Year : 2011

THREE ESSAYS ON SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION

MOINAT Vivien

FACULTÉ DES HAUTES ÉTUDES COMMERCIALES

DÉPARTEMENT DE MARKETING

THREE ESSAYS ON
SYMBOLIC
CONSUMPTION

THÈSE DE DOCTORAT

présentée à la

Faculté des Hautes Etudes Commerciales
de l'Université de Lausanne

pour l'obtention du grade de
Docteur en Sciences Économiques, « mention Management »

par

Vivien MOINAT

Directrice de thèse
Prof. Brigitte Müller

Jury

Prof. Michael Rockinger, président
Prof. Ghislaine Cestre, experte interne
Prof. Björn Ivens, expert externe

LAUSANNE
2011

I M P R I M A T U R

_____

Sans se prononcer sur les opinions de l'auteur, la Faculté des hautes études commerciales de l'Université de Lausanne autorise l'impression de la thèse de Monsieur Vivien MOINAT, titulaire d'un master en Sciences de l'Université de Lausanne, en vue de l'obtention du grade de docteur en Sciences Economiques, mention "Management".

La thèse est intitulée :

THREE ESSAYS ON SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION

Lausanne, le 10 juin 2011

Daniel Oyon

Composition du jury

Directrice de thèse
Prof. assistante Brigitte Müller
Université de Lausanne

Experte interne
Prof. Ghislaine Cestre
Université de Lausanne

Expert externe
Prof. Björn Ivens
Otto-Friedrich-Universität Bamberg

Université de Lausanne
Faculté des Hautes Etudes Commerciales

Doctorat en Sciences Economiques,
mention « Management »

Par la présente, je certifie avoir examiné la thèse de doctorat de

Vivien MOINAT

Sa thèse remplit les exigences liées à un travail de doctorat.
Toutes les révisions que les membres du jury et la soussignée ont
demandées durant le colloque de thèse ont été prises en considération
et reçoivent ici mon approbation.

Signature : _____ Date : 15.06.2011

Prof. Brigitte MÜLLER
Directrice de thèse

Université de Lausanne
Faculté des Hautes Etudes Commerciales

Doctorat en Sciences Economiques,
mention « Management »

Par la présente, je certifie avoir examiné la thèse de doctorat de

Vivien MOINAT

Sa thèse remplit les exigences liées à un travail de doctorat.

Toutes les révisions que les membres du jury et la soussignée ont

demandées durant le colloque de thèse ont été prises en considération

et reçoivent ici mon approbation.

Signature: _____ Date : 15 juin 2011

Prof Ghislaine CESTRE
Membre interne du jury

Université de Lausanne
Faculté des Hautes Etudes Commerciales

Doctorat en Sciences Economiques,
mention « Management »

Par la présente, je certifie avoir examiné la thèse de doctorat de

Vivien MOINAT

Sa thèse remplit les exigences liées à un travail de doctorat.

Toutes les révisions que les membres du jury et le soussigné ont demandées

durant le colloque de thèse ont été prises en considération

et reçoivent ici mon approbation.

Signature : _____ Date : __le 15 Juin 2011__

Prof. Björn IVENS
Membre externe du jury

Acknowledgements

At the end of this PhD journey, I would like to express my gratefulness to several people without which writing this dissertation would not have been possible.

First of all, I would like to thank Prof. Brigitte Müller, my supervisor. During these last four years, she has been more than supportive, always challenging my ideas and bringing in constructive comments. I am very grateful for the time and help she gave me. Her office door was always open for me and I highly appreciated it. The time I spent working for her, as a research and teaching assistant, was also very pleasant and instructive. I am also thankful for the valuable comments of the members of my jury, Prof. G. Cestre and Prof. B. Ivens which were very useful in further improving my thesis. During the beginning of my PhD time, when Prof. Ivens was still in Lausanne, I had the chance to work for him and I appreciated his strong enthusiasm.

Writing a doctoral dissertation is not always easy, but I have never been alone. The other PhD students have been for me particularly important both from a personal and academic perspective. The discussions I had with several of them have significantly improved my dissertation. Sharing coffee breaks and extra-academic activities with them was also a great way to balance work and leisure. I am very grateful for these great years we spent together. Among the PhD students, I want to thank, in particular, Dominik Breitinger, Christoph Ott and most of all Sébastien Mena. They spent a tremendous amount of time reading and correcting my articles, discussing with me, encouraging me, and providing me useful ways to improve my work. They have made significant contributions to this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to express my gratefulness to my friends and family. They had to listen to my doubts and uncertainties. Without them, without their understanding, their support, and their compassionate ears, things would have been much harder. Last but not least, I want to acknowledge the indefectible support of my girlfriend, Sabrina. During periods of doubts, she had always the right words and knew the way to encourage me. Her love and support gave me the force to continue and finish this journey.

Thank you.

Lausanne, June 29, 2011

Vivien Moinat

To Hugh Mowat

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

How can one explain that the number of visitors to the Antarctica has more than doubled in less than 10 years and today represents 34,000 per year? How can one explain that an online community on Facebook collects more than 7,600 people sharing their pictures and memories about Stonehenge and that the site in Wiltshire gathers more than 30,000[1] people each year for the summer solstice? How can one explain the success of touristic communities proposed by tour operators (*monlookea.fr*[2] or *Nomadsphère*[3])? What about the development of travel agencies specialized in gender travel (*Femmes du Monde*) or in scientific excursions (*Escursia*, *Aventuresvolcans*)? And what should we think of the explosion of interest in the St-James Way pilgrimage? Finally how can one explain the behavior of tourists that are ready to cross the world to learn how to make a kite (*Asia Tour Operator*), collect data on a community of primates in Africa (*Saïga*) or learn to spin wool in Auvergne (*Essorr*)?

These few examples illustrate that new forms of consumption have appeared in tourism. They might be related to eco-volunteering, scientific tourism, adventure tourism, spiritual or religious tourism, green or fair tourism, tourism for women. These forms of tourism are far removed from the traditional holidays at the beach or in the mountains. Explaining these forms or these practices with the existing models of consumption might be difficult. Indeed people seeking these forms of tourism are not only looking for functional or emotional benefits. Rather, they are trying to use a destination to satisfy a more deeply rooted need, namely, they want to express their identities, to give a meaning to their life, to express who they are, or to associate with people that are similar or important for them. They express a symbolic need. These new forms of consumption where consumers seek to express themselves, have not only appeared in tourism, but are increasingly important in various product categories such as clothing, cars, and fast moving consumer goods alike. This tendency is fascinating and is precisely the focus of this current dissertation.

---

[1] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/england/wiltshire/7465235.stm
[2] Created by Look Voyages, this community is composed of more than 10,000 members, allowing them to share pictures, videos and memories of their last holiday in a Look resort.
[3] Created by Accor, for the *Nomads* segment, this community is composed of more than 43,000 members sharing tips for 300 towns around the world.

The purpose of the rest of this general introduction is twofold:

- First, it explains the interest of symbolic consumption. This is the central focus of the dissertation. It is therefore necessary to begin by indicating why it is interesting and important to study symbolic consumption.
- Second, this introduction aims to show how the dissertation contributes to the study of symbolic consumption. To do so, each article will be summarized, and the main findings highlighted. Contributions of the thesis and future avenues of research will be discussed in the concluding part, after the three articles.

Why symbolic consumption deserves attention

Over the last decades, symbolic consumption has benefited from growing interest. Today, approximately 150 articles have been written on this theme or on related topics in the marketing literature. These articles will be reviewed and organised in the first article (see page 16).

How can one explain such an interest?

One explanation is that consumption, and more precisely, the reasons for consumption are a very central concern, if not the main issue, in marketing. Scholars have made endless efforts to understand the reasons for product choice and the reasons for consumption.

According to Belen del Rio et al., "Ultimately, the source of any brand value is the final user: the more positively he or she perceives the brand, the higher the consumer's brand awareness and loyalty allowing the firm to command larger margins, higher market share, more inelasticity consumer response to price increases, less vulnerability to competitive activity, increased marketing communications effectiveness, additional brand extension opportunities and other competitive advantages such as distribution leverage." (2001: 452).

Therefore creating value for consumers and understanding what consumers value during the consumption experience is probably one of the most crucial questions in marketing.

The initial consumption models (Cohen, Fishbein and Ahtola, 1972; Zajonc and Hazel, 1982; Burke and Edell, 1989), based on the "economic man" perspective propose that a consumer will, through a cognitive process, evaluate products' attributes, decide the importance of each of them, and finally choose the product that maximizes his utility. These models have been

criticized (see for example Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) as not reflecting all the emotional drivers underlying and explaining a purchase. In addition, according to Bhat and Reddy (1998: 33) "the rational model is appropriate only for goods which consumers value for their tangible and utilitarian benefits".

As consequence, several scholars have proposed alternative or complementary drivers to explain the consumption act such as the role of emotions (Richins, 1997; Bagozzi et al., 1999), its hedonic aspect (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Babin et al., 1994; Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann, 2003) or the importance of the consumption experience itself (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001; Chronis and Hampton, 2002).

However, these models integrating both functional and emotional drivers still can not be considered as satisfactory for two reasons:

First, several changes have taken place in the market. Alongside globalisation, the geographical and time distances between suppliers have been reduced, reinforcing price competitions, and offering a broader range of products to consumers. Significant improvements in communications techniques (Schmitt, 1999) offer the consumer more sources of information, better information, and therefore more knowledge in terms of what to search for. This leads to more demanding consumer profiles. Finally, according to postmodern scholars (Firat, Dholakia and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat and Schultz, 1997), the consumer has become less stable and predictable. He does not always act consistently anymore and sometimes even in a contradictory way. Moreover, the markets have become more fragmented. Therefore, it is important, once again, for firms to understand the origins of the value for consumers in order to gain competitive advantages and to free themselves from the constraints due to these changes.

Second, these approaches failed to explain consumption acts where the product is not consumed for its functional advantages or for the emotional stimulation it can provide but rather for its expressive value. More precisely, some people may choose to use a product because it allows them the satisfaction of a need of self-expression. According to some scholars (see for example Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Cova and Cova, 2001; Liang and Wang, 2004), this need of self-expression is sometimes stronger than the search for functional or emotional benefits and might be even so strong that it is not possible to understand the consumption act without it.

As a consequence of these two reasons, scholars and managers alike have made renewed efforts to better understand why people consume and to provide them with appropriate offers.

In order to do so, some have brought into play the concept of symbolic consumption – that is: how consumers express themselves through the product used as a symbol – and have demonstrated that this approach significantly adds value to the understanding of consumption.

How the current dissertation contributes to the study of symbolic consumption

Top journals in marketing continue to publish research on consumption that does not take into account the symbolic dimension. Several authors (see for instance the works of: Chitturi, Raghunathan and Mahajan, 2008; Chen, Kalra and Sun, 2009; Levav and McGraw, 2009; Khan and Dhar, 2010) do not consider symbolic drivers and focus only on functional and emotional ones. Even if it is not necessary, of course, to discuss and compare systematically the three benefits, it is helpful to mention them to make the reader understand that functional and emotional drivers are parts of a larger concept. Maybe a reason why these authors have not mentioned symbolic drivers is because no commonly agreed definition or operationalization has been carried out in the field, or because the usefulness of this approach, namely the added value of taking into account symbolic needs, was not sufficiently demonstrated.

Therefore, it has become imperative for symbolic scholars to ask the following question:
What is the best way to convince the other members of the academic community of the importance of symbolic drivers when speaking about consumption?
Without doubt, the first way is to be sure that there is a clear definition and that everyone knows what the term "symbolic consumption" means.
Showing how conceptually symbolic drivers are different from others will lead to a better understanding of the added value of an approach integrating them. It must be made clear that symbolic needs are not the same as, or a sub-part of, other functional and emotional needs. Having clarified this initial point, a way to stress the interest of symbolic drivers is to show the significant added value in terms of explanatory power. Surprisingly, no effort has been made until today to structure the vast amount of literature. It has become urgent to identify how consumption can be symbolic, what the different symbolic needs are and what needs consumers use to satisfy them. Several authors have given their opinions but no common view has been produced. Therefore, in order to fill this literature gap and to contribute to demonstrating the interest for the symbolic approach, the first article will review and propose a structured view of the literature (see abstract for article 1, below).

The second way to convince the academic community of the importance of symbolic consumption, is to display why this perspective is interesting. This entails showing how symbolic benefits are statistically related with outcome variables such as intentions to purchase or to recommend, that have direct managerial relevance. If the search for symbolic benefits is significantly related with those outcome variables, then it is valuable to take them into consideration.

Some authors of the symbolic consumption field (Deeter-Schmelz, Moore and Goebel, 2000; Belen del Rio, Vazquez and Iglesias, 2001; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Kocak, Abimbola and Ozer, 2007) are more focused on the nature of this consumption. Indeed, they are often first concerned by justifying the interest of taking into account symbolic drivers, rather than evaluating their real predictive power of behavioral intentions. In order to complement these authors, the current work presents statistical evidence that symbolic consumption is significantly related with such outcomes in articles 2 and 3.

Finally, the third way to convince the academic community is to demonstrate that symbolic benefits are not an unmanageable concept. It can be operationalized and moreover it can be shown to be related with other important concepts. Articles 2 and 3 will present two ways of operationalizing the concept of symbolic benefits. In addition, the second article will investigate the relationship between symbolic benefits and self-congruity. In other words, it will ask the following question: Is it necessary to be similar with a product to use it to express oneself? The third article will, among others, link symbolic benefits with consumer personality, investigating whether some personality traits are more related with the search for symbolic benefits. By showing how a symbolic approach can be operationalized and how it can be related with other important constructs, these two articles highlight the interest of symbolic drivers and the importance of an improved consumer understanding.

In summary, this dissertation aims at answering the following research questions:

- *What is symbolic consumption?*
- *What are the symbolic needs and the means used to answer them?*
- *What is the weight of symbolic benefits regarding the other traditional benefits in behavioral intentions?*
- *What are the antecedents of symbolic benefits?*

These research questions remain under-investigated in the literature and it is believed that answering them will significantly contribute to bridge gaps in the literature. The following section will now summarize the three articles.

Article 1

By providing an exhaustive review, the first article helps to define the main streams of research in the field and their related questions. Despite the large amount of published work on symbolic consumption, no exhaustive literature review has been produced until today. Because of this lack of a common vision, the field runs the risk of being stuck in the mud of studies only replicating previous findings. Moreover, newcomers to the field might feel discouraged by such a vast body of research. Therefore, a systematic review of published works between 1982 and 2010 was conducted and about 150 articles identified. These studies were classified into four major research streams. In doing so, the review provides a clear picture of the current state of research on symbolic consumption. More precisely, it first identifies the psychological explanations of symbolic consumption, emphasizing the role of the extended self and of consumer strategy of story-telling and identity construction. Second, it highlights the importance of taking into account symbolic drivers alongside, and in comparison with, other traditional benefits. Third, it names out the three needs that are expressed during a symbolic consumption, namely the need to reinforce self-identity, to express or seek a group-identity and to show signs of prestige and status. Finally, in the fourth identified stream, the review discusses articles focusing on the means used to satisfy symbolic needs. Three means have been investigated so far in the literature, namely the use of *products/brands*, *people,* and *practices*. This review contributes to the extant literature by showing the considerable progress that has been made in symbolic consumption since the beginning of the interest, and the fairly coherent and interesting body of work that the field represents. Moreover, the review is helpful for surfacing research propositions, based on gaps that remain in the literature.

Article 2

This article builds upon previous literature to show that two key concepts of symbolic consumption have often been used interchangeably, self-congruity and symbolic benefits. Self-congruity is defined as the similarity between a consumer's self-perception and his image of the product. Symbolic benefits are defined as the benefits provided by the consumption relative to a product answering self-expression needs such as self-identity, group-identity or

status. The paper proposes a model clearly differentiating the two concepts. This model is tested using a structural equation modeling approach based on a large sample. The paper demonstrates that the two concepts are clearly independent of each other, i.e., a consumer does not need congruity with a product to use it as a means of self-expression. Moreover, the two concepts do not have the same effects on behavioral intentions. The effects of symbolic benefits will be stronger than that of self-congruity. In other words, consumers will be more prone to buy a product if it helps them to express themselves rather than if there are shared and similar personality traits.

Article 3

The third article pursues two objectives. First, it aims at investigating the importance of symbolic benefits in comparison with the other traditional drivers of consumption, namely the functional and emotional benefits. Showing the weight of symbolic benefits in predicting purchase intentions highlights the interest of taking into account symbolic drivers. Second, the objective is to explore potential antecedents of individual differences in the sought benefits. It will be shown that one of the most interesting antecedents, consumer personality, has almost received no attention and therefore deserves more consideration. To reach these objectives, a model is proposed investigating the link between the five personality traits and the three (functional, emotional, symbolic) sought benefits. Interesting findings appear and sometimes contradict previous literature. Four of the five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, intellect and conscientiousness) are significantly related with sought benefits. Moreover, while the price does not seem to matter, the quality, the emotional benefit, and the symbolic benefits (group-identity and status) significantly predict consequences (satisfaction and behavioral intentions).

Link between the articles, contributions of the thesis and future avenues of research will then be discussed in the concluding part, after the three articles.

REFERENCES

Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R. and Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20, 644-656.

Bagozzi, R. P., Gospinath, M. and Nyer, P. U. (1999). The Role of Emotions in Marketing. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(2), 184-206.

Belen del Rio, A., Vazquez, R. and Iglesias, V. (2001). The role of the brand name in obtaining differential advantages. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 10(7), 452-465.

Bhat, S. and Reddy, S. K. (1998). Symbolic and functional positioning of brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(1), 32-43.

Burke, M. C. and Edell, J. A. (1989). The impact of feelings on ad-based affect and cognition. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 27, 69-83.

Chen, T., Kalra, A. and Sun, B. (2009). Why Do Consumers Buy Extended Service Contracts? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36, 611-623.

Chitturi, R., Raghunathan, R. and Mahajan, V. (2008). Delight by Design:The Role of Hedonic Versus Utilitarian Benefits. *Journal of Marketing*, 72, 48-63.

Cohen, J. B., Fishbein, M. and Ahtola, O. T. (1972). The Nature and Uses of Expectancy-Value Models in Consumer Attitude Research. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 9(4), 456-460.

Cova, B. and Cova, V. (2001). Tribal aspects of postmodern consumption research: The case of French in-line roller skates. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 1(1), 67-76.

Deeter-Schmelz, D. R., Moore, J. N. and Goebel, D. J. (2000). Prestige clothing shopping by consumers: A confirmatory assessment and refinement of the Precon scale with managerial implications. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 8(4), 43-58.

Firat, A. F., Dholakia, N. and Venkatesh, A. (1995). Marketing in a postmodern world. *European Journal of Marketing*, 29(1), 40-56.

Firat, A. F. and Schultz, C. J. (1997). From segmentation to fragmentation. markets and marketing strategy in the postmodern area. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3/4), 183-207.

Hirschman, E. C. and Holbrook, M. B. (1982). Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(Summer), 92-101.

Khan, U. and Dhar, R. (2010). Price-Framing Effects on the Purchase of Hedonic and Utilitarian Bundles. *Joumal of Marketing Research*, 47, 1090 –1099.

Kocak, A., Abimbola, T. and Ozer, A. (2007). Consumer Brand Equity in a Cross-cultural Replication: An Evaluation of a Scale. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1/2), 157-173.

Levav, J. and McGraw, P. (2009). Emotional Accounting: How Feelings About Money Influence Consumer Choice. *Joumal of Marketing Research*, 46, 66-80.

Michaelidou, N. and Dibb, S. (2006). Product Involvement: an application in clothing. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 5, 442-453.

Richins, M. L. (1997). Measuring Emotions in the Consumption Experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(2), 127-146.

Schmitt, B. H. (1999). *Experiential Marketing. How to get customers to sense, feel, think, act and relate to your company and brands.* New York, The Free Press.

Schouten, J. W. and McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 43-61.

Voss, K. E., Spangenberg, E. R. and Grohmann, B. (2003). Measuring the Hedonic and Utilitarian Dimensions of Consumer Attitude. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 40(3), 310-320.

Zajonc, R. and Hazel, M. (1982). Affective and cognitive factors in preferences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9, 123-131.

Deepening our understanding of symbolic consumption: a review and a research agenda

Vivien Moinat

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne

Lausanne, Switzerland

ABSTRACT

Understanding symbolic aspects of consumption is an original, often neglected, way to develop appropriate marketing and branding strategies. Much research has focused on this topic over the past decades. However, this voluminous body of literature lacks a unifying structure that makes sense and that would help to define future research avenues. Moreover, and perhaps for the same reason, some scholars continue to study consumption without integrating the symbolic perspective. Therefore, this paper provides a systematic and comprehensive literature review of symbolic consumption, collecting articles published in peer-reviewed journals from 1982 to 2010. It structures the important body of literature into four different research streams. This allows for the identification of the major research questions that have driven the field and their limitations. Finally, based on the literature gaps identified, several research propositions are offered.

Key words: symbolic consumption, needs, means, self-expression, extended self

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the meaning of consumption for consumers is crucial in marketing. Over the past twenty years, there has been an explosion of interest concerning the symbolic aspects of consumption. Approximately 150 articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals in marketing. Despite this attention, the field lacks a unified vision of symbolic consumption and newcomers in the field might be discouraged. Since the beginning of this interest in the eighties, no systematic literature review has been conducted. This is unfortunate because major advances have been realized both theoretically and methodologically since that time. Due to the absence of an exhaustive review, some researchers might overlook important progress made before and will not contribute to advancing research, but only replicating previous studies.

Therefore, this study aims:

- To identify all relevant articles for the field
- To propose an overall structuring view of the current knowledge, in order
- To recognize the main research streams and their related research questions, and finally,
- To determine the literature gaps and propose avenues for future research

The remainder of this article is structured into three parts. First, the methodology used to collect articles on symbolic consumption is explained. Second, this important amount of research is structured into four major streams and the key concepts for each are highlighted. Finally, I build upon this structure to propose a research agenda.

METHODOLOGY

This paper offers the first comprehensive account of symbolic consumption research published in peer-reviewed journals in marketing and related disciplines, between 1982 - the year Sirgy's article brought the notion of self-concept in marketing - and 2010. I have decided to use Sirgy's article as the starting point because this article, which has been extensively cited until today, is a comprehensive review of what was previously written in psychology on the notion of self-concept. The elaboration of this concept, as we will see hereafter, was necessary to develop the literature on symbolic

consumption. There were prior studies on symbols and symbolic consumption (see for example the seminal works of: Levy, 1959; 1964; Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967), but most of them are situated within the field of psychology and do not offer a marketing perspective.

To obtain an exhaustive view of the current literature and to minimize a potential overlook of articles, a three-step procedure described hereafter was carefully followed. First, all articles published in the following top marketing journals were methodically reviewed: *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Consumer Research, International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Academy of Marketing Science, Marketing Letters, Marketing Science*. These peer-reviewed journals were selected on the basis of their citation indexes (Theoharakis and Hirst, 2002) and their relevance to consumer behaviour studies. Second, I searched studies in EBSCO Business Source Premier and ABI/Inform databases in peer-reviewed journals containing one of the following keywords or combination of keywords in the title, keywords, abstract or full text: "symbol", "symbolic consumption", "self-identity", "self-congruity", "self-expression", "expressive/symbolic value". Within this pool, I selected only those adopting a consumer behaviour focus or those that were marketing oriented. Numerous articles were found published in a wide array of journals such as *Journal of Marketing Management, European Journal of Marketing, Psychology & Marketing, International Journal of Market Research, Journal of Consumer Behavior, Journal of Consumer Marketing, Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, Journal of Product and Brand Management, Academy of Marketing Studies Journal, Journal of Brand Management and Journal of Business Research*. In addition, this research also issued in articles published in other related disciplines' top journals such as *Journal of Advertising, Journal of Advertising Research, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Retailing, Annals of Tourism Research, Tourism Management and Journal of Travel Research*. References of the above mentioned articles were then examined to recognize recurrent and apparently important references published in journals which were not yet included in the selection. This includes research published in conference proceedings and papers in French, as significant advances have been made by French speaking scholars. From this collection of articles, book reviews, articles shorter than one page and notes from the editor were excluded. Finally, studies that

only mentioned the terms or where the terms play an insignificant role in the paper were removed and also those that did not use the concepts in the sense commonly accepted in the symbolic literature. Table 1 presents the results of the selection process sorted by journal:

Academic publications	Number of articles
Journal of Consumer Research	24
Advances in Consumer Research	10
Journal of Consumer Marketing	7
Journal of Consumer Behavior	6
Journal of Marketing Management	6
Journal of Business Research	6
Psychology & Marketing	5
Journal of Brand Management	5
Journal of Marketing	4
Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice	4
Journal of Product and Brand Management	4
Journal of Advertising	4
Journal of Consumer Psychology	4
Annals of Tourism Research	3
Consumption, Markets and Culture	3
International Journal of Market Research	3
Journal of Advertising Research	3
European Journal of Marketing	3
Journal of Marketing Research	3
Journal of Advertising Research	3
International Journal of Research in Marketing	2
Journal of Academy of Marketing Science	2
Journal of Vacation Marketing	2
Leisure Sciences	2
The Marketing Review	2
Academy of Marketing Science Review	2
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology	2

Table 1: Published articles on symbolic consumption per journal (only if # articles ≥ 2)

This above procedure resulted in 132 articles and 13 conference proceedings. As presented in Table 1, symbolic consumption and related topics are not equally represented in journals. One should notice the case of the Journal of Consumer Research which publishes by far the largest amount of articles on symbolic consumption and related themes. Although the majority of the papers have been published in marketing journals, other disciplines are also represented such as psychology and tourism.

Finally, as shown in Figure 1, there is an increasing trend in the number of articles per year since 1983, demonstrating growing attention to the topic. However in recent years, interest seems to be waning.
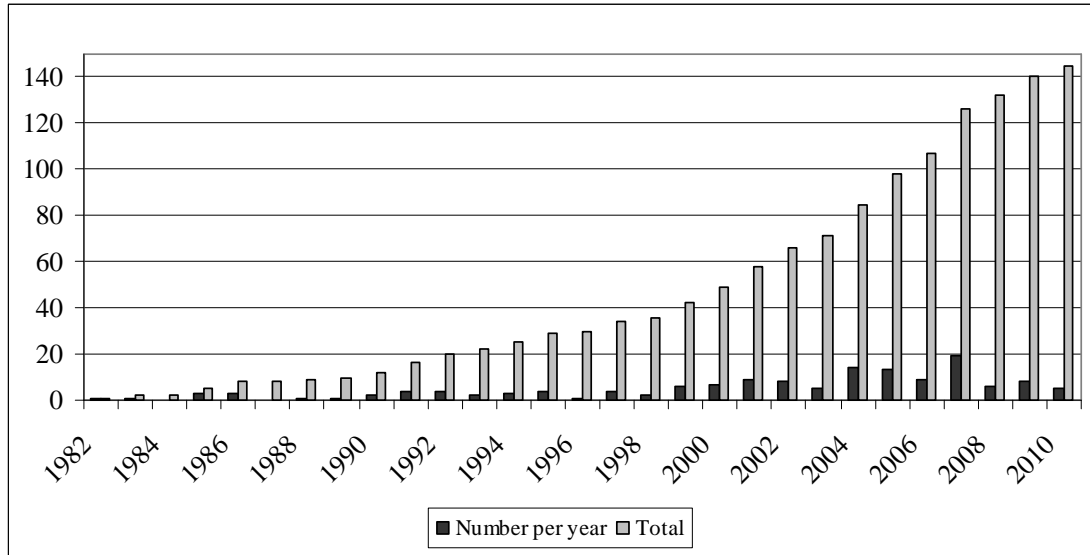
Figure 1: Published articles on symbolic consumption per year, 1982-2010

It is believed that this decrease is only temporary and does not reflect a lack of relevance of the symbolic concept. A more plausible explanation is that the field has become stuck by lacking a unifying theory or framework. Therefore, the current study proposes to structure the literature and to identify the main streams of research and their related research questions.

In an attempt to identify the main streams of research by reading the papers, I ask myself which was the research question that was central for each article. Articles were then sorted by these research streams. This classification was developed through iteration, that is moving back and forth between the articles and the research streams. During this process, I bear in mind several criteria that this classification should answer to. In other words, the aims of the proposed classification are to:

a) Identify the main research streams and their affiliated research questions
b) Structure these streams in a coherent way
c) Include all the articles identified during the literature research phase
d) Allow for the building of a research agenda.

For the sake of parsimony, a special effort was made, whenever possible, to place articles into only one stream, the one to which they were the most relevant. However, it is acknowledged that their scope is often broader than what is suggested by the classification. In some rare cases, they appear in two fields.

As a result of the classification procedure, I identify and organize the articles into the following research streams:

1) Psychological foundations of the symbolic consumption & exploration of the concept
2) The role of symbolic drivers alongside and comparison with the other traditional desired benefits (functional and emotional)
3) The symbolic needs
4) The means used to answer these needs

STRUCTURED LITERATURE REVIEW

1) Psychological foundations of the symbolic consumption and exploration of the concept
Main research question: How and why do people consume symbolically?

The first stream of research gathers articles that investigate « how and why » people consume symbolically. The reasons and the processes for the symbolic consumption is the common preoccupation of scholars in this stream. Most of these articles are only conceptual and frequently display a strong psychological background. They generally were written at the beginning stages of the field, and are regularly cited as such. There has been renewed interest in these conceptual issues over the last few years. Summarized in table 2 below, the following section discusses these articles.

A symbolic consumption is an act in which a product or a service is consumed because of the presence of one or more symbolic elements. A symbolic element relates to something in a product/service that is an essential component but which goes beyond the concrete aspect. It usually refers to a concept that makes sense for the

consumer because of a common cultural background and shared values with the message sender.

Crucial for the understanding of symbolic consumption is the idea that consumers have a "self" that they can project onto something. Consumers use these symbolic attributes to extend their "self". This notion of "Extended Self" has been extensively discussed (Belk, 1985; Markus and Kunda, 1986; Belk, 1988; 1989; Reed II, 2002; Fennis, Pruyn and Maasland, 2005; Tian and Belk, 2005; Saren, 2007). Belk emphasizes that one of the keys to understanding what consumption means for consumers is "first gaining some understanding of the meanings that consumers attach to possessions" (Belk, 1988: 139). Mittal (2006) goes further by depicting the self's components and proposes reasons why some products become part of our extended selves. Aaker has argued that "the symbolic use of brands is possible because consumers often imbue brands with human personality traits" (Aaker, 1997: 347).

Moreover, product ownership (Barone, Shimp and Sprott, 1999) or service experience might help the consumer to define and express personal identity.

Finally, the extent to which the product's identity is similar to the consumer's identity has received much attention (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 1985b; Sirgy and Johar, 1991; Sirgy, Johar, Samli and Claiborne, 1991; Wright, Claiborne and Sirgy, 1992: see also section Means/products below). This notion, called self-congruity has been argued to be related with and to significantly impact purchase intentions.

Another key perspective of this stream highlights that, in the case of symbolic consumption, consumers should be seen as *producers* of something valuable for them. Solomon (1983) speaks of the *homo faber* – the man as the maker and user of objects. What is produced is immaterial and mostly has no value, in the monetary sense. When people consume a product, they remove some of its economic value, but by answering their need of expression, they create a symbolic value. Thus, according to Solomon (1983), a brand might have a symbolic value regarding the extent to which it allows customers to fulfill symbolic needs and to express something about themselves. This symbolic or expressive value often relates to the opportunity of building personal identity or to give a special sense to life. According to Smith (2007: 325), consumers "are not passively but actively engaged in a meaning-making process". This perspective of consumption as producing and not destroying value is rooted in the postmodern approach (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995).

Related to this approach, some scholars see consumers as "constantly constructing and playing out in their minds a story about who they are and/or are striving to become" (Mittal, 2006: 551). "Products that we buy, activities that we do and philosophies or beliefs that we pursue, tell stories about who we are and with whom we identify" (Wattanasuwan, 2005: 179). In other words, consumers are what they consume and consume what they are (Belk, 1988; Schau, 2000). According to Zukin and Maguire (2004), people experience consumption as the "project of forming and expressing identity" thanks to the presence of symbolic elements. Finally, Murray (2002) discusses the extent to which consumers are free or constrained in the play of these signs.

Table 2 presents an overview of the articles of this stream

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Belk, 1985	Extended Self	Quantitative	338	
Belk, 1988	Meanings attached to possessions	Theoretical		-
Belk, 1989		Qualitative	-	
Tian and Belk, 2005	Extended Self and Possessions	Qualitative	17	Workplace
Saren, 2007	Extended Self	Theoretical	-	-
Markus and Zunda, 1985	Stability and Malleability of the Self-Concept	Quantitative	39	
Fennis, et al. 2005	Malleability of the Self-Concept	Quantitative	62+64+64	Soft drinks, magazines, cars and clothing
Reed, 2002	Self-concept	Theoretical	-	-
Aaker, 1997	Brand Personality	Quantitative	631	Diverse brands
Sirgy, 1982	Self-congruity			
Johar and Sirgy, 1991 a,b	Actual & ideal self-congruity	Theoretical	-	-
Wright, Claiborne et al., 1992	Social self-congruity			
Sirgy, 1985	Self-congruity	Quantitative	168	Cars and magazines
Barone et al., 1999	Self-congruity and product ownership	Quantitative	149	plastic key chain
Solomon, 1983	Homo Faber, Product as responses or stimuli	Theoretical	-	-
Firat and Venkatesh, 1995	Consumption produces value	Theoretical	-	-
Murray, 2002	Free reign or imprisoned in the play of signs	Qualitative	14 + 15	Fashion
Schau, 2000	Identity, self-expression	Theoretical	-	-
Zukin and Maguire, 2004	Consumers' project of forming and expressing identity	Theoretical	-	-
Wattanasuwan 2005	Products tell stories about who we are	Theoretical	-	-
Mittal, 2006	Self's components. Processes through which possessions become associated with one's self	Theoretical	-	-
Smith, 2007	consumers are actively engaged in a meaning-making process	Theoretical	-	-

Table 2: Stream N°1: Psychological foundations of symbolic consumption

NB: Several numbers in the sample columns indicates different studies

Summary of the first research stream

After the review of this stream of research, a first definition of *symbolic consumption* can be proposed. It is an experience during which people buy and use a product/service (1) based on its symbolic meaning - namely its ability to link the consumer with a concept that makes sense for that individual - (2) to form, to express personal identity or to give some meaning to life, (3) resulting in the "production" of

consumers and providing added value. This definition will be complemented by other streams of research which will be presented hereafter.

2) **Role of symbolic drivers alongside, and in comparison with, other traditional desired benefits (functional and emotional)**

Main research question: What is the role of symbolic consumption?

The second stream of research aims at situating the symbolic needs into a broader framework, and comparing their importance regarding other traditional desired benefits, namely functional and emotional ones. This stream was only conceptual at the beginning, but became more empirical in the following years and still receives a certain amount of attention nowadays. This stream differs from the previous one for two reasons: First, in stream 1, authors do not consider at all the other drivers (functional and emotional) and do not seek to compare them with symbolic ones. Second, scholars of stream 2 are not investigating the rationale of the symbolic consumption; they do not adopt a psychological perspective to understand the underlying forces that push consumers to express symbolic needs and to satisfy them. The origins of stream 2 can be traced back to the seminal article by Park, Jaworski and McInnis (1986) who stated that "an important factor influencing the selection of a brand concept is consumer needs". These authors identify three categories of benefits, and their related needs, namely functional, experiential and symbolic needs. Later, Keller in its renowned article (1993: 4) also recognizes the same three benefits and defines them as follows.

"Functional Benefits are defined as the more intrinsic advantages of product or service consumption (…) often linked to fairly basic motivation, such as physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1970) and involve a desire for problem removal or avoidance. *Experiential Benefits*, (also known as *Emotional Benefits*) relate to what it feels like to use the product or service (…) and satisfy experiential needs such as sensory pleasure, variety and cognitive stimulation. *Symbolic Benefits* are the more extrinsic advantages of product or service consumption. They relate to underlying needs for social approval and outer-directed self-esteem" (Keller, 1993: 4).

This last definition complements that of Park et al. (1986) who defined symbolic needs as "desires for products that fulfils internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership or ego-identification" (1986: 136).

These articles are not so important for their definitions, as they remain fairly basic. Rather, they are extremely significant as they are the first to recognize, and somehow, legitimize the presence of symbolic needs apart from functional and experiential needs. Prior to that, consumption was traditionally investigated without acknowledging the potential role of symbolic needs. Based on previous works (Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991; Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Woodal, 2003; Holbrook, 2005), Brock Smith and Colgate (2007) built on this typology and recognised that the satisfaction of each of these needs leads to respectively functional, cost, experiential and symbolic value. However, despite this strong theoretical basis, it is quite uncommon to find empirical studies comparing the weight of each of these three types of needs in explaining purchase decision.

An early case is the discussion of the effectiveness of value-expressive (symbolic) versus utilitarian (functional) advertising (Sirgy and Johar, 1991; Shavitt, 1992) but it remains conceptual. Later, Bhat and Reddy (1998) were the first to develop an empirical testing of the symbolic versus functional value of a brand. In particular, they demonstrated that a brand can hold these two values simultaneously. Pursuing their work in this direction, Belen del Rio, Vazquez et Iglesias (2001; 2002) found more differences in the benefits sought at the brand level than at the product level. They also found a strong correlation between the functional and the symbolic value of a brand. Along this line of thought, Mowle and Merriles (2005) also found, for different products that these two values might be displayed in a brand at the same time and that they can be interelated. Kocak, Abimbola and Ozer (2007) replicated the study of Vazquez et al. (2002) in a different culture and found similar results. Supphellen and Grønhaug (2003) also investigated the importance of culture, suggesting that the combination of desired functional/symbolic benefits might change as societies evolve. The impact of the functional versus symbolic value on the timing of repurchasing was investigated by Grewal, Mehta and Kardes (2004). Finally, Balakrishnan (2009) proposed a conceptual framework including functional and symbolic benefits specifically designed for destination branding.

Studies comparing the three benefits simultaneously do not abound:
- Orth conducted several studies (Orth, McDaniel, Shelhammer and Lopetcharat, 2004; Orth, 2005a; Orth and Lopetcharat, 2005; Orth, McGarry Wolf and Dodd,

2005; Orth and De Marchi, 2007) on the link between brand benefits and purchase intentions, based on the "perceived value" (PERVAL) approach developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001). Taken as a whole, his work displays the three benefits as significant predictors of purchase intention, although important differences might appear due to product category, ad exposure and product experiences.

- Liang and Wang (2004) conducted a very interesting study on the effects of product attributes (functional, experiential, and symbolic) on consumer satisfaction. They found different effects of the benefits, generally significant, mostly positive, but sometimes negative in the case of experiential benefits. Symbolic benefits were found to be the most accurate predictor of satisfaction, always significant and positive.

- Blankson and Kalafatis (2007) also considered the three benefits, functional, experiential and symbolic simultaneously. They state that the emphasis of benefits should depend of the positioning strategy of the brands. For example, a "value for money" strategy will be best served by the emphasis of functional benefits, whereas a "top of the range" strategy will be better echoed back by symbolic benefits.

- Finally, the interesting model proposed by Tsai (2005b) also verifies that "brand purchase value is dividable into three dimensionalities which in juxtaposition and in interaction exert direct influences on repurchase intention. Such a discovery provides support to the premise that the traditional economic utilitarian view is not adequate and that socio-cultural symbolism and emotional/affective marketing approaches should also be incorporated into the understanding of purchase value" (Tsai, 2005b: 288).

Summary of the second research stream

Whether the studies were conducted on only two benefits or on all three, the main findings of these studies are as follows: It is legitimate to also take into account symbolic benefits as drivers of satisfaction or future purchase decision. The benefits sought differ according to the consumer and to the type of product alike. In addition, although the three benefits have different powers of prediction relative to satisfaction and behavioral intention, all benefits might present a strong link and therefore should

be investigated in juxtaposition and not separately. Finally, these articles focus on the difference with the other benefits and, with some exceptions, do not offer a detailed decomposition of the symbolic needs.

Table 3 presents an overview of the discussed articles in this second stream:

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Park, Jaworski et al., 1986	Functional Benefits Experiential Benefits Symbolic Benefits	Theoretical	-	-
Keller, 1993 Keller, 2003	Functional Needs Experiential Needs Symbolic Needs	Theoretical	-	-
Woodal, 2003	Personal and social Benefits	Theoretical	-	-
Holbrook, 2005	Efficiency,excellence Values Status, esteem Values Play, aesthetics Values Ethics, and spirituality Values	Qualitative	-	Pictures
Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007	Functional/Instrumental Value Experiential/Hedonic Value Symbolic/Expressive Value Cost/sacrifice Value	Theoretical	-	-
Johar and Sirgy, 1991 Shavitt, 1992	Utilitarian appeals Expressive appeals	Theoretical	-	-
Bhat and Reddy, 1998	Comparing Functional vs Symbolic Value	Quantitative	62	Water, shoes, cosmetic, ice cream, hair cream
Belen del Rio, Vazquez et Iglesias, 2001 Vazquez, Belen del Rio et al., 2002	Comparison of functional and Symbolic benefits for products and brands	Quantitative	1054	Sport shoes
Mowle and Merriles, 2005	Functional and symbolic values	Qualitative	8	Australian SME wineries
Supphellen and Grønhaug, 2003	Comparison of functional and symbolic products Cultural influence	Quantitative	200	Car and clothing
Kocak, Abimbola and Ozer, 2007	Replication of Vazquez et al., 2002 in a different cultural setting	Quantitative	761	Sport shoes
Grewal, Mehta and Kardes, 2004	Utilitarian functions Expressive functions	Quantitative	774	Cameras, cars, vacuum cleaners, etc
Balakrishnan, 2009	Functional Benefits Symbolic Benefits	Theoretical	-	Tourism
Sweeney and Soutar, 2001	Price and Quality Emotional Social	Quantitative	273 / 303	Retail
Orth et al., 2004; Orth, 2005; Orth and Lopetcharat, 2005; Orth, McGarry Wolf and Dodd, 2005; Orth and De Marchi, 2007	Price & Quality Benefits Positive & Negative Emotions Benefits Social Benefits	Quantitative	300 / 352 / 313 /756 /703	Beer, wine, fruit juice
Liang & Wang, 2004	Functional Benefits Experiential Benefits Symbolic Benefits	Quantitative	1043	Banking services
Blankson & Kalafatis, 2007	Functional Benefits Experiential Benefits Symbolic Benefits	Quantitative	357	Credit cards
Tsai, 2005	Tradeoff Value Affective Value Symbolic Value	Quantitative	960	Computers, coffee, Denim wear

Table 3: Stream N°2: Comparing symbolic drivers with other benefits.

3) Symbolic Needs

Main research question: What are the needs expressed by consumers?

The third stream of research we can identify, tries to define and distinguish the different needs expressed during symbolic consumption. Numerous studies investigated symbolic consumption cases (cf Sections: Means/Products) and explored

these needs. However, their key message is not the careful examination of these needs. Therefore, articles presented in this stream of research are those with a central focus on the nature of these needs and/or on their differences.

According to Richins (1994a; Richins, 1994b), two needs – *characterization* and *communication* - can be fulfilled by the symbolic value of a brand:

Characterization relates to the need that a person can have to express something to himself or to reinforce his self-esteem. It is based on the "private meaning" of the product/service which is the "sum of the subjective meaning that an object holds for a particular individual (…). The development of an object's private meaning involves active processes in which meaning is cultivated over time through repeated often purposeful interactions" (Richins, 1994a: 523). The use of such a product/service will allow the expression of specific values that help consumers reinforce self-esteem, to more firmly build and establish personal identity. For instance, imagine that I buy a Patek Philippe Swiss watch. Of course, my primary goal is to have a watch in order to know what time it is (functional need). However I can also have other goals corresponding to how I want to *characterize* myself – or to reinforce my self-identity: I want to regard myself as someone able to appreciate this extremely complicated, well designed and sophisticated product. Its authenticity, high quality or the related story of Swiss watch manufactures helps me to relate to a universe that makes sense for me. I might use this product to associate myself with its values and to reinforce my self-esteem or identity.

Communication is the second need. In this case, the consumer will use the *public meaning* of an object. This can refer to the set of meanings, beliefs, attributes associated with the object by society at large. The possession/use of an object/service will serve to signal or to *communicate* the owner's values to others, as "there is evidence that others (acting as observers) are capable of reading elements of a person's identity by observing that person's possessions" (Richins, 1994a: 524). For example, I may choose to buy a sports car, such as a Porsche or Ferrari, to communicate part of my identity to others. I assume that others will know that such cars are high performance sports cars. Consistent with this research on *communication*, Berger and Heath (2007) called it *identity signaling,* and show how the expression of this need diverges according to consumers and products.

Thorbjornsen, Pedersen and Herbjorn (2007) also recognize these two symbolic needs which they consider *self-identity expressiveness* and *social-identity expressiveness*. They find them to be significant predictors of intentions to use a product.

Literature acknowledges another symbolic need, called *status* (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; O'Cass and McEwen, 2004) also called *need for material* by Mowen and Spears (1999). It is defined as the extent to which the use of the product/service will symbolize the prestige or the status of the user. It is particularly related with the consumer's purchasing power. Buying a Rolls-Royce will give an indication as to an individual's purchasing power and to social status.

Therefore, some authors (Belen del Rio et al., 2001; Vazquez et al., 2002) decide to go further and to establish a more accurate typology including this third category of symbolic need. Vazquez et al.'s (2002) study and its replication (Kocak et al., 2007) are excellent examples of this stream identifying these three separate needs.

Finally more recently, Strizhakova, Coulter and Price (2008) identify several meanings that consumers attach to branded products. Apart from traditions, value and quality reasons, they also recognize the symbolic needs of *self-identity, group-identity,* and *status*. Their work highlights a major divergence of the stream concerning the second need. For Richins (1994a; 1994b)*,* Berger and Heath (2007) and Thorbjornsen et al. (2007), the second need, *communication* is seen as the need to communicate personal identity to others. Whereas for Strizhakova et al. (2008) and others (Belen del Rio et al., 2001; Vazquez et al., 2002; Kocak et al., 2007), the second need, *group-identity* is rather seen as the desire for social affiliation or recognition. What is important - for the first authors - is to *communicate* (not necessarily a social belonging but rather values), while in the second case, what is sought is to *associate* or to *be associated* with someone.

Before concluding this section, it is important to make a point clear. Some authors speak about needs, some others about benefits (see for example Park, 1986 and Keller, 1993). These two concepts are linked: once you have a need X (for instance a status need), you will seek a product that answers this need and that provides you the corresponding benefit. In other words, consumers might feel continuously a specific symbolic need, for example, the need of expressing their status independently of a consumption's experience. Complementary, the use of the concept of symbolic

benefits is rather related with a product. Some authors even speak about the symbolic benefits of a product. This might be misleading as they do not measure the symbolic benefits a product intrinsically has, but how consumers use this product to provide themselves these symbolic benefits. Being aware of that language misuse, the term of symbolic benefits will be however used hereafter to be consistent with the literature.

Summary of the third research stream

Having reviewed this stream of research, it appears that different needs are expressed and satisfied through symbolic consumption. The first need, called *characterization*, *personal identification* or *self-identity*, relates someone's need to reinforce personal identity, values or self-esteem. The second need¸ called *communication* or *group-identity*, relates to the desire to communicate values or to associate or to be associated with a person or a group of reference that is meaningful for him. In the literature, the two first needs are both very often examined together. Finally, a consumer might also seek to express *status*, showing symbols of prestige, luxury or purchasing power.

Table 4 presents an overview of the articles in the third stream:

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Richins, 1994a	Private meaning - characterization Public meaning - communication	Quantitative	263+45+30	Valued possessions (car, home, dog, etc)
Richins, 1994b	Private meaning - characterization Public meaning - communication	Quantitative	192+64+49+121	Valued possessions (car, home, dog, etc)
Berger and Heath, 2007	Identity Signaling and divergence in this need's expression	Quantitative	201+40+123+44	Dozen of different goods (car, music, toothpaste, etc).
Thorbjornsen, Pedersen and Herbjorn, 2007	Self-Identity Expressiveness Social-Identity Expressiveness	Quantitative	563	Multimedia Messaging (MMS)
Mowen and Spears, 1999 Bosnjak, Galesic, Tuten, 2007	Need for material ressource	Quantitative	165/129 808	Online shopping Compulsive purchases
Vigneron and Johnson, 1999	Prestige seeking behavior	Theoretical	-	-
O'Cass and McEwen, 2004	Status	Quantitative	315	Fashion clothing and sunglasses
Belen del Rio, Vazquez et Iglesias, 2001 Vazquez, Belen del Rio et Iglesias 2002	Personal identification, Social Identification, Status	Quantitative	1054	Sport shoes
Kocak, Abimbola and Ozer, 2007	Personal identification, Social Identification, Status	Quantitative	761	Sport shoes
Strizhakova, Coulter and Price, 2008	Self-identity Group-identity Status	Quantitative	1261	Retail

Table 4: Stream N°3: Symbolic needs

4) Symbolic Means: *Products*, *People* and *Practices*

Main research question: By what means do consumers answer their needs?

Researchers in this stream have tried to answer how consumers satisfy the above mentioned needs. It is by far the most important stream in the existing research. It is often empirical, frequently presents interesting managerial implications, and still benefits from vivid interest. A *symbolic means* is defined as something – an object of consumption, a person or a group of people, or some ways of consuming – having specific attributes that a consumer will use to refer to a concept (see examples below) which is meaningful for that individual. No research has been published combining all the different means that can be mobilized during symbolic consumption in one single article. Therefore, the following section will provide a tentative outline to structure the literature around three distinct symbolic means: *product/brand*, *people* and *practices*.

Product/Brand *as a means*

The use of a product/brand as a means of symbolic expression is often rooted in the early discussion on consumer materialism (Belk, 1985; Hill and Stamey, 1990; Elliott, 1994; Richins, 1994a; Fitzmaurice and Comegys, 2006) or related to Fournier's typology (1991) of the relationships with specific products, based on the meaning consumers give to the product and in particular to its symbolic aspects. The product/brand is considered to have a specific set of symbolic attributes with which the consumer wants to be associated in order to form or express his identity. For example, a consumer will use a Harley-Davidson motorbike to symbolically refer to freedom, machismo or American dream, an Audi German car to efficiency, design, precision and quality, IKEA furniture to simplicity, youth or joy of life, a Chanel bag for luxury and femininity, etc.

Nevertheless, "it does not mean that a particular object holds a particular intrinsic meaning" (Wattanasuwan, 2005: 181). Meanings vary across individuals and cultures. Moreover, they can vary for the same consumer across time, in particular before consumption (Fournier and Guiry, 1993), during and after consumption. In other words, products and brands become "meaningful only as a part of communicative sign process and are active ingredients of that process" (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981 cited in Wattanasuwan, 2005: 181; see also Smith, 2007). The literature emphasizes that some brands and products "are better able than others to communicate something about the person using them"

(Escalas and Bettman, 2005: 380) and therefore they might have a higher symbolic value (Bhat and Reddy, 1998).

At this stage, product and brand are not differentiated in the proposed classification. Both are considered as similar means of expression. Some authors have focused on the symbolic aspect of products or type of product (Belk, 1988; Richins, 1994a; Cho and Kerstetter, 2004; Creusen and Schoormans, 2005; Govers and Schoormans, 2005; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Thomsen and Sørensen, 2006), others have rather focused on the symbolic aspects of brands (Elliott, 1994; Phau and Lau, 2000; Aaker, Benet-Martínez and Garolera, 2001; Kim, Han and Park, 2001; Batra and Miles Homer, 2004; Elliott and Leonard, 2004; Santos, 2004; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Sung and Tinkham, 2005; Tsai, 2005a; Anisimova, 2007; Bosnjak and Brand, 2008). It is rare to find research that studies both simultaneously (Vazquez et al., 2002; Kocak et al., 2007).

Different studies have explored the use of products or brands as symbolic means of expression. This approach has been applied:

- in retailing (Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg, 2000; Chebat, Sirgy and St-James, 2006; He and Mukherjee, 2007),
- in the fashion and clothing industry (Auty and Elliott, 1998; Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2000; Auty and Elliott, 2001; Tan and Ming, 2003; Elliott and Leonard, 2004; Piacentini and Mailer, 2004; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Krohmer, Malär and Nyffeneger, 2007; Carroll, 2009; Wallström, Steyn and Pitt, 2010),
- to money and gold (Ertimur and Sandikci, 2005; Rose and Orr, 2007)
- to religion (Wattanasuwan and Elliott, 1999),
- to music (Larsen, Lawson and Todd., 2010),
- for luxury brands and goods (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Tsai, 2005a; Berthon, Pitt, Parent and Berthon, 2009),
- in the tourism sector (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000; Kastenholz, 2004; Gross and Brown, 2006; Beerli, Meneses and Gil, 2007; Bosnjak, 2010),
- in the automotive industry (Hsieh, 2001; Phau and Lau, 2001; Kressmann, Sirgy et al., 2006; Lau and Phau, 2007; Bosnjak and Brand, 2008),

- for the testing of the effectiveness of advertising (Kamp and MacInnis, 1995; Marshall, Na, State and Deuskar, 2008) and finally,

- for consumer goods (Phau and Lau, 2001; Gao, Wheeler and Shiv, 2009).

Table 5 displays articles investigating the use of a product as a symbolic means:

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Belk, 1985	Materialism and product meaning	Quantitative	338+99	Diverse possessions
Hill, 1990	Meanings attached to Possession	Qualitative	-	American homeless
Fitzmaurice and Comegys, 2006	Materialism	Quantitative	204	-
Fournier, 1991	Type of meanings attached to products	Theoretical	-	-
Fournier and Guiry, 1993	Product meaning before consumption	Quantitative	47+33+40	Diverse possessions
Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000	Products as means	Quantitative	1226	Whitewater recreationists
Cho and Kerstetter, 2004	Products as means	Quantitative	436	Tourism products
Creusen and Shoormans, 2005	Products as means	Quantitative	142	Diverse products
Govers and Shoormans, 2005	Products as means	Quantitative	48+37	Screwdrivers, coffeemakers,soap-dispensers, table-wines
Piacentini and Mailer, 2004	Products as means	Qualitative	38	Clothing
Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006	Products as means	Quantitative	557	Clothing
Carroll, 2009	Products as means	Theoretical	-	Clothing
Wallström, 2010	Products as means	Quantitative	1067	Clothing
Wattanasuwan and Elliott, 1999	Products as means	Qualitative	-	Religion
Ertimur and Sandikci, 2005	Products as means	Qualitative	20	Gold
Rose and Orr, 2007	Product as means	Quantitative	223+220+233 +256+76+65	Money
Marshall, 2008	Product as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	148	Lipsticks
Larsen et al., 2010	Product as means	Qualitative	28	Music

Table 5: Stream N°4: Symbolic means: Product

NB: studies presented in previous tables have not been displayed in this one.

The diversity of the domains where this symbolic approach has been tested shows its high relevance for marketing. As mentioned earlier, an important part of this stream of research empirically investigates the concept of self-congruity (sometimes called self-congruence), namely the conformity or difference between the consumer's self-concept and his perception of the product or the brand (Chon, 1992; Ericksen, 1996; Sirgy, Grewal et al., 1997; Aaker, 1999; Quester, Karunaratna and Goh, 2000; Sirgy and Su, 2000; Litvin and Goh, 2002; Litvin and Goh, 2003; Jamal and Al-Marri, 2007; Kwak and Kang, 2009; Lau and Phau, 2010). When this congruity is reached, it is generally recognised to be a valid predictor for attitude towards brands, purchase

intentions, loyalty, etc. (Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004; Kressmann et al., 2006; He and Mukherjee, 2007; Krohmer et al., 2007; Xue, 2008; Lee, 2009; Parker, 2009). In other words, you will be more prone to smoke a Marlboro, if you consider yourself as someone who is rude, authentic or masculine, a Vogue if you consider yourself sophisticated, stylish, or feminine, etc.

Table 6 displays articles investigating the use of brands as a symbolic means.

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Elliott, 1994	Brands as means	Quantitative	135	Sport shoes brands
Phau and Lau, 2000	Brands as means	Literature Review	-	-
Elliott and Leonard, 2004	Brands as means	Quantitative	192+64+49+121	Trainers/athletic shoes brands
Batra and Miles Homer, 2004	Brands as means	Quantitative	181+86	Food brands
Santos, 2004	Brands as means	Qualitative	45	Tourism brands
Vigneron and Johnson, 2004	Brands as means	Quantitative	1322	Luxury brands
Tsai, 2005a	Brands as means	Quantitative	945	Luxury brands
Anisimova, 2007	Brands as means	Quantitative	285	Cars
Sung and Tinkham, 2005	Brands as means Brand personality and cultural influences	Quantitative	320	Cars, electronic and leisure brands
Aaker, 1999	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	105+156	Beer, jackets, jeans, fragrances, and shoes brands
Sirgy and Su, 2000	Brands as means Self-congruity	Theoretical	-	Tourism brands
Auty and Elliott, 1998	Brands as means	Quantitative	669	Clothing
Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2000	Brands as means	Quantitative	321	Fashion stores
Tan and Ming, 2003	Brands as means	Quantitative	79	Clothing
Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Garolera, 2001	Brands as means Cultural influence	Quantitative	50+114+692	Diverse brands
Kim et al., 2001	Brands as means	Quantitative	120	Cell phones brands
Phau and Lau, 2001	Brands as means	Quantitative	197	Beer brands
Litvin and Goh, 2002	Brands as means	Quantitative	139	Tourism brands
Litvin and Goh, 2003	Brands as means	Quantitative	196	Tourism brands
Gross and Brown, 2006	Brands as means	Quantitative	196	Tourism brands
Hsieh, 2001	Brands as means	Quantitative	4320	Car brands
Lau and Phau, 2007	Brands as means	Quantitative	148	Car brands
Berthon et al., 2009	Brands as means	Theoretical	-	Luxury brands
Bosnjak, 2010	Brands as means	Quantitative	-	Tourism brands
Chon, 1992	Self-congruity	Quantitative	382	Tourism brands
Kamp and McInnis, 1995	Self-congruity	Quantitative	400	Advertising
Ericksen, 1996	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	162	Cars
Sirgy, Grewal et al., 1997	Self-congruity	Quantitative	270+500+382+428+320+252	Athletic shoes, clothing, tourist destination, consumer goods, credit card, marketing students
Quester et al., 2000	Self-congruity	Quantitative	156	Denim jeans and personal computer
Helgeson and Supphellen, 2003	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	424	Retail brands
Kressman et al., 2006	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	600	Car brands
Jamal and Al-Marri., 2007	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	190	Car brands
Krohmer et al., 2007	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	263	Fashion brands
Sirgy et al., 2000	Self-congruity	Theoretical	-	Stores
Chebat et al., 2006	Self-congruity	Quantitative	200	Stores
He and Mukherjee, 2007	Self-congruity	Quantitative	320	Stores
Xue, 2008	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	223	SUV brands
Bosnjak and Brand, 2008	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	107	Car brands
Parker, 2009	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	272	Consumer (FMCG) brands
Kwak and Kang, 2009	Self-congruity	Quantitative	260	Sport brands
Lee, 2009	Brands as means Self-congruity	Quantitative	500	Car brands
Lau and Phau, 2010	Self-congruity	Quantitative	136	Car and watch brands

Table 6: Stream N°4: Symbolic means: Brands

NB: studies presented in previous tables have not been displayed in this one.

People as a means

People are the second means recognized in the literature. What defines this means is not the "what" of consumption, but the "with whom" of the consumption. The product/brand is no longer the focal point, but the linking value it has that "permits and supports social interaction of the communal type" (Cova, 1997: 307). The emphasis is put on reference groups that are important to a consumer and against which he compares himself (Leigh and Gabel, 1992; Englis and Solomon, 1995; Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Escalas and Bettman, 2005).

This symbolic interaction (Ligas and Cotte, 1999; Ligas, 2000) can appear in different social contexts, such as family ties (Epp and Price, 2008), cultural and gendered groups (Pritchard, Morgan and Sedgley, 2002), and sports communities (Cova and Cova, 2001).

The concept of *people* as a means of self-expression is rooted in the postmodern perspective of consumption (Merle, 2004; Sitz and Amine, 2004) and has also been discussed under the notions of *tribes* (Cova and Cova, 2001), *neo-tribal constellation* (Cova, 1997), and *sub-culture of consumption* (Cova and Carrère, 2002).

Brand communities are a particular case of *people* as a means. These are created when social interactions are built up around the shared values of a specific brand. Communities around brands such as Ford Bronco, Apple, Saab, Jeep, Harley-Davidson and Nutella have been studied (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Muniz Jr and O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002; Cova and Pace, 2006; Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig, 2007). Numerous other studies have been conducted on brand communities. However, as they do not put the emphasis on the symbolic aspect of consumption within these groups, they are not mentioned here.

Table 7 displays articles investigating the use of people as a symbolic means:

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Cova, 1997	People as means Neo-tribal constellation	Theoretical	-	-
Cova and Cova, 2001	People as means Tribes	Qualitative	-	In-line roller skaters
Auty and Elliott, 2001	People as means Brands as means	Quantitative	555	Sport shoes brands
Cova and Carrère, 2002	People as means Sub-culture of consumption	Qualitative	-	Movies and cars
Pritchard, et al. 2002	People as means Cultural and gendered groups	Qualitative	-	Gay's community
Merle, 2004	People as means	Theoretical	-	-
Sitz and Amine, 2004	People as means	Theoretical	-	-
Epp and Price, 2008	People as means Family ties	Theoretical	-	-
Leigh and Gabel, 1992	People as means Reference groups	Theoretical	-	-
Englis and Solomon, 1995	People as means Reference groups	Quantitative	69	Cars, magazine newspapers, toiletries and alcoholic beverages
Ligas and Cotte, 1999	People as means symbolic interactions	Theoretical	-	-
Ligas, 2000	People as means symbolic interactions	Qualitative	4	-
Escalas and Bettman, 2003	People as means Reference groups	Quantitative	45+171	Food, clothing
Escalas and Bettman, 2005	People as means Reference groups	Quantitative	288+161	Clothing
Schouten and McAlexander, 1995	People as means Brand community	Qualitative	-	Bikers
Muniz Jr and O'Guinn, 2001	People as means Brand community	Qualitative	-	Cars and computer
McAlexander, Schouten and Koenig, 2002	People as means Brand community	Quantitative	259	Cars
Cova and Pace, 2006	People as means Brand community	Qualitative	-	Food
Schouten, McAlexander and Koenig, 2007	People as means Brand community	Quantitative	453	Cars

Table 7: Stream N°4: Symbolic means: People

Practices *as a means*

As previously mentioned, an extensive body of literature exists on what or on with whom people symbolically consume, but it is rare to find research on "how" they consume. The few articles in marketing investigating the *practices* as a means to satisfy symbolic needs will be outlined below. Holt (1995b) is probably one of the

first to set up a typology of consumption *practices* yielding "a comprehensive vocabulary for describing how consumers consume" (1995b: 1). Later, Kjellberg (2008) built on Holt's typology to show how these *practices* result in the symbolic production of consumers. The role of *practices* in symbolic consumption has been investigated in several situations such as cross-cultural contexts (Jafari and Goulding, 2008), gendered ones, such as a gay's community (Kates, 2002) and intergenerational transfers of symbolic objects (Heisley and Cours, 2007).

A particular case of consumption *practices* is that of rituals. Different rituals have been recognized in the literature (Rook, 1985; Tetreault and Kleine, 1990) and scholars have highlighted how they allow a transfer of meaning from the consumed goods to the consumer (McCracken, 1986) or a (re)construction of self (Schouten, 1991).

Practices and in particular rituals are also often linked with sub-cultures of consumption, especially brand communities (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). "Rituals and traditions perpetuate the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness" (Muniz Jr and O'Guinn, 2001: 413) and allow to sustain the community membership (Cova and Cova, 2001). The recent article by Schau et al. (2009) highlights the role of *practices* in brand communities. They discuss how practices create value for the consumer, and how they are a means to answer symbolic needs: "Practices structurally add value by making actions reproducible and repeatable, thus allowing more consumers to derive greater value from the brand" (Schau et al., 2009: 40).

Study	Main concepts or ideas	Type	Sample size	Product Category
Holt, 1995	Practices as means	Theoretical	-	-
Kates, 2002	Practices as means	Qualitative	44	Gendered situations
Heisley and Cours, 2007	Practices as means	Qualitative	36	Intergenerational transfers
Kjellberg, 2008	Practices as means	Theoretical	-	-
Jafari and Goulding, 2008	Practices as means	Qualitative	14	Cross-cultural situations
Rook, 1985	Practices as means Rituals	Quantitative	91+59	Grooming
McCracken, 1986	Practices as means Rituals	Theoretical	-	-
Tetreault et al., 1990	Practices as means Rituals	Theoretical	-	-
Schouten, 1991	Practices as means Rituals	Qualitative	9	Re-construction of self (plastic surgery)
Schau et al.	People (brand community) Practices (rituals)	Qualitative	-	Car, beverage, music, movies, etc.

Table 8: Stream N°4: Symbolic means: Practices

Summary of the fourth research stream:

In summary, literature to date recognizes three different means to answer a symbolic need. Symbolic consumption through the means of *product/brand* has been by far the most studied until now. The *people* means has received less attention and is essentially focused on brand communities. Finally, *practices* are the means that have received the least attention. It is also interesting to notice that specific sectors have received continuing attention, such as cars (n=17), clothing (n=9), tourism (n=7) and food (n=6).

In linking the needs (Stream 3) and the means (Stream 4), in order to investigate their potential relationship, the following observations can be made on the previous literature:

People are a means used to satisfy a need for *group-identity*, whereas the *product/brand* means is used as much for a *self-identity* as for a *group-identity* need. It is also noteworthy that *practices*, especially *rituals*, have frequently been investigated in the community context. *Status* is clearly a symbolic need that deserves further research. Researchers have mostly investigated the satisfaction of *status* by a *product/brand* means, but it is much more uncommon to have studies who investigate *people* and *practices* as means for *status*.

DISCUSSION

As with any effort of classification or modeling, this structure reduces the complexity of the reality into simpler concepts. Articles are sometimes attributed to a specific field while their focus might have been broader. However, it is believed that the gains of benefiting from this structuring overview are greater than the negative sides due to the loss of complexity.

The above classification of the literature suggests that symbolic consumption represents a coherent field of research. Our understanding of symbolic consumption has significantly progressed since the early publication by Sirgy in 1982. In particular, scholars have managed to establish the psychological bases and underlying motives of consumers; they have identified the symbolic needs (*characterization* or self-*identity*, *communication* or *group-identity*, and *status*) and by what means (*product/brand*,

people and *practices*) consumers try to answer them. Researchers have also made special efforts to recognize symbolic drivers as valid predictors of consumption, alongside the functional and emotional drivers. Despite the important amount of literature on symbolic consumption, no comprehensive review has been conducted allowing for an identification of the main research streams and questions of the field. This article aims at bridging this gap, and using the latest developments of the literature. It develops an integrative structure of the field highlighting the key research themes.

DEFINING A RESEARCH AGENDA

Due to the classification of the literature into four different streams, several literature gaps or underlying problems surfaced. These issues merit further academic attention. Therefore, they will be presented here using a similar structure for each. First, the problem is identified. Second, the problem is translated into a research question. And third, propositions of research design or methodological suggestions are offered to answer the research question.

Issue 1: Difficulty to measure symbolic needs

Future researchers in the field should be aware that consumers are usually not conscious of their symbolic needs. They express them but might not always want to recognize it. For example, a Ferrari driver might not want to recognize that he has a communication need to express his virility. Therefore, asking him directly and explicitly about his symbolic needs might provide inaccurate or biased answers. This issue is highly relevant due to the very high number of studies using self-administrated questionnaires. Therefore, it is important to formulate adequate questions or ways to investigate symbolic consumption.

Research question: *How can scholars measure the reel symbolic need and not a biased one?*

Proposing a design to control for that issue is not easy. The first problematic situation is that a consumer refuses deliberately to recognize a symbolic need or tries to minimize it. In that case, one possibility would be to systematically control the results by using a social desirability scale (Crowne and Marlowe, 1960). The second problematic situation would be that the consumer is not aware of his symbolic need

and does not try conscientiously to influence the results. In that case, it would also valuable to use other techniques reducing common method biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff, 2003). Finally a study investigating the identical consumption experience using two designs, one with a survey and one with an experiment (in which the dependent variable would not be biased), will allow to test the importance of this bias.

Issue 2: Link between self-congruity and symbolic needs

Future research should also clarify the link between symbolic consumption and self-congruity. These two concepts are both crucial in the symbolic approach. The first characterizes a consumption act where self-expression needs are satisfied by specific means, while the second relates to the extent to which a product is consumed because it has common personality traits with the user. However, some scholars (Wright et al., 1992; Kamp and MacInnis, 1995; Sirgy et al., 1997) clearly confuse them as they measure them with a unique set of questions. Moreover, no study has shown how these two concepts are effectively related to each other.

R.Q: What is the genuine relationship between self-congruity and symbolic needs?

A research design using the same individuals for the two different concepts would be relevant. Scales for self-congruity are well established (some examples are the works of: Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004; Kressmann et al., 2006; Parker, 2009) and scales testing symbolic needs alike (Vazquez et al., 2002; Strizhakova et al., 2008). Therefore it would be possible to emphasize how these two concepts differ and are related using this type of design.

Issue 3: Discriminant validity of symbolic needs

As presented in stream 3, there is a controversy concerning the second symbolic need. For some authors, (Richins, 1994a; 1994b) the second need, *communication*, is seen as a need to communicate personal identity to others. Whereas for others (Strizhakova et al., 2008) the second need, *group-identity*, is rather seen as a desire for social belonging. Moreover, one might argue that the third need¸ *status*, is only a specific case of the *communication* need, as *status* is something you might want to communicate. Further research is then needed to show whether these three needs are different.

R.Q: Are group-identity and communication two different needs?

Are communication and status two different needs?

Before empirically testing these concepts, a conceptual refinement of these needs and of their differences should be conducted. A quantitative approach highlighting their discriminant validity would then be appropriate. Structural Equation Modeling might be the easiest way to calculate and display their differences.

Issue 4: Interaction between desired benefits (symbolic with functional and emotional benefits)

Numerous studies, in stream 2, have provided reasons for taking into account symbolic benefits alongside functional and the emotional benefits. However, it is rare to find articles focusing on the potential interactions of these drivers. Tsai (2005b) has found significant interactions between them, but has not conducted further investigations or provided explanations for them. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate the interaction between the desired benefits and in particular between emotional and symbolic ones. It is quite clear how they are theoretically different, but in reality they are probably inextricably mixed, and one probably does not exist without the other.

R.Q: How do the desired benefits interact? Are some specific (such as emotional and symbolic) benefits only present in pairs?

As presented in Stream 2, numerous studies do already exist and have calculated the impact of each of the functional, emotional and symbolic benefits on satisfaction. But they have not investigated the interactions between these benefits. Therefore, a meta-analysis using these data sets is undoubtedly the easiest way to give a first answer to this issue.

Issue 5: Interactions within the means used

The vast majority if not the totality of previous studies on symbolic means has investigated only one specific symbolic means. It is rare to find a work that studies two or even three different symbolic means at the same time. This is unfortunate because measuring only one means at a time does not make it possible to investigate their possible interactions. For instance, in the famous Harley-Davidson example (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), the motorbike (product and brand) is used as a means. But the community and practices alike are also of high importance for the consumer.

R.Q: *How does one means perform regarding the others? That is: does the presence of a means exclude or, on the contrary, automatically implicate or reinforce the presence of another means?*

A broad quantitative approach, such as a survey, differentiating and empirically measuring the different means is necessary. Consumers should first indicate what means they use. Then they should be asked to rate how important each means is for them and to what extent they think the means are related.

Issue 6: Overlooked means

As presented in stream 4, several means of satisfying a symbolic need are used by consumers, namely: *products, people* and *practices*. Although these means have been extensively studied, one can wonder whether scholars have not overlooked other symbolic means. In particular, it is worth investigating to what extent *ideas* might also serve as a means of self-expression. Indeed, in specific cases, ideas are used by consumers to help them express symbolic needs. Take the example of politics and religion, where ideas are clearly one way of satisfying a need of *self-identity, group-identity* or *status*. With the exception of Wattanasuwan and Elliott (1999), ideas have not been discussed as a means of satisfying symbolic needs.

R.Q: *What are the potential other needs not investigated until today?*

What is needed here is to dig deeper into the consumer behaviour and to discover unusual means of symbolic expressions. Therefore, it is necessary to be as close as possible to the consumer to understand symbolic consumption. An ethnographic approach would be particularly adapted to this.

Issue 7: Relationship between streams 3 and 4, i.e. linking needs and means

It is also highly valuable to step back from an overly narrow view and to rediscover symbolic consumption as a whole. Too often, scholars have only investigated the symbolic needs expressed or the means used to answer these needs. But as surprising as it might be, no framework linking needs and means has been investigated. An example of this framework is present in figure 2. As shown, this representation allows linking needs to means. It also highlights the importance of value creation as the end of symbolic consumption. The framework presented here is only the first step in representing the symbolic consumption. However, it is helpful as it allows essential research questions to surface.

Means \ Needs	Characterization Self-identity	Communication Group-identity	Status
Product/Brand (What ?)			
People (With whom ?)			
Practices (How ?)			

CREATION OF SYMBOLIC VALUE
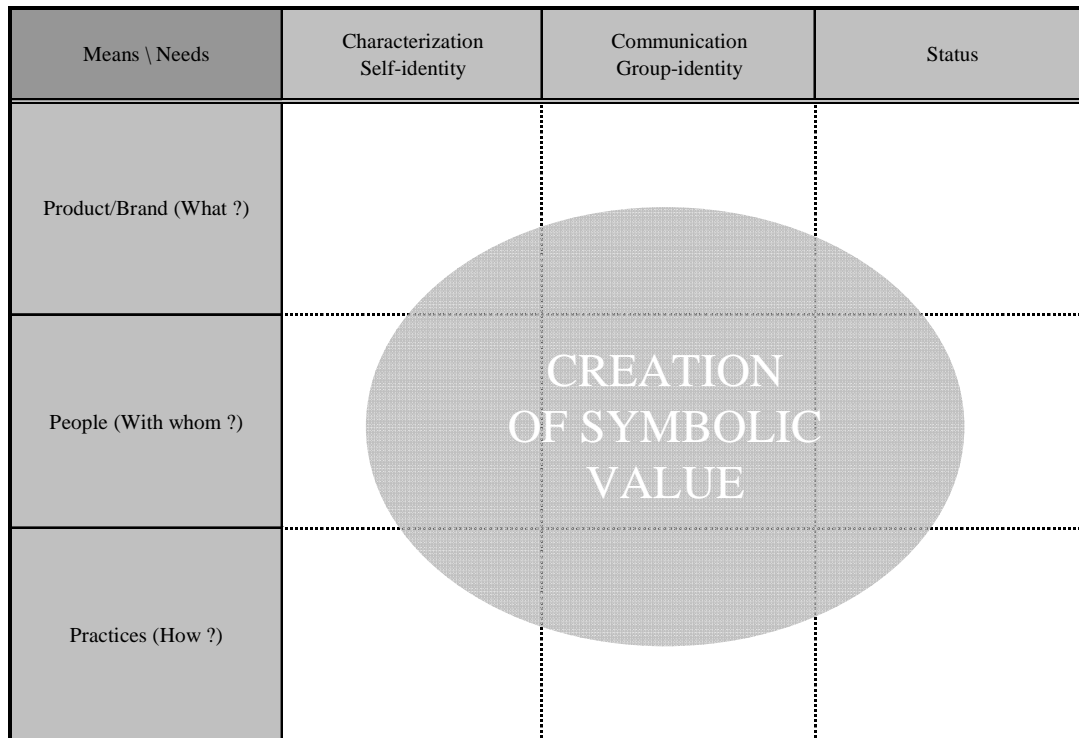
Figure 2: A theoretical framework for symbolic consumption

R.Q: Is a need usually satisfied by one single means or does a consumer frequently use different means simultaneously to answer one need? Can one means answer several needs simultaneously? Are specific means always mobilized in order to answer specific needs?

This current issue certainly merits further academic attention but requires the highest workload. Therefore, I would recommend beginning the investigation by a case study. As it might be hard to find a case of consumption where the nine cells of the above framework are present, cross-case studies might be appropriate. A qualitative approach is valuable as it will allow digging deeper into the consumer's motives and behaviour during a symbolic consumption.

Issue 8: Stability across product culture and time

Finally, the most ambitious avenue of research is that of stability. Several studies have demonstrated that symbolic consumption might differ regarding some criteria. First, the numerous examples in stream 4 present divergent results, depending on the product category. Second, several studies suggest that culture might also influence the

needs expressed or how a product is perceived as a symbolic means (Quester et al., 2000; Aaker et al., 2001; Kocak et al., 2007). Finally, scholars (Richins, 1994a; Orth and De Marchi, 2007) have proposed that the meaning we associate with a product and its usefulness as symbolic means evolve in time.

R.Q: *How does symbolic consumption behave according to product category, culture and time?*

This is believed to be a very interesting and fruitful avenue of research. Several steps will be necessary to answer such an ambitious question. Meta-analysis is already possible to answer the cross-product interrogation. But further longitudinal as well as cross-cultural studies on large samples will be necessary to investigate the effect of culture and time.

To conclude, the important amount of these questions highlights how vivid and relevant symbolic consumption remains for marketing. Table 9 presents an overview of the above mentioned issues. As stated above, these issues have surfaced during the literature review. Although they do not represent an exhaustive list of "what remains to be done", investigating them is a necessary step to improve our understanding of symbolic consumption.

REFERENCES

Aaker, J. (1999). The Malleable Self: The Role of Self-Expression in Persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(1), 45-57.

Aaker, J., Benet-Martínez, V., et al. (2001). Consumption Symbols as Carriers of Culture: A Study of Japanese and Spanish Brand Personality Constructs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81(3), 492-508.

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(August), 347-356.

Anisimova, T. A. (2007). The effects of corporate brand attributes on attitudinal and behavioural consumer loyalty. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 24(7), 395–405.

Auty, S. and Elliott, R. (1998). Fashion involvement, self-monitoring and the meaning of brands. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 7(2), 109-123.

Auty, S. and Elliott, R. (2001). Being Like or Being Liked: Identity vs. Approval in a Social Context. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 28, 235-241.

Balakrishnan, M. S. (2009). Strategic branding of destinations: a framework. *European Journal of Marketing*, 43(5/6), 611-629.

Barone, M. J., Shimp, T. A., et al. (1999). Product Ownership as a Moderator of Self-Congruity Effects. *Marketing Letters*, 10(1), 75-85.

Batra, R. and Miles Homer, P. (2004). The Situational Impact of Brand Image Beliefs. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(3), 318-330.

Beerli, A., Meneses, G. D., et al. (2007). Self-Congruity and Destination Choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(3), 571-587.

Belen del Rio, A., Vazquez, R., et al. (2001). The role of the brand name in obtaining differential advantages. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 10(7), 452-465.

Belk, R. W. (1985). Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(December), 265-280.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possession and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(September), 139-168.

Belk, R. W. (1989). Extended Self and extending paradigmatic perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16(1), 129-133.

Berger, J. and Heath, C. (2007). Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34, 121-134.

Berthon, P., Pitt, L., et al. (2009). Aesthetics and Ephemerality: Observing and preserving the luxury brand. *California Management Review*, 52(1), 45-66.

Bhat, S. and Reddy, S. K. (1998). Symbolic and functional positioning of brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(1), 32-43.

Blankson, C. and Kalafatis, S. P. (2007). Congruence between Positioning and Brand Advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(1), 79-94.

Bosnjak, M. (2010). Negative symbolic aspects in destination branding: Exploring the role of the 'undesired self' on web-based vacation information search intentions among potential first-time visitors *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 16(4), 323-330.

Bosnjak, M. and Brand, C. (2008). The Impact of Undesired Self-Image Congruence on Consumption-Related Attitudes and Intentions. *International Journal of Management*, 25(3), 673-683.

Bricker, K. S. and Kerstetter, D. L. (2000). Level of Specialization and Place Attachment: An Exploratory Study of Whitewater Recreationists. *Leisure Sciences*, 22, 233-257.

Brock Smith, J. and Colgate, M. (2007). Customer Value Creation : a practical framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 15(1), 7-23.

Carroll, A. (2009). Brand communications in fashion categories using celebrity endorsement. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17(2), 146-158.

Chebat, J.-C., Sirgy, M. J., et al. (2006). Upscale image transfer from malls to stores: A self-image congruence explanation. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(12), 1288-1296.

Cho, M.-H. and Kerstetter, D. L. (2004). The Influence of Sign Value on Travel-Related Information Search. *Leisure Sciences*, 26, 19-34.

Chon, K. S. (1992). Self-image/destination image congruity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(2), 360-363.

Cova, B. (1997). Community and Consumption. *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(3/4), 297-316.

Cova, B. and Carrère, V. (2002). Les communautés de passionnés de marque : opportunité ou menace ou sur le net ? *Revue Française de Marketing*, 119-130.

Cova, B. and Cova, V. (2001). Tribal aspects of postmodern consumption research: The case of French in-line roller skates. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 1(1), 67-76.

Cova, B. and Pace, S. (2006). Brand community of convenience products: new forms of customer empowerment – the case "my Nutella The Community". *European Journal of Marketing*, 40(9/10), 1087-1105.

Creusen, M. and Schoormans, J. P. L. (2005). The Different Roles of Product Appearance in Consumer Choice. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 22, 63–81.

Crowne, D. and Marlowe, D. (1960). A new scale of social desirability independent of psychopathology. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 24, 349-354.

Deeter-Schmelz, D. R., Moore, J. N., et al. (2000). Prestige clothing shopping by consumers: A confirmatory assessment and refinement of the Precon scale with managerial implications. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 8(4), 43-58.

Elliott, R. (1994). Exploring the symbolic Meaning of Brands. *British Journal of Management*, 5, 13-19.

Elliott, R. and Leonard, C. (2004). Peer pressure and poverty: Exploring fashion brands and consumption symbolism among children of the 'British poor'. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 3(4), 347-359.

Englis, B. G. and Solomon, M. R. (1995). To Be and Not to Be: Lifestyle Imagery, Reference Groups, and The Clustering of America. *Journal of Advertising*, XXIV(1), 13-28.

Epp, A. and Price, L. (2008). Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(1), 50-70.

Ericksen, M. K. (1996). Using self-congruity and ideal congruity to predict purchase intention: A European perspective. *Journal of Euro - Marketing*, 6(1), 41-56.

Ertimur, B. and Sandikci, O. (2005). Giving Gold Jewelry and Coins As Gifts: The Interplay of Utilitarianism and Symbolism. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 32, 322-327.

Escalas, J. E. and Bettman, J. R. (2003). You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumer's Connection to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 339-348.

Escalas, J. E. and Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-Construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378-389.

Fennis, B. M., Pruyn, A. T. H., et al. (2005). Revisiting the Malleable Self: Brand Effects on Consumer Self-Perceptions of Personality Traits. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 32, 371-377.

Firat, A. F. and Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchatment of Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(3), 239-267.

Fitzmaurice, J. and Comegys, C. (2006). Materialism and social consumption. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 14(4), 287–299.

Fournier, S. (1991). A Meaning-Based Framework for the Study of Consumer-Object Relations *Advances in Consumer Research*, 18, 736-742.

Fournier, S. and Guiry, M. (1993). An Emerald Green Jaguar, A House on Nantucket, and an African Safari: Wish Lists and Consumption Dreams in Materialist Society. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 20, 352-358.

Gao, L., Wheeler, C. S., et al. (2009). The "Shaken Self": Product Choices as a Means of Restoring Self-View Confidence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36, 29-38.

Govers, P. C. and Schoormans, J. P. L. (2005). Product personality and its influence on consumer preference. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 22(4), 189-197.

Grewal, R., Mehta, R., et al. (2004). The Timing of Repeat Purchases of Consumer Durable Goods: The Role of Functional Bases of Consumer Attitudes. *Joumal of Marketing Research*, 41, 101-115.

Gross, M. J. and Brown, G. (2006). Tourism experiences in a lifestyle destination setting: The roles of involvement and place attachment. *Journal of Business Research*, 59(6), 696-700.

Grubb, E. L. and Grathwohl, H. L. (1967). Consumer Self-Concept, Symbolism and Market Behavior: A Theoretical Approach. *Journal of Marketing*, 31(4), 22-27.

He, H. and Mukherjee, A. (2007). I am, ergo I shop: does store image congruity explain shopping behaviour of Chinese consumers? *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(5/6), 443-460.

Heisley, D. D. and Cours, D. (2007). Connectedness and Worthiness for the Embedded Self: A Material Culture Perspective. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 10(4), 425-450.

Helgeson, J. G. and Supphellen, M. (2004). A conceptual and measurement comparison of self-congruity and brand personality. The impact of socially desirable responding. *International Journal of Market Research*, 46(2), 205-233.

Hill, P. R. and Stamey, M. (1990). The homeless in America: An examination of possession and consumptions behaviors. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 303-321.

Holbrook, M. B. (2005). Customer value and autoethnography: subjective personal introspection and the meanings of a photograph collection. *Journal of Business Research*, 58, 45-61.

Holt, D. B. (1995). How Consumers Consume: A Typology of

Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 1-16.

Hsieh, M. H. (2001). Identifying Brand Image Dimensionality and Measuring the Degree of Brand Globalization: A Cross-National Study. *Journal of International Marketing*, 10(2), 46-67.

Jafari, A. and Goulding, C. (2008). "We are not terrorists!" UK-based Iranians, consumption practices and the "torn self". *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 11(2), 73-91.

Jamal, A. and Al-Marri, M. (2007). Exploring the effect of self-image congruence and brand preference on satisfaction: the role of expertise. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(7-8), 613-629.

Kamp, E. and MacInnis, D. J. (1995). Characteristics of portrayed emotions in commercials. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 35(6), 19-28.

Kastenholz, E. (2004). Assessment and Role of Destination-Self-Congruity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 719-723.

Kates, S. (2002). The Protean Quality of Subcultural Consumption: An Ethnographic Account of Gay Consumers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(3), 383-399.

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(January), 1-22.

Kim, C. K., Han, D., et al. (2001). The effect of brand personality and brand identification on brand loyalty: Applying the theory of social identification. *Japanese Psychological Research*, 43(4), 195-206.

Kjellberg, H. (2008). Market Practices and over-consumption. *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 11(2), 151-167.

Kocak, A., Abimbola, T., et al. (2007). Consumer Brand Equity in a Cross-cultural Replication: An Evaluation of a Scale. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1/2), 157-173.

Kressmann, F., Sirgy, J. M., et al. (2006). Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 59, 955-964.

Krohmer, H., Malär, L., et al. (2007). *The Fit Between Brand Personality and Consumer's Self*. 2007 AMA Winter Educators' Conference.

Kwak, D. H. and Kang, J.-H. (2009). Symbolic purchase in sport: the roles of self-image congruence and perceived quality. *Management Decision*, 47(1), 85-99.

Larsen, G., Lawson, R., et al. (2010). The symbolic consumption of music. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 26(7/8), 671-685.

Lau, K. C. and Phau, I. (2007). Extending Symbolic Brands Using Their Personality: Examining Antecedents and Implications Towards Brand Image Fit and Brand Dilution. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(5), 421-444.

Lau, K. C. and Phau, I. (2010). Impact of gender on perceptual fit evaluation for prestige brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17, 354 – 367.

Lee, J. W. (2009). Relationship between consumer personality and brand personality as self-concept: from the case of Korean automobile brands. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 13(1), 25-44.

Leigh, J. H. and Gabel, T. G. (1992). Symbolic Interactionism: Its Effects on Consumer Behavior and Implications for marketing strategy. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 9(1), 27-38.

Levy, S. (1959). Symbols for sale. *Harvard Business Review*, 37, 117-124.

Levy, S. (1964). Symbolism and Life Style *Toward Scientific Marketing*. S. A. Greyse. Chicago, American Marketing Association

Liang, C.-J. and Wang, W.-H. (2004). Attributes, benefits, customer satisfaction and behavioral loyalty - an integrative research of financial services industry in Taiwan *Journal of Services Research*, 4(1), 54-91.

Ligas, M. (2000). People, Products, and Pursuits: Exploring the relationship between consumer goals and product meanings. *Psychology & Marketing*, 17(11), 983-1003.

Ligas, M. and Cotte, J. (1999). The Process of Negotiating Brand Meaning: A Symbolic Interactionist Perspective. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 29(1), 609-614.

Litvin, S. W. and Goh, H. K. (2002). Self-image congruity: a valid tourism theory? *Tourism Management*, 23, 81-83.

Litvin, S. W. and Goh, H. K. (2003). Individualism/collectivism as a moderating factor to the self-image congruity concept. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(1), 23-32.

Markus, H. and Kunda, Z. (1986). Stability and malleability of the self concept. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 51(4), 858-866.

Marshall, R., Na, W., et al. (2008). Endorsement Theory: How Consumers Relate to Celebrity Models. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 48(4), 564-572.

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W., et al. (2002). Building Brand Community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(January), 38-54.

McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(June), 71-84.

Merle, A. (2004). *Apports du point de vue postmoderne à l'étude des comportements de consommation de groupe : un début de clarification*. IIèmes Journées Normandes de Recherche sur la Consommation, Caen.

Michaelidou, N. and Dibb, S. (2006). Product Involvement: an application in clothing. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 5, 442-453.

Mittal, B. (2006). I, me, and mine-how products become consumers' extended selves. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 5, 550-562.

Mowen, J. C. and Spears, N. (1999). Understanding compulsive Buying among College Students: A hierachical approach. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 8(4), 407-430.

Mowle, J. and Merriles, B. (2005). A functional and symbolic perspective to branding Australian SME wineries. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 14(4/5), 220-227.

Muniz Jr, A. M. and O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.

Murray, J. (2002). The Politics of Consumption: A Re-inquiry on Thompson and Haytko's (1997) "Speaking of Fashion". *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(3), 427-440.

O'Cass, A. and McEwen, H. (2004). Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 4(1), 25–39.

Orth, U. R. (2005). Consumer personality and other factors in situational brand choice variation. *Journal of Brand Management*, 13(2), 115-133.

Orth, U. R. and De Marchi, R. (2007). Understanding the relationships between functional, symbolic and experiential brand beliefs, product experiential attributes, and product schema:advertsing-trial interactions revisited. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 15(3), 219-233.

Orth, U. R. and Lopetcharat, K. (2005). Consumer-Based Brand Equity versus Product-Attribute Utility: A Comparative Approach for Craft Beer. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 11(4), 77-90.

Orth, U. R., McDaniel, M., et al. (2004). Promoting brand benefits: the role of consumer psychographics. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 21(2/3), 97-108.

Orth, U. R., McGarry Wolf, M., et al. (2005). Dimensions of wine region equity and their impact on consumer preferences. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 14(2), 88-97.

Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J., et al. (1986). Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(October), 135-145.

Parker, B. T. (2009). A comparison of brand personality and brand user-imagery congruence. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26(3), 175-184.

Phau, I. and Lau, F. (2000). Conceptualising brand personality: A review and research propositions. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 9(1), 52–69.

Phau, I. and Lau, K. C. (2001). Brand personality and consumer self-expression: single or dual carriageway. *Journal of Brand Management*, 8(6), 428-444.

Piacentini, M. and Mailer, G. (2004). Symbolic consumption in teenagers' clothing choices. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 3(3), 251–262.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., et al. (2003). Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.

Pritchard, A., Morgan, N., et al. (2002). In search of lesbian space? The experience of Manchester's gay village. *Leisure Studies*, 21(105-123).

Quester, P. G., Karunaratna, A., et al. (2000). Self-congruity and product evaluation: a cross-cultural study. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 17(6), 525-537.

Reed II, A. (2002). Social Identity as a Useful Perspective for Self-Concept–based Consumer Research. *Psychology & Marketing*, 19(3), 235-266.

Richins, M. L. (1994a). Special Possessions and the Expression of Material Values. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 522-533.

Richins, M. L. (1994b). Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 504-521.

Rook, D. W. (1985). The Ritual Dimension of Consumer Behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(3), 251-264.

Rose, G. M. and Orr, L. M. (2007). Measuring and Exploring Symbolic Money Meanings. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(9), 743-761.

Santos, C. A. (2004). Framing Portugal. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(1), 122-138.

Saren, M. (2007). To have is to be ? A critique of self-creation through consumption. *The Marketing Review*, 7(4), 343-354.

Schau, H. J. (2000). Consumer Imagination, Identity and Self-expression. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 27(1), 50-56.

Schau, H. J., Muniz Jr, A. M., et al. (2009). How Brand Community Practices Create Value. *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), 30-51.

Schouten, J. W. (1991). Selves in Transition : Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 412-425.

Schouten, J. W. and McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 43-61.

Schouten, J. W., McAlexander, J. H., et al. (2007). Transcendent customer experience and brand community. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 35(3), 357-368.

Shavitt, S. (1992). Evidence for Predicting the Effectiveness of Value-Expressive Versus Utilitarian Appeals: A Reply to Johar and Sirgy. *Journal of Advertising*, XXI(2), 47-51.

Sheth, J. and Parvatiyar, A. (1995). Relationship Marketing in Consumer Markets: Antecedents and Consequences. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 23(4), 255-271.

Sheth, J. N., Newman, B. I., et al. (1991). Why We Buy What We Buy: A Theory of Consumption Values. *Journal of Business Research*, 22, 159-170.

Sirgy, J. M. (1982). Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(December), 287-300.

Sirgy, J. M. (1985). Using Self-Congruity and Ideal Congruity to Predict Purchase Motivation. *Journal of Business Research*, 13(3), 195-206.

Sirgy, J. M., Grewal, D., et al. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(3), 229-241.

Sirgy, J. M. and Johar, J. S. (1991). Value-Expresive Versus Utilitarian Advertising Appeals : when and why to use which appeal. *Journal of Advertising*, XX(3), 23-33.

Sirgy, J. M. and Su, H. (2000). Destination Image, Self-Congruity and Travel Behavior: Toward an Integrated Model. *Journal of Travel Research*, 38, 340-352.

Sirgy, M. J., Grewal, D., et al. (2000). Retail Environment, Self-Congruity, and Retail Patronage: An Integrative Model and a Research Agenda. *Journal of Business Research*, 49(2), 127-138.

Sirgy, M. J., Johar, J. S., et al. (1991). Self-Congruity Versus Functional Congruity: Predictors of Consumer Behavior. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 19(4), 363-376.

Sitz, L. and Amine, A. (2004). Consommation et groupes de consommateurs, de la tribu postmoderne aux communautés de marque : pour une clarification des concepts. *Cahier de Recherche, IRG, Paris XII.*

Smith, T. (2007). The existential consumption paradox: an exploration of meaning in marketing. *The Marketing Review*, 7(4), 325-341.

Solomon, M. R. (1983). The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: A symbolic Interactionism Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(December), 319-329.

Strizhakova, Y., Coulter, R., et al. (2008). The meanings of branded products: A cross-national scale development and meaning assesment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 25, 82-93.

Sung, Y. and Tinkham, S. F. (2005). Brand Personality Structures in the United States and Korea: Common and Culture-Specific Factors. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 15(4), 334–350.

Supphellen, M. and Grønhaug, K. (2003). Building foreign brand personalities in Russia: the moderating effect of consumer ethnocentrism. *International Journal of Advertising*, 22, 203–226.

Sweeney, J. and Soutar, G. (2001). Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203-220.

Tan, T. T. W. and Ming, M. C. H. (2003). Leveraging on symbolic values and meanings in branding. *Journal of Brand Management*, 10(3), 208-218.

Tetreault, M. A. S. and Kleine, R. E. (1990). Ritual, Ritualized Behavior, and habit: Refinements and extensions of the consumption ritual construct *Advances in Consumer Research*, 17, 31-38.

Theoharakis, V. and Hirst, A. (2002). Perceptual Differences of Marketing Journals: A Worldwide Perspective. *Marketing Letters*, 13(4), 389-402.

Thomsen, T. U. and Sørensen, E. B. (2006). The First Four-wheeled Status Symbol: Pram Consumption as a Vehicle for the Construction of Motherhood Identity. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 22, 907-927.

Thorbjornsen, H., Pedersen, P. E., et al. (2007). "This is who I am ?": Identity Expressiveness and the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(9), 763-785.

Tian, K. and Belk, R. W. (2005). Extended Self and Possessions in the Workplace. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32, 297-310.

Tsai, S.-p. (2005a). Impact of personal orientation on luxury-brand purchase value. *International Journal of Market Research*, 47(4), 429-454.

Tsai, S.-p. (2005b). Utility, cultural symbolism and emotion: A comprehensive model of brand purchase value. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 22, 227-291.

Vazquez, R., Rio, A. B. d., et al. (2002). Consumer-based Brand Equity: Development and Validation of a Measurement Instrument. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 18, 27-48.

Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L. W. (1999). A Review and a Conceptual Framework of Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 1.

Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L. W. (2004). Measuring perceptions of brand luxury. *Brand Management*, 11(6), 484-506.

Wallström, Å., Steyn, P., et al. (2010). Expressing herself through brands: A comparative study of women in six Asia-Pacific nations. *Journal of Brand Management*, 18(3), 228-237.

Wattanasuwan, K. (2005). The Self and Symbolic Consumption. *Journal of American Academy of Business*(March), 179-184.

Wattanasuwan, K. and Elliott, R. (1999). The Buddhist Seif and Symbolic Consumption: The Consumption Experience of the Teenage Dhammakaya Buddhists in Thaiiand. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 26, 150-155.

Woodal, T. (2003). Conceptualising 'Value for the Customer': An Attributional, Structural and Dispositional Analysis. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 12, 1-44.

Wright, N. D., Claiborne, C. B., et al. (1992). The Effects of Product Symbolism on Consumer Self-Concept. *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 311-318.

Xue, F. (2008). The moderating effects of product involvement on situational brand choice. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 25(2), 85-94.

Zukin, S. and Maguire, J. S. (2004). Consumers and Consumption. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 30, 173-197.

N°	Issue identified	Research questions	Methodological propositions for design
1	Difficulty to measure the symbolic needs	How can the scholar measure the reel symbolic need and not a biased one?	Techniques reducing social desirability and CMV
2	Link between self-congruity and symbolic needs	What is the genuine relationship between self-congruity and symbolic needs?	Within subjects study comparing two scales
3	Discriminant validity of the symbolic needs	Are group-identity and communication two different needs? Are communication and status two different needs?	Conceptual refinement, and then SEM with discriminant validity investigations
4	Interactions between the desired benefits	How do the desired benefits interact? Are some specific (such as emotional and symbolic) benefits only present in pairs?	Meta-analysis
5	Interactions within the means used	How does one means behave regarding the others? Does the presence of a means exclude or, on the contrary, automatically implicate or reinforce the presence of another means?	Quantitative
6	Overlooked means	What are the most often mobilized means ? What are the potential other needs not investigated until today ?	Ethnographic Approach
7	Linking needs and means	Is a need usually satisfied by one single means or does a consumer frequently use different means simultaneously to answer one need? Can one mean answer several needs simultaneously? Are specific means always mobilized in order to answer specific needs?	Cross-Case Studies
8	Stability across time, product and culture	How does symbolic consumption behave according to product category, culture and time?	Quantitative

Table 9: A research agenda for symbolic consumption

Drivers of symbolic consumption: Differentiating self-congruity and symbolic benefits

Vivien Moinat

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne

Lausanne, Switzerland

Brigitte Müller

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne

Lausanne, Switzerland

ABSTRACT

Marketing has often modeled processes and results of product purchasing decisions based on the ability to provide functional and/or emotional benefits. This study investigates the role of symbolic drivers in the choice of a product. More precisely, the concepts of product self-congruity and symbolic benefits are brought into play and their impacts on behavioral intentions are analyzed. The authors test the hypothesis that the more a consumer is congruent with a product, the more likely he will use it as a means of self-expression and, in turn, purchase it. Data from the tourism sector are used to test this model. Findings reveal that self-congruity has no direct impact on symbolic desired benefits, whereas certain symbolic benefits such as group-identity and status are highly helpful to predict behavioral intentions. Theoretical and managerial implications are offered with specific suggestions to deepen the understanding of the symbolic approach to consumption.

Keywords: self-congruity, symbolic benefits, purchase decision, tourism marketing, structural equation modeling.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding the drivers of a consumer's product choice is a key issue in marketing. The literature to date has mainly taken into account functional and emotional benefits sought by people to explain consumption acts. Although there is an increasing literature on symbolic aspects of consumption, their role in the consumer's decision process merits further academic attention.

Two concepts stand out from the symbolic literature: self-congruity and the perceived symbolic benefits of a product or a brand. This research first examines the relation between self-congruity and behavioral intentions. The goal is to show that the more a consumer is congruent with a product/brand– i.e. the more common attributes he shares with the product's or brand's personality - the more likely he will be to purchase it or to recommend it. This concept of self-congruity has already demonstrated its relevance and usefulness in marketing literature in predicting purchasing behaviour. In addition, the concept of symbolic benefits – the extent to which a product allows the consumer to express himself – is brought into play and its relationship with behavioral intentions is investigated.

What is new in this contribution is that until today, these two concepts, self-congruity and symbolic benefits, have often been used interchangeably (Kamp and MacInnis, 1995; Sirgy et al., 1997; Litvin and Goh, 2002; Litvin and Goh, 2003; Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004; He and Mukherjee, 2007). As opposed to these former contributions, this paper proposes to clearly differentiate the two concepts and to investigate how they are related to each other. This new approach might help to address a major potential limitation in the current literature, namely the confusion with regard to the impact of each concept on behavioral intentions, such as intention to purchase or to recommend.

In order to test the hypotheses, a structural equation modeling approach is used and applied to the tourism sector. By exploring and making the link between self-congruity and symbolic benefits explicit and in turn with behavioral intentions, this research paper intends to build a comprehensive model to understand symbolic consumption. Such a theoretical model has not been identified in the literature to date

and thus allows for further empirical research to deepen the understanding of symbolic consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A major change in marketing has taken place during the last decades. Thanks to the seminal work of various authors (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Belk, 1988; Holt, 1995a), there is now a common agreement among scholars that a product is often not consumed only for the functional benefits it brings to the consumer but might be also for emotional or experiential reasons (see for instance the works of: Babin, Darden and Griffin, 1994; Richins, 1997; Bagozzi, Gospinath and Nyer, 1999; Bigne, Mattila and Andreu, 2008).

The most interesting approach that complements the functional and emotional perspectives is that investigating the role of symbolic drivers during the consumption act. The symbolic attributes and related benefits of any product have long been recognised as important drivers for their evaluation and use (Solomon, 1983; Belk, 1988; Sirgy and Johar, 1991; Shavitt, 1992; Aaker, 1999). According to this stream of research, consumers base their purchase decisions not only on functional or emotional attributes of the product but also on its symbolic attributes. A symbolic attribute relates to something in a product/brand that is an essential component, but which goes beyond its concrete aspect. It usually refers to a concept that makes sense for the consumer thanks to a common cultural background and shared values with the message sender. This symbolic dimension of the product is perceived by consumers that use it to express themselves through it. Products and brands are then significant consumption symbols that provide symbolic value (also known as expressive value or utility) to customers. For example, a consumer will use Nike shoes to symbolically refer to sports and wellbeing, a Maseratti car to refer to design and power, a Louis Vuitton bag to luxury and femininity, a Rolls-Royce to luxury, a Ferrari to sports and virility, etc. "Products that we buy, activities that we do and philosophies or beliefs that we pursue tell stories about who we are and with whom we identify" (Wattanasuwan, 2005: 179).

To explore this proposition, different studies have been carried out. Among others, this approach has been applied in retailing (He and Mukherjee, 2007), in the fashion

and clothing industry (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2000; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Krohmer et al., 2007), for luxury brands and goods (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Tsai, 2005a), in the tourism sector (Kastenholz, 2004; Beerli et al., 2007), in the automotive industry (Kressmann et al., 2006; Bosnjak and Brand, 2008), for the testing of the effectiveness of advertising (Kamp and MacInnis, 1995; Marshall et al., 2008) and finally for consumer goods (Phau and Lau, 2001; Marshall et al., 2008; Gao et al., 2009). The diversity of the domains where this symbolic approach has been tested shows its high relevance for marketing.

Moreover, the focus on symbolic utility has not only demonstrated its appeal when investigating the consumption act from the consumer's point of view, but it has also been shown to be useful for brand management (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Kocak et al., 2007).

Despite these works, a major issue remains in the field: some authors made the confusion (Kamp and MacInnis, 1995; Sirgy et al., 1997; Litvin and Goh, 2002; Litvin and Goh, 2003; Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004; He and Mukherjee, 2007) between two key-concepts of the symbolic approach, namely self-congruity and symbolic benefits. These two constructs are often used in an interchangeable manner and it is not clear what they refer to. Thus, from our point of view, it is necessary to define: (1) each concept and their differences, (2) how they are related with each other and finally (3) what their predictive power of satisfaction or behavioral intentions are. To investigate these points, an original model clearly separating the two constructs is proposed and tested. As prerequisites for building the model, the following sections will review the literature first on self-congruity and second on symbolic benefits.

Self-congruity

Self-congruity is defined as the comparison between consumer self-image and the perception of a product or a brand. This concept has led to an extensive body of literature (see for example: Dolich, 1969; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 1985a; Hong and Zinkhan, 1995; Kastenholz, 2004; Beerli et al., 2007). In general, confirmed conformity between the consumer's self-concept and his perception of the product has been recognised to be a valid predictor for attitude towards brands, purchase intentions, loyalty, or satisfaction. In other words, you will be more prone to buy a

Ferrari if you consider yourself as someone who is athletic, a Jaguar if you consider yourself high-class, etc.

The typical way (Sirgy et al., 1997; Kastenholz, 2004; Beerli et al., 2007) to measure this conformity is by using a set of adjectives to describe personality traits. The respondents have to indicate the extent to which both they and the product/brand are described correctly by identical items. For example, they are asked the following questions: "Do you consider yourself modern?" and "Do you consider the product X to be modern?" Malhotra's (1981) set of adjectives is now an established way to measure self-congruity. To find the self-congruity score, one traditionally mathematically computes a discrepancy score with each image dimension and then sums these scores across all dimensions (Sirgy et al., 1997).

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} = |Pi\text{-} Si|$$

Where *Pi* = rating of product-user image on characteristic *i* and *Si* = rating of self-concept on characteristic *i*.

The higher the self-congruity (the similarity between one's own personality and the perceived product personality), the more likely the consumer will buy or recommend the product. Sometimes contradicting results are found. For example, in tourism, Kastenholz (2004) failed to find any significant effect of self-congruity on the probability to recommend a destination, whereas Beerli et al. (2007) found that the higher the congruity, the higher the tendency to visit the destination. Thus, there remains a need of validation of this concept's effect, at least in tourism marketing.

Symbolic Benefits

The concept of symbolic brand benefit (also known as the expressive value or the symbolic utility of a brand) appeared a long time ago in seminal works on the brand concept (Park et al., 1986; Keller, 1993). In these articles, a brand might be considered as an answer to satisfy functional benefits, experiential (also called emotional), and/or symbolic needs. "Functional needs are defined as those that motivate the search for products that solve consumption-related problems (…). Experiential needs are defined as desires for products that provide sensory pleasure,

variety and/or cognitive stimulation (…). Symbolic needs are defined as desires for products that fulfill internally generated needs for self-enhancement, role position, group membership, or ego-identification" (Park et al., 1986: 136). The consumer will perceive the benefit of using this brand regarding its ability to answer his need. Brands therefore can provide functional, emotional and symbolic benefits. There is no clue in the literature that self-congruity might be related with the search for emotional or for functional benefits. Rather, self-congruity has always been related by scholars to the symbolic field. Therefore, this study will not investigate the two traditional drivers and will solely focus on the relationships between self-congruity and symbolic benefits.

Within the symbolic approach of consumption, Solomon (1983) and Belk (1985; 1988) recognised the symbolic value of a brand, namely the extent to which it allows customers to express themselves and therefore to provide symbolic benefits. Bhat and Reddy (1998) were the first to develop a scale measuring the symbolic and functional value of a brand. The literature has gone further and suggests that consumers might look for three different symbolic benefits:

- The first one has different names: *characterization* (Richins, 1994a; Richins, 1994b), *identity signaling* (Berger and Heath, 2007), *self-identity expressiveness* (Thorbjornsen et al., 2007), *personal identification* (Belen del Rio et al., 2001; Vazquez et al., 2002; Kocak et al., 2007) or *self-identity* (Strizhakova et al., 2008). This benefit relates to someone's need for self-expression, or his need to reinforce self-esteem or self-image. In this benefit, the use of a product or a brand embodies aspects of the owner's values. For instance, imagine a man taking private Chinese lessons. One of his primary goals is to learn the language (functional benefit). However he can also have other goals corresponding to how he wants to *characterize* himself or to *signal his identity* – meaning: he wants to regard himself or to be regarded as someone who loves this authentic, millennial culture, and the history of this nation. He may highly respect the language and its related culture such that he wishes to use the language to associate with its values. For the sake of clarity, this benefit is labeled *self-identity* hereafter.

- The second benefit, called *social identity expressiveness* (Thorbjornsen et al., 2007)¸ *social identification* (Belen del Rio et al., 2001; Vazquez et al., 2002; Kocak et al., 2007) or *group-identity* (Strizhakova et al., 2008) relates to someone's desire to associate or be associated to a specific group of reference that makes sense for him. A man will buy a Harley-Davidson motorbike in order to associate with a "HOG" (Harley's Owners Group) or at least to be seen as someone belonging to this specific type of bikers, and more generally to a specific type of people. Hereafter, this benefit is labeled *group-identity*.

- The third need called *status* (Belen del Rio et al., 2001; Vazquez et al., 2002; Kocak et al., 2007; Strizhakova et al., 2008)*, prestige seeking* (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) or *need for material resource* (Mowen and Spears, 1999), is defined as the extent to which the use of the product/service will help the user to express a specific *status* or specific signs of prestige. For example, a man will conspicuously offer an onerous Bordeaux French wine to his guests or drive a Bentley car, as he wants to be recognised as someone able to purchase such products. Hereafter, this benefit is named *status*.

In summary, consumers might face different needs of self-expression and relatively perceive different symbolic benefits in a brand, namely the expression of *self-identity*, *group-identity* or *status*. Meeting and satisfying these benefits creates symbolic value (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007) for the consumer.

As previously mentioned, the concepts of self-congruity and symbolic benefits are often used interchangeably in the literature. This confusion has probably appeared or at least been reinforced by the proposition of Sirgy et al. (1997) to measure self-congruity with direct questions such as "this product is consistent with how I see my self" or "this product reflects who I am". From that point on, self-congruity was no longer an objective comparison of the product's personality and the consumer's self-image, but rather a measure of the extent to which he feels congruent with the product. This is unfortunate as it might lead to an issue of discriminant validity with the symbolic needs. Indeed, those questions measure simultaneously the congruity and the ability of the product to provide a symbolic benefit. Several scholars have followed this stream of research (Litvin and Goh, 2002; Litvin and Goh, 2003; Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004; He and Mukherjee, 2007). Unfortunately, because

the measurement questions in these studies do not differentiate the two concepts, it is not possible to differentiate their effects either. Figure 1 shows examples of studies from each field and highlights those using the two concepts interchangeably.
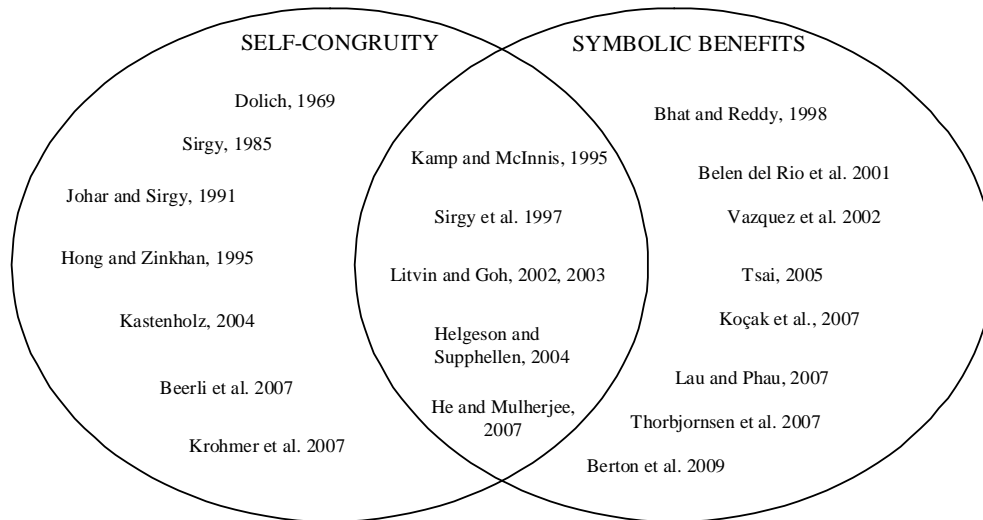
Figure 1

Examples of studies using self-congruity and/or symbolic benefits

If the two concepts are measured with the same questions, it is not possible to discriminate them anymore, and what is even more problematic, it is not possible to differentiate their respective impacts on behavioral intentions. To avoid this issue, we propose differentiating these two concepts in two ways. The first difference relates to the notion of subjectivity. In self-congruity, there is no subjectivity regarding the match of the two sets of adjectives. In other words, the researcher - not the consumer - measures to what extent the two perceptions are (dis)similar in an objective way. Thus, it is an objective match between perceived images (the one that a consumer has of himself and the one he has of the product/brand), rather than a perceived match between perceived images. It is objective because the consumer is not required to evaluate the congruity. The second difference relates to the notion of value creation. In self-congruity, there is no reference to the satisfaction of a benefit, which would implicitly lead to value creation. Whereas for symbolic benefits, according to the previous definition, once the need is satisfied by the perceived benefit, symbolic value is created (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007).

Differentiating these two concepts makes it possible to address two potential limitations of the current literature. First, if the two concepts are considered synonyms, it is impossible to examine the relationships between them, if any. It is of uttermost importance to differentiate them to answer the following question: Is it necessary for a consumer to have a high congruity with a product to express himself by it? This question has remained unanswered in the literature to date. Second, differentiating the concepts allows for the differentiation of their respective capacity to predict behavioral intentions. Therefore to answer these two questions, this study seeks to differentiate the two concepts.

In order to build a model differentiating self-congruity and symbolic benefits, two main questions should be answered. First, there is the question of the order: which concept should be considered as influencing the other, and in consequence put as an antecedent? Second question: what is the expected relationship between the two concepts?

Concerning the first question, it is proposed (cf Figure 2 below) to place self-congruity as an antecedent of symbolic benefits, and not the opposite. The opposite would say that a single consumption's experience can influence your personality (as consumer's personality is used to build the concept of self-congruity). However, according to Costa and McCrae (1985), consumer's personality is stable across time and in consequence independent of a consumption experience. Rather, it sounds more probable that a consumer feels more comfortable to use a product as a means of self-expression, if he shares common personality traits with the product, that is: to place self-congruity as a driver of symbolic benefits.

Concerning the second question, it is proposed, as detailed hereafter, to consider that the two concepts are positively and significantly related.
According to Sirgy (1982), two perspectives are related with the notions of self-concept. We believe these two perspectives can serve as two alternative explanations concerning the relationship between the self-congruity and symbolic needs. These two perspectives relate to the goals of the consumer, either he seeks to increase his self-esteem or he seeks to main his self-consistency. According to the chosen perspective, alternative hypotheses can be proposed.

According to the self-esteem perspective, a consumer will be motivated to use a product as means of self-expression because it allows him to increase his self-esteem. Whether he is congruent or not with the product will have no impact on his will to use it as a means of self-expression. Because this self-esteem search, he might consider a product with which he is not congruent in order to express himself in a way that he would like to be perceived. Following this perspective, it should be hypothesized that: There is no relationship between self-congruity and symbolic benefits.

According to the self-consistency perspective, it is predicted that the consumer will rather choose, as means of self-expression, products that are congruent with him. He will act in order to maintain a consistency between his behaviour and the way he perceives himself. Following this perspective, it should be hypothesized that: The more congruent the consumer is with a product, the more likely he will be to use it as a means of self-expression.

In addition, these two perspectives should be completed by the light of the theory of Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger, 1957). This theory states that the consumer will act in a way to reduce a potential inconsistency between two dissonant thoughts. In marketing for example, it has been shown (Williams and Aaker, 2002) that people tend to re-evaluate the product's quality after its purchase to simply convince themselves that they have made the right choice.

In our study, this effect might be present in, or interact with, the two perspectives:

In the self-esteem perspective, it would mean that people might change their attitude concerning the personality of the product or their beliefs concerning the product's ability to satisfy needs of self-expression in order to reduce a cognitive dissonance. Because they have used the product, a dissonance has appeared between the way they perceive themselves and the way they would like to be perceived. Because of this dissonance, they might be, for future purchases, especially not in look for congruent products but rather seek products to complement themselves in the way they would like to be perceived.

In the consistency perspective, the link is more direct. The consumer will use products with which he shares similar personality traits precisely to main a consistency in the way he perceives himself, to avoid a potential dissonance, and will seek to reduce tensions due to products' personalities that are too different.

We decide to rather consider the second perspective for three different reasons:

First, from a theoretical perspective, literature (Swann, 1987; Blackston, 1993; Phau and Lau, 2000; Litvin, 2002) has emphasized until today the motivation goal of self-consistency rather than the one of self-esteem. For example, Litvin and Goh (2002) state: "Through the activation and operation of the self-consistency motive, defined as one's need to behave in ways which will maintain internal consistency (Lecky, 1945; Maslow, 1954), individuals act in ways designed to reinforce an internal belief of who they are" (2002: 61).

Second, from an empirical perspective, there are clues that the search for internal consistency explains consumption-related intentions "over and above the (other) antecedents that have been already established" (Bosnjak, 2008: 673).

Finally, we propose that the cognitive dissonance has a small if not inexistent effect in our design. Indeed, according to Festinger (1957), a dissonance, and in turn a behaviour biased by a dissonance, appears only after the consumption because complete and thorough computation is not performed before it. In our design, respondents have not experienced the product yet (and might not even be planning to use it). They are asked before the consumption. Thus, it is unlikely that they will act in order to reduce a cognitive dissonance and avoid the use of the proposed product as a means of self-expression for this reason.

Thus, out of the two perspectives, we propose that the search of the self-consistency is stronger. The following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1:   There is a positive and significant relationship between self-congruity and each symbolic benefit (H1a for self-identity, H1b for group-identity, H1c for status).

We do not differentiate the hypotheses for the three benefits, as we have no clues that they might behave in a different manner.

We can illustrate this hypothesis with the famous Harley-Davidson example. Bikers who drive Harley-Davidsons often describe themselves using concepts of *personal freedom, patriotism, American heritage,* and *machismo*. The Harley-Davidson brand has been demonstrated to be particularly congruent with these concepts as indicated by Schouten & McAlexander (1995). The authors illustrate that high self-congruity offers bikers the opportunity to express themselves. That is, the more similar a consumer is to a product, the more prone he will use it to express his values.

As symbolic perceived benefits have been demonstrated to positively impact behavioral intentions (see for example:Vazquez et al., 2002; Tsai, 2005b; Kocak et al., 2007) the second hypothesis stipulates that there will be a positive and significant relationship between each symbolic benefit and behavioral intentions (H2a, H2b, H2c).

Hypothesis 2: *The higher the symbolic benefit perceived (H2a: self-identity / H2b: group-identity / H2c: status), the higher the intentions to use/recommend the product.*

Finally, it is also important to compare the two concepts, self-congruity and symbolic benefits, with regards to their relative power to predict behavioral intentions. If the first one is much lower than the second, then it is legitimate to want to keep only symbolic benefits. Once again, the literature does not yet provide clues on their respective predicting power as it does not differentiate the two concepts. Both concepts have been shown to have an effect on attitude towards brands, purchase intentions, loyalty, etc. (some examples are the works of: Vazquez et al., 2002; Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004; Tsai, 2005b; Kressmann et al., 2006; He and Mukherjee, 2007; Kocak et al., 2007; Krohmer et al., 2007; Parker, 2009). This study investigates not only the existence of this direct effect of each concept on behavioral intentions but also explores whether the effect of self-congruity is more important than that of symbolic benefits. We hypothesize that the predictive capacity of symbolic benefits is higher than that of self-congruity as they are more directly related

to the notion of value creation (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007). Value creation, if obtained for the consumer, will be revealed by its behavioral intentions. If a consumer has the impression that a product can fulfill his needs, he will be more prone to buy it than if he only shares similar personality traits with the product (i.e. if he has a high self-congruity). Therefore, the third hypothesis suggests that:

Hypothesis 3: *The relationship between symbolic benefits and behavioral intentions is stronger than between self-congruity and behavioral intentions.*

Figure 2 represents the proposed model, with the three above mentioned hypotheses. In particular, it highlights the difference and the relationships between the two key mentioned concepts.
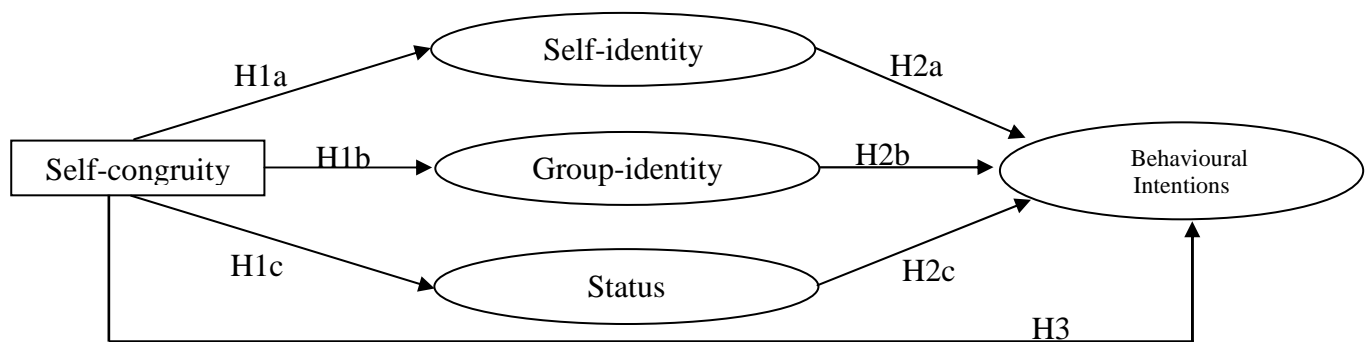
Figure 2
Hypothesized structural model

RESEARCH DESIGN
Field of application: Tourism Sector

To test the proposed model, we decided to use examples from the tourism sector. There are several reasons for this choice. First, tourism is typically a sector in which symbolic consumption occurs. There is a large variety of tourist offers designed to answer symbolic needs such as green tourism, gender tourism, scientific tourism, spiritual and religious tourism, etc. Despite these numerous examples, only few studies of symbolic consumption have been carried out in tourism in the past (Litvin and Goh, 2002; Litvin and Goh, 2003; Kastenholz, 2004; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011). Moreover, according to Beerli et al. (2007: 582), there still is "some controversy about the applicability in tourism" of the concept of symbolic consumption and there remains a need for further validation. This paper echoes back this demand and aims at

reinforcing this stream of research. Finally, interestingly, in tourism, we usually speak of services and not of products as there is no transfer of property rights (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1994). Early works on materialism (Belk, 1985; Richins, 1994a) led to believe that possessions are a prerequisite for symbolic expression. In the case of tourism, the consumer does not "possess" the good as it is a service. Therefore, following these authors, a service might not allow to satisfy a symbolic need. Taking the case of tourism will make it possible to test for such assertions and will help to determine the extent to which symbolic consumption is relevant not only for products but also for services.

Data Collection

We conducted a large-scale data collection (n= 813), in Switzerland, based on student projects. The sample is composed of 56% males and 44% females. As most of the chosen destinations target a rather young population, the sample corresponds to the following age representation (18-25 years old: 59%; 26-35: 14%; 36-45: 7%; 46-55: 12%; 56 and above: 8%). Additional demographic data were collected on marital status, profession, nationality, etc.

Eleven tourist destinations were chosen to represent a large spectrum of different types of destinations ranging from cities (New-York, Québec, Valencia, Las Vegas, Dubai, Istanbul, and Sao Paulo) to countries (Colombia, Scotland, Israel, South Korea). Respondents were asked to fill out the first part of the questionnaire dealing with general destination attitude and consumer self-image. They were then requested to watch an advertising campaign of the evaluated destination to help them understand the personality of the destination. After the movie exposure, respondents had to fill out the second part of the questionnaire, dealing with post-evaluation of the destination image. A question served to control their effective viewing of the advertising movie. Respondents were also asked to provide information concerning other variables such as product category involvement and social desirability. Questions were asked in French. However, a professional translator checked the wording of the items.

To check the reliability of the model, a *split-half* approach (Singleton and Straits, 1998) was used. The sample was divided into two equal sub-groups based on a random algorithm. The first (sample n°1) was subject to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and served to develop the structural model. The second (sample n°2) was used

as a confirmation to test the stability of the model (see Results section). The two sub-groups were compared regarding different variables (gender, age, marital status, profession, etc.) and no significant differences between them were found.

We decided to use a design with self-report measures for both independent and dependent variables. We did so as previous research in this field (Litvin and Goh, 2002; Litvin and Goh, 2003; Beerli et al., 2007) generally uses this methodology. There is evidence supporting the accuracy and relevance of self-report measures (Spector, 1992; Spector, 1994; Aquino, Lewis and Bradfield, 1999). However, a common method bias might appear. Therefore, different recommended procedural and statistical techniques (Podsakoff et al., 2003) were used in order to control for this bias:

- Procedural techniques: Reverse-coded items, temporal and psychological separation of measurement were used. Anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed. They were informed that there was no right or wrong answer to reduce the evaluation apprehension.

- Statistical techniques: we first performed a Harman's single factor test which failed to find a single factor revealing a common method variance. However, we went further and also tested technique 3A proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2003) integrating a common method variance latent variable in the structural model. Technique 3B, namely the recognition of social desirability as potentially having an impact, was also tested using a reduced version (Helgeson and Supphellen, 2004) of the classical Crowne-Marlowe (1960) social desirability scale. However, in the end, both techniques showed results very similar to the original structural model, failing to show a potential impact of a common method bias.

RESULTS

Measurement Model and Factor Analysis

The model was tested using a structural equation modeling approach. We used the recommended two step approach (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). A dependent variable called *Behavioral Intentions* was created and is composed of the two questions: "To what extent are you motivated to visit this destination?" and "To what extent are you motivated to recommend this destination to your friends?"

To measure the "destinations self-congruity" (DSC) - i.e. the congruity between consumer self perception and his perception of a destination – we used the most common approach in tourism (Litvin and Goh, 2002; Kastenholz, 2004; Beerli et al., 2007), namely the Malhotra (1981) scale. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which each of the attributes was good at describing him/herself. Then, they had to evaluate the same items, but for the destination. For example, they are asked the following questions: "Do you consider yourself as being someone who is modern?" and "Do you consider the product X to be modern?" The average absolute difference value was calculated as an indicator of the DSC.

As the concept of symbolic benefits is still rare in tourism, we used a pool of 14 questions collected from previous studies to measure the three different symbolic benefits (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Vazquez et al., 2002; Tsai, 2005a). These 14 items were subject to a confirmatory factor analysis. Six items were deleted as their communalities were under 0.5. We conducted a confirmatory analysis with the remaining items to verify that they loaded on the three symbolic benefits recognised in literature *self-identity, group-identity* and *status* (see Table 1). All the factor loadings were higher than the recommended 0.7 level (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2010), the communalities higher than the 0.5 level.

The first dimension of the symbolic value - *the self-identity* benefit - illustrates how destinations are used by consumers to express themselves or to embody aspects of their values. The second dimension, *group-identity* benefit, illustrates how consumers use destinations to associate or to be associated to other users. The third dimension, *status*, illustrates the use of destinations to express a symbol of prestige or a certain social status.

Benefit Construct	Factor loading	Communalities
Symbolic: Self-identity		
Destinations I visit should reflect who I am and what I stand for	.729	.585
You can tell a lot about a person when you know he has visited this destination	.645	.549
People are using this destination as a way to express themselves	.763	.583
Variance explained: 13.35; Cronbach's alpha: .580		
Symbolic: Group-identity		
The classical tourist of this destination is very similar to me	.905	.843
The classical tourist of this destination reflects the kind of person I am	.884	.845
Variance explained: 19.07; Cronbach's alpha: .829		
Symbolic: Status		
This destination is very reputed	.838	.715
Famous people are going to this destination	.869	.773
Visiting this destination is a prestige symbol	.813	.726
Variance explained: 37.82; Cronbach's alpha: .815		
Behavioral Intentions		
Do you think you will visit this destination?	.948	.899
Will you recommend this destination to your friends ?	.948	.899
Variance explained: 89.88		

Table 1, Confirmatory Factor Analysis for Symbolic Benefits

We computed the rho of internal validity (Jöreskog, 1971) for each latent construct and the average variance extracted (AVE) alike (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Both indicators were higher than the recommended benchmark of 0.7, respectively 0.5, for all the variables with one exception for self-identity (Rho=0.61; AVE=0.35), because of the first item ("Destination I visit…"). However, we decided to keep this item, as it contributes to the face validity of the construct. Doing so also avoids the use of the statistical trick of paths constraining, which would be necessary with a two items construct.

To assess the discriminant validity, the AVE value was compared to the squared correlations between the corresponding constructs (Hair et al., 2010). For all the relationships, none of the correlations were sufficiently high to reach the 0.5 level, thus indicating an acceptable degree of discriminant validity. (For results concerning convergent and discriminant validity, see Appendix A and B).

Finally following the proposed procedure (Hair et al., 2010), the measurement model was adjusted using modification indices' propositions. Three modifications indices

were taken into account: the ones correlating the measurement errors of the three symbolic benefits. This is justifiable, as these three concepts are part of one higher-order concept, the symbolic benefits. Overall the measurement model is convincingly supported by fit statistics (χ^2/df= 1.653; CFI= 0.984; NFI=0.962; Hoelter=354; RMSEA= 0.040, p= 0.812).

Structural Model

To investigate the impact of self-congruity on symbolic benefits and in turn on behavioral intentions, three main hypotheses were formulated:

- *There is a positive and significant relationship between self-congruity and each symbolic benefit (H1a, H1b, H1c).*
- *Each symbolic benefit has a positive and significant effect on behavioral intentions (H2a, H2b, H2c).*
- *The predictive power of symbolic benefits on behavioral intentions is higher than that of self-congruity on the same construct (H3).*

As stated above, it is important for the model elaboration not to be directed by intrinsic characteristics of the sample. To control for this point, the sample is randomly divided into two sub-samples (samples n°1 and n°2). The first is used to construct the measurement and the structural model. Sample 1, according to commonly used criteria (Roussel, Durrieu, Campoy and El-Akremi, 2002) convincingly fits the model (χ^2/df= 1.640; CFI= 0.985; NFI=0.962; Hoelter=357; RMSEA= 0.039, p= 0.822). The second sample is used to confirm the structural model and also presents convincing goodness of fit statistics (Chi-square / df = 2.438; CFI = 0.966; NFI=0.945; Hoelter=233; RMSEA = 0.060, p = 0.143). Moreover, the path coefficients remained very similar between sample 1 and sample 2. This is expected and confirms that the model does not depend on the sample, which shows a good reliability of the proposed model.

Structural Paths				Std. Paths	C.R.	P
H1a	✖	Self-congruity	-> Self-Identity	0.031	0.496	0.62
H1b	✔	Self-congruity	-> Group-Identity	0.114	2.113	0.035
H1c	✖	Self-congruity	-> Status	-0.004	-0.08	0.936
H3	✔	Self-congruity	-> Behavioral Intentions	0.15	3.069	0.002
H2a	✖	Self-Identity	-> Behavioral Intentions	-0.152	-1.676	0.094
H2b	✔	Group-Identity	-> Behavioral Intentions	0.216	2.968	0.003
H2c	✔	Status	-> Behavioral Intentions	0.393	5.482	<0.001

Table 2: Path values in the structural model (sample n°1)

Four hypothesized paths are significant and present some interesting values while three paths (cf Table 2) are not significant. In particular, the path from self-congruity to behavioral intentions mediated by the *self-identity* benefit is not significant leading to the rejection of hypotheses H1a and H2a. Paths mediated by the *group-identity* present interesting results: this benefit is related with self-congruity and moreover significantly relates to behavioral intentions, leading to the acceptance of both H1b and H2b. Concerning the *status* benefit, it is not related with self-congruity but significantly relates to behavioral intentions, leading to the acceptance of H2c but rejecting H1c.

Finally, with the exception of self-identity, the symbolic benefits have a higher predictive power on behavioral intentions than self-congruity, which supports H3.

Figure 3 presents these results in a graphical way:
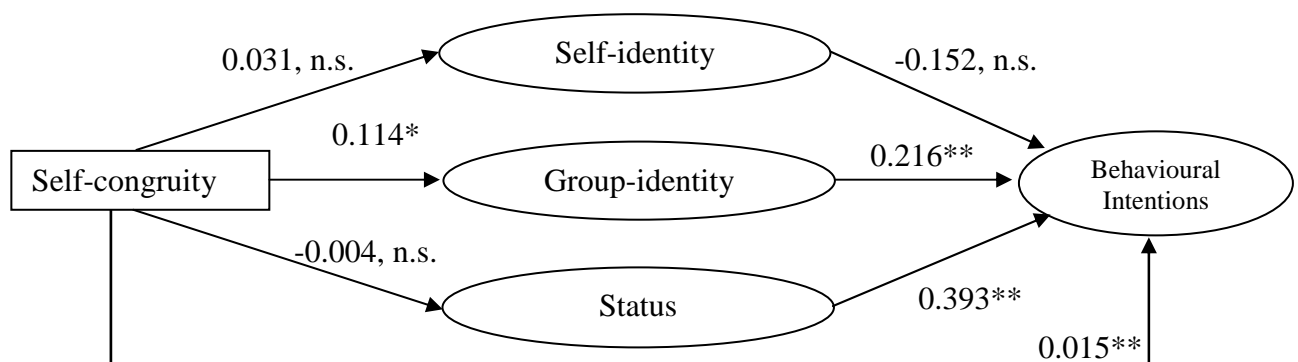

Figure 3: Structural model
NB: * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001

Complementary Analyses

Having examined the model on a general level, it is also interesting to make some complementary analyses for sub-populations, more precisely regarding age and gender. We first performed t-tests to investigate differences between men and women

or young and old people regarding their behavioral intentions. The men group did not score significantly lower than the women group concerning intentions to purchase: $t(804) = -0.554$, $p = .580$ nor for intentions to recommend $t(803) = -0.484$, $p = .628$. Concerning age, the young group did not score significantly higher than the old group concerning intentions to purchase: $t(807) = -0.600$, $p = .548$ nor for intentions to recommend $t(808) = 0.395$, $p = .693$. In other words, there are no significant differences. This means that, in general, men are not more prone to visit or to recommend a destination than women, or old than young. However, differences might exist within the structural model. Therefore, we conducted two multigroup comparisons. We first established the acceptance of the measurement models and measurement invariance for the group (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). We then investigated the differences (see Table 3) in the path coefficients between groups. We only discuss here results where interesting differences appear between the two groups.

MULTIPLE GROUP COMPARISON Men vs Women			Estimate (Men)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate (Women)	S.E.	C.R.	P
Self-congruity	-->	Self-Identity	0.041	0.078	0.696	0.486	0.031	0.085	0.462	0.644
Self-congruity	-->	Status	-0.021	0.114	-0.4	0.689	-0.039	0.131	-0.653	0.514
Self-congruity	-->	Group-Identity	0.197	0.1	3.799	***	0.127	0.118	2.231	0.026
Self-Identity	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	-0.303	0.179	-3.183	0.001	-0.194	0.213	-2.051	0.04
Status	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	0.36	0.071	5.744	***	0.386	0.093	5.263	***
Self-congruity	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	0.145	0.12	3.009	0.003	0.165	0.148	3.141	0.002
Group-Identity	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	0.413	0.103	5.126	***	0.288	0.098	3.987	***

MULTIPLE GROUP COMPARISON Young vs Old			Estimate (Young)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Estimate (Old)	S.E.	C.R.	P
Self-congruity	-->	Self-Identity	0.03	0.068	0.594	0.553	0.02	0.103	0.234	0.815
Self-congruity	-->	Status	-0.034	0.102	-0.75	0.454	-0.006	0.158	-0.083	0.933
Self-congruity	-->	Group-Identity	0.19	0.09	4.248	***	0.09	0.149	1.206	0.228
Self-Identity	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	-0.173	0.142	-2.454	0.014	-0.481	0.377	-2.742	0.006
Status	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	0.356	0.066	6.348	***	0.397	0.115	4.227	***
Self-congruity	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	0.134	0.111	3.225	0.001	0.201	0.176	2.933	0.003
Group-Identity	-->	Behavioral_Intentions	0.297	0.077	5.178	***	0.533	0.183	3.729	***

Table 3: MGC: Differences in path values regarding gender and age.

Regarding gender, the most interesting difference appears in the relationships between benefits and behavioral intentions. Men will be more prone to perceive a *group-identity* benefit if they are congruent with the destination and in turn will more strongly consider this benefit than women in the intentions to visit or recommend the destination. On the contrary, it is more important for women to be able to show their status.

To compare ages, we created two groups composed of "young" people (18 to 35 years old) and "older" people (36 years old and more). We divided the population into two groups only to have a sufficient number of observations in each group. Both young and old people do not feel the need of being similar with a destination to use it as a way of self-expression (*self-identity*). Furthermore, it is interesting to see that all the effects of symbolic benefits are stronger for older than for younger people. Older people are also more prone than young people to visit a destination if they share common personality traits with it. One possible explanation is that young people are more attracted by functional benefits (price, for example) or by emotional benefits (having fun, for example), than by symbolic ones.

As a consequence of the low predictive power of self-congruity on symbolic needs, one could wonder whether self-congruity might play another role in the model. More precisely, it is worth investigating to what extent self-congruity moderates the relationship between the expression of symbolic benefits and behavioral intentions. To verify this, a linear regression was conducted, integrating the three symbolic benefits as factors and three interaction terms created with the self-congruity variable. It appears that two out of three interaction terms are significant predictors (self-congruity with *self-identity*, $\beta=0.805$; $p=0.011$; with *group-identity*: $\beta=-0.841$; $p=0.005$ and with *status*: $\beta=0.527$, $p=0.087$). This means that self-congruity might moderate the impacts of symbolic benefits on behavioral intentions. In other words, the consumer might consider more attentively symbolic benefits in choosing a destination, depending on his level of congruity. However this result does not represent the central focus of the current study and should be taken with caution as it is a post-hoc analysis. Therefore additional studies would be useful to investigate it.

Finally, this study also investigates the extent to which involvement towards the product category might play a role in the model. The literature usually underlines that involvement often acts as a moderator of the self-congruity effect. For example, involvement moderates the effect of self-congruity on brand trust (Krohmer et al., 2007), on choice of vacation destination (Beerli et al., 2007), or on judgment of brand functional performance (Kressmann et al., 2006). Therefore, in order to test the potential effect of involvement, we conducted four (one for each benefit and for self-congruity) linear regressions on behavioral intentions with interaction terms

composed of involvement. Results contradict previous ones (Beerli et al., 2007), as the effect of self-congruity on behavioral intentions was not significantly moderated by involvement (β=0.142; p: 0.649). This is interesting as Beerli et al. (2007) propose a sound explanation for their result: "it seems logical to think that if people have a high involvement with leisure travel, this activity is considered to express their personality and their self-concept, so their self-congruity is higher" (Beerli et al., 2007: 583). Our result seems to indicate that this is not the case, at least in our sample. In addition, no significant effect of involvement as a moderator was found for the three symbolic benefits (interaction terms with *self-identity*: β=-0.132, p=0.468; *group-identity*: β=-0.141, p=0.468; *status*: β=0.135, p=0.399).

DISCUSSION

The goal of this empirical study is to clarify the relationships between self-congruity, symbolic benefits and behavioral intentions. By differentiating self-congruity and symbolic benefits, interesting results appear and emphasize the role of each construct on behavioral intentions.

With the exception of the group-identity dimension, self-congruity does not seem to be linked with symbolic benefits. This means that respondents do not need a potential congruity as a pre-condition to express themselves or to express social status through destination choice. According to the earlier discussion, this is to say, that contrary to what was hypothesized, the motivation of self-consistency is less important than the one of self-esteem. We might consider that self-congruity is a measure reflecting one's actual self and symbolic benefits a measure reflecting how people would like to be perceived (ideal self). According to that, it would mean that people consume to reflect how they would like to be perceived and not how they currently perceived themselves. Another possible explanation is that it might be hard for consumers to have a clear representation of the destination's personality, especially in the case where they have not experienced it yet, which is the case in the design.

Concerning the *group-identity* dimension, the path value is small but significant (β=0.11; p: 0.035) and shows that both variables are somehow related. This means

that people are more prone to use a destination to meet or to be associated with others, if they share common personality traits with this destination.

In the second set of hypotheses, two out of three are supported. When comparing values of the paths from symbolic benefits to output variables, it appears that the perceived benefit of showing *status* is the highest, followed by *group-identity*. *Self-identity* is rejected as a valid predictor for behavioral intentions. This means that even if respondents do feel the need to express themselves by their choice of a destination, it does not predict their intentions to visit it.

Previous literature has emphasized the need "to investigate the effects of self-congruity on other marketing outcomes, such as destination loyalty and word of mouth" (Beerli et al., 2007: 583). In her study, Kastenholz (2004) failed to find a significant impact of self-congruity on intentions to recommend. The results of the present study contradict her findings, as the direct path from self-congruity to behavioral intentions is significant. However, our result is in line with that of Beerli (2007) who found self-congruity to be a valid predictor of tourist intention. Moreover, the predictive power of self-congruity on symbolic benefits and their total variance explained by the self-congruity alike are very low. In other words, self-congruity might not truly add value to the understanding of the search for symbolic benefits. However, as shown, there remains a need for the investigation of self-congruity as a moderator of the effects of symbolic needs.

CONCLUSION

Previous literature on symbolic consumption (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2000; Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006; Kocak et al., 2007) generally focused more on the nature of this consumption, often first concerned by justifying the interest of taking into account symbolic drivers, rather than evaluating their capacity to predict purchase intentions. By showing that symbolic benefits (at least its *group-identity* and *status* dimensions) are valid predictors of purchase intentions, this study provides a significant improvement for the symbolic consumption literature.

Moreover, this empirical study provides a significant contribution to the current literature in four additional ways. First, it answers the need relative to operationalisation and replication of the concepts of self-congruity and symbolic benefits in tourism.

Second, by differentiating self-congruity and symbolic benefits, this study indicates how they are related to each other and their respective impact on behavioral intentions. In particular, it states that the two concepts are independent. In addition, symbolic benefits are stronger predictors of behavioral intentions.

Third, the study tests the concept of symbolic consumption in the services field. This is of particular interest as research on symbolic consumption was until recently only focused on products. Indeed, the capacity to answer self-expression needs has often been linked with the possession of the product (Belk, 1985; Richins, 1994a). This study then goes further and suggests that the use of a service, not only possession of a product, also allows the fulfillment of symbolic needs.

Fourth, the study highlights a topic of uttermost importance; the value created for the consumer. Marketing is often criticized for being concerned only with value creation for firms. By taking into account symbolic benefits, it adopts and focuses more on the consumer's perspective, making it possible to define what really counts for the consumer, and what the consumption act is really all about. It will help product and service managers to create a more efficient and more original value creation process.

In addition to these theoretical contributions, several managerial implications also surface:

- Consumers will look for destinations that are similar to them.
- Consumers will look for destinations that help them to identify with a group and to show their status.
- Showing status by the means of a destination is sought by men, but even more by women. The opposite is true relative to the ability to associate with a group.
- The older the consumer is, the more prone he will be to seek symbolic benefits. Younger consumers would perhaps rather give priority to price or having fun.

However, it would be wise to replicate the obtained results in order to confirm them, before putting them into practice, even if they sound very appealing.

As with any research, this study faces several limitations that should be addressed by future research.

First, although this paper improves on prior research by using a larger number of destinations, the choice of destinations, might have an impact on the results. Indeed, the chosen destinations might not have an equal capacity to satisfy symbolic needs and therefore their ability to do so might be differentially perceived by consumers. If a consumer does not perceive a destination as being able to satisfy a need, then he will not consider it to satisfy symbolic needs. Therefore, studies with an even larger number of destinations or studies using destinations with symbolic benefits more easily recognizable might help to reduce this bias.

Similarly, the sample used, even if it was adequate in terms of gender, age or socioeconomic level, as well as the snow-ball method used, might also have an effect on the results. In addition in our study, we only created two groups (younger and older than 36 years old) for the comparison of age. This limit and the number of groups is debatable but has made to ensure a sufficient identification of the model. Larger samples would allow the comparison of more groups and therefore provide more accurate results.

Second, responses were collected in a single-country setting only. Future studies would do well to focus on how different socio-cultural contexts affect the obtained results as they have already been proven to modify the expression of symbolic needs (Kocak et al., 2007).

Third, although the items were highly loaded on their correspondent constructs, one might wish to develop better scales for the symbolic constructs. Indeed, on the 14 items selected, six had to be deleted. Moreover, one could wonder whether the items used for self-identity and group-identity cover all the complexity of these concepts. For example, some questions might be missing such as "I visited this destination to be able to associate with specific people and groups" or "I feel a special bond with people who also visited this destination". Therefore, improvement of these scales, or use of other scales, might be desirable. For instance, future research would benefit from using the one proposed by Strizhakova et al. (2008).

Fourth, within the symbolic consumption framework, it may be advisable to investigate other potential antecedents of symbolic benefits, for example other ways to measure product/brand personality and other types of congruities:

- In order to measure product/brand personality, and instead of or complementary to that of Malhotra (1981), one can use the seminal scale developed by Aaker (1997; 1999). Moreover, the Aaker's scale has already been applied to the case of tourism destinations (Hosany, Ekinci and Uysal, 2006).

- Other congruities such as that with consumption practices (Holt, 1995a) or particular ways to consume such as rituals (McCracken, 1986; Schouten, 1991) may also provide consumers with symbolic benefits. In addition, congruity with other consumers or with a particular group of consumers or communities (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000; Muniz Jr and O'Guinn, 2001) may also be interesting to investigate as antecedents of symbolic benefits. Therefore, further studies integrating these other types of congruities are needed to deepen the understanding of symbolic consumption.

Finally, this study focuses only on the symbolic benefits as drivers of purchase intention and intention to recommend. However it would be very interesting to also investigate functional and emotional drivers. Considering functional, emotional and symbolic drivers simultaneously would allow the comparison of their respective weight when predicting future purchase decisions and would highlight the importance of taking symbolic drivers into account.

REFERENCES

Aaker, J. (1999). The Malleable Self: The Role of Self-Expression in Persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(1), 45-57.

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34(August), 347-356.

Anderson, J. C. and Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural Equation Modeling in practice: a review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 411-423.

Aquino, K., Lewis, M. and Bradfield, M. (1999). Justice constructs, negative affectivity, and employee deviance: a proposed model and empirical test. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20, 1073-1091.

Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R. and Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20, 644-656.

Bagozzi, R. P., Gospinath, M. and Nyer, P. U. (1999). The Role of Emotions in Marketing. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(2), 184-206.

Beerli, A., Meneses, G. D. and Gil, S. M. (2007). Self-Congruity and Destination Choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(3), 571-587.

Belen del Rio, A., Vazquez, R. and Iglesias, V. (2001). The role of the brand name in obtaining differential advantages. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 10(7), 452-465.

Belk, R. W. (1985). Materialism: Trait Aspects of Living in the Material World. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 12(December), 265-280.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possession and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(September), 139-168.

Berger, J. and Heath, C. (2007). Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34, 121-134.

Bhat, S. and Reddy, S. K. (1998). Symbolic and functional positioning of brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(1), 32-43.

Bigne, E. J., Mattila, A. S. and Andreu, L. (2008). The impact of experiential consumption cognitions and emotions on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 22(4), 303-315.

Blackston, M. (1993). Beyond Brand Personality: Building Brand Relationships. *Brand equity and Advertising*. D. A. Aaker and A. L. Biel. Hillsdale, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Bosnjak, M. and Brand, C. (2008). The Impact of Undesired Self-Image Congruence on Consumption-Related Attitudes and Intentions. *International Journal of Management*, 25(3), 673-683.

Bricker, K. S. and Kerstetter, D. L. (2000). Level of Specialization and Place Attachment: An Exploratory Study of Whitewater Recreationists. *Leisure Sciences*, 22, 233-257.

Brock Smith, J. and Colgate, M. (2007). Customer Value Creation : a practical framework. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 15(1), 7-23.

Costa, P. T. and McCrae, R. R. (1985). *The NEO PI-R Personality Inventory Manual*. FL., Psychological Assesment Ressources.

Crowne, D. and Marlowe, D. (1960). A new scale of social desirability independent of psychopathology. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 24, 349-354.

Deeter-Schmelz, D. R., Moore, J. N. and Goebel, D. J. (2000). Prestige clothing shopping by consumers: A confirmatory assessment and refinement of the Precon scale with managerial implications. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 8(4), 43-58.

Dolich, I. (1969). Congruity Relationship between Self-Images and Product Brands. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 6, 80-84.

Festinger, L. (1957). *Theory of Cognitive* Dissonance. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Joumal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.

Gao, L., Wheeler, C. S. and Shiv, B. (2009). The "Shaken Self": Product Choices as a Means of Restoring Self-View Confidence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36, 29-38.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., et al. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, Pearson Education.

He, H. and Mukherjee, A. (2007). I am, ergo I shop: does store image congruity explain shopping behaviour of Chinese consumers? *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(5/6), 443-460.

Helgeson, J. G. and Supphellen, M. (2004). A conceptual and measurement comparison of self-congruity and brand personality. The impact of socially desirable responding. *International Journal of Market Research*, 46(2), 205-233.

Hirschman, E. C. and Holbrook, M. B. (1982). Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(Summer), 92-101.

Holbrook, M. B. and Hirschman, E. C. (1982). The Experiental Aspects of Consumption: Consumer Fantasies, Feelings, and Fun. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(September), 132-140.

Holt, D. B. (1995). How Consumers Consume: A Typology of Consumption Practices. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 1-16.

Hong, J. and Zinkhan, G. M. (1995). Self-Concept and Advertising Effectiveness: the influence of Congruency, Conspicuousness, and Response Mode. *Psychology & Marketing*, 12(1), 53-77.

Hosany, S., Ekinci, Y. and Uysal, M. (2006). Destination image and destination personality: An application of branding theories to tourism places. *Journal of Business Research*, 59, 638-642.

Jöreskog, K. G. (1971). Statistical Analysis of sets of congeneric tests. *Psychometrika*, 34, 183-202.

Kamp, E. and MacInnis, D. J. (1995). Characteristics of portrayed emotions in commercials. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 35(6), 19-28.

Kastenholz, E. (2004). Assessment and Role of Destination-Self-Congruity. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 719-723.

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(January), 1-22.

Kocak, A., Abimbola, T. and Ozer, A. (2007). Consumer Brand Equity in a Cross-cultural Replication: An Evaluation of a Scale. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1/2), 157-173.

Kressmann, F., Sirgy, J. M., Herrmann, A., et al. (2006). Direct and indirect effects of self-image congruence on brand loyalty. *Journal of Business Research*, 59, 955-964.

Krohmer, H., Malär, L. and Nyffeneger, B. (2007). *The Fit Between Brand Personality and Consumer's Self*. 2007 AMA Winter Educators' Conference.

Litvin, S. W. and Goh, H. K. (2002). Self-image congruity: a valid tourism theory? *Tourism Management*, 23, 81-83.

Litvin, S. W. and Goh, H. K. (2003). Individualism/collectivism as a moderating factor to the self-image congruity concept. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 10(1), 23-32.

Malhotra, N. K. (1981). A scale to measure Self-Concepts, Person Concepts and Product Concepts. *Joumal of Marketing Research*, 18(November), 456-464.

Marshall, R., Na, W., State, G., et al. (2008). Endorsement Theory: How Consumers Relate to Celebrity Models. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 48(4), 564-572.

McCracken, G. (1986). Culture and Consumption: A Theoretical Account of the Structure and Movement of the Cultural Meaning of Consumer Goods. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 13(June), 71-84.

Michaelidou, N. and Dibb, S. (2006). Product Involvement: an application in clothing. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 5, 442-453.

Mowen, J. C. and Spears, N. (1999). Understanding compulsive Buying among College Students: A hierachical approach. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 8(4), 407-430.

Muniz Jr, A. M. and O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.

Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. and Berry, L. (1994). Alternative scales for measuring service quality: A comparative assessment based on psychometric and diagnostic criteria. *Journal of Retailing*, 70(3), 201-230.

Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J. and MacInnis, D. J. (1986). Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(October), 135-145.

Parker, B. T. (2009). A comparison of brand personality and brand user-imagery congruence. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 26(3), 175-184.

Phau, I. and Lau, K. C. (2000). Conceptualizing brand personality: A review and research propositions. *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 9(1), 52-69.

Phau, I. and Lau, K. C. (2001). Brand personality and consumer self-expression: single or dual carriageway. *Journal of Brand Management*, 8(6), 428-444.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., et al. (2003). Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.

Richins, M. L. (1994a). Special Possessions and the Expression of Material Values. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 522-533.

Richins, M. L. (1994b). Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 504-521.

Richins, M. L. (1997). Measuring Emotions in the Consumption Experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(2), 127-146.

Roussel, P., Durrieu, F., Campoy, E., et al. (2002). *Méthodes d'équations structurelles : Recherche et Applications en Gestion*. Paris, Economica.

Schouten, J. W. (1991). Selves in Transition : Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 412-425.

Schouten, J. W. and McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 43-61.

Schumacker, R. E. and Lomax, R. G. (2004). *A beginner's Guide to Structural Equation Modeling*. Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Shavitt, S. (1992). Evidence for Predicting the Effectiveness of Value-Expressive Versus Utilitarian Appeals: A Reply to Johar and Sirgy. *Journal of Advertising*, XXI(2), 47-51.

Singleton, R. A. and Straits, B. C. (1998). *Approaches to Social Research, 3rd ed.* New York, Oxford University Press.

Sirgy, J. M. (1982). Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(December), 287-300.

Sirgy, J. M. (1985). Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A critical review. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(December), 287-300.

Sirgy, J. M., Grewal, D., Mangleburg, T. F., et al. (1997). Assessing the predictive validity of two methods of measuring self-image congruence. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(3), 229-241.

Sirgy, J. M. and Johar, J. S. (1991). Value-Expresive Versus Utilitarian Advertising Appeals : when and why to use which appeal. *Journal of Advertising*, XX(3), 23-33.

Solomon, M. R. (1983). The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: A symbolic Interactionism Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(December), 319-329.

Spector, P. (1992). A consideration of the validity and meaning of self-report measures of job conditions. *International Review of Industrial and Organisational Psychology*. C. L. Cooper and T. Robertson. West Sussex, England, John Wiley.

Spector, P. (1994). Using self-report questionnaires in OB research: a comment on the use of a controversial method. *Joumal of Organizational Behavior*, 15, 385-392.

Strizhakova, Y., Coulter, R. and Price, L. (2008). The meanings of branded products: A cross-national scale development and meaning assesment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 25, 82-93.

Swann, W. (1987). Identity Negotiation: Where Two Roads Meet. *Journal of Personality and Social Psycholog*, 53(6), 1038-1051.

Thorbjornsen, H., Pedersen, P. E. and Herbjorn, N. (2007). "This is who I am ?": Identity Expressiveness and the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29(9), 763-785.

Tsai, S.-p. (2005a). Impact of personal orientation on luxury-brand purchase value. *International Journal of Market Research*, 47(4), 429-454.

Tsai, S.-p. (2005b). Utility, cultural symbolism and emotion: A comprehensive model of brand purchase value. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 22, 227-291.

Usakli, A. and Baloglu, S. (2011). Brand personality of tourist destinations: An application of self-congruity theory. *Tourism Management*, 32, 114-127.

Vazquez, R., Rio, A. Belen and Iglesias, V. (2002). Consumer-based Brand Equity: Development and Validation of a Measurement Instrument. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 18, 27-48.

Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L. W. (1999). A Review and a Conceptual Framework of Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 1.

Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L. W. (2004). Measuring perceptions of brand luxury. *Brand Management*, 11(6), 484-506.

Wattanasuwan, K. (2005). The Self and Symbolic Consumption. *Journal of American Academy of Business*(March), 179-184.

Williams, P. and Aaker, J. (2002). Can Mixed Emotions Peascefully Coexist ? *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(Mars), 636-649.

APPENDIX A

Table 1: Convergent validity (rho and AVE)

Benefit Construct	Standardized λ_i	var(ε_i)	(λ_i)2	AVE	Internal validity (rho)
Symbolic: Self-identity					
	0.42	0.825	0.175		
	0.60	0.641	0.359		
	0.72	0.477	0.523		
Sum	1.74	1.944	1.056	0.352	0.609
Symbolic: Group-identity					
	0.821	0.326	0.674		
	0.860	0.260	0.740		
Sum	1.681	0.586	1.414	0.707	0.828
Symbolic: Status					
	0.739	0.454	0.546		
	0.741	0.451	0.549		
	0.785	0.384	0.616		
Sum	2.265	1.289	1.711	0.570	0.799
Satisfaction					
	0.898	0.194	0.806		
	0.911	0.170	0.830		
Sum	1.809	0.364	1.636	0.818	0.900

APPENDIX B

Table 2: Discriminant validity

Correlations

	Self-identity	Group-identity	Status	Self-congruity	Behavioral Intentions
Self-identity	1				
Group-identity	0.549	1			
Status	0.464	0.35	1		
Self-congruity	0.031	0.114	-0.004	1	
Behavioral Intentions	0.154	0.287	0.397	0.169	1

Squared Correlations

	Self-identity	Group-identity	Status	Self-congruity	Behavioral Intentions
Self-identity	1				
Group-identity	0.301	1			
Status	0.215	0.123	1		
Self-congruity	0.001	0.013	0.000	1	
Behavioral Intentions	0.024	0.082	0.158	0.029	1

NB: To ensure an good discriminant validity, all the values in the second table should be equal or lower than 0.5

Why do we consume? An investigation of personality traits as antecedents of sought benefits, and their consequences.

Vivien Moinat

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne

Lausanne, Switzerland

Brigitte Müller

Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Lausanne

Lausanne, Switzerland

ABSTRACT

This research investigates the role of functional, emotional and symbolic benefits as potential drivers of a destination's satisfaction and behavioral intentions. Moreover, it brings into play the consumer's personality as antecedents of these benefits. Responding to calls for further research, this is the first study to simultaneously link all the personality traits, the benefits sought and consequences. Findings reveal interesting and counterintuitive relationships between personality, benefits and consequences. Four of the five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, intellect and conscientiousness) are significant antecedents of benefits. Moreover, while the price does not seem to matter, the quality, emotional benefit, and symbolic benefits (group-identity and status) are significantly related to consequences (satisfaction and behavioral intentions). Destination managers first need to consider the reasons and motives tourists have for selecting destinations. Second, and based on the revealed relationship between personality traits and benefits, they should tailor their advertising campaign in order to trigger the interest of the targeted personality type.

Keywords: personality, functional, emotional, symbolic benefits, tourism, SEM

INTRODUCTION

Why do people consume a product or service? This question has preoccupied scholars and managers for decades now and is probably one of the most central in marketing. Take the example of a car. Some consumers will buy a car for practical reasons, such as cost, space available, gas consumption, etc. Others will give priority to different factors: design, color, sound of the motor, particular sensations experienced, smell of the leather, etc. Finally, some will focus on the car because of its ability to signal social status, or to represent specific values that are of importance to them.

It is interesting to note that the same car can be bought in each of these cases for very different reasons. In other words, there are strong inter-individual differences. Consumer A will not buy a product for the same reasons as Consumer B.

Starting from this point, several questions can be raised which could be of interest to scholars and managers alike:

- What are the different reasons motivating a purchase?
- What are their weights in the purchase decision? And finally,
- What are the reasons for inter-individual differences?

This article hopes to answer these three questions. Even if these issues seem central in marketing, the literature remains scarce on the topic, and there is a distinct need for further research to offer a more precise answer. The article will be structured as follows.

First we will review the literature on brand benefits and its functional, emotional and symbolic dimensions. The relevance of this concept will be discussed according to its usefulness to predict satisfaction and behavioral intentions such as purchase, loyalty and word-of-mouth. The antecedents of brand benefits will then be discussed. It will be shown that only a few studies have addressed this issue, and that moreover one of the most important potential antecedents, namely consumer personality, has been almost neglected until today. The importance of personality as an antecedent will be demonstrated and research propositions will be formulated relative to the link between personality traits and benefits sought. Finally as a consequence, a model linking personality traits and benefits sought, and, in turn the impact of benefits on outcome variables will be proposed and tested, through an exploratory and a main study using structural equation modeling. We propose to use tourism

as the field of research and indicate why this sector is relevant for such investigation. Results will be discussed and finally managerial implications and several avenues of research will be highlighted in the conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Benefits

According to Park et al. (1986: 136) "an important factor influencing the selection of a brand concept is consumer needs". These needs, and the benefits echoing them, have long been a central topic in marketing (Keller, 1993). As it is detailed hereafter, three categories of benefits, and their related needs, are usually recognized in the literature. These three benefits compose the consumer-based brand equity (for a recent review, see Christodoulides and De Chernatony, 2010) seen as the "overall utility that the consumer associates to the use and consumption of the brand" (Vazquez et al., 2002: 28)

The first category is called *Functional Benefits*. Keller defines functional benefits as "the more intrinsic advantages of product or service consumption (…) often linked to fairly basic motivation, such as physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1970) and involve a desire for problem removal or avoidance" (1993: 4). This dimension is related to the consumer's beliefs about product-service attributes that can be physically measured or observed, and their performances (Cohen et al., 1972; Burke and Edell, 1989). This approach is also often called *economic utilitarian* and highlights that "the rational choice and mental calculus characterize consumer decision-making process" (Tsai, 2005b: 278). The functional benefits are often decomposed into two components: quality and price (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Orth et al., 2004; Orth and De Marchi, 2007).

The second category of benefits that a product or service consumption can fulfill is *Emotional Benefits*. Also known as *Experiential Benefits*, they relate to "what it feels like to use the product or service (…) and satisfy experiential needs such as sensory pleasure, variety and cognitive stimulation" (Keller, 1993: 4). Indeed, numerous scholars have insisted on taking into account drivers other than the sole functional ones, such as emotions (Richins, 1997; Graillot, 1998; Bagozzi et al., 1999), the hedonic aspect (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Babin et al., 1994; Voss, Spangenberg and Grohmann, 2003) and the experiential dimension of consumption (Mathwick, Malhotra and Rigdon, 2001; Chronis and Hampton, 2002; Chronis, 2005; Lin, 2006; Keng, Huang, Zheng and Hsu, 2007; Bigne et al., 2008).

The third category is the *Symbolic Benefits*. Symbolic attributes of products have long been recognized as important drivers for their evaluation and use (Solomon, 1983; Belk, 1988; Sirgy and Johar, 1991; Shavitt, 1992; Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Aaker, 1999) and relate to something in a product/service that is an essential component, but which goes beyond its concrete aspect. This symbolic dimension of the product is perceived by consumers who use the product to express themselves through it (which is why this concept is also sometimes labeled expressive value or utility). Products and brands are then significant consumption symbols which provide symbolic value to customers. For example, a consumer will use an Apple computer to symbolically refer to creativity and "Think different", Bang&Olufsen audio equipment to refer to design, Dolce&Gabanna clothes to "made in Italy" fashion, Chanel bags to luxury and femininity, Rolls-Royce to luxury, Ferrari to sports, etc. "Products that we buy, activities that we do and philosophies or beliefs that we pursue tell stories about who we are and with whom we identify" (Wattanasuwan, 2005: 179). The symbolic benefits have often been decomposed into three components: self-identity (sometimes labeled characterization), group identity (sometimes labeled communication), and finally status (Richins, 1994b; Vazquez et al., 2002; Kocak et al., 2007; Strizhakova et al., 2008). Self-identity refers to the use of products by consumers in order to embody their values or to reinforce their self-esteem. In the group-identity desired benefit, the use or consumption of a product helps to signal the owner's values to others, as "there is evidence that others (acting as observers) are capable of reading elements of a person's identity by observing that person's possessions" (Richins, 1994a:, p. 524) and is important in the sense that it helps them to associate or to be associated with a specific group of reference (Escalas and Bettman, 2003; Escalas and Bettman, 2005) or a brand community (Muniz Jr and O'Guinn, 2001; McAlexander et al., 2002; Schouten et al., 2007) that is important for them. Finally, the third desired benefit, *status*, is the extent to which the use of the product/service will help the user to express a specific status or specific signs of prestige.

This distinction between these three categories of benefits (functional, emotional, symbolic) is not new and has already been discussed theoretically (Park et al., 1986; Keller, 1993), considered in specific cases, such as luxury products (Berthon et al., 2009) or product innovation (Rindova and Petkova, 2007). The empirical investigation of these three benefits is however, rarer. Studies of single benefits are more common in the literature (see for example the works on symbolic benefits of Berger and Heath, 2007; He and Mukherjee, 2007; Gao et

al., 2009) as are comparisons of two benefits (see for example the works comparing functional and symbolic benefit or functional and emotional: Babin et al., 1994; Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Belen del Rio et al., 2001; Voss et al., 2003; Mowle and Merriles, 2005; Kocak et al., 2007).

To the authors' knowledge, only a few studies can be found comparing the three benefits simultaneously:

- Orth conducted several studies (Orth et al., 2004; Orth et al., 2005; Orth and De Marchi, 2007) on the link between brand benefits and purchase intentions, based on the "perceived value" (PERVAL) approach developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001). One of his major findings is that there are "fundamental differences in how beliefs in different categories [functional, experiential, symbolic benefits] form, endure and affect purchase intentions (…). Consumer beliefs about symbolic benefits do not behave in concert with functional and experiential beliefs" (Orth and De Marchi, 2007: 228). Taken as whole, his work displays the three benefits as significant predictors of purchase intention, although important differences might appear due to product category, ad exposure and product experiences.

- Liang and Wang (2004) conducted a very interesting study on the effects of product attributes (functional, experiential, symbolic) on consumer satisfaction. They tested their model in a Taiwanese financial services company. According to the services (loan, deposit, credit card), they found different effects of the benefits. The impact of the three benefits was generally significant, mostly positively, but sometimes negatively, in the case of experiential benefits. Symbolic benefits were found to be the most accurate predictor of satisfaction, always significant and positive. Unfortunately, they did not decompose symbolic benefits into the three commonly recognized dimensions (self-identity, group-identity, status). Therefore, it is not possible to determine which dimension was the one that had the biggest impact.

- In their study concerning positioning objectives for credit card brands, Blankson and Kalafatis (2007) also considered the three benefits, functional, experiential and symbolic, simultaneously. They discuss the relevant strategies that should be implemented to reach these goals. One of their results is that "experiential" is not an appropriate strategy for the concerned sector.

- Finally, the interesting model proposed by Tsai (2005b) also verifies that "brand purchase value is dividable into three dimensionalities which in juxtaposition and in

interaction exert direct influences on repurchase intention. Such a discovery provides support to the premise that the traditional economic utilitarian view is not adequate and that socio-cultural symbolism and emotional/affective marketing approaches should also be incorporated into the understanding of purchase value" (Tsai, 2005b: 288).

Whether the studies were conducted on only two benefits or on all three, the main findings of these studies are as follows:

1) The benefits sought differ according to the type of product
2) There are inter-individual differences in sought benefits
3) Although the three benefits have different powers of prediction relative to satisfaction and behavioral intention, all benefits might present a strong link and therefore should be investigated in juxtaposition and not separately.
4) The origins of inter-individual differences remain unexplained.

Antecedents of brand benefits

As brand benefits sought by consumers are crucial during the purchasing process, researchers have made significant efforts to discover potential antecedents explaining inter-individual differences on the weight of these benefits. Several elements, presented hereafter, have been investigated. However, as will be shown, one of the most important, consumer personality, tends to be almost completely neglected.

Product related and non-product related attributes have been successfully shown, by Liang and Wang (2004), to have an influence on the benefits sought. For example, they have investigated how safety and ease of use (product related), or employee's courteousness (non product related) were related with benefits. Other antecedents of functional, emotional and symbolic benefits such as perceived image, emotional experience, perceived quality and price acceptability have been investigated by Tsai (2005b), perceived brand personality by Ramaseshan and Tsao (2007), and demographics by Creusen (2010).

Finally, consumer lifestyle also represents an interesting potential antecedent of brand benefits and has already received some attention (Orth et al., 2004; Orth et al., 2005). However, a systematic link between lifestyle and product preference was hard to find and

moreover lifestyles have been criticized regarding their lack of predictive validity (Novak and MacEvoy, 1990) and for stability issues (Quinn, Hines and Bennison, 2007).

As a consequence, numerous scholars have recommended going back to the roots of consumer and to take into account what is intrinsic to the consumer himself, namely his personality. Indeed, "it is reasonable to propose that people with different perceptions of themselves, in terms of their own personalities, may purchase different brands, which functionally satisfy the same needs but symbolically are quite different" (Whelan and Davies, 2006: 396). Tsai also states, according to Keller (2003), that "personal values (…) of consumers antecede the functional, experiential and symbolic consequences from the brand's purchase or consumption" (Tsai, 2005b: 279). Similarly Strizahkova also recognizes the use of psychographics as a "fruitful area for future research" (Strizhakova et al., 2008: 89). Finally Orth and De Marchi (2007) have been particularly explicit in their suggestions for future research stating that taking into account consumer personality would particularly enrich the understanding of consumption.

Although consumer personality has not received sufficient attention as brand benefit antecedent, it has already received much attention in marketing. Its influence has been recognized on purchase intentions (Lin, 2010), to describe types of buyers (Na and Marshall, 1999), perceived brand personality (Lee, 2009; Mulyanegara, Tsarenko and Anderson, 2009; Lin, 2010) and specific purchasing behavior, such as ecological behavior (Fraj and Martinez, 2006) or the motivation to buy counterfeit products (Swami, Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2009). Consumer personality has also been used as a segmentation technique (Whelan and Davies, 2006).

Marketing benefits from a now established view of personality in psychology. The "Big Five" model (Costa and McCrae, 1985) states that human personality can be described according to five main dimensions: Extraversion/Introversion, Emotional Stability (sometimes labeled Neuroticism), Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Openness to experience (sometimes labeled Intellect/Imagination).

> "Traits associated with Extraversion include being sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative, and active (…). Common traits associated with Emotional stability associated with this factor include being anxious, depressed, angry, embarrassed, emotional, worried and insecure. (…). Traits associated with Agreeableness include being courteous, flexible, trusting, good-natured, cooperative, forgiving, soft-hearted and tolerant (…). Conscientiousness reflects dependability that is being careful,

thorough, responsible, organized, planful (…), hard working, achievement-oriented and persevering (…). Traits commonly associated with Openness/intellect are being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent and artistically sensitive" (Barrick and Mount, 1991: 5).

As stated above, consumer personality has been widely used in marketing but almost totally neglected as a potential brand benefit antecedent. Indeed, no research can be found systematically linking personality traits and (functional, emotional and symbolic) benefits. It is surprising that such an important potential antecedent has not been yet investigated, especially because personality has a managerial advantage over lifestyle in the sense that it is considered as more stable (Quinn et al., 2007).

Orth et al. (2005) have postulated that personality, as a whole, will have an influence on the benefits sought. However, they did not test it in detail using established personality scales. Furthermore, only some partial relationships, described hereafter, have been studied, between one or two personality traits and some specific benefits (functional and emotional, almost never symbolic).

In their experimental study, Guido et al. (2006) found significant positive relationships between benefits and some personality traits. In particular, they found that openness to experience (also sometimes labeled "intellect") and agreeableness were strongly and positively related to emotional benefits while introversion, conscientiousness and emotional stability were more related with functional benefits. These results are in line with those of Mowen and Spears (1999) who also found a negative link between introversion and conscientiousness and emotional benefits and a positive relation between openness/intellect and emotional benefits. These results were also confirmed by Matzler et al. (2006) who observed a negative relationship between introversion and openness and emotional benefits.

In other words, people looking for emotional benefits might score higher on agreeableness, openness and extraversion. On the contrary, functional benefit-seekers will be more introverted, emotionally stable, and conscientious. However, the Guido et al. (2006) study did not distinguish between the two functional benefits (price and quality) and hence they are unable to indicate potential differences between them. Finally, Mowen and Spears (1999) highlighted that the status benefit (that they labeled *need for material*) has a positive relationship with conscientiousness and a negative relationship with emotional stability. But theirs study is only a preliminary step in the investigation of the link between symbolic

benefits and personality traits, as they did not take into account the other (self-identity and group-identity) symbolic benefits and the other personality traits.

In summary, the literature seems to indicate that personality traits would be a very interesting predictor of benefits sought. However this same literature is unable to provide a clear and, above all, a complete vision of the diversity of the relationships between personality traits and benefits sought.

To conclude with this theoretical part, and even after a comprehensive review of the literature, it appears hazardous to propose detailed hypotheses concerning the sign and strength for all the relationships between personality, benefits and satisfaction. Therefore, we propose to derive from the discussed literature propositions for the conceptual model as follows:

- First, the consumer brand equity (for a recent review, see Christodoulides and De Chernatony, 2010) seen as the "overall utility that the consumer associates to the use and consumption of the brand" (Vazquez et al., 2002: 28) is a multidimensional construct and can be decomposed into three principal benefits sought by consumers: the *functional* (in turn composed of *price* and *quality*), the *emotional* and the *symbolic* ones *(self-identity, group-identity* and *status)*. These benefits will have positive consequences for the consumer (in terms of satisfaction and behavioral intentions). It is valuable to integrate them simultaneously into the model to better understand the purchase value (Tsai, 2005b).

- Second, the consumer's personality is a valid antecedent of the afore-mentioned benefits. Different traits will present significant relationships with some or the total of the sought benefits. Therefore, we suggest that personality is not interesting *per se* in defining consumer's satisfaction but is significantly mediated by sought benefits.

Literature has not yet developed detailed hypotheses on each of the relationships between the big five personality and traits and the three categories of benefits. Therefore, and bearing in mind the exploratory character of the work, we use research propositions and not hypotheses. Coherently, the structural approach used hereafter will also reflect this exploratory nature. Indeed, by running competing models and by using a model development strategy (Hair et al., 2010), we investigate for the general structure among the proposed concepts rather than testing the sign or the strength of a precise relationship.

Field of application: tourism destinations

In order to investigate the above-mentioned relationships we decided to concentrate on the tourism sector. There are several reasons for this choice. First of all, tourism costs for consumers have decreased in the last decades and tourism is now a democratized product. Therefore, almost everyone in Western countries has the opportunity to take holidays and to experience service consumption in this industry. Second, tourism is one of the services that can simultaneously offer the consumer the three benefits. Indeed, a tourist service might be purchased either for functional, for emotional, or for symbolic reasons. It can even be a combination of the three benefits which is precisely the point of interest here. Third, it is a high involvement purchase (Beerli et al., 2007). This high involvement would guarantee that the obtained combination is the true reflection of consumer purchase rationale and not the result of chance. Finally, tourism is a sector where studies have already been conducted on both concepts, personality and benefits. On one hand, scholars (Barnett, 2006; Leung and Law, 2010) have shown that the tourist's personality has an influence on the choice of his activities or destination. On the other hand, the desired benefits have been shown to have an influence on outcome variables such as satisfaction (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1998; Beerli and Martin, 2004; Cho and Kerstetter, 2004; Hankinson, 2004; Beerli et al., 2007; Chi Gengqing and Qu, 2008; Balakrishnan, 2009; Bosnjak, 2010; Qu, Kim and Im, 2011:, etc). However none of these studies has linked simultaneously personality, benefits and outcomes. The present paper attempts therefore to build a bridge between these two streams.

METHODOLOGY

A pilot study was conducted to generate a pool of items concerning brand benefits. An initial set of 35 items was gathered based on a review of the related literature (Bhat and Reddy, 1998; Vazquez et al., 2002; Orth et al., 2004; Orth et al., 2005; Orth and De Marchi, 2007; Strizhakova et al., 2008). In addition, the tourism literature (Yoon, 2002; Chen and Tsai, 2007; Lee, Yoon and Lee, 2007; Narayan, Rajendran and Sai, 2008) was consulted to add 9 more specific items concerning benefits for the case of tourism products.

To measure personality traits, we use the Big Five model proposed by Costa and Mc Crae (1985), which is widely recognized by psychologists and often used in marketing (for recent examples, see: Whelan and Davies, 2006; Lee et al., 2007; Mulyanegara et al., 2009; Lin, 2010). For space and time constraints, we have decided to use the short version, the IPIP-50

items scale developed and validated by Goldberg (Goldberg, 1992; Goldberg, 1999; Goldberg, Johnson et al., 2006; Hampson and Goldberg, 2006).

Respondents were asked to choose a destination that they have recently experienced and to answer on benefits sought for this destination. Questions were asked in French. However, a professional translator checked the wording of the items. The exploratory study was conducted among undergraduate students (n=91). To minimize the potential common method variance bias, diverse recommended procedural techniques (Podsakoff et al., 2003) were used such as reverse-coded items, guarantee of respondent anonymity, and especially temporal and psychological separation of measurement. More precisely, two different surveys were conducted: the first one tested personality, while the second was related to the destination and its desired benefits. Personality and desired benefit measures were submitted to a factor analysis with communalities and reliability checks, in order to derive the underlying factors. 14 items presenting cross-loadings or low communalities were deleted. The personality scale issued in five dimensions. These dimensions are identical to those used by Goldberg (2006). Consequently, they have been labeled "Extraversion", "Agreeableness", "Conscientiousness", "Emotional Stability", and "Intellect/Openness to experience"[4]. Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis were also conducted for the benefits. Items with a low communality level or cross loadings were deleted. In the pool of remaining items (n=20), six underlying benefits were identified and correspond to those of the related literature. Indeed, we identified the two traditional (Orth et al., 2004; Orth and De Marchi, 2007) functional benefits, i.e. the price and the quality, one emotional (Orth et al., 2004; Orth and De Marchi, 2007), and three symbolic benefits corresponding to the three dimensions proposed by Vazquez et al. (2002) and Strizahkova et al. (2008), namely the self-identity, the group identity and the status benefit.

Finally to measure the consequences of these benefits, we created an outcome variable based on measures of satisfaction, intentions to visit and intentions to recommend. This measure, named "consequences" relates to the extent to which the consumer has a good disposition towards the destination.

The main study was conducted using an online questionnaire, distributed by an academic mailing list (students and non-students), through forums related to holidays, and through an online social network. The sample size was composed of 334 people, male and female almost

---

[4] For the rest of the article, we will speak of extraverted, agreeable, conscientious, (etc) people. However, it should be clear that this is a misuse of language and that the reader should, each time these terms appear, take them with caution and refer to the whole personality description (see for example Barrick & Mount, 1991).

equally represented (55% female, 45% male). 60% of the sample was under 26 years old. The scales used are those issued in the pilot study, namely the Big Five personality traits and the six sought benefits identified previously. The model was tested using a structural equation modeling approach. We used the recommended two steps approach (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The following section presents the results of the main study.

RESULTS

Measurement Model

As presented in tables 1 and 2, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis on the items of the main study. Items with a low-level of communality were deleted. For the remaining ones, they were all highly loaded on their correspondent construct found during the pilot study. All the factor loadings were higher than the recommended 0.7 level (Hair et al., 2010), the communalities higher than the 0.5 level (with one exception for item "take time for others" at 0.497).

Personality Construct	Item	Factor loading	Communalities
Extraversion	*Don't talk a lot (R)*	.772	.596
	Feel comfortable around people.	.744	.554
	Keep in the background (R)	.793	.628
	Start conversations.	.796	.634
	Have little to say (R)	.756	.572
Cronbach's alpha = .830/ variance explained = 59.69			
Emotional Stability	*Get upset easily (R)*	.746	.556
	Change my mood a lot (R)	.877	.769
	Have frequent mood swings (R)	.866	.750
	Get irritated easily (R)	.843	.711
Cronbach's alpha = .853/ variance explained = 69.63			
Agreeableness	*Am interested in people.*	.805	.649
	Am not interested in other people's problems (R)	.763	.582
	Am not really interested in others (R)	.806	.649
	Take time out for others	.705	.497
Cronbach's alpha = .770/ variance explained = 59.43			
Intellect	*Have a vivid imagination*	.836	.699
	Have excellent ideas	.783	.614
	Am full of ideas	.894	.800
Cronbach's alpha = .785/ variance explained = 70.42			
Conscientiousness	*Leave my belongings around (R)*	.871	.759
	Often forget to put things back in their proper place (R)	.842	.708
	Like order	.822	.676
Cronbach's alpha = .798/ variance explained = 71.44			

Table 1, Personality Constructs

Cronbach's alphas also exceed by far the 0.7 threshold, ranging from 0.743 to 0.869. In addition, we computed the rho of internal validity (Jöreskog, 1971) for each latent construct and the average variance extracted alike (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). For all the variables, both indicators were higher than the recommended benchmark of 0.7, respectively 0.5.

Benefit Construct	Factor loading	Communalities
Functional: Quality (Orth et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2007; Narayan et al., 2008)		
The cleanliness and hygiene at tourist spots/places of visit was satisfactory	.831	.690
This destination is a good quality product	.835	.698
While visiting this destination, I received good service	.807	.651
Cronbach's alpha = .764/ variance explained = 67.96		
Functional: Price (Orth et al., 2004)		
This destination is reasonably priced	.895	.801
This destination offers value for money	.895	.801
Cronbach's alpha = .743/ variance explained = 80.10		
Emotional (Orth et al., 2004)		
This destination makes me feel good	.831	.691
This destination would give me pleasure	.854	.729
This destination evokes thoughts of happiness	.766	.586
This destination helps me to eliminate my anxiety	.704	.495
Cronbach's alpha = .774/ variance explained = 62.53		
Symbolic: Self-identity (Strizhakova et al. 2008)		
This destination brings out my personality	.906	.821
This destination says something about me as person	.926	.857
This destination communicates important information about the type of person I am as a person	.838	.702
Cronbach's alpha = .869/ variance explained = 79.33		
Symbolic: Group-identity (Strizhakova et al. 2008)		
I choose destinations that are associated with the social group I belong to	.863	.744
By choosing this destination, I choose who I want to associate with.	.891	.794
My choice of this destination says something about the people I like to associate with	.835	.697
Cronbach's alpha = .828/ variance explained = 74.48		
Symbolic: Status (Strizhakova et al. 2008)		
I use this destination to communicate my social status	.868	.753
I communicate my achievements through this destination	.808	.653
I avoid choosing a destination that does not reflect my social status	.795	.632
Cronbach's alpha = .757/ variance explained = 67.94		
Consequences		
How do you evaluate your satisfaction?	.893	.792
Will you recommend this destination to your friends?	.890	.798
Do you think you will visit again?	.792	.628
Cronbach's alpha = .765/ variance explained = 73.92		

Table 2, Benefits Constructs

To assess the discriminant validity, the AVE value was compared to the squared correlations between the corresponding constructs (Hair et al., 2010). Except for one relationship, none of the correlations were sufficiently high to reach the 0.5 level, thus indicating an acceptable degree of discriminant validity. For the exception (relationship between emotional benefit and consequences), we followed the recommended technique (Hair et al., 2010) conducting a comparison of two competing models, one in which the path values was set to 1 (which means that these constructs are in fact the same) and the tested model, and we performed a χ^2 test. The tested model was significantly better suggesting a satisfactory level of discriminant validity (for a complete view of the results of convergent and discriminant validity calculations, see Appendix A, B and C).

Finally, following the proposed procedure (Hair et al., 2010), the measurement model was adjusted using modification indices' propositions. Three modifications indices were taken into account: the ones correlating the measurement errors of the three symbolic benefits. This is justifiable, as these three concepts are part of one higher-order concept, the symbolic benefits. We also correlate two errors terms within the extraversion construct and within the emotional stability construct. Although there is a debate in SEM concerning error correlations, Cote et al. (2001) recognize that it could be justified in case of complex models with a large number of measures or constructs, which is the case in our study. Overall the measurement model was convincingly supported by fit statistics ($\chi^2/df= 1.618$; CFI= 0.927; RMSEA= 0.043, p= 0.991).

Structural Model

After the measurement model, several structural models were run in order to identify the one that best fits the relationship between personality traits, benefits sought and consequences. More precisely, models with some of the personality traits correlated (Extraversion with Intellect and Emotional Stability with Conscientiousness) were significantly better than those where there was no correlation between these exogenous constructs. Moreover these relationships between personality traits have been already several times acknowledged (Digman, 1997; De Young, 2006) and therefore we have decided to keep them. We have also investigated the potential existence of direct effects of personality traits on consequences. We found significant direct paths only for the Intellect dimension. However, for this trait full mediated paths were already significant. Therefore, as full mediation assumptions are preferable (James, Mulaik and Brett, 2006) and following a philosophy of parsimony, we

have decided to consider only the full mediation model and to not consider the direct effects of personality on consequences.

Based on the proposition of modifications indices, we also add a path from price to quality. Indeed, literature (see the recent review of Volckner and Hofmann, 2007) has extensively shown that consumers tend to use price as an indicator of quality.

Finally, according to the recommendation made by Gallagher, Ting and Palmer (2008), paths with a critical ratio lower than 1.96 have been deleted.

After these modifications, one model emerges presenting satisfactory goodness-of-fit measures (χ^2/df= 1.867; CFI= 0.927; RMSEA= 0.043, p= 0.991). The figure 1 presents this model:
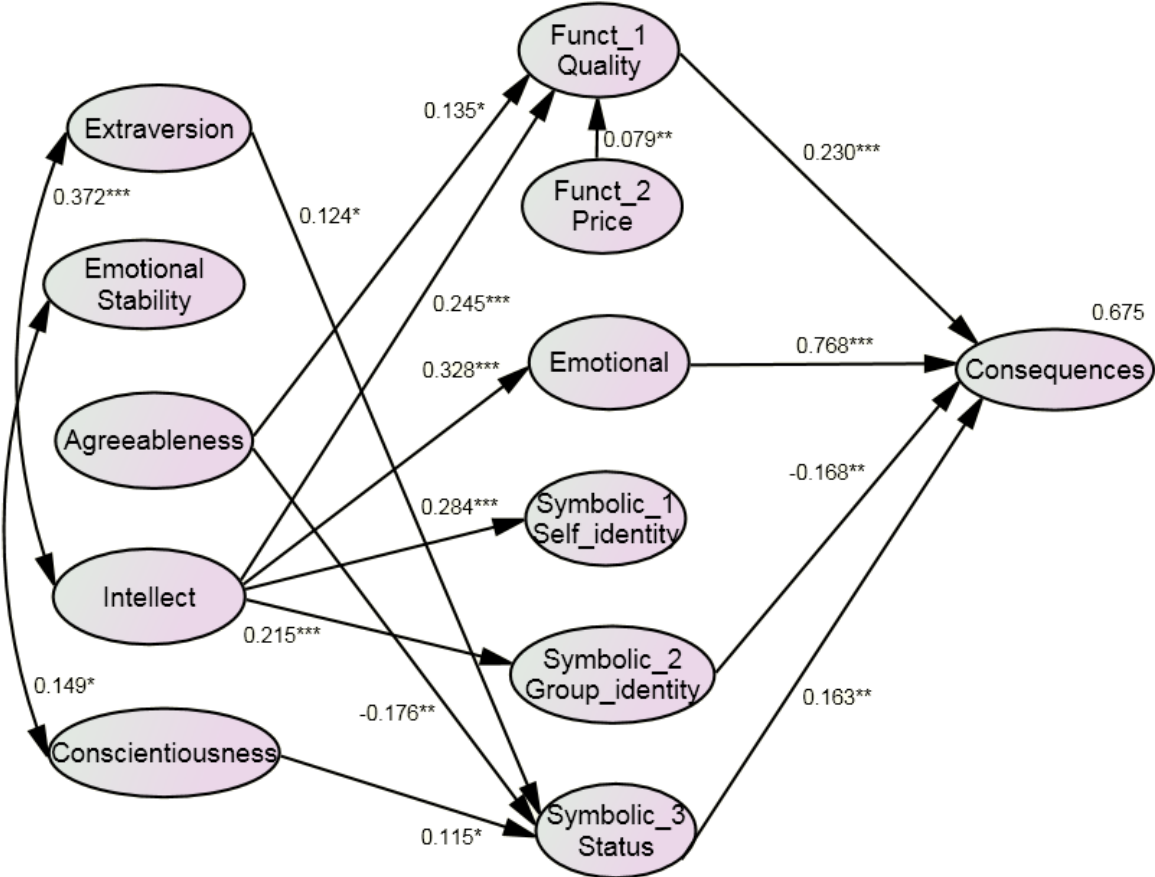

Figure 1, Structural model of Personality-Benefits-Consequences
NB: * = p<0.05; ** = p<0.01; *** = p<0.001

DISCUSSION

This complex model linking six different benefits, and highlighting which of the five personality traits antecede each of them, presents interesting and sometimes counterintuitive results. Moreover, some of these results contradict previous studies. There are two ways of reading the paths between personality and benefits. First, one can read them from the personality's perspective (that is from the left to the right of the graph).

- More precisely, as shown in Figure 1, extraversion is significantly related to the symbolic benefits of status. This means that extraverted people will appreciate the fact that a destination allows them to show their social status. Guido et al. (2006) found a strong correlation between introversion and functional benefits. In our case, we failed to find such a relationship.

- Emotional stability does not present significant relationships with any benefits, which is partially in line with the results of Guido et al. (2006) who failed to find significant relationships between this trait and emotional benefits. However, these authors found that emotionally unstable people were strongly looking for functional benefits, which was not confirmed by our results.

- For agreeableness, one can observe that agreeable (for traits' description, see: Barrick and Mount, 1991) people will be apparently more attracted by functional benefits. This result is in line with Guido et al. (2006) who found a similar path value. Surprisingly this personality trait does not relate to emotional benefit. Agreeableness is negatively related to status, meaning that agreeable people will not seek to show off their status. In other words, this agreeableness condition is interesting as it allows differentiating between consumers looking for quality and those seeking a way to express status.

- Intellect/Openness to experience is the personality trait with the largest predicting power as it presents four significant paths. Intellectual people will consider functional benefits such as quality and will be even more attracted for emotional reasons. This last result (the link between intellect and emotional benefit) confirms previous studies (Mowen and Spears, 1999; Guido et al., 2006; Matzler et al., 2006) where it has been found to be systematically positive and significant. Finally, open-minded tourists will also seek the opportunity to reinforce their self-esteem or identity and to be linked with a specific group through a destination.

- The last personality trait, Conscientiousness, is significantly and positively related to the status benefit. One of the sub-dimensions of this trait measures whether the person is achievement-oriented. This probably explains the relationship between conscientiousness and status, which has also been found by Mowen and Spears (1999).

Second, these results can also be summarized from the benefits point of view, that is: investigating what would be the personality of the consumer, knowing the benefit he is looking for (that is reading the paths from the right to the left of the graph):

- Consumers looking for quality are "agreeable" and "open-minded".
- Consumers looking for emotional benefit are very "open-minded".
- Consumers looking for group identity are "open-minded".
- Consumers looking to show their status are not "agreeable", but are "conscientious" and "extraverted".

Literature can shed an interesting light on some of the obtained paths.

First, concerning the path between status and conscientiousness; according to Mowen and Spears (1999), a person looking for status might be more prone to work longer hours to earn more money. Similarly a person who is conscientious will work more easily long hours. This would be a way to explain the obtained correlation between the two concepts.

Second, according to Matzler et al. (2006), people scoring high on the intellect/openness dimension will have the tendency to be "curious about both inner and outer worlds, to have experientially richer lives, to experience both positive and negative emotions than closed individuals, [therefore] it can be assumed that they perceive and experience hedonic values of products stronger than individuals who score low on openness" (2006: 428). Our results suggest that this effect is true in tourism. For the same reason, we would have expected also a positive relationship between extraversion and emotional benefits. However, this relationship was not supported by our data.

Finally, because extraverted people are also more prone to make contacts with others, one could have expected that they will score higher on the group-identity need. However, no significant relationship of that kind was found in the dataset. Complementary, according to Guido et al. (2006), people who are introverted, emotionally unstable and conscientious will

be more looking for functional benefits that are tangible and objective in order to reassure themselves. Once again our study provides contradictory results as none of these relationships were significant.

As expected, the relationships between the sought benefits (functional, emotional, and symbolic) and consequences are significant. This result confirms the results of previous studies (Liang and Wang, 2004; Blankson and Kalafatis, 2007; Orth and De Marchi, 2007) and the importance of taking into account the three benefits simultaneously (Tsai, 2005b). The results show that emotional benefits (i.e., "what it feels like to use the product or service" (Keller, 1993: 4)) are the most influential predictor of consequences. In other words, what counts the most for holidays is the opportunity to answer emotional needs, such as the need for relaxation, which comes as no surprise. Orth and De Marchi (2007) also found that the emotional benefit was the one that had the strongest impact on purchase intention.

What is unexpected, however, is that, with regard to functional benefits, quality is the only element that matters and price has no importance. In terms of symbolic benefits, two of the three components of symbolic benefits are found to be significant predictors of consequences. First, it appears that destinations are not goods that help people to characterize themselves or to reinforce their self-identity and therefore that impacts consequences. This result is surprising regarding all the new forms of tourism that have emerged (fair or green tourism, gender tourism, spiritual or religious tourism, scientific or adventurous tourism, etc.) and that clearly indicate the need of reinforcing their self-esteem or identity. The destinations present in our sample are more conventional and might explain this result. However, other symbolic benefits impact consequences. A consumer will prefer a destination that allows him not to be associated with other people. This means that during holidays, people would prefer to escape than to reinforce their social belonging. In contrast, they would be satisfied with a destination that allows them to show their social status. Finally, these six benefits explain 67.5% of the variance in consequences. Again, this finding shows support for the importance of taking into account all the benefits sought in a destination for judging their related consequences.

Complementary analyses

Having examined the model on a general level, it is also interesting to make some complementary analyses for sub-populations, more precisely regarding the type of user and gender. The type of user (first time vs. repeated user) distinguishes people that have visited this destination for the first time from people who have at least visited this destination twice.

We conducted this analysis as there are already some clues (Beerli et al., 2007; Orth and De Marchi, 2007) that previous experience with the product might impact our results. Similarly, we decided to investigate the effect of gender, because Orth (2005b) has shown its effect on the sought benefits, and also because Lau and Phau (2010) have exposed its impact on the brand's image for symbolic brands.

Therefore, we conducted multigroup comparisons (see Appendix D). We first established the acceptance of the measurement models and measurement invariance for the group (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004). We then investigated the significant differences in the path coefficients between groups. We used the initial model with all the structured paths as a baseline model. We present here only the paths that strongly differ between groups or with the above presented model.

Concerning the type of user (first time vs. repeated user), interesting results appear for some personality traits. Repeated anxious users pay more attention to price (β=0.248, p=0.039) than anxious first-time users (β=-0.133, n.s.). Similarly, Conscientiousness presents more significant paths for repeated users than for first-time users. For example, a repeated conscientious user will not be primarily attracted by the price (β=-0.20, p=0.011 vs. β=-0.022, n.s.), but will be attracted by the possibility to show his social status (β=0.143, p=0.044 vs. β=0.082, n.s.), which might appear contradictory. The most interesting results are to be found in the Agreeableness trait. Indeed the type (first vs. repeated) of user strongly interacts with the effect of this trait on the sought benefits. More precisely, as shown in table 3, each time a path presents a significant value for the repeated user, the same path will be not significant for the first time user, and vice-versa.

			Estimate (repeated)	P	Estimate (first time)	P
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.21	0.164	-0.077	0.648
Agreeableness	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.427	***	-0.063	0.586
Agreeableness	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.072	0.609	0.446	0.003
Agreeableness	-->	Emotional	0.223	0.003	-0.006	0.951
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	0.663	***	-0.212	0.228
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	0.041	0.76	-0.43	0.001

Table 3, Multiple Group Comparison: the interaction effect of type of user on the effect of Agreeableness
The significant paths are highlighted in gray.

This means that agreeable people (i.e. forgiving, cooperative, courteous, flexible, good-natured, soft-hearted, tolerant, etc.) will seek entirely different benefits whether this is their first visit to this destination or not. First time agreeable users will be price and status-

conscious, while repeated agreeable users will be more attracted by quality, emotional stimulation and the possibility to associate with someone. This effect seems quite strong, but has, to the best of our knowledge, never been emphasized by previous research. If people make repeated visits to a destination, this means that they have been satisfied by previous visits. According to Mooradian, Renzl and Matzler (2006), for people scoring high on Agreeableness, the propensity to trust is particularly important. This might explain the result obtained here. Indeed, this would mean that agreeable people that have made repeated visits have established an important relationship of confidence and trust with the destination. Because they trust the destination, they do not rely anymore on price but strongly believe on the intrinsic quality of the destination and also let their personality be fully expressed. As stated by Mooradian et al. (2006) this personality trait characterizes people being altruistic, having prosocial and communal orientation and looking for emotional support. This emerges in our data, as the emotional benefits and the group-identity one become strongly positive and significant for agreeable people, once they have established this trust relationship.

While the relationships between personality traits and benefits are quite different with regard to the type of user, the impacts of the benefits sought on consequences do not strongly differ across groups and are similar to the ones presented in the model above. Emotional benefits and quality loose their predictive capacity slightly on consequences ($\beta=0.657$, $p<0.001$ vs. $\beta=0.479$, $p<0.001$ and $\beta=0.218$, $p<0.001$ vs. $\beta=0.186$, $p=0.007$). These results should be read in line with those of Orth and De Marchi (2007). Indeed, these scholars have shown that the weight of functional, emotional and symbolic desired benefits significantly changes between non-users and first-time users. Our results would indicate that once a product has been experienced a first time, the combination of the desired benefits does not change radically. However, our results are only the first step and further studies should investigate this point more deeply.

With regard to the effect of gender, four additional paths are significant for women, while they are not for men. Extraverted and conscientious women will be more prone to show their status than men ($\beta=0.243$, $p=0.049$, vs. $\beta=0.099$, n.s. and $\beta=0.19$, $p=0.002$ vs. $\beta=-0.033$, n.s.). In addition, agreeable women will pay attention to the price and intellectual ones to group-identity which is not the case for men ($\beta=0.335$, $p=0.028$ vs. $\beta=0.012$, n.s. and $\beta=0.33$, $p=0.024$ vs. $\beta=0.189$, n.s.). As a consequence, the symbolic benefits will strongly count on the consequences formation for women, whereas this is not the case at all for men (Group Identity

on consequences: β=-0.118, p=0.008 vs. β=-0.026, n.s. and status: β=0.14, p=0.004 vs. β=0.064, n.s.).

Finally, we also conducted a comparison of two models, by using a χ^2 test, to investigate whether it is worth to take into consideration symbolic benefits. The model integrating symbolic benefits as predictors of consequences was significantly better than the one without. Moreover, the variance explained of the outcome variable is also higher with the integration of symbolic benefits and reaches 67.5%.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this empirical study was first to investigate the relationships between benefits sought and consequences (satisfaction/behavioral intentions) in the tourism sector. These benefits are decomposed into functional (price and quality), emotional and symbolic benefits (self-identity, group-identity and status). Second, this study brought into play the consumer's personality as an antecedent of these benefits.

Theoretical contributions

From a theory development perspective, this empirical research echoes back to at least three demands for further research and therefore provides a significant contribution to the current literature.

First the findings show that functional, emotional, and symbolic desired benefits have an impact on consequences. As emphasized previously, the vast majority of studies until now have failed to take into account the three benefits simultaneously, focusing only on one or two at a time. This research answers Tsai's (2005b) call to incorporate the three benefits and thus allows for a better understanding of the purchase value.

In our view, it is not possible to say that a specific benefit has a stronger predicting power than the others. In Tsai's study (Tsai, 2005b), the utilitarian benefit was the strongest, whereas for Liang and Wang (2004), it was the symbolic one. In our case, emotional benefits were by far the ones with the highest predicting power. We believe that these differences come from the product's category studied. In the case of tourism, consumers are especially looking for being emotionally satisfied, this is understandable as a need for relaxation is highly related with leisure time.

Second, the literature highlights strong inter-individual differences regarding the desired benefits, but with unclear origins. As a potential explanation for these differences, numerous scholars (Tsai, 2005b; Whelan and Davies, 2006; Strizhakova et al., 2008) have asked to investigate the role of consumer personality. Whereas previous studies (Mowen and Spears, 1999; Guido et al., 2006; Matzler et al., 2006) have only investigated partial relationships, this study provides empirical evidence that personality traits are significantly related to the sought benefits and therefore highly relevant to understand the purchase decision.

Finally, we also answer Orth and De Marchi (2007), who asked for real-world design in order to complement their laboratory settings. In our study, consumers are real in the sense that they have had indeed a real consumption experience. We also followed their suggestion to use a different product category which has not yet been investigated, namely tourist destinations.

To sum up, this study is the most integrative one to date linking the five personality traits, the desired benefits and consequences. Furthermore, the results present strong evidence that personality traits and benefits are significantly related. However, the nature (strength and sign) of these relationships was found to sometimes contradict previous results. Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind the exploratory nature of the current study. Further research is needed to establish in a more definite manner the nature of these relationships, but the interest of considering personality as a driver of benefits has now been established.

Managerial implications

In addition to the above mentioned theoretical contributions and assuming that future research will support our findings, we believe this study provides interesting practical implications. What this study points out to managers is the importance of taking into account consumer personality in the offer design and in its communication. From our results, we can assume that all three benefits should be present in the offer, and that they should be differentially emphasized according to the personality of the targeted consumers. Of course, one can raise the objection that it is very hard, if not impossible, for marketing managers to know what type (extraverted, conscientious, emotionally stable, etc) of consumer they are targeting. However, there is a way to benefit from our results without needing to know the consumer's personality. Indeed, there is already some evidence (Mooradian, Matzler and Szykman, 2008; Orth, Malkevitz and Bee, 2010; Paek, Choi and Nelson, 2010) that certain types of messages and advertising will be more effective for specific personality traits. As a consequence, managers might use the appropriate advertising strategy without needing to know the personality of their consumers. A destination manager, knowing what benefit is sought by the consumers of

his destination, should use the advertising type that will be the most effective to people seeking this benefit. For example, knowing that people come to the destination because of its quality, the manager should use message type appropriate for agreeable and intellect-oriented consumers. Moreover, he should also try to target repeated users as the path is stronger for them. In another example, the manager knows that his destination is helpful to show a status (for example: Dubai or a five-star hotel, etc), and as we have seen previously, people looking for status will be extraverted, conscientious but not agreeable. Thus the destination manager should use the appropriate message and advertising type for them. Targeting them (and not all the population) allows a more parsimonious use of advertising budgets, as only interested people are targeted. Targeting the whole population might maybe convince more tourists to come, but would cost much more.

Apart from this major implication, we can also formulate a series of more specific ones:

- Quality will be important for men, first-time users, agreeable and intellect-oriented people.

- Price does not appear to have an influence on satisfaction/behavioral intentions for tourist destinations.

- Emotional benefits are by far the most desired ones by men and even more for women. Open-minded and first time users will pay special attention and will look for these benefits.

- With the probable exception of specific types of holidays (such as green, fair, spiritual or scientific tourism, for which further studies would be needed), consumers do not seek to be characterized, namely for reinforcing their self-identity, when choosing a destination. Therefore, it is not worthwhile for marketers to build upon this message.

- Interestingly, consumers, especially women and first time users, will avoid destinations that allow them to associate or to be associated with someone or some specific group. One possible explanation would be that when on holiday, people try to escape from who they are during the routine of their daily working lives. However, previous studies also concerning leisure time, especially in the case of brand communities (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Cova and Cova, 2001), contradict this result. Therefore, further research on this issue is needed.

Limitations and future research

One limitation of this study is the question of the scale used for measuring emotional benefits. Indeed, even though it is a well established scale (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Orth et al., 2004; Orth et al., 2005; Tsai, 2005b; Lee et al., 2007), a small issue concerning discriminant validity appeared between emotional benefits and consequences. However these constructs are clearly different from each other, both from a theoretical and a measurement perspective. As a possible improvement, future research might use a scale with a broader range of items (examples of tourism related items could be found in the following: Narayan, Rajendran and Sai (2008), Bigne, Mattila and Andreu (2008) or Chi Gengqing and Qu (2008)), in order to better reflect all the emotional stimulations that can exist for tourism products.

There is no common agreement concerning the way to test benefits sought in tourism. As a consequence, a study, pointing out the difference of the used scales and proposing and testing a unique scale, would be valuable.

Similarly, an important number of items for the personality scale have been deleted for their low level communalities or for cross-loadings issues. This might be explained by the fact that until today, the 50 items scale has not been validated when applied in French. A part of the deletion might be explained by an inadequate translation (despite the use of a professional translator). As a consequence of this deletion, not all the nuances of the traits might be captured by the used scale. Therefore, it is worth investigating the impact of culture and language when measuring personality before going further.

As a dependent variable, we used a variable labeled "consequences". However, this variable gathers two different concepts: the one of satisfaction and the one of behavioral intentions. In our design, we measured satisfaction with only one question and used two questions for behavioral intentions. We could have modeled two different latent variables (satisfaction and behavioral intentions). However, we decided not to do so because literature is particularly explicit about one single-item measures, stating that everything should be done to avoid them (Hair et al., 2010). Moreover differentiating satisfaction and behavioral intentions would implicate several methodological tricks, such as setting constrains, that are debatable. Finally, if these two constructs are differentiated, their path value is extremely high ($\beta= 0.978$, $p< 0.001$), and 95.7% of the variance of behavioral intentions is explained by satisfaction. Thus, an important issue of discriminant validity would be present. This explains why we have chosen this "consequences" variable. Future research investigating a better way to measure outcomes of desired benefits would be helpful.

Another point that requires attention is the situational context within which the Big Five model is applied. Mowen and Spears (1999) have pointed out that it might have an impact on the validity of the scales. It is unclear how the context of our study might impact our results. However, further studies would help to increase the external validity of our results and reduce potential effects of the context.

For managerial relevance, future research also needs to extend our work to other samples. In particular, our results may not be replicable for all age categories (60% of the sample was younger than 26 years old). In addition, it should be replicated in other countries as literature (Kocak et al., 2007) indicates that this could influence the expression of some benefits.

Most importantly, this study examines a single product category, tourism destinations. As a consequence, the item formulation, the findings about impacts of the benefits', and their related relationships with personality traits alike, might not hold for a different category of products or services. Therefore, the replication and a comparison with several product categories would undoubtedly represent a necessary subsequent step for this study.

Finally a promising avenue of research would be to investigate the stability over time of the sought benefits and their relationship with personality traits, as our research, as well as previous research (Orth and De Marchi, 2007), indicates that they evolve over time. Therefore, a complete design is recommendable, capable of testing the sought benefits and their relationship with personality traits before the first use, after the first use, and after several consumption experiences.

REFERENCES

Aaker, J. (1999). The Malleable Self: The Role of Self-Expression in Persuasion. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36(1), 45-57.

Anderson, J. C. and Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural Equation Modeling in practice: a review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103, 411-423.

Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R. and Griffin, M. (1994). Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Value. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20, 644-656.

Bagozzi, R. P., Gospinath, M. and Nyer, P. U. (1999). The Role of Emotions in Marketing. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 27(2), 184-206.

Balakrishnan, M. S. (2009). Strategic branding of destinations: a framework. *European Journal of Marketing*, 43(5/6), 611-629.

Barnett, L. A. (2006). Accounting for Leisure Preferences from Within: The Relative Contributions of Gender, Race or Ethnicity, Personality, Affective Style and Motivational Orientation *Journal of Leisure Research*, 38(4), 445-474.

Barrick, M. R. and Mount, M. K. (1991). The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Job Performance: A Meta-Analysis. *Personnel Psychology*, 44(1), 1-26.

Beerli, A. and Martin, J. D. (2004). Factors influencing destination image. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 31(3), 657-681.

Beerli, A., Meneses, G. D. and Gil, S. M. (2007). Self-Congruity and Destination Choice. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 34(3), 571-587.

Belen del Rio, A., Vazquez, R. and Iglesias, V. (2001). The role of the brand name in obtaining differential advantages. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 10(7), 452-465.

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possession and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(September), 139-168.

Berger, J. and Heath, C. (2007). Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34, 121-134.

Berthon, P., Pitt, L., Parent, M., et al. (2009). Aesthetics and Ephemerality: Observing and preserving the luxury brand. *California Management Review*, 52(1), 45-66.

Bhat, S. and Reddy, S. K. (1998). Symbolic and functional positioning of brands. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 15(1), 32-43.

Bigne, E. J., Mattila, A. S. and Andreu, L. (2008). The impact of experiential consumption cognitions and emotions on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 22(4), 303-315.

Blankson, C. and Kalafatis, S. P. (2007). Congruence between Positioning and Brand Advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 47(1), 79-94.

Bosnjak, M. (2010). Negative symbolic aspects in destination branding: Exploring the role of the 'undesired self' on web-based vacation information search intentions among potential first-time visitors *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 16(4), 323-330.

Burke, M. C. and Edell, J. A. (1989). The impact of feelings on ad-based affect and cognition. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 27, 69-83.

Chen, C.-F. and Tsai, D. (2007). How destination image and evaluative factors affect behavioral intentions? *Tourism Management*, 28, 1115-1122.

Chi Gengqing, C. and Qu, H. (2008). Examining the structural relationships of destination image, tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty: An integrated approach. *Tourism Management*, 29, 624-636.

Cho, M.-H. and Kerstetter, D. L. (2004). The Influence of Sign Value on Travel-Related Information Search. *Leisure Sciences*, 26, 19-34.

Christodoulides, G. and De Chernatony, L. (2010). Consumer-based brand equity conceptualisation and measurement: A literature review. *International Journal of Market Research*, 52(1), 46-66.

Chronis, A. (2005). Our Byzantine heritage: consumption of the past and its experiential benefits. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 22(4/5), 213-222.

Chronis, A. and Hampton, R. (2002). *Theory building for experiential consumption: The use of the phenomenological tradition to analyze international tourism.* American Marketing Association. Conference Proceedings.

Cohen, J. B., Fishbein, M. and Ahtola, O. T. (1972). The Nature and Uses of Expectancy-Value Models in Consumer Attitude Research. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 9(4), 456-460.

Costa, P. T. and McCrae, R. R. (1985). *The NEO PI-R Personality Inventory Manual*. FL., Psychological Assesment Ressources.

Cote, J. A., Netemeyer, R., Bagozzi, R. P., et al. (2001). Structural Equations Modeling. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 10(1&2), 83-100.

Cova, B. and Cova, V. (2001). Tribal aspects of postmodern consumption research: The case of French in-line roller skates. *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 1(1), 67-76.

Creusen, M. (2010). The importance of product aspects in choice: the influence of demographic characteristics. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 27(1), 26-34.

De Young, C. (2006). Higher-Order Factors of the Big Five in a Multi-Informant Sample. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 91(6), 1138-1151.

Digman, J. M. (1997). High-Order Factors of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 73(6), 1246-1256.

Escalas, J. E. and Bettman, J. R. (2003). You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumer's Connection to Brands. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13(3), 339-348.

Escalas, J. E. and Bettman, J. R. (2005). Self-Construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378-389.

Fornell, C. and Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.

Fraj, E. and Martinez, E. (2006). Environmental values and lifestyles as determing factors of ecological consumer behaviour: an empirical analysis. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 23(3), 133-144.

Gallagher, D., Ting, L. and Palmer, A. (2008). A journey into the unknown; taking the fear out of the structural equation modeling with AMOS for the first time user. *The Marketing Review*, 8(3), 255-275.

Gao, L., Wheeler, C. S. and Shiv, B. (2009). The "Shaken Self": Product Choices as a Means of Restoring Self-View Confidence. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36, 29-38.

Goldberg, L. R. (1992). The development of markers for the Big-Five factor structure. *Psychological Assessment*, 4, 26-42.

Goldberg, L. R. (1999). A broad-bandwidth, public domain, personality inventory measuring the lower-level facets of several five-factor models. *Personality Psychology in Europe*. I. Mervielde, I. Deary, F. D. Fruyt and F. Ostendorf. Tilburg, Tilburg University Press. 7**:** 7-28.

Goldberg, L. R., Johnson, J. A., Eber, H. W., et al. (2006). The International Personality Item Pool and the future of public-domain personality measures. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40, 84-96.

Graillot, L. (1998). Emotions et comportement du consommateur. *Recherches et Applications en Marketing*, 13(1), 5-23.

Guido, G., Capestro, M. and Peluso, A. M. (2006). Experimental analysis of consumer stimulation and motivational states in shopping experiences. *International Journal of Market Research*, 49(3), 365-386.

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., et al. (2010). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Upper Saddle River, Pearson Education.

Hampson, S. E. and Goldberg, L. R. (2006). A First Large Cohort Study of Personality Trait Stability Over the 40 Years Between Elementary School and Midlife. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 91(4).

Hankinson, G. (2004). Repertory grid analysis: An application to the measurement of destination images. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, 9(2), 145-153.

He, H. and Mukherjee, A. (2007). I am, ergo I shop: does store image congruity explain shopping behaviour of Chinese consumers? *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(5/6), 443-460.

Hirschman, E. C. and Holbrook, M. B. (1982). Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions. *Journal of Marketing*, 46(Summer), 92-101.

James, L. R., Mulaik, S. A. and Brett, J. M. (2006). A Tale of Two Methods. *Organizational Research Methods*, 9(2), 233-244.

Jöreskog, K. G. (1971). Statistical Analysis of sets of congeneric tests. *Psychometrika*, 34, 183-202.

Keller, K. L. (1993). Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(January), 1-22.

Keller, K. L. (2003). Brand Synthesis: The Multidimensionality of Brand Knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(March), 595-600.

Keng, C.-J., Huang, T.-L., Zheng, L.-J., et al. (2007). Modeling service encounters and customer experiential value in retailing. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 18(4), 349-367.

Kocak, A., Abimbola, T. and Ozer, A. (2007). Consumer Brand Equity in a Cross-cultural Replication: An Evaluation of a Scale. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23(1/2), 157-173.

Lau, K. C. and Phau, I. (2010). Impact of gender on perceptual fit evaluation for prestige brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 17, 354 – 367.

Lee, C.-K., Yoon, Y. and Lee, S.-K. (2007). Investigating the relationships among perceived value, satisfaction, and recommendations: The case of the Korean DMZ. *Tourism Management*, 28, 204-214.

Lee, J. W. (2009). Relationship between consumer personality and brand personality as self-concept: from the case of Korean automobile brands. *Academy of Marketing Studies Journal*, 13(1), 25-44.

Leung, R. and Law, R. (2010). A review of Personality Research in the Tourism and Hospitality Context. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, 27(5), 439-459.

Liang, C.-J. and Wang, W.-H. (2004). Attributes, benefits, customer satisfaction and behavioral loyalty - an integrative research of financial services industry in Taiwan *Journal of Services Research*, 4(1), 54-91.

Lin, K.-M. (2006). An examination of the relationship between experiential marketing strategy and guests' leisure behavior in Taiwan Hot-springs Hotel. Daphne, United States Sports Academy.

Lin, L.-Y. (2010). The relationship of consumer personality trait , brand personality and brand loyalty: an empirical study of toys and video games buyers. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 19(1), 4-17.

Mathwick, C., Malhotra, N. and Rigdon, E. (2001). Experiential value: conceptualization, measurement and application in the catalog and Internet shopping environment. *Journal of Retailing*, 77, 39-56.

Matzler, K., Bidmon, S. and Grabner-Kraüter, S. (2006). Individual determinants of brand affect: the role of the personality traits of extraversion and openness to experience. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 15(7), 427-434.

McAlexander, J. H., Schouten, J. W. and Koenig, H. F. (2002). Building Brand Community. *Journal of Marketing*, 66(January), 38-54.

Mooradian, T. A., Renzl, B. and Matzler, K. (2006). Who trusts? Personality, Trust and Knowledge Sharing. *Management Learning*, 37, 4, 523-540.

Mooradian, T. A., Matzler, K. and Szykman, L. (2008). Empathetic responses to advertsing: testing a network of antecedents and consequences. *Marketing Letters*, 19, 79-92.

Mowen, J. C. and Spears, N. (1999). Understanding compulsive Buying among College Students: A hierachical approach. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 8(4), 407-430.

Mowle, J. and Merriles, B. (2005). A functional and symbolic perspective to branding Australian SME wineries. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 14(4/5), 220-227.

Mulyanegara, R. C., Tsarenko, Y. and Anderson, A. (2009). The Big Five and brand personality: Investigating the impact of consumer personality on preferences towards particular brand personality. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(4), 234-247.

Muniz Jr, A. M. and O'Guinn, T. C. (2001). Brand Community. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(4), 412-432.

Na, W. and Marshall, R. (1999). Validation of the "Big Five" Personality Traits in Korea. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 12(1), 5-19.

Narayan, B., Rajendran, C. and Sai, L. P. (2008). Scales to measure and benchmark service quality in tourism industry: A second-order factor approach. *Benchmarking : An International Journal*, 15(4), 469-493.

Novak, T. P. and MacEvoy, B. (1990). On comparing alternative segmentation schemes: The list of values (LOV) and Values and Lifestyles (VALS). *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, 105-109.

Orth, U. R. (2005). Consumer personality and other factors in situational brand choice variation. *Journal of Brand Management*, 13(2), 115–133.

Orth, U. R. and De Marchi, R. (2007). Understanding the relationships between functional, symbolic and experiential brand beliefs, product experiential attributes, and product schema:advertsing-trial interactions revisited. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 15(3), 219-233.

Orth, U. R., Malkevitz, K. and Bee, C. (2010). Gender and Personality Drivers of Consumer Mixed Emotional Response to Advertising. *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 32(1), 69-80.

Orth, U. R., McDaniel, M., Shelhammer, T., et al. (2004). Promoting brand benefits: the role of consumer psychographics. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 21(2/3), 97-108.

Orth, U. R., McGarry Wolf, M. and Dodd, T. H. (2005). Dimensions of wine region equity and their impact on consumer preferences. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 14(2), 88-97.

Paek, H.-J., Choi, H. and Nelson, M. (2010). Product, Personality or Prose ? Testing functional matching in advertising persuasion *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 32(2), 11-26.

Park, C. W., Jaworski, B. J. and MacInnis, D. J. (1986). Strategic Brand Concept-Image Management. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(October), 135-145.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J.-Y., et al. (2003). Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879-903.

Qu, H., Kim, L. H. and Im, H. H. (2011). A model of destination branding: Integrating the concepts of the branding

and destination image. *Tourism Management*, 32, 465-476.

Quinn, L., Hines, T. and Bennison, D. (2007). Making sense of market segmentation: a fashion retailing case. *European Journal of Marketing*, 41(5/6), 439-465.

Ramaseshan, B. and Tsao, H.-Y. (2007). Moderating effect of the brand concept on the relationship between brand personality and perceived quality. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(6), 458-466.

Richins, M. L. (1994a). Special Possessions and the Expression of Material Values. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 522-533.

Richins, M. L. (1994b). Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21, 504-521.

Richins, M. L. (1997). Measuring Emotions in the Consumption Experience. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24(2), 127-146.

Rindova, V. and Petkova, A. (2007). When Is a New Thing a Good Thing? Technological Change, Product Form Design, and Perceptions of Value for Product Innovations. *Organization Science*, 18(2), 217-232.

Schouten, J. W. and McAlexander, J. H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: an ethnography of the new bikers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22, 43-61.

Schouten, J. W., McAlexander, J. H. and Koenig, H. F. (2007). Transcendent customer experience and brand community. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, 35(3), 357-368.

Schumacker, R. E. and Lomax, R. G. (2004). *A beginner's Guide to Structural Equation Modeling*. Mahwah, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Shavitt, S. (1992). Evidence for Predicting the Effectiveness of Value-Expressive Versus Utilitarian Appeals: A Reply to Johar and Sirgy. *Journal of Advertising*, XXI(2), 47-51.

Sirgy, J. M. and Johar, J. S. (1991). Value-Expresive Versus Utilitarian Advertising Appeals : when and why to use which appeal. *Journal of Advertising*, XX(3), 23-33.

Solomon, M. R. (1983). The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: A symbolic Interactionism Perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(December), 319-329.

Strizhakova, Y., Coulter, R. and Price, L. (2008). The meanings of branded products: A cross-national scale development and meaning assesment. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 25, 82-93.

Swami, V., Chamorro-Premuzic, T. and Furnham, A. (2009). Faking it: Personality and individual difference predictors of willingness to buy counterfeit goods. *The Journal of Socio-Economics*, 38, 820-825.

Sweeney, J. and Soutar, G. (2001). Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale. *Journal of Retailing*, 77(2), 203-220.

Tsai, S.-p. (2005). Utility, cultural symbolism and emotion: A comprehensive model of brand purchase value. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 22, 227-291.

Vazquez, R., Rio, A. B. d. and Iglesias, V. (2002). Consumer-based Brand Equity: Development and Validation of a Measurement Instrument. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 18, 27-48.

Vogt, C. and Fesenmaier, D. R. (1998). Expanding the functional information search model. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 25(3), 551-578.

Volckner, F. and Hofmann, J. (2007). The price-perceived quality relationship: a meta-analytic review and assessment of its determinants. *Marketing Letters*, 18(181-196).

Voss, K. E., Spangenberg, E. R. and Grohmann, B. (2003). Measuring the Hedonic and Utilitarian Dimensions of Consumer Attitude. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 40(3), 310-320.

Wattanasuwan, K. (2005). The Self and Symbolic Consumption. *Journal of American Academy of Business*(March), 179-184.

Whelan, S. and Davies, G. (2006). Profiling consumers of own brands and national brands using human personality. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 13, 393-402.

Yoon, Y. (2002). Development of a Structural Model for Tourism Destination Competitiveness from Stakeholders' Perspectives, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

APPENDIX A

Table 1: Convergent validity (rho and AVE) for personality traits

Personality Construct	Item	Standardized λ_i	var(ε)	$(\lambda_i)^2$	AVE	Internal validity (rho)
Extraversion	P6_1	0.71	0.4959	0.5041		
	P11_1	0.68	0.5376	0.4624		
	P16_1	0.74	0.4524	0.5476		
	P21_1	0.73	0.4671	0.5329		
	P26_1	0.69	0.5239	0.4761		
Sum		3.55	2.4769	2.5231	0.505	0.836
Emotional Stability	P29_4	0.57	0.6751	0.3249		
	P34_4	0.89	0.2079	0.7921		
	P39_4	0.88	0.2256	0.7744		
	P44_4	0.7	0.51	0.49		
Sum		3.04	1.6186	2.3814	0.595	0.851
Agreeableness	P7_2	0.73	0.4671	0.5329		
	P22_2	0.66	0.5644	0.4356		
	P32_2	0.74	0.4524	0.5476		
	P37_2	0.57	0.6751	0.3249		
Sum		2.13	1.4839	1.5161	0.505	0.754
	P15_5	0.71	0.4959	0.5041		
Intellect	P25_5	0.61	0.6279	0.3721		
	P50_5	0.92	0.1536	0.8464		
Sum		2.24	1.2774	1.7226	0.574	0.797
	P8_3	0.7	0.51	0.49		
Conscientiousness	P28_3	0.75	0.4375	0.5625		
	P33_3	0.83	0.3111	0.6889		
Sum		2.28	1.2586	1.7414	0.580	0.805

APPENDIX B

Table 2: Convergent validity (rho and AVE) for benefits

Benefit Construct	Item	Standardized λ_i	var(ε_i)	$(\lambda_i)2$	AVE	Internal validity (rho)
Functional: Quality	q_180_4	0.740	0.452	0.548		
	q_180_5	0.750	0.438	0.563		
	q_180_17	0.680	0.538	0.462		
Sum		2.170	1.428	1.573	0.524	0.767
Functional: Price	q_180_1	0.710	0.496	0.504		
	q_180_16	0.850	0.278	0.723		
Sum		1.560	0.773	1.227	0.613	0.759
Emotional	q_180_8	0.880	0.226	0.774		
	q_180_12	0.780	0.392	0.608		
	q_180_24	0.700	0.510	0.490		
	q_180_25	0.540	0.708	0.292		
Sum		2.900	1.836	2.164	0.541	0.821
Symbolic: Self-identity	q_180_6	0.850	0.278	0.723		
	q_180_7	0.950	0.098	0.903		
	q_180_19	0.690	0.524	0.476		
Sum		2.490	0.899	2.101	0.700	0.873
Symbolic: Group-identity	q_180_9	0.780	0.392	0.608		
	q_180_10	0.870	0.243	0.757		
	q_180_11	0.710	0.496	0.504		
Sum		2.360	1.131	1.869	0.623	0.831
Symbolic: Status	q_180_13	0.860	0.260	0.740		
	q_180_14	0.670	0.551	0.449		
	q_180_22	0.640	0.590	0.410		
Sum		2.170	1.402	1.598	0.533	0.771
Consequences						
	q_150	0.850	0.278	0.723		
	q_160	0.870	0.243	0.757		
	q_170	0.630	0.603	0.397		
Sum		2.350	1.124	1.876	0.625	0.831

APPENDIX C

Table 3: Discriminant validity

	Symbolic_2 Group_identity	Symbolic_3_Status	Symbolic_1 Self_identity	Emotional	Funct_2 Price	Funct_1 Quality	Conscientiousness	Intellect	Agreeableness
Symbolic_2_Group_identity	1								
Symbolic_3_Status	0.546	1							
Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.543	0.387	1						
Emotional	0.224	-0.03	0.343	1					
Funct_2_Price	0.041	0.046	0.068	0.064	1				
Funct_1_Quality	0.156	0.022	0.29	0.6	0.051	1			
Conscientiousness	-0.004	0.139	0.035	0.02	0.008	0.063	1		
Intellect	0.146	-0.074	0.223	0.316	0.02	0.251	-0.05	1	
Agreeableness	0.108	-0.105	0.018	0.112	-0.001	0.18	-0.038	0.159	1
Emotional_Stability	-0.061	-0.087	-0.034	0.155	-0.01	0.117	0.15	0.145	0.057
Extraversion	0.044	0.021	0.039	0.161	0.031	0.132	-0.015	0.39	0.514
Satisfaction	0.11	0.045	0.253	0.817	0.05	0.615	0	0.14	0.092

	Symbolic_2 Group_identity	Symbolic_3_Status	Symbolic_1 Self_identity	Emotional	Funct_2 Price	Funct_1 Quality	Conscientiousness	Intellect	Agreeableness
Symbolic_2_Group_identity	1.000								
Symbolic_3_Status	0.298	1.000							
Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.295	0.150	1.000						
Emotional	0.050	0.001	0.118	1.000					
Funct_2_Price	0.002	0.002	0.005	0.004	1.000				
Funct_1_Quality	0.024	0.000	0.084	0.360	0.003	1.000			
Conscientiousness	0.000	0.019	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.004	1.000		
Intellect	0.021	0.005	0.050	0.100	0.000	0.063	0.003	1.000	
Agreeableness	0.012	0.011	0.000	0.013	0.000	0.032	0.001	0.025	1.000
Emotional_Stability	0.004	0.008	0.001	0.024	0.000	0.014	0.023	0.021	0.003
Extraversion	0.002	0.000	0.002	0.026	0.001	0.017	0.000	0.152	0.264
Consequences	0.012	0.002	0.064	0.667	0.003	0.378	0.000	0.020	0.008

NB: To ensure an good discriminant validity, all the values in the second table should be equal or lower than 0.5

Constrained Model (all paths=1)	1722.5	726
Tested Model	1082.1	669
Difference	640.4	57

As presented, the constrained model is significantly worse than the tested one : 79.1 < 640.4 at p<0.05 with df : 60

When testing a model uniquely correlating emotional benefit and satisfaction, the following results are obtained :

Constrained Model (path=1)	69.5	13
Tested Model	49.1	12
Difference	20.4	1

As presented, the constrained model is significantly worse than the tested one : 3.84 < 20.4 at p<0.05 with df : 1

Which is to say, that a model setting to one the path between emotional benefit and satisfaction (in other words, assuming that these constructs are in fact the same one) is significantly worse that the tested model

APPENDIX D

Table 4 and 5: Multiple Group Comparisons

MULTIPLE GROUP COMPARISON repeated vs first time user)			Estimate (repeated)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Estimate (first time)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Extraversion	-->	Funct_1_Quality	-0.08	0.091	-0.869	0.385	b1_1	-0.039	0.108	-0.365	0.715	b1_2
Extraversion	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.158	0.129	-1.228	0.219	b2_1	-0.047	0.126	-0.377	0.706	b2_2
Extraversion	-->	Emotional	-0.075	0.068	-1.11	0.267	b3_1	0.04	0.098	0.404	0.686	b3_2
Extraversion	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-0.211	0.137	-1.54	0.124	b4_1	-0.056	0.157	-0.355	0.723	b4_2
Extraversion	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-0.212	0.158	-1.34	0.18	b5_1	-0.009	0.162	-0.057	0.954	b5_2
Extraversion	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	0.06	0.122	0.488	0.626	b6_1	0.205	0.119	1.725	0.084	b6_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.017	0.082	0.213	0.831	b7_1	0.101	0.084	1.197	0.231	b7_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Funct_2_Price	0.248	0.12	2.067	0.039	b8_1	-0.133	0.1	-1.335	0.182	b8_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Emotional	0.049	0.06	0.805	0.421	b9_1	0.12	0.077	1.563	0.118	b9_2
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.21	0.151	1.392	0.164	b10_1	-0.077	0.169	-0.457	0.648	b10_2
Agreeableness	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.427	0.108	3.96	***	b11_1	-0.063	0.116	-0.545	0.586	b11_2
Agreeableness	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.072	0.14	-0.511	0.609	b12_1	0.446	0.151	2.948	0.003	b12_2
Agreeableness	-->	Emotional	0.223	0.076	2.944	0.003	b13_1	-0.006	0.106	-0.061	0.951	b13_2
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	0.663	0.18	3.675	***	b14_1	-0.212	0.176	-1.205	0.228	b14_2
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	0.041	0.135	0.306	0.76	b15_1	-0.43	0.132	-3.265	0.001	b15_2
Intellect	-->	Emotional	0.244	0.059	4.161	***	b16_1	0.321	0.101	3.19	0.001	b16_2
Intellect	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.5	0.119	4.21	***	b17_1	0.439	0.16	2.75	0.006	b17_2
Intellect	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	0.254	0.132	1.918	0.055	b18_1	0.339	0.164	2.065	0.039	b18_2
Intellect	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	-0.133	0.102	-1.302	0.193	b19_1	-0.032	0.118	-0.267	0.789	b19_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	0.143	0.071	2.019	0.044	b20_1	0.082	0.059	1.399	0.162	b20_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	0.097	0.091	1.075	0.282	b21_1	-0.02	0.08	-0.248	0.804	b21_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.173	0.079	2.184	0.029	b22_1	-0.013	0.077	-0.171	0.864	b22_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Emotional	-0.01	0.039	-0.246	0.806	b23_1	0.03	0.049	0.615	0.538	b23_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.2	0.079	-2.536	0.011	b24_1	-0.022	0.062	-0.355	0.722	b24_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.055	0.053	1.037	0.3	b25_1	0.034	0.053	0.64	0.522	b25_2
Intellect	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.227	0.079	2.889	0.004	b26_1	0.31	0.111	2.79	0.005	b26_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-0.275	0.124	-2.224	0.026	b27_1	-0.006	0.122	-0.048	0.962	b27_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-0.216	0.142	-1.524	0.128	b28_1	-0.041	0.126	-0.327	0.744	b28_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	-0.184	0.11	-1.668	0.095	b29_1	-0.074	0.092	-0.798	0.425	b29_2
Intellect	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.073	0.106	-0.69	0.49	b30_1	-0.19	0.128	-1.478	0.139	b30_2
Funct_1_Quality	-->	Consequences	0.186	0.069	2.701	0.007	b31_1	0.218	0.052	4.217	***	b31_2
Funct_2_Price	-->	Consequences	0	0.002	-0.098	0.922	b32_1	0	0.001	0.08	0.936	b32_2
Emotional	-->	Consequences	0.479	0.083	5.764	***	b33_1	0.657	0.057	11.449	***	b33_2
Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-->	Consequences	-0.047	0.042	-1.104	0.27	b34_1	0.033	0.039	0.848	0.397	b34_2
Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-->	Consequences	-0.086	0.047	-1.801	0.072	b35_1	-0.099	0.048	-2.073	0.038	b35_2
Symbolic_3_Status	-->	Consequences	0.111	0.057	1.944	0.052	b36_1	0.11	0.062	1.784	0.074	b36_2

MULTIPLE GROUP COMPARISON (men vs women)			Estimate (men)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Estimate (women)	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Extraversion	-->	Funct_1_Quality	-0.177	0.105	-1.684	0.092	b1_1	0.113	0.099	1.142	0.254	b1_2
Extraversion	-->	Funct_2_Price	0.025	0.148	0.169	0.866	b2_1	-0.231	0.133	-1.735	0.083	b2_2
Extraversion	-->	Emotional	-0.007	0.092	-0.073	0.942	b3_1	0.005	0.085	0.059	0.953	b3_2
Extraversion	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-0.109	0.158	-0.69	0.49	b4_1	-0.142	0.144	-0.99	0.322	b4_2
Extraversion	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-0.09	0.157	-0.573	0.567	b5_1	-0.132	0.16	-0.826	0.409	b5_2
Extraversion	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	0.099	0.114	0.865	0.387	b6_1	0.243	0.124	1.968	0.049	b6_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.13	0.1	1.296	0.195	b7_1	0.003	0.077	0.038	0.97	b7_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.125	0.143	-0.874	0.382	b8_1	0.118	0.104	1.141	0.254	b8_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Emotional	0.131	0.089	1.473	0.141	b9_1	0.077	0.067	1.151	0.25	b9_2
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-0.039	0.196	-0.197	0.844	b10_1	0.037	0.16	0.232	0.816	b10_2
Agreeableness	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.151	0.13	1.158	0.247	b11_1	0.138	0.111	1.241	0.214	b11_2
Agreeableness	-->	Funct_2_Price	0.012	0.184	0.066	0.947	b12_1	0.335	0.152	2.198	0.028	b12_2
Agreeableness	-->	Emotional	-0.043	0.115	-0.376	0.707	b13_1	0.147	0.096	1.531	0.126	b13_2
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	0.132	0.196	0.67	0.503	b14_1	0.355	0.182	1.952	0.051	b14_2
Agreeableness	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	-0.117	0.143	-0.817	0.414	b15_1	-0.27	0.139	-1.944	0.052	b15_2
Intellect	-->	Emotional	0.226	0.088	2.581	0.01	b16_1	0.322	0.08	4.024	***	b16_2
Intellect	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.488	0.152	3.22	0.001	b17_1	0.416	0.132	3.142	0.002	b17_2
Intellect	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	0.189	0.148	1.278	0.201	b18_1	0.33	0.146	2.253	0.024	b18_2
Intellect	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	-0.124	0.108	-1.151	0.25	b19_1	-0.132	0.111	-1.186	0.236	b19_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	-0.033	0.073	-0.445	0.656	b20_1	0.19	0.062	3.093	0.002	b20_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-0.071	0.101	-0.702	0.482	b21_1	0.085	0.079	1.076	0.282	b21_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	0.042	0.101	0.414	0.679	b22_1	0.079	0.071	1.117	0.264	b22_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Emotional	-0.023	0.059	-0.386	0.7	b23_1	0.035	0.042	0.821	0.412	b23_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.219	0.098	-2.22	0.026	b24_1	-0.062	0.065	-0.958	0.338	b24_2
Conscientiousness	-->	Funct_1_Quality	-0.016	0.067	-0.235	0.814	b25_1	0.082	0.049	1.658	0.097	b25_2
Intellect	-->	Funct_1_Quality	0.273	0.1	2.722	0.006	b26_1	0.218	0.091	2.406	0.016	b26_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-0.047	0.151	-0.313	0.754	b27_1	-0.113	0.112	-1.01	0.313	b27_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-0.143	0.152	-0.946	0.344	b28_1	-0.135	0.126	-1.07	0.285	b28_2
Emotional_Stability	-->	Symbolic_3_Status	-0.083	0.11	-0.757	0.449	b29_1	-0.174	0.097	-1.796	0.073	b29_2
Intellect	-->	Funct_2_Price	-0.219	0.141	-1.552	0.121	b30_1	0.017	0.117	0.145	0.884	b30_2
Funct_1_Quality	-->	Consequences	0.226	0.055	4.095	***	b31_1	0.171	0.057	3.025	0.002	b31_2
Funct_2_Price	-->	Consequences	-0.013	0.017	-0.764	0.445	b32_1	0.005	0.01	0.521	0.603	b32_2
Emotional	-->	Consequences	0.641	0.061	10.48	***	b33_1	0.651	0.062	10.459	***	b33_2
Symbolic_1_Self_identity	-->	Consequences	-0.017	0.037	-0.458	0.647	b34_1	-0.001	0.042	-0.027	0.978	b34_2
Symbolic_2_Group_identity	-->	Consequences	-0.026	0.048	-0.541	0.589	b35_1	-0.118	0.044	-2.655	0.008	b35_2
Symbolic_3_Status	-->	Consequences	0.064	0.064	1	0.317	b36_1	0.14	0.049	2.856	0.004	b36_2

CONCLUSION

To conclude with this doctoral dissertation, the following section will display the link between the three papers, summarize the academic contributions of the current work and finally will propose avenues for future research.

Links between the three papers

This dissertation represents a coherent body of work. It starts, with the first paper, by proposing a clear definition of the field, and explains conceptually what symbolic consumption is and why it is important to study it. To give a theoretical basis and to structure the literature to highlight the current gaps is a necessary first step before further investigation. Having completed this step, it is possible to conduct further empirical analyses, as proposed in articles 2 and 3. These two articles show how symbolic consumption can be operationalized and test several related concepts.

When comparing the results of the two empirical studies, one can notice the following:

- The self-identity need does not display a significant link with outcome variables such as behavioral intentions, in paper 2, nor in paper 3. The first potential explanation is that this need is not related with these consequences. But two additional elements should be considered. First, the results might be due to the chosen destinations, especially in the second paper, where respondents were asked for specific destinations. These destinations were perhaps not sufficiently symbolic to answer self-identity needs. As respondents did not feel this symbolic capacity, they would not relate it with satisfaction. This does not mean that self-identity is not a valid predictor in general. It has been shown to be of some interest for different product categories. Therefore, it might remain a valid predictor in tourism but for more specific symbolic forms of tourism such as green, fair, scientific, gendered or spiritual tourism. Second, as discussed in paper 1, consumers are mostly unconscious of their symbolic needs, or might not want to recognize them. Self-identity is the symbolic need that is most prone to be a victim of this bias, as it is the one that is the most deeply related with consumer personality and subconscious alike.

- Group-identity is strongly and significantly related with outcome variables (intentions to purchase and to recommend), both in articles 2 and 3. However, it would be inaccurate to compare these values because destinations, and respondents alike, were not the same in the two studies. Moreover, the scales used are different and in the second paper, people did not experience the destination. Finally the structure of the model, and in particular antecedents and the other benefits alike, are not the same. Therefore, it is only possible to affirm that group-identity significantly impacts the outcome variables.

- Finally, the third need status appears to be strongly related in both studies with the outcome variables. Similarly, it is difficult to compare these values, however it seems that a destination will be better perceived (in terms of satisfaction or behavioral intentions) by the consumer if it offers him the opportunity to show personal status.

Apart from their complementary findings, these two empirical studies also represent interesting complements to each other in terms of methodology. First, the second paper tests the search for symbolic benefits before a consumption experience, whereas paper 3 investigates it after respondents have returned from their holidays. Second, in paper 2, destinations are selected by the authors whereas, in paper 3, they are freely chosen by respondents with reference to their last holidays. Third, different measurement scales were used to measure the symbolic benefits. Although some differences exist between the results, they show that symbolic consumption can be operationalized in different ways. Fourth, the design is also different between paper 2 and paper 3. This allows showing the importance of symbolic benefits, both when they are measured separately, as in paper 2, or simultaneously with other benefits, as in paper 3. Finally, the two papers also differ in terms of sample and data collection. Paper 2 uses paper-based questionnaires, while paper 3 uses mainly online questionnaires. Finally, and with the exception of the exploratory study in paper 3, a special effort was made to avoid samples composed solely of students in order to increase the external validity.

Academic contributions and avenues for future research

These three papers fill several theoretical and methodological gaps and provide significant contributions to the current literature. It is hoped that these findings will convince scholars of the relevance and the importance of the symbolic perspective.

In particular, the first article contributes to the literature by offering a clear and structured view of this perspective. It conceptually shows the interest of this approach and explores the different needs and means used during symbolic consumption. Moreover, paper 1 enriches the literature by identifying clear methodological and conceptual gaps that future research should bridge.

The second paper also provides a strong contribution by highlighting a major confusion made in symbolic literature to date. It demonstrates that self-congruity and symbolic benefits are two clearly differentiated concepts and the paper offers a way to operationalize them in a distinctive manner. Moreover, it tests and validates that symbolic benefits have a higher predictive power on behavioral intentions than self-congruity. Therefore, future symbolic research should concentrate not on the congruity between the product's image and consumer's self perception, but rather on the extent to which the product allows to fulfill symbolic needs of self-expression.

Theoretic contributions of the third article are twofold:

First, it reinforces the stream of research comparing the three types of sought benefits (functional, emotional, and symbolic). It empirically demonstrates the importance of symbolic benefits as drivers of consequences (satisfaction and behavioral intentions) and highlights that a model integrating symbolic benefits as predictors is significantly better (in terms of model fit) than a model excluding them. Moreover, it is shown in paper 3 that the variance explained by the consequences is higher when integrating symbolic benefits.

Second, it is also the first paper to date to investigate the role of all personality traits on the sought benefits. Surprisingly, the impact of personality has almost been neglected until today in the literature. The paper reveals that it is relevant to model benefits as consequences of consumer personality.

From a methodological point of view, this dissertation also contributes to the field by using state-of-the art statistical methodologies, in particular Structural Equations Modeling allowing

the construction and investigation of complex models, in a field that remains often purely conceptual or qualitative. This provides support that symbolic consumption is not only interesting in theory but is also manageable when it comes to quantitative research.

From a managerial perspective, this work argues that symbolic needs are real consumer desires that product and brand managers should consider. By showing what influences symbolic needs and how these needs can be measured, this dissertation provides managers with a useful basis for answering consumer needs and building a tailored offer. Managerial implications were presented in more detail in each article.

Finally, these three articles open exciting avenues for further research. In particular, the question of stability allows the building of a sound research agenda. There are several stability-related issues that are emphasized in this thesis. Answering them represents the possibility of conducting future interesting studies. By stability, I first mean the stability across consumers. As shown in articles 2 and 3, consumers do not behave equally regarding symbolic consumption. Some are more sensitive to these benefits, some less. The impacts of consumer personality and self-congruity alike have already been investigated in this thesis to explain these inter-individual differences. However, there remains scope for further research before a complete understanding can be achieved. Second, the stability question also relates to the variation across product categories. Some products are especially sought after and appreciated for their symbolic attributes, while others only have functional or emotional attributes. Even within the tourism sector, some destinations display high symbolic attributes whereas others do not. In other words, symbolic consumption is not stable across and within product categories. It would be highly interesting to understand the origins of these variations. Finally, differences in the results of articles 2 and 3 provide preliminary support to state that symbolic consumption is not stable over time. This means that a consumer will not search for and be sensitive to symbolic benefits similarly if he has never experienced the product or the brand, if he has experienced it once, or if he is highly loyal to it and has made repeated purchases. Investigating stability over time would surely also represent a significant contribution to the study of symbolic consumption.

Last words

In conclusion, I would like to give some guidance for future scholars working on this topic. Marketing managers are often criticized for creating new needs rather than satisfying existing ones. This matter is particularly important for the field of symbolic consumption. Why is that? Because, in this symbolic consumption, needs appear, based on the essential desires of the consumer to complete his identity. He might feel a lack of self-esteem or a lack of social integration and because of this lack, he is expressing symbolic needs. It is honorable for marketers to answer these needs once they are explicitly expressed by the consumer. However, it is particularly shocking that marketers create them before they have been expressed by consumers. This would mean that marketers play on and reinforce consumers' essential feelings of incompleteness only for monetary reasons. In no way is such behaviour acceptable.

Moreover, while working on symbolic consumption, marketing scholars and practitioners should bear in mind that the issue of "consumer identity is an overwhelmingly ethnocentric one for the rich, advanced economies of the North. The vast majority of consumers in the world desperately want to consume more, not to complete or compliment some notional 'identity', but in *order to survive*" (Saren, 2007: 348). Even in our Western societies, "many people are unable to fully participate in the consumer society because they have little discretionary spending or choice. Some of this is due to low incomes, however consumer disadvantage may take several forms including lack of access to markets, information and education, availability of finance and credit, exploitative practices of business, and other personal factors such as immobility or illness" (ibid.).

Therefore, as academics working on symbolic consumption, we have to make a special effort to avoid the reductionism of all consumption into a single logic, namely the market logic (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). We have to deepen our understanding of symbolic consumption, not to create new needs and achieve financial prosperity, but to be better able to provide the consumer with what he is looking for to complete or express personal identity and well-being.

REFERENCES

Firat, A. F. and Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchatment of Consumption. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22(3), 239-267.

Saren, M. (2007). To have is to be ? A critique of self-creation through consumption. *The Marketing Review*, 7(4), 343-354.