Consumer resistance: proposal for an integrative framework

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ABSTRACT

Consumer resistance has received significant attention in marketing recently. The diversity of approaches and the absence of a theoretical framework call for a conceptual synthesis that this article aims to achieve.

After defining the concept of resistance and outlining the ongoing orientations on this topic, the article emphasizes the status of the construct and the limitations of this field of research. An integrative framework then introduces the antecedents, the factors of influence and the consequences of consumer resistance, which open up a number of avenues for future research in consumer behavior.

Key words: Consumer resistance, power, firm behavior, representations, metacognition.

INTRODUCTION

At a time when relationship marketing is concerned with the components of consumer confidence and loyalty (Webster, 1992), various studies show that consumers evade or reject the products offered to them. From the standpoint of Hirschman (1970) concerning their power of expression, voice or exit, this research reveals numerous forms of resistance. While consumers occasionally voice their complaints collectively, they also resist silently, individually and sometimes permanently, behavior that is all the more harmful for companies. The reactive and adverse nature of these behaviors enables us to group them under the general heading of resistance, the term used in the studies that describe them (Peñaloza and Price, 1993; Herrmann, 1993; Fournier, 1998; Fischer, 2001). A field of research has thus built up

around the exploration, in various contexts, of the forms of resistance displayed by consumers toward companies or, more generally, against consumer society as a whole. The value of this work is not lost on marketers, who can find in it the symptoms of a critique, the nature, origin and consequences of which it is essential to understand (Fournier, Dobscha and Mick, 1998; Laufer and Paradeise, 1982). However, the fragmentation of approaches and the absence of an integrative framework currently prevent us from identifying the contours of a field of research where attempts at definition are rare.

This article has three objectives. After clarifying the concept of resistance in different disciplines, we will examine its recent use in consumer behavior. A summary of the main research and contributions on this theme will lead us to put forward a definition of the construct and its limits. Finally, an integrative framework will be used to examine the antecedents, factors of influence and consequences of consumer resistance, thus shedding light on areas for future research.

THE CONCEPT OF RESISTANCE

The verb *resist* comes from Latin *re*- "against" + *sistere* meaning "take a stand, stand firm". The term contains the idea of opposition, which can be expressed passively (by not giving in or changing, by enduring) or actively through combat, struggle or rebellion. The term "resistance" also encompasses a broad semantic field and designates both a physical phenomenon and a human act of opposition. We will first analyze the nature of the concept, and then consider the conditions needed for its manifestation.

Resistance: a manifestation of opposition and/or an individual characteristic

Resistance refers to two notions: a manifestation of opposition in a situation perceived as oppressive and a variable propensity to oppose. The first sense implies

situational resistance, i.e., a variously active or reactive response of an individual to perceived pressure, while the second implies dispositional resistance i.e., a physical aptitude or psychological tendency to react. Use of the term in various disciplines provides support for these two conceptions.

Situational resistance is studied in historiography (historical struggles against occupation forces), political science and sociology (as a reaction to power) as well as in management (resistance to change) and marketing (resistance to innovation and persuasion). *A contrario* in physics or medicine, it is the properties and stability of bodies, studied in various conditions that indicate their resistance. In the social sciences, the dispositional aspect of resistance seems to be absent. Indeed, this aspect would imply studying *in abstracto* the capacity of individuals to resist. However, due to its structured and socialized nature, it would be difficult to distinguish purely innate elements from reactivity acquired within the sphere of human interactions.

A response to dissonant representations of a situation

In the social sciences, resistance requires the simultaneous presence of three conditions: that a force is exerted on the subject, that the subject perceives this force, and that he seeks to cancel its effect. The first point refers to the sociological conception of social interactions, which link power and resistance in a coextensive manner (Weber, 1922/1971; Dahl, 1957; Giddens, 1987; Foucault, 1975). This is what Foucault (1982, p. 1056) defines as a mode of acting upon the actions of others – power – implies, simultaneously and potentially, the "insubordination" of a free subject.

Resistance originates both in a perception – one cannot resist what is not perceived – and in a conflict – one does not resist if one submits. The perception of dissonant elements in a situation is a key determinant. Indeed, a force exerted on an individual is a stimulus that he categorizes according to his representations (Gallen, 2005). Resistance appears when the characteristics of the stimulus – its source, content or objectives – clash with pre-established representations, and all the more so if these representations are stable (Ram and Sheth, 1989). There are many illustrations of this point in work devoted to relations

within distribution channels (Pras, 1991; Lapassouse, 1989), to the adoption of innovations (Ram, 1987; Ram and Sheth, 1989; Nabih, Bloem and Poeisz, 1997) and to reactions to change (La Ville and Mounoud, 2004; Perret, 1996). In these contexts, resistance expresses the impossibility of accepting and appropriating "frame" that has been negatively evaluated (Chreim, 2006). The opposite of resistance is situated, therefore, in the realm of non-perception, or if the situation is perceived, in assent, agreement or collaboration.

Apart from cognitive elements, emotional reactions can influence the response process. Bagozzi and Lee (1999) indicate that rejection of an innovation results, in part, from the evaluation of a product's new features and the anticipated consequences of its adoption, but also the negative emotions involved. Individual variables therefore moderate the subject's reaction. It has been shown, for example, that resistance to change among certain employees is caused by their perceived incapacity to adapt to targets set by management (Chreim, 2006). Similarly, not everyone took part in the Resistance during the occupation of France. On this point, historians underline the difficulty of defining resistance solely on the basis of an inventory of practices (Marcot, 1997). In view of the variety of acts and gestures carried out, from the mundane to the heroic, deciding whether or not an act counts as resistance has led them to specify an "intentionality" criterion for the actors. They have suggested using this term to examine the degree of people's awareness of their commitment to a type of action. To count as resistance, behaviors must be determined upstream by a specific will to act, triggered by the existence of internal conflicts.

To sum up, the study of resistance in different disciplines shows that it is the result of a state of opposition – leading to a variety of responses – to a force exerted and perceived as unacceptable due to the dissonant representations and negative emotions it produces in the subject.

CONSUMER RESISTANCE: AN EMERGING CONCEPT

The term "consumer resistance" was first used in the marketing literature (Peñaloza and Price, 1993) only around fifteen years ago. This indicates that it is an emerging trend, despite debates dating from the 1960s in philosophy and critical sociology on the consumer society, consumerism and the role of marketing (Barthes, 1957; Habermas, 1978; Packard, 1958; Baudrillard, 1970; Cochoy, 1999). By defining it as a modern form of sophistics and initiating discussion of its operation, effects and legitimacy, the work of Laufer (1993) and Laufer and Paradeise (1982) remain from this standpoint a remarkable exception in France.

Despite the emergence of the theme, very few definitions have been produced, even though numerous works seem to be linked to it (*cf*. Table 1). We will comment on the main studies here, indicating their contributions and current research orientations, as well as the problems they raise.

Approaches centered on behaviors

Consumer resistance was first discussed in an article by Peñaloza and Price (1993), which took up the following definition by Poster (1992, p. 1): "the way in which individuals or groups practice a strategy of appropriation in response to structures of domination". Four axes of analysis were proposed: collective or individual; reformist or radical; against offers or against signs conveyed by firms; internal or external to marketing institutions. This perspective covers a wide spectrum of manifestations. Along with collective movements that have been widely studied, such as boycotts (Friedman, 1985, 1999), the authors suggest including other individual, presumably resistant behaviors – complaints, negative word of mouth, and exit – as well as alternative and creative uses of products.

This definition, in fact, gives rise to a triple problem. It is marked by a specific, critical representation that researchers attribute to the market, without defining a "structure of domination". Apart from the

Table 1. – Summary of marketing research on consumer resistance

Authors	Method and context	Principal contributions
Definitions and integrative frameworks		
Peñaloza and Price (1993)	Conceptual framework	Proposition of an integrative framework of resistance according to four behavioral dimensions: individual/collective, reformist/radical, products/signs, internal or external position. Principle of recursive interaction between consumers and the market and discussion of the exteriority of individuals.
Herrmann (1993)	Review of the literature	Analysis of two tactics of resistance according to the Hirschman's *voice/exit* typology (1970): boycotts (voice) and consumer movements and organizations (exit).
Gabriel and Lang (1995)	Conceptual framework and review of the literature	Proposed approach to resistance based on twos dimensions: rebellion (reactive and ephemeral) and activism (articulated and militant).
Fournier (1998)	Conceptual framework	Proposed continuum of acts of resistance, from avoidance to hostile action.
Marsden (2001)	Conceptual framework	Proposition of a post-structuralist integrative framework of marketing and its techniques as a power structure.
Targeted resistance: against the signs, discourse, strategies and behaviors of firms		
Kozinets and Handelman (1998)	Netnography Boycotters via the Internet	Identification of the self-expressive and moral dimension in the commitment of boycotters to their actions.
Handelman (1999)	Review of the literature *The Media Foundation*	Analysis of the *Media Foundation* project from the standpoint of critical theory (importance of consumer emancipation and media awareness).
Kates and Belk (2001)	Ethnographic study *Lesbian and Gay Pride*	Analysis of resistance *through* consumption and *to* consumption in homosexual communities.
Holt (2002)	Qualitative phenomenological study of 5 marginal Americans	Exploration of two forms of individual resistance: reflexive and creative. Identification of the constructed and recursive character of resistance. Discussion of the role and strategy of brands from the standpoint of defiance/re-appropriation.
Rumbo (2002)	Review of the literature and documentary *Adbusters*	Analysis of discourse and ideology of the *Adbusters* movement and the recuperation by marketing of the anti-advertising arguments it defends.
Moisio and Askegaard (2002)	Participatory observation of 23 Finnish cell phone users	Exploration of individual attitudes toward cell phones: perceptions, behaviors, decoding of the meaning assigned to the object and alternative uses of the product.
Duke (2002)	Longitudinal study of 16 young Afro-Americans, readers of women's magazines	Analysis of perceptions and resistance to the white female models presented in magazines. Demonstration of the absence of identification with the dominant model.
Giesler and Pohlmann (2003) ; Giesler (2006)	Netnography Napster community	Exploration of the online music exchange community and its opposition to the music industry.
Thompson (2004)	Qualitative study Female consumers of alternative medicine	Proposed dialogical interpretation of marketplace "mythologies" spread by advertising and the way consumers appropriate them.
Kirmani and Campbell (2004)	Qualitative approach Interpersonal persuasion (salesmen/contact persons)	Identification of two types of response (cooperative *vs.* vigilant) and their means of expression. Resistance is only one of the forms, characterized by a firm refusal of any attempt at influence.
Dalli, Gistri and Romani (2005)	Qualitative study Brand rejection	Exploration of three dimensions of brand rejection: the operational features of the product, the symbolic feature of the product and the ethics of the firm.
Hemetsberger (2006)	Netnography Open source software movement	Exploration of the discourse and practice of opposition to the Microsoft monopoly. Importance of the inclusion/exclusion dialectic and ideology of the movement.
Roux (2008)	Qualitative approach Perceptions of telesales by 24 respondents	Analysis of metacognition and response strategies of individuals exposed to telesales episodes. Identification of the construction process behind cognitions.

Table 1. – Summary of marketing research on consumer resistance (next)

Global resistance to marketplace practices and tactics		
Dobscha (1998) Dobscha and Ozanne (2001)	Qualitative phenomenological study of 9 American eco-feminists	Exploration of attitudes and behaviors of resistance to the marketplace. Identification of skepticism toward marketing strategies and various practices of recycling, second-hand purchases, conservation of resources.
Dobré (1999)	Empirical study Everyday ecological practices	Sociological approach to everyday consumer resistance through everyday practices such as voluntary simplicity.
Kozinets (2002)	Ethnographic study *Burning Man*	Exploration of the militant dimension, but also the fleeting nature of the event and the role of donations.
Zavestoski (2002)	Empirical study of 179 disciples of voluntary simplicity and 111 students	Analysis of anti-consumption attitudes. Identification of the reflexive and identification dimensions of the process and a sentiment of inauthenticity perceived through consumption
Shaw and Newholm (2002)	Qualitative study of "ethical" consumers	Exploration of the ethical motivations of certain British consumers and the ways they have reorganized their consumption (green consumerism, vegetarianism, purchase of used goods).
Shepherd (2002)	Ethnographic study Anarcho-environmentalists	Exploration of behaviors and representations among members of a militant group of ecologists: importance of asceticism and ethics.
Kozinets and Handelman (2004)	Qualitative and netnographic approach Militant groups: anti-brand, anti-advertising, anti-GMO	Study of discourses and representations among members of activist groups. Importance of the evangelical vision underlying the need for raising awareness among passive and even adversarial consumers.
Roux (2007)	Qualitative phenomenological study of eight ordinary critical consumers	Exploration of motives behind opposition toward offers and discourses of firms and sales techniques. Identification of a constructed and progressive process of resistance to the marketplace.
Measurement of resistance		
Austin, Plouffe and Peter (2005)	Development of a measurement scale for "Anti-commercial Consumer Rebellion"	Approach based on the determinants of rebellion: artifice, avoidance, cynicism and manipulation (four factors and 20 items). Final model tested with two consequences: materialism and the need for uniqueness. Indices reported. No convergent and discriminant validity test.

practices of firms, it does not consider other determinants. Finally, it remains focused on ways of resisting (Certeau, 1990), without showing the reactive dimension or its constructed and interactive nature.

Later, Fournier (1998, p. 89) put forward the hypothesis that resistance is expressed according to a "continuum" of adverse behaviors and activities, the spectrum of actions ranging from avoidance of certain brands or products to intermediate behaviors such as adjusting or reducing consumption and more aggressive actions directed at firms – boycotts, complaints and defections. This approach implies that the manifestations mentioned above have the same nature and differ only in their intensity, a principle that deserves to be called into question. It also remains centered on behaviors without really specifying the causes underlying them.

Taking up the approach of investigating resistance through its manifestations, Ritson and Dobscha (1999) defended the idea that these behaviors could be more than simply sanctions on firms and could be expressed more broadly through anti-consumerism and market exit. Boycotts or the refusal to purchase certain products and brands would therefore be only minimal forms of opposition compared to a more massive rebellion against the consumer society. This is also the standpoint adopted by Herrmann (1993), who distinguishes expressive actions – among which boycotts are a prototype form – from behaviors that involve market exit through the deployment of alternative networks of consumer exchanges. However, the variety and scope of possible manifestations of resistance raise the question of the criteria used to describe it. Examining motivational triggers, in particular detecting the presence of dissonant elements in sales situations, enables the authors discussed below to provide some answers.

Opposition linked to corporate behaviors
and marketplace practices

To take account of the reactive character of resistance, it is important to understand the factors likely to trigger it. Moisio and Askegaard (2002) suggest three such factors: market conditions that are deemed unacceptable; products or brands that do not conform to the consumer's self image; and dominant cultural values that are rejected due to their hegemonic nature. This typology, which is not based on any theoretical framework, produces, in our opinion, a view based on artificial distinctions, due to the fact that some of these causes, especially the last two, overlap. Therefore, studies on distinction and the negative self (Bourdieu, 1979; Englis and Solomon, 1997; Wilk, 1997; Banister and Hogg, 2001) emphasize that the symbolic choice (or non-choice) of products is not independent of opposition to cultural codes disseminated by certain groups. As Bourdieu points out (1979), tastes are above all distastes for the tastes of others, from which there is "a distance to be maintained" (p. 61). Thompson and Arsel (2004) also show that brands are rejected because they are emblems of a mass culture with which certain consumers do not identify. Along the same lines, Gabriel and Lang (1995) reserve the term "consumer rebellion" for symbolic, expressive and sometimes deviant forms of resistance that they contrast with ethical and militant activism, which is more focused on questions of responsible consumption. While the work of these authors overlaps in some areas, the absence of a definition and an appropriate analytical framework makes it difficult to define the limits of the field.

Kates and Belk (2001) have made an important contribution by arguing that consumer resistance should be limited to resistance to consumption and not resistance through consumption. Indeed, conflicts between certain social structures can cause specific products to be used as expressions of defiance, without involving consumer resistance. Numerous groups practice forms of opposition – punks (Hebdige, 1979), bikers (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), juvenile delinquents (Ozanne, Hill and Wright, 1998) and other sub-cultures (Fiske, 1989; Sitz and Amine, 2004; Sitz, 2006) – which, although bound by objects to which they sometimes assign a new meaning, are not communities of militant consumers. On the contrary, most use consumption as a way to assert their identity without challenging the system itself. Working from this distinction, which is essential for defining the scope of the field, we can speak of "consumer resistance" only if the resulting behaviors, whatever their form (opposition, avoidance, defection), target consumption and/or one its promoters.

From this point of view, our review of the literature is organized around two main themes (*cf.* Table 1): on the one hand, we have the practices of firms (the product offerings, signs, discourse and tactics they deploy) and, on the other hand, marketplace practices based on economic, social and environmental principles.

The first theme concerns targeted resistance with clearly defined goals – firms or subsidiaries (Kozinets and Handelman, 1998; Hemetsberger, 2006; Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003; Giesler, 2006), brands (Klein, 2001; Holt, 2002; Dalli, Gistri and Romani, 2005), products and signs (Moisio and Askegaard, 2002; Duke, 2002), as well as marketing techniques such as advertising (Handelman, 1999; Rumbo, 2002) or sales (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004). Manifestations of collective resistance, particularly boycotts, have been most frequently discussed because they are highly visible and easily identified (Friedman, 1985, 1999). More recently, community groups (Muniz and Schau, 2005) and the emergence of alternative and militant consumer networks on the Internet have been the subject of new research (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003; Giesler, 2006; Hemetsberger, 2006). On the other hand, forms of individual resistance, which are fleeting and often silent, have been the subject of only a few studies which tend, above all, to highlight consumer inertia. Thus, the young African-Americans studied by Duke (2002) spurn the tenets of fashion presented in magazines because they cannot identify with white models. Similarly, the cell phone owners observed by Moisio and Askegaard (2002) do not conform to the supposed mobility attributed to the product, treating it as a fixed object. Apart from ethnographic approaches, other forms of individual resistance have been studied in specific situational contexts of influence such as sales (De Carlo, 2005; Campbell and Kirmani, 2000) or films (Russell and Russell, 2006).

The second area of research examines the forms of resistance to marketplace practices, which are expressed occasionally through anti-consumerism

events such as *Burning Man* (Kozinets, 2002) or by more lasting changes in consumer habits. From this point of view, "voluntary simplicity" (Elgin, 1981; Leonard-Barton, 1981) and ecological militancy are examples of significant modifications in consumption (Dobscha, 1998; Dobré, 1999; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001; Shepherd, 2002; Zavestoski, 2002; Shaw and Newholm, 2002; Micheletti, 2003; Rémy, 2007). Work on political consumerism also shows that today product choices are more strongly influenced by prior information and consumers' attitudes toward the firms manufacturing the products and the ethics of their practices (Micheletti, 2003; Chessel and Cochoy, 2004).

An integrative framework organized around a system of market representations

As we have emphasized above, analysis of resistance tends to be based on a system of representations that influences practices (Sitz, 2007). One of the major difficulties in positioning work in this area to date stems partly from the ideological presuppositions that support certain approaches and underlie their arguments. Until the development of a third, more recent approach offering an interactionist analysis, two types of conceptualization confronted each other in relation to the real or supposed freedom of the consumer:

– Marxian approaches inspired by the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno, 1944/1974) and critical sociology (Baudrillard, 1970; Habermas, 1978) assign a dominant and oppressive role to the market. Consumer resistance is seen as both combative and necessary (Rudmin and Richins, 1992; Murray and Ozanne, 1991; Hetrick and Lozada, 1994; Murray, Ozanne and Shapiro, 1994),

– Postmodern approaches, on the contrary, see in the fragmentation of society the multiplication of openings for individual freedom and the growing impossibility of firms to control them. Consumption offers numerous opportunities for emancipation (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), that can be witnessed in alternative and creative uses of products and self-expression instead of struggle (Thomson, 2004; Thomson and Troester, 2002).

More recently, Holt (2002) has suggested closing the debate on the superiority of an axiological sys-

tem, in favor of an interactive and recursive analysis of marketplace relations. Between "reflexive resistance" inherited from the Frankfurt School and "creative resistance" inspired by postmodernism, the consumer creates his identity in a more or less critical way, within a market that responds, as adequately as possible, to the behaviors observed (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999; Kozinets et al., 2004). Using a conception close to post-structuralism which places resistance in a necessarily dialogical relation with power (Foucault, 1982; Marsden, 2001), Holt also argues against the idea of a dominant position of one of the actors and the possible exteriority of the consumer to the market suggested by Ritson and Dobscha (1999). Using notions of strategy and tactics (Certeau, 1990), these authors propose considering exit by the consumer as a strategic form of resistance (he escapes from the market to his own space), in contrast to tactical forms of opposition to firms (on their own ground, i.e., the market). Holt (2002), along with Fischer (2001), Fiske (1989), Thompson (2004) and Arnould (2007), see resistance only as a series of dialogical relations within a market, not outside it. The individual is inherently the result of a structuring of *habitus*, practices and values strongly influenced by culture, including consumer culture, which he cannot shed (Bourdieu, 1979; Thompson and Hirschman, 1995).

A field dominated by qualitative approaches and the absence of measurement tools

Most work conducted on consumer resistance has privileged qualitative, ethnographic, phenomenological or interpretive approaches that, while providing a profound understanding of certain manifestations, are limited in three ways. First, the observation of certain consumer situations does not enable the findings to be generalized to the concept of resistance, when, moreover, it is only one aspect of the context in question (Thompson and Haytko, 1997; Thompson and Troester, 2002; Thompson and Arsel, 2004). Second, these studies remain focused on a behavioral approach to resistance. To presuppose, as in the example of Moisio and Askegaard (2002), that there are oppressive forces behind the behaviors observed can thus lead to overinterpretation if nothing supports the link between the manifestations and their

determinants (Lahire, 2005). Generally speaking, due to the ideological positions described earlier, these studies tend to construct what Latour and Woolgar (1996) consider to be tautologies. Consumers are described as resisting (or, conversely, emancipated) because they are presumed to be so from the outset, hence the debate as to their freedom (versus resistance) remains circular (Arnould, 2007).

Finally, like the contexts used in the study of persuasion, this approach has a high risk of constructing artifacts (Herbert, 2005). Indeed, the researcher's questioning is capable of modifying the inferential and interpretive activities of the subjects and influencing their behaviors, depending on the intentions and purpose underlying the questions. The quality of the information collected also depends on the difficulty involved in expressing verbally behaviors that are not easily objectified or categorized socially – what does the term resistance mean in everyday language for the consumer? – or of which the subject is only partially aware (Lahire, 2005; Wilk, 1997).

Apart from ethnographic and qualitative approaches, only one research study has so far suggested a way of measuring resistance or more precisely "anti-commercial consumer rebellion" (Austin, Plouffe and Peter, 2005). Defined as "open and avowed resistance to institutionalized marketing practices" (p. 62), it is presented, based on a review of the literature, as a multidimensional construct with four factors: artifice (trickery or deceit), avoidance, cynicism and manipulation. Although the goodness of fit index of the confirmatory model of this 20-item scale is correct, the conceptualization raises serious problems. At a theoretical level, the status of the construct has not been defined. In terms of content, it incorporates situational antecedents (artifice and manipulation), individual characteristics (cynicism) and consequences (avoidance). The situational antecedents – artifice and manipulation – seem very close in meaning and no information is given on the correlation of these factors. Nor is any measure provided for the discriminant validity of the scale, particularly in relation to cynicism. It therefore seems possible to make new proposals to improve the approach and the definition of the concept of consumer resistance.

PROPOSED DEFINITION OF THE CONSTRUCT

In the light of what we have seen earlier, it seems that resistance, due to its multiple meanings, allows for several possible theoretical frameworks. We propose to examine, and justify, the elements that enable us to specify the different statuses of the construct, to define the limits of the field and then to propose a definition.

Polysemy and theoretical statuses of the construct

As demonstrated in the previous sections, resistance is a term that encompasses several meanings. It can, on the one hand, be viewed as an individual propensity to oppose, and on the other, as a specific response triggered by the dissonant elements of a situation. A preliminary source of confusion can be avoided by reserving the term *consumer resistance* for its situational dimension and distinguishing it from *propensity to resist*, which is a possible individual tendency to oppose.

For a given situation, the concept of resistance being used should also be specified. In regard to persuasion, Knowles and Linn (2004, p. 5) observe that the concept of resistance is based on a dual dimension involving a result – not being affected by pressure to change – and a "motivational state" – described as the "motivation to oppose and counter pressures to change". However, the authors emphasize the difficulties caused by using the same term to describe different states. Since the term resistance has this double meaning, and therefore introduces conceptual ambiguity, we suggest using a semantic distinction to clarify matters. We will therefore distinguish between the *motivational state* of resistance and the *manifestations* produced. *Manifestations of resistance* will be defined as forms of negative responses that the consumer uses in response to marketplace practices and corporate behaviors that he considers unacceptable, while the *motivational state of resistance* will enable us to describe the internal condition prior to the mobilization of energy that leads to opposition. This motivational state corresponds to what Brehm (1999) describes as a "state of activation" that

impels the individual to act and indicates the direction of his action. Similarly, Gray (2002, p. 185) defines the "motivational state" as "an internal, reversible condition in an individual that orients the individual toward one or another type of goal" in relation to a need. According to Brehm (1999, p. 3), the "motivational state" is itself distinguished from motivation by its imperious nature, leading to action by the individual, while motivation can be an energy in the background that is present to a greater or lesser extent depending on the intensity of the need. If motivation describes the "internal and/or external forces that produce the initiation, direction, intensity, and persistence of behavior" (Vallerand and Thill, 1993, p. 12), the "motivational state" refers more specifically to the particular conditions of tension that the individual seeks to reduce through his action. Despite the fact that studies do not always make a distinction between motivation and motivational state, the two concepts both refer to "a state of the organism and not the behavior itself" (Newcomb, Turner and Converse, 1970, p. 35), and this point confirms the idea of a distinction, that we believe to be useful, between manifestations and the motivational state of resistance. To illustrate more concretely these conceptual distinctions, which are summarized in Table 2, let us take the example of an individual who receives a phone call at home in the evening from a telesales service. Disturbed during dinner, he is quickly annoyed by the standardized discourse of the salesman about the advantages of a new telephone service. A feeling of irritation is generated because he does not feel the need to change his phone company, he does not agree with the salesman's arguments and his impatience grows at the thought that, because of the phone call, he is missing the documentary on TV. This internal tension corresponds to a *motivational state of resistance*. This predisposes him to react and is soon translated into action: the formulation of a firm and polite apology that enables him to hang up quickly, or a *manifestation of resistance*.

In addition to its analysis in a specific situation, the concept of resistance has a cumulative character that must be underlined. Studies of consumer "metacognition" (Friestad and Wright, 1994) demonstrate, in fact, that individuals think about the acquisition processes with which they are familiar, including those related to marketing. This "marketplace metacognition" (Wright, 2002) is the result of accumulated experiences that are memorized in the form of representations and ideas about the systems of persuasion used by firms. We can assume that consumer resistance, triggered by a situation or series of situations, results over time in *cumulative resistance*. *Cumulative resistance* is produced by a set of negative cognitions and emotions that become encoded through the repetition of marketplace situations containing elements that can potentially trigger resistance. If we look at the previous example, the individual who is frequently called by telesales services is likely to develop cumulative resistance to this type of approach, eventually viewing as it undesirable (Roux, 2008).

Table 2. – Definitions of the principle constructs

Nature of the construct	Definition
Propensity for resistance	*Stable individual tendency of the consumer* to oppose perceived forms of pressure of influence.
Motivational state of resistance	*Internal state* that drives the individual to reduce the tension experienced in a situation involving commercial pressure, influence, practices, strategies or discourse perceived as dissonant.
Manifestations of resistance	*Forms of variable oppositional responses* to situations involving pressure or influence in which commercial pressure, influence, practices, strategies or discourse are perceived as dissonant.
Cumulative resistance	*Global set of negative cognitions and emotions* encoded, over time, by the consumer concerning past episodes of resistance.

As well as the various aspects of the construct summarized in Table 2, consumer resistance must also be distinguished from other variables, which are central in influence contexts and appear similar to it. We will indicate what we believe they are *not*, both from a theoretical and conceptual standpoint, by comparing them with four variables: strength of attitude, coping, resistance to persuasion and reactance. As in resistance, the first two variables concern situations that destabilize attitudes, while the last two occur in more specific contexts of influence, the differences among which we shall examine in terms of content.

Resistance and other variables related to situations that destabilize attitude

While it cannot be assimilated to the evaluative components of attitude or the predisposition to behave in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), resistance can sometimes be related to its non-evaluative component: strength of attitude. Despite the diversity of conceptualizations and the absence of a single definition (Bressoud, 2002), this concept reflects the quality of the evaluation of a given object, and not the valence or nature of the evaluation. Apprehended via its consequences, the properties of strength of attitude are often reduced to three main characteristics: stability over time, impact on thought and behaviors, and resistance to change (Krosnick and Petty, 1995). In experiments involving the manipulation of counter-persuasive arguments, the invariance of judgments before and after are proof of a phenomenon described by the authors as resistance, and therefore constitutes the principal manifestation of strength of attitude (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Blankenship and Craig, 2006; Simon, 2002; Bressoud, 2002). It demonstrates the passive and inert dimension of reactions to attempts to influence. Certain authors also designate this variable as the central tendency in emotional or psychological commitment, upstream of loyalty (Pritchard, Havitz and Howard, 1999; Bodet, 2006). Throughout this research, resistance concerns attitude and not the individual. These two concepts differ, therefore, in their object of study, and do not cover the same field of definition.

Coping is a form of adjustment to a situation that should also be mentioned in relation to resistance. Defined as constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts that individuals use "to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), *coping* is above all a strategy used to adapt to stress (Costa, Somerfield and McRae, 1996; Terry, 1994). Research on consumer resistance does not refer to the stressful nature of the situation (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004). This nuance distinguishes studies devoted to coping from those that concern consumer resistance. However, certain authors (Friestad and Wright, 1994; Wright, 2002) use the term coping, in its broad sense, to refer to an adjustment strategy. Kirmani and Campbell (2004), for example, explicitly refer to resistance as a means of defense that consumers use to counter persuasive techniques employed by sales staff without, in fact, mentioning the notion of stress in the context of these relations.

Resistance in the context of specific situations: persuasion and loss of freedom

Defining the conceptual specificity of consumer resistance also implies examining what differentiates it from resistance to persuasion and reactance.

Numerous studies have been conducted on resistance to persuasion and are summed up in certain syntheses (Petty, Tormala and Rucker, 2004). Focused for the most part on the study of a particular influence technique – advertising and, less frequently, sales (Campbell and Kirmani, 2000; De Carlo, 2005) – these studies differ, in their subject matter, from those devoted to consumer resistance. Consumer resistance can indeed be provoked by practices and discourses deemed unethical – social or environmental conditions of production, for example – other than advertising and sales. Generally speaking, with only a few exceptions using an approach of representations in terms of persuasion (Friestad and Wright, 1994; Campbell and Kirmani, 2000; De Carlo, 2005), research on this theme has been more concerned with argumentation mechanisms, the contents of messages, and the effects on attitudes, intentions and behaviors rather than the conflicts in representations generated by these tactics, which seem, in fact, to be central to consumer resistance.

Among influence mechanisms, reactance is also a variable that is very close to resistance in terms of content. Defined as "a motivational state that is aimed at restoring a threatened or eliminated freedom" (Brehm and Brehm, 1981, p. 37), it is an effort to regain freedom of choice or options of which the consumer feels he has been deprived. This is sometimes viewed as a trait (Brehm and Brehm, 1981), thus supporting the hypothesis of a powerful need for freedom on the part of the individual (Shen and Dillard, 2005). Whether considered a trait or motivational state, reactance leads the individual either to avoid what he perceives as an attempt to reduce his choices or to desire even more strongly the option he feels he has lost (Brehm, 1966, 1989). However, four characteristics enable us to distinguish reactance from resistance: 1) the central motive for reactance is the threat a situation represents for the individual's options, while resistance can be caused by other determinants; 2) reactance does not involve a deliberation process concerning the instigator or source of the action, which is a central point for resistance (Clee and Wicklund, 1980); 3) reactance requires the prior existence of a sense of freedom that is important for the individual, which is not necessarily the case for resistance; 4) while one of the effects of reactance is to render desirable the option that the consumer feels he has lost, this is not necessarily the case for resistance, where the first consequence is to oppose perceived pressure. Therefore, while reactance and resistance are both states of opposition in situations of influence, they are not similar concepts. Resistance includes a dimension of judgment concerning the instigator of the attempt at influence and the tactics he uses, which is not determinant for reactance (Clee and Wicklund, 1980). As the concept of metacognition mentioned earlier suggests (Friestad and Wright, 1994), consumer resistance requires awareness on the part of the individual, an apprenticeship of marketplace relations and acquisition of practical skills, in order to evaluate situations of influence and the pressures exerted on him. The existence of potentially cumulative cognitions and emotions encoded by the consumer makes resistance a concept that is distinct from reactance.

On the basis of the different theoretical and empirical elements presented, we can consider consumer resistance as a *motivational state* leading to variable *manifestations* of opposition and which is triggered by certain factors linked to corporate behaviors and marketplace practices. This proposition is supported by the choice of an interactionist integrative framework to analyze the power firms can exert exclusively through legitimation strategies (Bourgeois and Nizet, 1995). Faced with consumers who are mobile and free, firms are indeed forced to deploy strategies that aim to rally support through the content of decisions offered and the manner of presenting these decisions and by presenting themselves as qualified partners in these exchanges. These strategies are supported by systems – discursive or practical – and representations capable of causing resistance (Thompson, 2004; Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Indeed, our review of the literature shows that by refusing certain codes perceived as imposed, by trying to escape from "capture devices" (Cochoy, 2004) and by refusing to respond to encouragements to buy, the consumer seems to struggle to defend values that he feels are threatened by the marketplace – freedom of choice, freedom to make autonomous decisions, and responsibility for the future (Jonas, 1990; Marion, 2003, 2004; Roux, 2007). In this context, resistance seems to be a phenomenon designed to foil attempts at influence exerted through discourse, actions and arguments that are perceived as dissonant.

To conclude, and bearing in mind that resistance depends on specific situational determinants that trigger in the consumer an evaluative process and negative emotional reactions (Damasio, 2001), we propose to characterize it as (1) a *motivational state* that causes opposition to marketplace practices, strategies or discourse perceived as dissonant and leads to (2) types of responses triggered – *manifestations of resistance* – by this state of opposition to marketplace practices, strategies or discourse perceived as dissonant. The hypothesis of *cumulative resistance* will be used to characterize the overall negative cognitions and emotions encoded by the consumer, over time, concerning marketplace practices, strategies or discourse perceived as dissonant.

PROPOSAL FOR AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK
AND AVENUES FOR RESEARCH

In this section, we will specify avenues of theoretical research based on the concept of resistance. We will then outline the antecedents, factors of influence and possible consequences.

Theoretical research on the concept of resistance, propensity to resist and cumulative resistance

Studies have widely illustrated resistance from the standpoint of its manifestations, all the more so in that they are easily observed and identified. To date, no research has been undertaken to analyze, upstream, the prior motivational state. As with the concepts of commitment or reactance, studying a motivational state is difficult due to its intrinsically non-observable nature and the difficulty of gaining access to the experience itself. In regard to reactance, Lessne and Venkatesan (1989) show that self-reported measurements by individuals on the perception of loss of freedom are inherently questionable, but it is also very difficult to infer, from the behaviors observed, that reactance is the only cause. Difficulties accessing a motivational state also stem from the fact that it is much easier to obtain a verbalization of the cognitive elements of an experience than to capture the emotional charge accompanying it, which the subject is not necessarily aware of. Theoretical extensions are required to specify the way the concept of a motivational state of resistance must be approached, while taking into account these cognitive and emotional dimensions.

In regard to the propensity to resist, further work is required, particularly at a qualitative level, to define the concept and distinguish it from other similar constructs such as reactance. While this individual characteristic can manifest itself in many situations of daily life in which pressure is exerted, it is important to delimit it and to develop an appropriate measurement tool for marketplace relations.

Finally, the concept of cumulative resistance must also be deepened, since it is not necessarily triggered by an isolated technique or action but by a chain of events perceived in a holistic, extended and cumulative manner. Longitudinal approaches could serve to enrich the understanding of the process, despite difficulties linked to the control of conditions over time and a prolonged commitment for the researcher. For example, the behaviors adopted by the American eco-feminists analyzed by Dobscha (1998) were the subject of a two-year study, punctuated by three interview sessions. Keeping journals over a relatively long period of time could also enable evolving and gradually sedimented material to be collected. This approach was adopted by Kirmani and Campbell (2004) to capture representations of persuasive episodes using a different technique than periodic interviews.

The antecedents of resistance

The triggers of consumer resistance must be sought in the perception of dissonant acts, procedures or arguments. Forced to resort to legitimation strategies, firms implement systems of influence that are perceived – or fail to be perceived – by consumers. The approach to resistance through metacognition therefore opens an important avenue of research for understanding both its reactive nature and its construction over time (Friestad and Wright, 1994). While an individual's thoughts on general subjects are considered "primary thoughts", metacognition refers to thoughts "that occur at a second level which involve reflections on the first-level thoughts" (Petty et al., 2007). From this standpoint, "marketplace metacognition" refers to "people's beliefs about their own and others' mental states and processes and their beliefs about other people's beliefs on those topics as these beliefs pertain to the specific domain of marketplace cooperation and manipulation" (Wright, 2002, p. 677). The variability of these cognitive patterns is linked to the development of individuals. They depend on their environment, culture and successive acquisitions made in terms of persuasion in the course of social interactions in the private sphere or marketplace.

In resistance, the consumer perceives the elements within a form of influence as dissonant and contrary to his beliefs. According to Friestad and Wright (1994), these dissonances can originate in the discrepancy between his representations of the situa-

tion and acquired moral principles, but also behaviors the subject deems ethically unacceptable when he sees himself as an "influencer". In order for him to recognize and resist the strategies used by firms, he must, however, have already classified them as capable of affecting him. In other words, they have no influence unless a connection is made between the situation and the characteristics that he is predisposed to notice because he has prior knowledge of their nature and effects. Therefore, his own defense mechanisms come into play in resistance to the tactics deployed. Their effectiveness – and the vulnerability they produce – is evaluated by the consumer on the basis of the emotional intensity he attributes to them (Friestad and Wright, 1994). Even though existing literature on consumer resistance does not clearly illustrate the role and place of emotions, studies on metacognition nevertheless suggest examining in depth the effects of emotional states in resistance situations, as well as the way they are encoded, with the aim of studying cumulative resistance. Except for the studies on brands by Romani, Grappi and Dalli (2007) and of Dalli, Romani and Gistri (2005), there are few theoretical contributions for understanding, in particular, which emotions come into play – anger, fear, disdain, sorrow, disgust – in triggering resistance. The progressive incorporation of cognitions and emotions contributes, over time, to sustaining pre-established patterns of activity. The consumer

becomes capable of mobilizing "tactic recognition heuristics" that enable him to evaluate situations, even in the absence of precise knowledge concerning the instigator or subject of the message (Friestad and Wright, 1994). In regard to this point, the authors underline, the importance of inferences in the construction of metacognition. Negative judgments on a firm's ability to communicate are likely to contaminate other perceptions, such as its interpersonal skills or the quality of its products and services. It therefore seems essential to explore the way these processes trigger states of resistance, according to the significance they are assigned.

Individual factors influencing consumer resistance

Several individual factors can be identified in the literature and are capable of influencing consumer resistance, depending on the perception of situations and marketplace relations. They act as moderating variables in the relation between the cognitive interpretation and emotions experienced in a situation, the motivational state and the ensuing manifestations.

Among these variables, a kind of general dissatisfaction and vague discontent in relation to society and the marketplace is a factor often mentioned, although rarely measured (Fournier, 1998; Fischer,
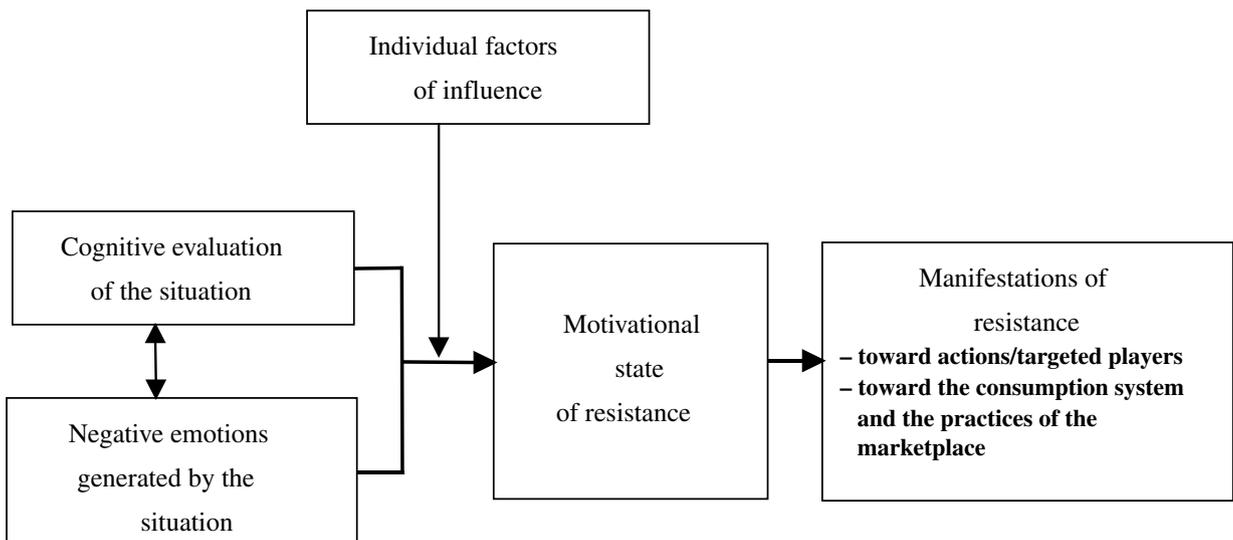

Figure 1. – An integrative framework for analyzing consumer resistance

2001; Lambert, 1980; Zavestoski, 2002; Shaw and Newholm, 2002). When firms make promises of fulfillment they cannot honor, this leads to rejection of expectations concerning the marketplace which we can observe, in particular, in voluntary simplicity and anti-consumption behaviors (Hirschman, 1983). On this point, measurement tools for satisfaction are limited when it comes to detecting possible consumer resistance. Indeed, an individual can choose to reduce consumption, stop buying certain products or frequent alternative distribution channels without necessarily expressing dissatisfaction with a particular producer or distributor. This choice can be motivated by a change in his consumer habits that goes beyond the context of a single transaction or relationship with a firm. Furthermore, measurements of satisfaction cannot always signal the defection of a consumer early enough, except if they are repeated on a regular basis and complemented by other variables. This is why current customer relationship management programs try to include other factors, even those external to the relationship, in order to understand more fully why consumers defect. More attractive offers from competitors (Jahanzeb and Jabeen, 2007) or personal events affecting the consumer's lifestyle are now taken into account by *data mining* tools that use, among other things, multiple socio-demographic and behavioral data. The aim is to evaluate the likelihood of attrition[1] and to qualify the profile of vulnerable consumers in order to re-orient customer relationship management programs (Ultsch, 2002).

On a psychological level, several variables indicating the orientation of the individual toward opposition can be mentioned. First, two variables associated with doubt – skepticism and cynicism – seem to influence resistance. Skepticism, defined as a tendency not to believe a claim (Obermiller and Spangenberg, 1998, p. 160), is mentioned in numerous reservations expressed by consumers concerning marketing discourse (Fournier, 1998). Cynicism, which is defined as "suspicion concerning the intentions, loyalty and benevolence" of a speaker (Kanter and Wortzel, 1985; Boyer, Albert and Valette-Florence, 2006) is suggested by Dobscha and Ozanne (2001) to be a symmetrical suspicion by

consumers of behaviors that are perceived as inherently cynical within the market. In the light of the elements presented above, it also seems essential to explore the role of reactance as a trait capable of moderating consumer resistance (Hong and Faedda, 1996; Donnell, Thomas and Buboltz, 2001). As a hypothesis, and using certain contributions from work on metacognition (Friestad and Wright, 1994), we suggest that reactance can constitute a moderating variable of the state of consumer resistance in situations of influence that do not necessarily involve a loss of freedom. The relative sensitivity of the individual to loss of freedom can help amplify or diminish the state of tension experienced when faced with certain commercial tactics designed to influence him. Finally, it seems important to develop a greater understanding of the consumer's propensity to resist, the role of which appears to be central as a variable of influence.

Furthermore, due to the dimension of self-expression which makes certain consumers feel they can express their personality and their values via oppositional behaviors, links have been envisaged between resistance and self-expression (Gould, Houston and Mundt, 1997; Kozinets and Handelman, 1998) and have in particular been measured with the need for uniqueness (correlation of 0.22 with the "anti-commercial rebellion" construct reported by Austin, Plouffe and Peter, 2005). This relation could be explained by the motivation of consumers prone to resistance, reported by several authors, to communicate who they are – in terms of frugality, sobriety, self-control, strict moral values (Shepherd, 2002) – and what they think of society and corporate practices (Gould, Houston and Mundt, 1997).

However, the diversity of situations observed and the variables studied lead us to believe that some manifestations are more influenced by certain factors than others. Thus, studies devoted to voluntary simplicity and other forms of resistance characterized by reduced consumption highlight frugality and ascetic behavior as possible influence variables. A tendency to preserve and use resources parsimoniously (Lastovicka et al., 1999) appears explicitly in verbatim interviews with consumers sensitive to ecology and followers of voluntary simplicity (Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001; Shepherd, 2002). At the same time, these profiles attribute little importance to personal possessions and appear not to be interested in materia-

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1. Attrition, or *churn*, refers to the departure of the consumer and the breaking off of relations.

lism (negative correlation of 0.24 with the "anti-commercial rebellion" construct reported by Austin, Plouffe and Peter, 2005). Therefore, complementary research needs to be carried out in order to analyze more precisely the type of variables involved in the perception of certain situations and the forms of resistance they can cause.

Among the socio-demographic characteristics, the level of education seems to play a role in certain resistance behaviors such as those generating a decrease in consumption due to greater sensitivity to environmental problems (Dobré, 1999). Friestad and Wright (1994) emphasize that the more the consumer is educated and aware, the richer his cognitive representations of sources of influence and their techniques and effects, and the greater his capacity to resist them. Age is also linked to cognitive level, with children and even young adults (from 18 to 23) having less elaborate representations of marketplace practices (Wright, Friestad and Boush, 2005).

The consequences of resistance

Several directions can be envisaged. First, resistance is capable of modifying the perceived image of a brand or firm, depending on the behaviors it adopts. The intensity with which some companies have resorted to telesales, for example, has created a negative categorization, not only for these companies, but more generally for the technique itself and other firms using it (Roux, 2008). Similarly, registering one's number on a "no-call" list or lying about one's contact information, phenomena which have been analyzed in recent studies (Lancelot Miltgen and Volle, 2005), could be the consequences of repeated use of intrusive sales techniques that have been widely identified by consumers.

Second, resistance can lead to a more pronounced tendency to doubt the claims of firms. The notion of marketplace metacognition (Friestad and Wright, 1994) suggests that when consumers have memorized situations in which influence has been used, they are likely to use "self-generated alerts" to ward off future attempts. The consequence could then be observed in a more pronounced tendency to search for information on firms or analyze information provided by them, whether in purchasing situations or, more generally, to improve knowledge of market-

place practices. The impact of resistance on consumer perceptions of expertise in terms of purchases or word of mouth is another possible avenue of research on the consequences of this phenomenon.

Finally, the principle of cumulative resistance encourages the investigation of the forms of sustainable defection that consumers manifest concerning certain types of products or distribution channels. Studies of voluntary simplicity, in particular, describe manifestations of resistance to the market – going without certain products, recycling, buying second-hand products – that are not necessarily without consequence on other phenomena. The change in budgets spent in traditional distribution channels in favor of increased purchases of used products could be a first clue (Bauhain-Roux and Guiot, 2001; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001). A second clue could be related to ecology and sustainable development. Purchases of certain products that preserve the environment, that are biodegradable, recycled or sold in bulk could also increase, to the detriment of disposable products that pollute or come in expensive packaging.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article is to offer a clarification of consumer resistance, an emerging concept in marketing. The integrative framework proposed here suggests conceiving resistance from an interactionist perspective. It identifies, at the source of the behaviors observed, situational determinants linked to corporate and marketplace practices perceived as dissonant according to a pre-established system of representations. Rather than placing resistance at the heart of an ideological debate on the power of firms and the freedom of consumers (Arnould, 2007), it proposes to situate it within a dialogical perspective of marketplace relations. Within this framework, companies are obliged to deploy legitimation strategies to convince their targets, whose resistance is a possible response on three levels: against practices, against discourses and against the commercial practices underlying their actions.

On the individual level, the concept of resistance has been defined as a motivational state (triggered by situational elements related to practices, discourse and strategies perceived as dissonant) producing variable manifestations. We have distinguished it from the propensity to resist, as a possible individual characteristic of defiance. Using the concept of "metacognition" (Friestad and Wright, 1994) enabled us to suggest the principle of cumulative resistance that could result, over time, from an encoding of prior situations that triggered manifestations of resistance.

Our integrative framework suggests numerous avenues of research, both on a theoretical level and the types of applications it could produce. First, it invites the researcher to explore the construction of consumer representation systems via their perception of marketplace activities. One of the main issues is therefore to understand more clearly why certain situational elements are negatively evaluated and categorized, which characteristics are used and which forms of opposition are generated. Another area of research would consist in analyzing, in certain situations, the elements consumers perceive, or fail to perceive, in terms of influence and pressure. Friestad and Wright (1994) suggest in fact that persuasive tactics need to be perceived in order to be resisted. This moment of awareness produces, according to the authors, "a change of meaning" that transfers attention from the content of messages to a clearer perception of influence tactics. Telesales have recently been studied from this point of view (Roux, 2008), but other, more complex, contexts could be tackled. Thus, the way consumers evaluate the experiential marketing strategies of distributors, the way they decode (or fail to decode) the tactics and psychological levers used – brand design, dramatization, sensory marketing – and categorize the effects associated with them, is worth studying from the standpoint of potential resistance. This could shed light on certain questions concerning the effects of awkward or stereotyped experiential marketing. Loyalty programs and the various capture and retention techniques they deploy could also provide an interesting field of study. Certain clients characterized as "transactional" turn out to be hostile, for example, to the intrusion of certain customer relations tools – such as a simple birthday card – in the context of marketplace relations (Boulaire, 2003). Generally speaking, like Latour (2006) who points out that tactics are even more effective if they are invisible, it is important to be able to identify the threshold of perceptibility of influence strategies that could lead, depending on their content and intensity, to resistance.

Another direction would consist in studying, from a longitudinal perspective, how a manifestation of resistance triggered by a situation possibly contaminates the perception of other actions implemented by a firm, on the same level or in other contexts. Following the lead of Friestad and Wright (1994), we suggest that resistance triggered by a context of influence – in particular advertising or sales – can provoke a negative categorization of the competencies of an actor in an area other than the one concerned at the outset – notably the quality of its products and services.

By considering marketplace relations as a dialogical process where the knowledge and competence of consumers is growing, it is essential to ask how firms can (re)act (Thompson, 2004) and what strategies can be developed to counter the phenomenon of resistance. While advertising is a subject that has been widely explored, this is not the case for other areas such as sales, the perceptions of which, comparatively speaking, have been little studied (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004; Hollet and Lavorata, 2007). Due to its ubiquity in the lives of consumers and the importance of the influence strategies it deploys, consumer-brand relationship is also an important theme. Forms of resistance can, in fact, manifest themselves against a particular firm, but also more generally against its offering or its symbolic representation on the market. It would be interesting to measure the links between resistance, in particular cumulative resistance, and variables such as confidence, loyalty, attachment, rejection or detachment concerning brands in general or particular brands (Perrin-Martinenq, 2003; Romani, Grappi and Dalli, 2007). By proposing that firms serve as cultural resources and adopt authentic behaviors, Holt (2002) has suggested several ways of disarming resistance. However, other topics should be examined in the field of ethics (Bergadaà, 2004), an important theme for marketers. Studies on the protection of privacy and collecting of personal data (Lancelot Miltgen and Volle, 2005) have recently underlined the need to respect the private lives of certain consumers.

It is more difficult, however, to prevent consumer resistance to the marketplace itself and exit in favor of other channels, whether they be overtly resistant communities (Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001; Shepherd, 2002) or alternative systems of exchange among consumers (Bauhain-Roux and Guiot, 2001; Giesler, 2006; Hemetsberger, 2006). These are means of escape, which are even harder to define as the growth of possibilities for communication promotes the emergence of new places of exchange, from militant forums to second-hand distribution channels. From this standpoint, traditional producers and distributors must not ignore or underestimate these movements, whether individual or collective, which are developing today outside traditional channels or working against certain values promulgated by market society.

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