research to learn about the assumptions, beliefs, and practices in two other disciplines in which audiovisual texts are the main output. Videographies may be conceptualized as taking up a middle position between documentary films on the one side, and ethnographic films on the other.

Documentaries focus on putting forward an argument that aims to persuade the audience to take a certain point of view. In contrast, ethnographic films are more descriptive in nature, allowing the audience to draw conclusions and insights of their own. Kozinets and Belk (2006, p. 341) state that: "every consumer research film should potentially and ideally make a lasting contribution to our understanding of consumption". This requires that audiences agree on what has been shown and why that is important in terms of the existing body of academic knowledge. Videographies do not need to be based on the problem-solving logic of documentaries, but their outcome should be some sort of shared understanding that goes beyond individual interpretations of what has been depicted.

Documentaries offer *a* view of the world. Ethnographic films represent what is (made) visible. In either case, it is acknowledged that there is no objective reality that can be captured on film. However, whereas the ethnographic film prescribes a reflexive approach that stresses the subjectivity of filmmaker, informants, and viewers, documentary offers alternative representational strategies that could be of interest to videographic practice in consumer research. The formal classification of modes allows for an informed choice about what the role of the filmmaker should be, and to what extent his role should be made apparent in the film text.

Finally, documentary and ethnographic film propose a different stance towards words that may help us answer the questions posed by Kozinets and Belk about the relationship between videography and written text. Because of the preponderance of argument, documentaries rely heavily on commentary. It is primarily by means of the spoken word (on- and off-screen) that viewers are directed towards a particular understanding. In the documentary film text, images, sound, and editing serve to persuade the viewer; they are subservient to the argument. In contrast, images, sound, and editing in the ethnographic film text serve to describe, convey, or inform without

necessarily aiming to integrate into a final meaning. Understandings of the filmmaker, informants, and viewers may co-exist.

We could argue that in light of academic requirements in terms of abstraction, theorization, and conceptualization, videographies need to put forward an academic argument. If this is done within the film text, as in documentaries, no written text is needed. However, if the film text explicitly offers multiple subject positions that open up the possibility of multiple understandings, a written text that offers a more "closed" reading in terms of the academic discourse may be instrumental in connecting with and contributing to mainstream consumer research.

Discussing our videography-in-progress brings to light that researchers are faced with a lot of challenging questions when they want to produce a videography. We need to learn to think in images, we need to learn the skills of filming and editing, and we need to learn a new language that allows us to discuss audiovisual text meaningfully. This paper has shown that we do not have to start from scratch, but that we can learn and borrow from other disciplines. If we truly believe in the adage "a picture is worth a thousand words", we should write less and film more. Let these cameras roll!

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ESSAY IV

Brothers in paint: practice-oriented inquiry into a tribal marketplace culture

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Brothers in paint: practice-oriented inquiry into a tribal marketplace culture

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to explore what opportunities and challenges the emerging practice-oriented approach opens up for conceptualizing tribal consumer culture and marketplace dynamics. Drawing on Schatzki's theorization of the 'site of the social', tribal marketplace culture and change are examined based on findings from a multi-sited ethnography of consumer tribes gathered around the extreme sport of paintball. In doing so, the tribal marketplace culture or the 'site of the tribe' is conceptualized via constantly evolving nexus of practices and material arrangements; a specific context of human and non-human co-existence where, and apart of which, social life and the marketplace inherently transpire. Implications of such practice-order dynamics suggest that research on marketplace cultures would benefit from similar analyses that go beyond the identity, community, and affection-centered insights.

Keywords

Consumer tribes, tribal practices, practice turn, marketplace dynamics, ethnography

Introduction

Consumer collectives and tribes have become an important category of consumer culture theory and have inspired a vast amount of consumer research in recent years (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Cova *et al*., 2007). Not only have these affection based, co-creative, resisting, trouble-making, brand and consumption-oriented consumer groups been depicted as a central emblem of our time (Cova and Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2001; Maffesoli, 1986/1996; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001) but they have claimed centrality in the definition of marketplace cultures (Arnould and Thompson, 2005).

Prominent approaches in prior consumer tribe research have emphasized subcultural (e.g. Kozinets, 2001), microcultural (Thompson and Troester, 2002), postmodern (Cova and Cova, 2002), and sociological (Muñiz and O'Quinn, 2001) frameworks of interpretation which give rise to and focus on the kinds of contemporary identities and communities consumers construct. Whether gathered

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around iconic brands, authentic sources of affection, consumption interests, online sites, or driven by sub-cultural resistance, the analytic focus on consumer tribes has most often stressed the importance of understanding the meaning-making processes and systems of signification involved, i.e. what particular consumer identities 'mean' and how this meaning is negotiated. In this paper, we wish to blaze a new trail by exploring tribal sociability and identity from a practice-based perspective.

The objective of this paper is therefore to explore what opportunities and challenges the emerging practice-oriented approach, or practice-turn in contemporary theory (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001; Schatzki, 1996; 2002; Reckwitz, 2002), opens up for conceptualizing tribal consumer culture and marketplace dynamics. More specifically, by drawing on Schatzki's (2002) philosophical account on the 'site of the social', we wish to conceptualize tribal marketplace culture via 'social/cultural practices'. In doing so, we are interested in how marketplace cultures come into being, how they are organized as well as how they evolve.

From this perspective, we conceptualize the tribal marketplace culture as the 'site of the tribe', i.e. a nexus of practice elements which are carried along and altered by human and nonhuman doings/agency. Following Schatzki (2002), this 'site' is a constantly evolving nexus of practices and material arrangements; a specific context of human and non-human co-existence where, and apart of which, social life inherently transpires. We argue that to understand and study the 'tribal practices' it is necessary to conceive them both as co-ordinated entities and performances, such as 'ways of doing and saying', which maintain and alter social practices and orders. Tribal practices therefore include interconnected sets of practice elements such as shared practical understandings, skills, know-how, knowledge, ways of handling objects and moving bodies, and material arrangements, which are maintained through their routine reproduction.

As an illustrative empirical case we studied a tribal marketplace culture gathered around the extreme sport known as paintball. This team based sport is currently played in 110 countries and has more devotees than snowboarding or rugby. It provided us with a transnational, rapidly changing marketplace culture in an intriguing setting. Questions that directed our study include: What makes people want to play paintball? What does playing it entail? Why does this extreme sport exist in its present form, and how did it come into being? In addition, we sought to understand what roles do such things as teams, brands, companies, playing sites, equipment, and tribal practitioners motivations, background knowledge and skills play in the practice of paintball.

This paper presents findings from fieldwork carried out in large-scale paintball tournaments in six countries applying the proposed approach[1]. The data was gathered in 2008 using ethnographic methods guided by a strong auto-ethnographic orientation. The informants included paintball players from professional and amateur levels and high-level company executives. Paintball thus provided us with an ideal opportunity to conduct transnational research, allowing an insider's perspective and access to 'tribal practices'.

The empirical insights are used to illustrate how the studied tribal marketplace culture is organized and constituted via the 'tribal practices'. As a result, we consider three relevant outcomes for future research: First, we suggest our perspective makes it possible to move beyond meaning-making processes and narratives in tribal research. Second, it allows for the investigation of change and dynamics that have been so far under-researched in the literature. Third, it frees us from the specific local field site common to prior approaches and re-conceptualizes the site of the tribal marketplace. In this way, further research is called upon exploring how tribal marketplace cultures evolve.

Thus, inspired by Schatzki's theoretical and ontological ideas, the purpose of this article is to conceptualize and illustrate how practice-oriented inquiry can further inform the research seeking to understand a tribal marketplace and its dynamics. In the following, practice-oriented approach is first described and lined out for tribal consumer research. Then empirical study is opened up to elaborate the practice-oriented way of thinking by depicting the central constituents of what we call the 'site of the tribe'. Before the conclusion, empirical insights are used to discuss and capture some of the central logics of tribal marketplace evolution.

Practice-oriented perspective to consumer tribes

'Social practice' is undoubtedly a hallmark concept in social sciences and in the study of consumption (e.g. Bourdieu, 1990; Foucault, 1976; 1980; Giddens, 1979; 1984; Holt, 1995). However, the problem with practice-oriented analyses has long been the confusing variety and differences in their vocabularies, assumptions, scope, levels of abstraction and nature (f.ex. unconscious or conscious). In addition, lack of synthetic and cohesive approaches has spurred

[1] As a supplement to this paper, a videograpy was compiled in which we demonstrate the audiovisual aspects of our analyses and approach detailed here (See: Rokka, Hietanen and De Valck 2010).

further fragmentation in practice-theoretical accounts (Schatzki, 1996; 2002; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005).

Despite of this, practice theory has recently been a relatively hot topic in the academia, especially in the organization and strategy research (e.g. Schatzki, 2005). In addition, science of technology studies (cf. Latour, 1993; Callon, 1991; Pickering, 1995; Law, 1994) has been among the ones most occupied in systematic analyses of practices according to Schatzki (2001). The recent interest on what has been called 'practice turn' in contemporary theory (Schatzki *et al.*, 2001; see also Reckwitz, 2002), however, has not yet proliferated in the field of consumer research, although some closely related examples have emerged (e.g. Warde, 2005; Shove and Pantzar, 2005; Hand *et al.*, 2005). Most recently, one particular exception has appeared in marketing research in which consumers' value-creation practices were examined within brand communities (Schau, Muñiz, and Arnould, 2009).

According to philosopher Theodore R. Schatzki (2001, 1-2), the growing interest in this approach may emerge from the fact that many contemporary theorists would accord that 'practices' have the potential of being the 'primary generic social thing' of today whereas thinkers once spoke of 'structures', 'systems', 'life worlds', 'events', and 'actions'. References to the notion of practice draw ideas first from philosophical thinkers such as Wittgenstein (1958) and Taylor (1985) in their contention that practices underlie subjects and objects and illuminate the conditions for intelligible social action. Second, they build on social theoretical ideas from Bourdieu (1990), Giddens (1979; 1984) to talk about practices as forms of social structures and systems which in some sense determine desire, taste, status, and 'free' activity within social phenomena. Third, they borrow from cultural theorists, most importantly Foucault (1976; 1980) and Lyotard (1984), in the sense that to speak of practices is to depict language as discursive activity (or practice). Finally, they also draw from and theorize practice theoretical study of science and technology (e.g. Pickering, 1995) where, for example, science is viewed as activity as opposed to representation, and where critical attention is paid also to non-human entities such as machines in shaping practices.

At first practice turn might seem like a strange concept. It is a compilation of practice-theoretical ingredients from a broad range of academic traditions. Practices in their simplest conception deal with arrangements and arrays of human activity. Most practice theorists would agree that social order is embedded in practices, and that social activity is embodied and that nexuses of practices are mediated by artifacts, organisms and things. However, there is disagreement over the nature of embodiment, the pertinence or scope of practices, the sorts of entities that mediate practices, and

the extent these entities are relevant for mediating practices. The common project of practice accounts is still joined in the belief that such phenomena as knowledge, meaning, human activity, science, power, language, social institutions and social transformation occurs within and are aspects or components of practices, or a field of practices. (Schatzki, 2001, 2.)

In social theory, practice approaches therefore maintain a distinct social ontology (Schatzki, 1996; 2001, 2002; 2005) stressing that the social is a field of embodiment, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings, knowledge, know-how, skills as well as emotions. Thus it contrasts with social accounts that privilege individuals, interactions, language systems, signifying systems, life worlds, social structures or systems in conceptualizing the social. It takes that any social phenomenon needs to be studied and analyzed via the field of practices instead of, for example, by analyzing only individuals or groups of individuals as 'units' of analysis. Actions are embedded in practices and thus constitute individuals and social groups. In this view language is seen as a type of activity (practice) and therefore a practice phenomenon (Schatzki, 2001, 3).

The radical difference in practice approach is that it treats 'practices' as the site of the social instead of placing the social into the 'minds', 'texts' or 'social interactions' (Reckwitz, 2002). It offers tools and insight for consumer culture in the sense that it focuses analysis on the social/cultural via practice. Moreover, it is built on the idea that the social world is populated by diverse social practices which are 'carried' by agents, i.e. individuals. But these 'carriers of practices' are neither autonomous agents nor judgmental dopes who conform to norms; they understand the world themselves, and use the skills, know-how and motivational knowledge according to the particular practice. The individual is the unique 'crossing point' of diverse social practices, of both bodily and mental routines (Warde, 2005, 143). Therefore, practice approach is not analyzing individuals or social groupings but practices as 'analytic units'. Practice theorists accord that practices hence provide the basis for intelligibility and it is an activity that has a specific logic. It also recognizes the social context, thoughts, routines and knowledge.

It is important to clarify how 'practice' is conceptualized here. Despite wide-ranging origins and vocabularies, a common thread in practice conceptualizations is the emphasis on practices as routinely reproduced activities which entail shared beliefs, habits, knowledge, competence and desires (e.g. Schatzki, 2002; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005). Thereby practices as recognizable entities are made by and through their routine reproduction. Reckwitz (2002) gives a useful definition when he describes practice as "a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements

interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge." In this sense any practice, such as showering (Shove, 2003; Hand *et al.*, 2005), walking (Shove and Pantzar, 2005), eating out (Warde, 2005), researching (Knorr Cetina, 1999), banking or stock trading (Schatzki, 2002) forms a 'block' or arrangement the existence of which depends on the existence and interconnectedness of these elements, and which cannot be reduced to any one of those elements (Reckwitz, 2002). It is thus a "routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, things are described, and the world is understood" (Reckwitz, 2002).

Schatzki (1996) makes an important clarification when distinguishing between dispersed and integrative practices. The former may appear as a sub-domain of the latter and in various sectors of social life, only requiring a shared understanding of how to carry out and perform, for instance, an appropriate act of 'explaining' (Warde, 2005). Integrative practices refer to "the more complex practices found in and constitutive of particular domains of social life" (Schatzki, 1996, 98). Tribal practices, as will be discussed here, are hence considered to be a part of the latter, more fundamental sort, as they presume intricate layers of shared understandings, know-how, competences and ways of desiring.

Practice approach, as Warde (2005) has argued, defines practices as collective achievements. On the other hand, they are coordinated entities that consist of behaviors and understandings that appear in different locations and points of time and are carried by different mind/body unities. On the other hand, they require performances in order to exist. Practices are performed by consumers or practitioners, i.e. 'carriers' of practice. Thus, practices are important for consumption because they steer the processes of consumption – the manner of appropriating items, the processes of learning about, identifying, appreciating and putting into use; "it is therefore the practices rather than individual desires […] that create wants" (Warde, 2005, 137).

Before moving on to our empirical study, it is worth iterating how the sites of the social and contexts are conceptualized in the present practice approach. According to Schatzki (2002, 65), sites in general are where things exist and events happen. A site is also a special sort of context: it is where entities are intrinsically part of their own context. Sites need not be spatial. For example, Schatzki (1996) has argued that human activities are part of social practices. In this view the practices are the site of actions that have little to do with spatial properties of practices (e.g. particular locations or objective places). Practices are the site, not the spatial site, of activities. A site

is hence a type of context which can be understood as an arena for sets of phenomena and activities to take place.

So how is the tribal marketplace culture conceptualized in a practice-oriented approach? We argue that, it describes how human actions 'hang together' in the ways that are definitive of practices. Culture is conceptualized as the social life which takes place at a social site which, on the other hand, consists of the mesh of practices and orders. The notion of practice hence shifts focus away from the mental objects, such as the interests or intentions that inform concepts of action toward the reordered conditions and dynamics of the chains of action of collective life.

As indicated, practices are hence by no means static. Prior research on consumer tribes has offered only few insights into how tribal marketplace cultures evolve. We argue that practice approach would present valuable insight in this regard. The changes in practice-order complexes emanate through such things as dynamic forms and mechanisms including contagion, continuity over change, hybridization, bifurcation, fragmentation and appropriation, coherence, conflict, insemination, common events, media of communication and politics (Schatzki, 2002, 252). This implies that practices do not simply interlace but progress.

As a final remark, it should be noted that there is no consensus among practice theorists regarding how and where one is supposed to study practices or on what level of abstraction should they be considered. Rather they stress that social life is plied by a diverse range of practices such as economies, political practices, cooking practices, banking practices, recreation practices, religious practices or educational practices. The existing empirical examples are also scarce. For instance, Schatzki (2002) uses only two extensive empirical examples of practices: the Shaker herb business community in New York in 1870s and Nasdaq day trading in 2000s. Next, we offer one particular perspective in which we turn our focus onto analyzing tribal practices in paintball.

Multi-sited ethnography of tribal practices

Our empirical fieldwork explored paintball which is a form of team-based extreme sport where players basically engage in shooting each other. Although paintball is played in over 110 countries, it has still eluded wider general recognition. However, similar to other, better recognized extreme sports, paintball has its own share of professional players, a multitude of publications on the subject, equipment manufacturers operating on a global context, player unions, tournaments attracting over a hundred teams of over a dozen nationalities. Nevertheless, paintball has yet to become a

mainstream sport. This may partly be due to the relative age of the sport – paintball in any form has been around for less than 30 years and less than 10 years in its present competitive form. It can be also argued that paintball has suffered from negative attitudes from the mainstream – related to its seemingly warlike-character – even if it has now been packaged into a high-technology athletic sport which is played in front of crowds.

Paintball can be practiced in two primary forms: tournament and recreational paintball. Recreational paintball bares little resemblance to its competitive tournament counterpart and it is commonly played in forest settings wearing camouflage apparel. As revealed by our data, tournament paintball players often seem to stress a sharp distinction in this respect: they do not want to be associated with what they, not without venom, tend to describe "war game players". Instead, tournament players want to be seen to be sincere practitioners of a athletically demanding sport. When using the term 'paintball' in this study's nomenclature, tournament paintball is implied.

In a nutshell, paintball is played as follows: In a typical game of paintball two teams engage in a field set up with asymmetrical bunkers behind which players can avoid being hit by paintballs by the opposing team. A game usually lasts 15 minutes, during which the teams play a number of points. Teams start a point from opposing ends of the field and advance toward the opponent through the field while shooting at them with paintball markers. A point is won by removing all the opponents from the field, and then pressing a buzzer at the opposing end of the field. The tactics that teams use are far from ad-hoc as teams spend considerable amounts of time in practicing specific bunker layouts and mapping out the most effective game strategies to respond to different tactical situations during the game.

The game fields are commonly soccer/football arenas and consist of symmetrically laid-out covers ("bunkers") the players use for cover from the streams of incoming paintballs. Each marker can shoot 12 balls per second with each ball travelling at a speed of approximately 100 meters per second – each capable of inflicting deep bruises (despite equipment designed to protect players). Winning teams advance through the brackets to meet each other in the finals.

As paintball is not an instant development, it becomes interesting in the sense that it has gone through some significant changes since its early days. At present, the major tournament series are events of scale consisting of large trade shows, spectators and hundreds of teams (for instance, over 150 teams of more than 15 different nationalities in a typical Millennium event). The largest paintball tournament series in Europe is the Millennium Series yearly spanning five events across Europe. The

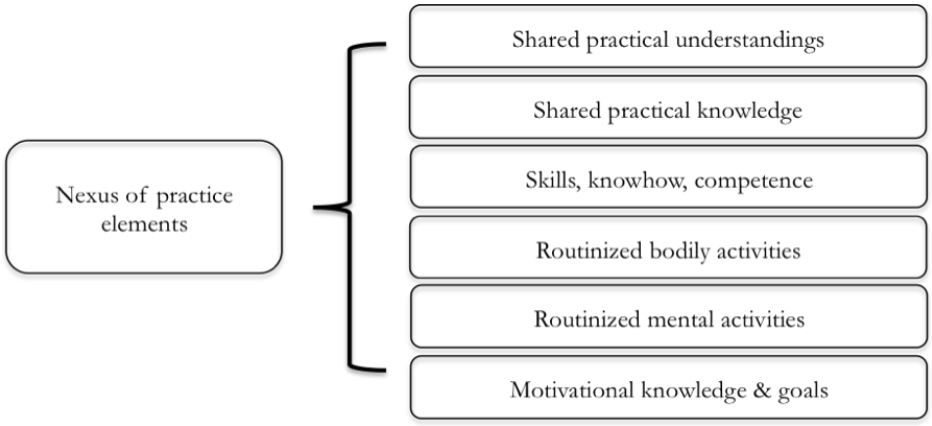
United States has two competing large-scale tournament series, the PSP and the NPPL from which the former hosts the largest single international tournament of the year, the PSP World Cup.

Our ethnographic fieldwork was conducted in five Millennium tournaments (Malaga, Nurnburg, Toulouse, London, and Paris) and in the PSP World cup (Orlando) in 2008. Our data consists of approx. 100 informal interviews, 20 videotaped interviews, 400 recorded photographs, 50 hours of videotaped tribal practices in tournament and in practice and casual settings. In addition, we have collected netnographic materials from online paintball communities and reviewed over 100 paintball-related publications. Our research team consisted of three members, one with 14 years of international experience in paintball, one who in the course of the research experienced paintball for the first time and one who has not experienced paintball on-field. The data analysis was informed by the principles of analysis of cultural practice (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). The next section reports our findings by briefly illustrating the practice-order dynamics of the tribal marketplace culture of paintball.

The site of the tribal marketplace culture

This section offers a brief description of the 'tribal site' which consists of a nexus of practice elements (i.e. consumer tribe activities including doings and sayings) and material arrangements (i.e. the set-ups of material objects which compose the entities where practices are carried out) (Schatzki, 2005). It is taken that, in the context of consumer tribes, marketplace culture 'hangs together' via the interconnected practices and material arrangements it entails. The first component of the tribal site is described next in more detail and summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1 *Nexus of Practice Elements*



The nexus of practice elements includes a set of interconnected mental and bodily components which determine and shape how the tribal practice is performed. These elements function as a sort of blueprint for the practice's performance. However, it needs to be emphasized that the blueprint requires continuous performance for its reproduction and existence. In this sense, it both governs and legitimizes tribal activities as intelligible, desirable, or accepted.

> Interviewer: "What makes pb so different from other sports?"
>
> Laurent (CEO of a paintball company, France): "The combination of adrenaline and team sport is unique. When you start, you get addicted for life. Behind pb, there is a real pb life, a real community, like in surfing."
>
> Jens & Marten (Ducks, Denmark): "If you screw up, another might get hurt; it is like the army, you travel, train together, you get under each other's skin; it is just like a family, we are blood brothers."
>
> Gus (Nexus Kids, Spain): "In skateboard you only have to count on yourself. In pb you have to be a family, work like a hand; together you form a fist and then you hit. You have to think in the others. It is very weird, someone who don't play paintball, can't understand."
>
> Interviewer: "What then makes you feel good about pb?"
>
> Jens & Marten (Ducks, Denmark): "When you are gearing up for a game, standing next to your 4 team mates, getting all psyched up, do what you have to do, feeling in your stomach and head. When you leave the field after a game (won or lost): five guys acting as one unit, it is great. We know we did this together."
>
> Coach (Joy, Sweden): "Pb is about hanging out with friends, shooting people, travelling, partying. It is not such a sacrifice as some players like to pretend. When you consider something else like soccer;

you don't call everyone in your team your friend. We travel all around the world. Pb makes a certain lifestyle possible."

Patrick (Cyclone, Finland) "Pb has learned me to network and I now have a network of good friends around the world. These people are really open and you'll always get help. In pb you get to travel the world, and you get to shoot people!"

Ash (ECI, UK): "We build strong friendships, like brothers. You want to win for the others. Need to be best possible as you can, this is why you go to practice every week. You cannot miss practice, you cannot miss an event. It is all about the next big battle."

Some of the *shared practical understandings* particular to paintball uncover that, despite some violent features of the sport, being close like a family, having fun and hanging out with friends and team members seem to be important characteristics of the paintball practice. A sense of belongingness is forged also through the constant effort of "being there" for your team which means that the team members are expected to sacrifice time, money, and sometimes your body, to earn the respect of others, as illustrated in the following quotes:

Jens & Maerten (Ducks, Denmark): "The worst thing about training is the physical stuff, the trainer slaves us through, totally bumped. Bruises all over – feels like a day of hard work."

Chris (Crisis, US): "Be there when your mate needs you - money, girlfriend issues. Sacrificing is important."

Practical skills, know-how, and competence also play a crucial role in paintball practice. It was emphasized in our data that a variety of ingredients make up a 'good practitioner' of paintball.

Coach (Joy, Sweden): "Social skills and a good motivation are more important selection criteria than pb (game play) skills."

Oliver Lang (Ironmen, Los Angeles): "This is what I do; it is my life – 24 hours. It is everything, every weekend. It has been like that for a long time, so I am used to it. [...] There are lots of good players nowadays, players that are talented, who understand the game and have the mechanics of it. But what makes a really good player is up here (in the head): you've got to be smarter than most other people that are playing, you've got to learn how to adjust to your team and the surroundings. And you've got to be open minded and not arrogant… Team-wise you have to be with your team for at least 2-3 years. The same core group of guys building and building together, so that all are on the same page willing to fight for each other, but be friends ultimately.

Jens & Maerten (Ducks, Denmark): "Respect is gained by doing your best to improve skills. You don't need to be the best player – these might get arrogant – instead, being helpful is appreciated. Not all players are equal (in terms of skills), but we all have to share the same load."

Laurent (CEO of a paintball company, France): "Success of the team is not on the field, but during the week, during training. Building a team is important. It is like a sauce, you need a lot of ingredients. With the best player in the world, you don't automatically have a great team. Good player is a strong personality. Five personalities working together is not easy. When you live in a community

> and you need to put a lot of your ego aside and try to live together. If everyone is working in the same direction, you can create something good."

Routinized bodily activities, ways of handling objects and moving bodies fundamentally shape the practice of paintball – not least during the gameplay itself. Paintball practice is to be understood as a sort of physical and routinized activity where team/tactic/body/mind-unities are carried out in training sessions, games and also during free-time. The player-practitioners also spend considerable time taking care of their game-equipment, including the pneumatic-paintball markers. These highly technical devices also require expertise and caution in their handling and use. After all, the practice can boil down to what you are able to do with your paintball marker:

> (Team interview, UK): "The feeling you get when you shoot someone with a pb gun! We do it for that feeling!"

Routinized mental activities, states of emotion and ways of desiring direct attention to phenomenological aspects of the paintball practice; how paintball practice is lived and experienced. In this sense, a strong driver of paintball practice is the desire of communion and camaraderie that also goes beyond team boundaries.

> Jan (Johannesburg Dynamics, South-Africa): "Pb is like rock and roll meets sports culture. Pb it is like it has a language on its own – we all come from different cultures, speak different languages, but if we come on the field we understand each other. Being with your friends, also in larger paintball community, is everything. Pb is not just what happens on the field, it starts way before. When you come from South-Africa, pb also teaches you hope. It's is about meeting people, going to events, being with your friends. There is a drive. It is also about taking in disappointments. We are like a family and everyone's got a role – like mom, dad & kids. It's in your heart. Pb is your life!"

> Ash (ECI, UK): "Just being there, being soldiers side by side, always being out there fighting for each other, helping the team further."

> Jens & Maerten (Ducks, Denmark): [Interviewer: How do you want to be perceived by other teams?] "Friendly and fair. We try not to be the bad boy team, we don't like that image, although everyone knows how to be rude on the field."

Shared motivational and end-state knowledge of this tribal practice structures around common themes, such as earning respect of others, commitment, group achievement, self-enhancement as well as winning and fighting for the team:

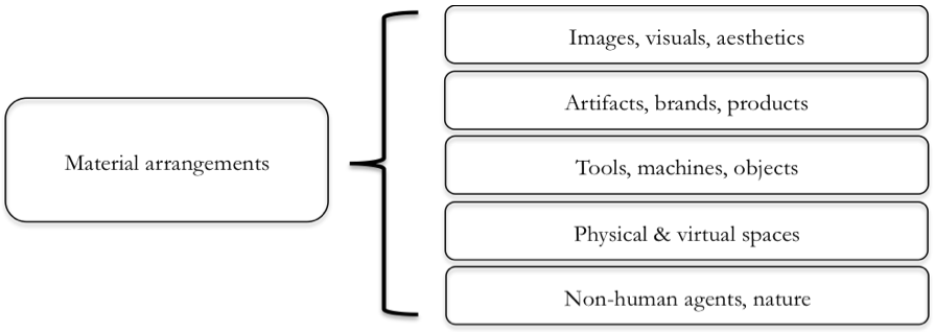
> Coach (Joy, Sweden): "It's a paradox; you need to have good social skills, motivation to train and win, and to be aggressive and, sometimes, self-centered personality. To be pro, its like 'almost denying other things; your family, education, or girlfriend. Bad ego, attitude, no practice is not good. Our motto is: be best friends, worst enemy."

> Gus (Nexus Kids, Spain): "Motivation comes from team work; you have to think team, team, team. It is like Darwinian evolution; you have to improve, go to the gym. Guys that don't make it, you got to lose them."
>
> Patrick (Cyclone, Finland): "Commitment. You need to do what you say. You need to be more than a player, you need to be part of the team. Good play is a bonus, but not most important. It's a matter of how much effort you put in the team as a whole (social level)."

The practice of paintball hence seems to revolve around a tribal logic in a metaphoric sense. The player-practitioners set out to encounter the ultimate challenge, the "jungle out there" with many dangers, by bonding with their blood/paint brothers, all brave and prepared. Within their team they feel safe and are willing to expose themselves to danger and to put to put themselves on the line for the good of the tribe. The single individual – as a bodily and mental agent – then acts as the 'carrier' of this practice. Thus, the individual is not only a carrier of patterns of bodily behavior, but also of certain routinized ways of understanding, knowing how and desiring. These conventionalized 'mental' activities of understanding, knowing and desiring are necessary elements and qualities of a practice in which the single individual participates, not qualities of the individual (Reckwitz, 2002). Schatzki (2002) also emphasizes that, in fact, practices are non-individualist phenomena. Even if individuals conduct and carry practices, the practice is not organized by individual people. However, different combinations of practice's organization elements are incorporated in the minds of individuals: the understandings, know-how, emotions and desires.

The second component of the site of the tribe is the material arrangements, depicted in Figure 2. The tribal practice of paintball is inherently embedded and mediated by an interconnected organization of material and non-human agents of a branded paintball universe which is best captured by our videographic data.

Figure 2 *Material Arrangements*



Briefly put, paintball practice can be characterized by a strong athletic and tribal aesthetic – present in tournaments, magazines, websites and numerous brands supported by equipment and apparel manufacturers. The practice is also marked with artifacts, products and tools – sometimes kin to fashion or jewelry items such as head gear, wrist bands, gloves, scarves and several add-on apparels that can be used to signal difference or status.

> (Interview with the European Director of Dye Corp.): "Nowadays, we have recognizable identities for teams and players (dress, behavior, image). Pb companies have all created their little niche allowing players to be part of the group, but stand out at the same time."

In addition, paintball parks with their game fields, on-site marketplace bazaar, sponsor companies, venues and other physical arrangements govern how the practice is performed and reproduced.

Co-evolution of the tribal marketplace: becoming and change

As demonstrated by our data, practices are by no means static. This leads us to consider a dynamic view of consumer tribes and the evolution of practices through time. As such, movement and change are continuously marking the orders and arrangements of the tribal site. This is also what Schatzki (2002, 189-190) emphasizes when asserting that "any account of the social site is inherently one of ceaseless movement and incessant rearrangement and reorganization". In this view, the central motor of constant becoming that sweeps the social site is agency; both human and non-human. The tribal site is thus to be regarded as a scene of continuously mutating orders and perpetually performed and often evolving activities. (Schatzki, 2002, 189-190.)

Our investigation of the paintball practice revealed that evolution has occurred first of all due to technological development of the sport equipment (e.g. pneumatics, rate of fire, ball velocity, increased safety of tools and gear, game field necessities, and cost-effectiveness of manufacturers). The presence of tribal companies, sponsors and brands has furthered this development throughout the years.

> (Interview with representative of Smartparts): "In 1996; everyone knew everyone. Although it was supposedly a violent sport, there were no big fights or stupidities, and camaraderie was strong. It was played in the woods, and the manager kept arrogant players down. Gradually the game changed into speedball attracting younger players. Nowadays, I see in the audience families with little kids, this is novel! [...] The firing rate is now very high – we should not exaggerate, keep it at a level that kids want to join the game, keep it down so that kids don't get hurt."

Second, the tribal practice has evolved over key changes of the nature of the sport and its accessibility and appeal for wider audiences. This dynamic refers to the professionalization, aesthetization and commercialization of the sport as well as the growth of the paintball map.

> (Interview with Chief of operations, Dye Corp. US): "I think it is a part of the learning curve, that we are a new industry. You know, we are only twenty years old and that's really young. We're in an infancy stage as a sport. But it has helped that we've had some mainstream television coverage and more acceptance worldwide, and there are more fields and people participating in the sports to help to bring that knowledge to the general consumer that paintball is a sport. And that it's not some weird, crazy renegade activity that war veterans play in the woods! Those days are gone, and we've all worked together to bring a sports aesthetics into what we are doing."

> (Interview with the European Director of Dye Corp.): "Before, when the game was played in the woods, the question was 'is he a good drinker', now the question is 'what can he bring to the team'. You don't bring in someone who does not add something."

> (Interview with CEO of Adrenaline Sports): "Now, teams are more supported because of their results and their behavior on the field. Pb is becoming now more like a traditional sport, with its heroes, and this is a good thing."

In addition, external changes have a strong effect in practice -organizations. For instance, the economic crisis has its reflection on how tribal companies operate and collaborate.

> (Interview with the Chief of operations, Dye Corp. US): "with the crisis, everyone needs to take a step back and consider how the tide can be changed – before, everyone was just making (easy) money, because of the natural growth of the sport. Now, we really need to start thinking about maintaining and growing the market."

Conclusion

Inspired by Schatzki's work, we advocate for a more practice-oriented perspective for theorizing the site of the marketplace cultures. The aim of this article was to show that the application of a consistent account of otherwise fragmented practice-oriented ideas may prove useful and bring potentially new insights into how consumer and tribal marketplace cultures are organized and transformed. In contrast to several other studies on consumer tribes (e.g. Kozinets, 2001; Cova and Cova, 2002; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001, Thompson and Troester, 2002; Cova *et al.*, 2007) our findings propose that tribal dynamics go well beyond identity, community and affection-centered insights. It should also be noted that novel practice approaches have recently re-appeared in consumer and marketing research (Schau *et al.*, 2009) signaling their attractiveness for further research.

Three general conclusions can be drawn based on our study: First, practice-oriented perspective allows us to move beyond approaches that emphasize meaning-making processes and narratives in

their analyses. Practice dynamics direct attention also into doings, sayings, understandings, skills, know-how, objects and their handling, routinized mental and bodily activities and material arrangements, all of which are inherently interconnected and fundamentally constitute the tribal practice. In this way, following Schatzki (2002), it is taken that practices underlie subjects and objects and most importantly illuminate conditions and settings for intelligible action.

Second, it is implied that practice-approach allows for the investigation of change and evolution that is surprisingly under-researched in the existing marketplace cultures literature. Additionally, the prior notable attempts (e.g. Peñaloza and Gilly, 1999; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli, 2007; Giesler, 2008) have relied heavily on dialectical and narrative based models in explaining marketplace evolution over time. In our approach it is taken that marketplace culture needs to be understood as a more complex entity, consisting of several interconnected elements including for instance aesthetics, machines, equipment and tools as well as other material elements that exert their own agency and dynamic upon market evolution but have previously been under-theorized.

Third, the analytic focus on practices frees us from specific local, spatial field sites common to ethnographic investigations. As presented by our material, the practices themselves are the ultimate site of activities. The site of inquiry is not a location but a dynamically evolving practice to which participants engage in. Thus, looking at consumer tribes from this perspective, it is necessary to conceive them not bound in a location but inherently 'translocal' in the sense that they are both transnational but local in terms of the described tribal site. In paintball, we encountered a truly transnational community of consumers unbounded by territorial or national constraints. Instead, as our informants put it, paintball was more like a common language that connects the tribe together.

Further implications include, in cohesion with Warde's (2005) argumentation, that the analytic focus on social practices can overcome some problems typical for pluralistic and postmodern descriptions of ephemeral and affection-based consumer collectives "without succumbing to relativism" (Warde, 2005). By drawing on practice theorists, we present a pluralistic but flexible picture of the constitution of tribal marketplace dynamics. We illustrate how the analytical focus on tribal 'doings and sayings' rather than on what tribes or tribal identities mean can provide useful insight into tribal marketplace cultures.

It is also implicated that practice theory challenges fundamental ideas typical of consumption theory and consumer research – most importantly the focus on individual consumers, lifestyles or consumer groups. Instead practice theory focuses on what practices are, how they come into being,

how they are reproduced, how they change and relate to each other and 'hang together' (e.g. Warde, 2005).

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