

Chapter 23

Consumption, Anti- Consumption, and Consumption Communities: The Football Clubs and its Fans

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ABSTRACT

Broadly, consumerism can be considered as a set of beliefs and values integrated into, but not exclusive to, the global market system, intended to make people believe that happiness is best achieved through possessions. In literature there are several other definitions of consumerism, consumption, anti-consumption and consumption communities. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to (i) present an overview of the research concepts, models and main theories of this topic, based on a systematic literature review and using the following databases to search information: Elsevier, Emerald, Science Direct, EBSCO, Springer, and ISI web knowledge; (ii) formulate a framework of consumption waves and anti-consumption motivations and types (iii) discuss consumption and anti-consumerism in football (soccer) context.

The current study also carried out semi-structured interviews with 15 football fans with an average duration of 60 minutes each. Findings revealed four main types of anti-consumption: Global impact consumers or anti-consumption society; Selective consumption or anti-loyalists market activists; Conservative or Simplifiers; and Rejection of brand hegemony. Football fans are avid consumers of many products, such as information, knowledge, travels, tickets to matches, and diverse merchandizing from brands that sponsor the team and the club. Nevertheless, they are also selective consumers, rejecting everything connected to the rival clubs. Finally, the chapter provides insights for further research and managerial implications. In this vein, this chapter contributes to the existing literature giving insights for a better understanding of football clubs and fans as consumers and anti-consumers.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989), postmodernism is a philosophical movement, largely a reaction against the philosophical assumptions and values of the modern period of the Western (specifically European) from the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries to the mid-20th century. Indeed, many of the ideas characteristically associated with postmodernism can fairly be described as the straightforward denial of the general philosophical viewpoints of modernism. The term postmodernism may have different perspectives (Borgmann, 1992; Rosenau, 1992); some have been linked to the loss of a sense of historical past or the replacement of reality by images, simulations, and even unchained signifiers (Featherstone, 1991, p. 11).

Howsoever, postmodernism exercises its influence on consumption. As Firat and Dholakia (1982) noted, the postmodern consumer is the consumer and the consumed. The postmodern consumer is involved in consumption experiences (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, 1987; Schmitt, 1999), materialism (e.g., Belk & Pollay, 1985), meanings of possessions (Belk, 1988; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988), semiotics (McCracken, 1988; Mick, 1988; Sherry, 1989), and consumption patterns (e.g., Firat & Dholakia, 1982). Consumers seek to self and social express themselves through the products they buy; they do not hesitate to demonstrate feelings through products and brands (such as love and hate) (Batra et al., 2012); and consumer self-image is dependent on the symbolic meanings attached to products and the relationships established through them. Thereby, postmodern consumers have a large number of possibilities to choose from even in a simple everyday purchase. This selection process influences the identity and consumption becomes a 'looming threat of personal meaninglessness' (Giddens, 1991, p. 201).

In this vein, the postmodern era becomes the tipping point for a new and more diverse vision of consumerism. So, consumption versus anti-consumption or alternative consumptions arises as a discussion topic, which will be addressed throughout this chapter. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is threefold: (i) to present an overview of the research concepts, models and main theories of this topic, based on a systematic literature review and using the following databases to search for information: Elsevier, Emerald, Science Direct, EBSCO, Springer, and ISI web knowledge; (ii) to formulate a framework of consumption waves and anti-consumption motivations and types (iii) to discuss consumption and anti-consumerism in football (soccer) context.

Football consumption is a field which has not yet been extensively explored within the context of consumerism. However, given football's worldwide importance in economic terms (Szymanski, 2003), popularity (Nicolau, 2011), and the existence of committed consumers (fans), it becomes relevant to explore consumption and anti-consumerism in this context.

The remainder of this chapter is organised as follows. First, a systematic literature review on consumerism and consumption is presented. This is followed by the theoretical arguments about consumption and anti-consumption concepts, typology of anti-consumption, anti-consumption movements, a framework showing consumption waves and anti-consumption motivations, and a discussion on consumption and anti-consumerism in football (soccer) context. In order to better understand the consumption football phenomenon, this study carried out semi-structured interviews with 15 football fans with an average duration of 60 minutes. Finally, the chapter provides a set of future research directions and conclusions and managerial implications.

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