

3 Kroger William (1969) What the Well-off consumer Buys, Management Review, February, 48-50

4 Marketing Financial Services to Affluent Consumers, Javalgi, Rajshekhar G.. Journal of Services Marketing, Spring 92, Vol. 6 Issue 2, p33, 12p

5 Stanley, T.J., Moschis, G.P., and Danko, W. D. (1987) Financial Service Segments: the Seven Faces of the Well-off consumer Market, Journal of Advertising Research, 27, Aug-Sep., 52-67

6 Capon, N. F. Z. Simoins G. J. and Rick Weingarten. (1994) Well-off consumer Investors and Mutual Fund Purchases, International Journal of Bank Marketing, 12(3), 17-25

7 Thomas Edward, Rao S.R. and Rajshekhar G. Javalgi (1990) Well-off consumer and NonWell-off Consumers' Needs: Attitudes, and Information-Seeking Behavior in the Financial Services Marketplace, The Journal of Services Marketing, 4(4), 41-54

8 Burnett, J. J. (1991) Examining the Media Habits of the Well-off consumer Elderly, Journal of Advertising Research, 31, Oct-Nov., 33-41

9 Thorstein Veblen (1899), The Theory of the Leisure Class

10 Richard Conniff (2002), The Natural History of the Rich

11 Westchester County Business Journal, 9/8/2003, Vol. 42 Issue 36, p28, 1/3p

12 Wong, Nancy Y, Aaron C Ahuvia, Personal Taste and Family Face: Luxury Consumption in Confucian and Western Societies Psychology & Marketing, 1998, 15(5)

13 Min Ren, Research on the Consuming Layering of the Residents—Exploration of the Consuming Layering and Comparison of Different Estates' Consum Modes, <http://alswh.com>

14 Lijian Pan, How Much Money Are There On Earth, Numerally Unscramble The Rich of Shanghai, China Nongovernmental Technology and Economy, Issue 7, 2003, 50-51

15 Schwitzgebel, Eric (2006), "Belief", in Zalta, Edward, The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford, CA

16 Morris B. Holbrook, David A. Velez, and Gerard J. Tabouret, "Attitude Structure and Search: An Integrative Model of Importance-Directed Information Processing", in Kent B. Monroe, ed., Advances in Consumer Research 8 (Ann Arbor: Association for Consumer Research, 1981), 35-41

17 Fishbein, M. and I. Ajzen (1975). "Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research" Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

18 Alhabeeb, M. J. (2006). Consumer Attitude and Attribution. Proceedings of the International Conference of the Allied Academies, Academy of Marketing Studies, pp. 31-42, Allied Academies, Inc. 19 Principles of marketing/Ninth edition

STATUS ORIENTATION AND SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION OF CYPRIOT CONSUMERS

ALEXIS KITSIOS
UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA, CYPRUS

HANS RUEDIGER KAUFMANN
UNIVERSITY OF NICOSIA, CYPRUS

Abstract

Based on the case study method conducted in the setting of Cyprus, this paper provides descriptive detail on the factors which influence brand related consumer behavior. In addition, a brief analysis of the past political, economic and social developments having led to the status quo has been conducted. Consistent findings resulting from two focus groups with potential brand consumers and 8 interviews with marketing managers, the exploratory research provides a conceptual framework which points to differentiate brand related consumer behavior as to small island populations. The paper highlights the crucial role of the identity and symbolic consumption theory with social identity being regarded as the key motivational driver of brand related behavior. The paper concludes with suggestions for further research in the field and corporate implications.

Key words: Branding, consumer behavior, identity, symbolic consumption, small island populations

kitsios1@cytanet.com.cy

Kaufmann.r@unic.ac.cy

Literature Review

Branding and Culture

The following definitions imply a certain extent of unanimous and patterned reactions of members of a given culture to marketing stimuli. Culture has been defined as the "interactive aggregate of common characteristics that influence a group's response to its environment" (Hofstede, 1980, p. 25), or as the "collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede, 1997, p. 5). Referring to cultural dimensions (Hofstede

and Hofstede, 2005) governing the respective people's behavior (individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, long-term vs. short-term orientation), Lustig and Koester (1999) reason cultural differences primarily by the individualism vs. collectivism category which emphasizes conflicting views on the nature of humans and society and the underpinning relationships. The following more detailed description by Samovar and Porter (2001) referring to Hofstede points to the applicability of branding in both, individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Whereas, in an individualistic culture, people are symbolized by numerous features believing that they are unique in society and, hence, emphasizing personal preference and competition rather than a co-operative social setting, the needs, views, objectives and, even emotions of the people in a collectivistic culture are conditioned by the group. Conclusively, in individualistic cultures, branding might account for individual preferences by segment specific life style positioning and, in collectivistic cultures the consumption of well known brands might be regarded as constituting a group norm.

Social Class, Group Influence On Consumer Behavior

A basic group categorization refers to social classes. A social class can be defined as a "group of people within a society who possesses the same socioeconomic status" (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2007) with status meaning the extent of honor or prestige attached to an individual's position in society (Marmot, 2004). Status related socioeconomic factors refer, for example, to family income, occupational status (Tracy and Trethewey, 2005), educational achievement and lifestyle. Compared to formal groups (Wood et al, 2004) which are designated by formal authority to serve

a specific purpose, or normative reference groups guiding individual's behavior (Dawson & Chatman, 2001), i.e. in terms of Corporate Design, branding from a consumer behavior perspective seems to refer more to informal groups that emerge unofficially. These informal groups might serve as a kind of reference group whose presumed perspectives or values are being used by an individual as the basis for his/her current behavior, affective and cognitive response patterns and sense of self-identity (Olson and Peter, 1996; Hawkins et al, 2004). Furthermore, comparative reference groups might be seen as relevant as well in this context. Comparative reference groups set norms which serve as a benchmark or standard for behaviour. Influencing individuals' feelings and behaviour comparative reference groups give individuals a basis for comparison with other individuals and /or groups (Dawson and Chatman, 2001).

A very important type of a reference group for this research is regarded to be the identification reference group. Puiu (2008, p. 1137/1138) describes the identification influence of a reference group in the following way: "The reference group is used to validate, by comparison, the consumer's opinion, attitudes, norms and the actual behavior. The individual behaves in a manner consistent with the group's values, because the individual's values and the group's values are the same". In contrast with the other types of reference groups mentioned before, individuals tend to comply with identification groups' standards for the desire to be affiliated. Correlated with the identification reference group, is the aspirational reference group an individual consumer wants to join or be similar to by satisfying symbolic needs. For the time being, this type of consumer does not hold membership to such groups yet but it is his/her wish and goal to gain membership into the group that epitomizes his/her aspirations. These groups have a positive influence on the buying behavior of individuals since they modify their buying behavior in order to match the buying behavior of the aspirational group (<http://www.geocities.com/lazaridou/consumer.htm>). This insight is utilized by the promotional image strategy (Shimp, 1997).

Symbolic consumption and identity

People who have achieved or even inherited a higher status or group membership tend to consume certain products that signify their status

and membership. Thus, consumption can be considered as a factor that reveals status and/or group membership. In this case, consumption is called symbolic consumption. Consumers purchase products for their symbolic meanings as well as for functional reasons. Goods are symbols of personal attributes and goals in addition to social patterns and motivations (Levy, 1959). People's identities are cultivated and preserved via the symbolic use of possessions (Belk, 1988). Not only do people use consumption for acquiring or maintaining an aspect of self-concept, they also use it to facilitate other kinds of identity change, namely, for temporarily or permanently laying aside an aspect of identity (Kleine et al., 1999). In fashion, for example, consumers can be quoted by stating that "they want to reinvent themselves" with a different type of dress code or brand. People may attempt to change their entire identity (Schouten, 1991, in Kleine and Kleine, 1995), but adult self-cultivation often involves a piece of the self, labeled as social identity (Stryker, 1980, in Kleine and Kleine, 1999). The main reason that people try to change their identity is that they feel that they should advance on their lives. Thus, they try to adopt different behaviors than before and at the same time try to take different roles that fit to the ideal identity they want to achieve.

Identity is a holistic concept applied in psychology, social psychology, social anthropology and sociology (Cote and Levine, 2002) that explains people's behavior based on its core physical and spiritual repertoire. "In sociology and political science, the notion of social identity is defined as the way that individuals label themselves as members of particular groups such as nation, social class, subculture, ethnicity, gender etc (Cote and Levine, 2002, p. 32)".

This definition of identity links the concept with membership in a group, a subject that was analyzed in the previous section.

Kaufmann, Zagorac and Sanchez (2008) provide a chronological literature review on the identity concept which experienced various differentiations over time as to social, personal or self-identity, ethnic, national, cultural, political as well as group identity. Referring to Ward (1974), Laverie (1995), Reed (2002), Baer et al (2001) or Arnett et al (2003) the authors also interlink the notion of salient identity to consumption in general and to social consequences of consumption in particular. This interrelation is reflected in the following brief

summary of Laverie's (1995) findings who, as one of the first scientists considered the effects of group activities such as tennis and aerobics on purchasing behaviour and the identity salience interrelating social identity with purchasing behaviour. "Over time, people form and maintain consumption patterns associated with particular activities" (Laverie, 1995, p.2). According to Laverie, the affiliation to the group affects the purchasing behaviour not directly, but indirectly by the personal estimations of group members to the product. Latter, again, affects the emotions of the individual to the product. Consequently, the feelings to the product, which one consumes in the context of the group activity lead to the salient identity: "the personal and social appraisals lead to positive feelings which make participation into the activity more important to the self. As the activity becomes more important to the individual, he or she participates in the activity more often" (Laverie, 1995, p. III). Hence, Laverie (1995, p.2) supported by Ward (1974) reject the traditional view that products are only consumed in isolation due to bare individual needs and personal experiences but due to social considerations.

A brief historical environmental analysis of the Republic of Cyprus

In the following, the respective periods providing the backstage for the development of the consumer behavior pattern of Cypriots are pinpointed. In doing so, key economic criteria such as GDP (GDP per capita per annum from 1960- 2006), gross average salary development (from 1980- 2006) and tourist arrivals (from 1959-2006) as well as some non economic reasons such as educational peer influence and political reasons have been investigated by analyzing data provided by the Cyprus Government Statistics Department. As to GDP there was a continuous increase in all years except in the year 1975 due to the Turkish invasion in 1974. This event divided the country, and the economy had to shift to new industries, mainly tourism to survive (Maital and Pierides, 2003). However, after this tragic event an impressive increase in GDP occurred and the Cyprus economy boomed by double digit growth rates between 1976 until 1995 and more moderate, single digit growth rates thereafter up to a level of 14.317,57 mio Euro. (2006). The average gross monthly income increased mostly in the interval 1980-1990 by 8.7%. The following interval 1990-2000 showed

high growth rates until 1994 with more moderate growth rates thereafter averaging a growth rate of still 6.1%. The decreasing trend continues in the interval 2000-2006 with an average growth rate of 5.1% to level of Euro 1.900. Implicitly, in the period 1976-1994/1995 Cypriots might have become more status orientated due to the high level of economic well-being. Coinciding with the rise in GDP is the development of tourist arrivals. This general economic picture is confirmed by the development of tourist arrivals. From 1959 (19642) to 1973 (264066) the tourist arrivals increased by 32.6% annually, albeit with strong fluctuations. In the war year of 1974 the figure dropped to 150478 followed by a further downturn in 1975 to 47084 tourists arriving in Cyprus. However, since this time the tourist arrivals dramatically increased between 1975 and 1985 by an average annual growth rate of 45%. In the next interval between 1985 and 1999 tourist arrivals continued to grow by annually 8.87%. Since 1999 the level of tourist arrivals stagnates and achieves 2400924 tourists in 2006. Taking additionally the increased TV household penetration into account it might be concluded that Cypriots tried to emulate international consumption patterns, a way of life or status introduced by the tourists. Accompanying this development a gradual rise of university degree attainment can be noted, especially during the 1980s and 1990s. Higher levels of education might trigger a more prevalent status orientation. Furthermore, people who did not achieve a higher education might attempt to compensate this through symbolic consumption. There is some evidence that Cypriots pursue symbolic consumption due to other reasons relating to the small size of the island and to the influence of the media. This links to the next paragraphs which provide the methodology and the analysis of the qualitative empirical findings.

Research methodology

Due to its idiosyncratic political and economic development, Cyprus might be considered a unique case. In addition to the aforementioned idiosyncratic more recent political and economic development, Cyprus was conquered by a variety of international conquering powers who wanted to capitalize on the strategic position of the island being ideally strategically located at the crossroads of the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. This unique cultural background might imply unique aspects of consumer behavior be it consciously or unconsciously (De Mooij, 2003). In order to achieve

the research aim, which was to investigate the underlying reasons governing consumer behavior of Cypriot consumers as to branding, the qualitative research focused on the why and how of decision making as compared to the what, where and when of quantitative research. A need was perceived for smaller but focused samples (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). The research objectives were to investigate and conceptualize the concrete factors of brand related consumer behavior of Cypriots which might inform corporate branding strategies. The derived research question was if symbolic consumption and the other notions on identity described above might be determining factors of consumer behavior as to branding in the age group 25 and 40. This age group purposive sample was chosen due to their anticipated pursuit of a higher social status. Purposive sampling is regarded as useful for situations where the researcher needs to reach a targeted sample quickly and where sampling for proportionality is not the primary concern (Trochim, 2006). As to subcategories of purposive sampling, expert sampling and quota sampling were applied. Expert sampling was used for two reasons: first, the specific strategic and operational knowledge of experts representing a variety of categories of status revealing products, such as technology, fashion, cars, mobile phones or cosmetics; second, expert sampling might provide evidence for the validity of another sampling approach chosen. Hence, 8 interviews with marketing managers where interviewed on their perception

and capitalization of symbolic consumption. As a second sampling method for two focus groups with respectively 7 potential brand consumers aged between 25 and 40, proportional quota sampling was applied to assure a proportion of respectively 50% female and male participants. Due to the perceived uniqueness of the Cypriot setting the research method of a case study was chosen where a focus on a limited number of cases allows for a holistic, in-depth investigation eliciting rich information (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991; McNamara, 1997). As a qualitative research technique the focus group was applied to uncover, possibly surprising, information by an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk with other group members (Rushkoff and Douglas, 2005). Moreover, focus groups are a powerful means to test new ideas or assumptions. As a structural guideline for conducting the focus groups McNamara's (1997) suggestions were applied. The qualitative data were analyzed to elicit meaning and symbolic content (Seidel, 1998) and to specify the presence of certain words or concepts using content analysis (Neuendorf, 2002).

Findings

The following category grid summarizes the frequencies of statements resulting in the respective categories which are further elaborated on in the following narratives.

Table 1 - Categories Elicited by Interviews

Business People	Collectivism	Preferred Lifestyle	Preferred Identity	Group Influence	Media	Small Society/ Population	Show Off issues	Age	Gender
PAM	X	X		X	X	X	X		
PAP		X	X			X	X		
KCT		X	X	X		X	X		
PPT		X				X	X		
LFT	X	X	X	X		X			
DGM	X	X		X	X		X	X	X
DAS		X				X	X	X	X
XST	X	X	X (JOB)	X		X	X		

Table 2 - Categories Elicited by 1st Focus Group

1 st FOCUS GROUP	Collectivism	Preferred Lifestyle	Preferred Identity	Group Influence	Media	Show Off issues	Age	EASY BORROWING
EJF		X		X	X		X	
APF	X	X	X (JOB)	X	X	X	X	
XPM	X		X (JOB)	X	X			
PPM					X	X		X
ATF	X			X	X			
IPM	X	X		X	X		X	X
CCM		X	X			X	X	

Table 3 - Categories Elicited by 2nd Focus Group

2 nd FOCUS GROUP	Collectivism	Preferred Lifestyle	Preferred Identity	Group Influence	Media	Show Off issues	Age	Gender
AKF	X		X	X			X	X
JFF	X		X	X	X		X	X
JSM	X		X		X	X		
AIF	X	X	X (JOB)	X	X			
IPF	X		X	X	X	X		
PHM	X		X		X	X		
OKM	X	X	X (JOB)	X		X	X	X

The findings suggest that brand consumer behavior of Cypriots is mainly determined by aspects related to social Identity, comparative and identification reference groups. is the dominant factor that influences the other factors.

Social Identity/preferred group influence:

Five of the marketing managers (KCT, PAM, XST, DGM, and LFT) confirmed the influence of the group, where the consumers want to become members of, on brand consumer behavior. One possible reason was provided in that people have the need to belong somewhere and, at the same time, to advance socially. Therefore, they are more likely to modify their behavior according to the preferred group conditions compared to that group they are already belonging to. PAM said, "Indeed, people may change their buying behavior so as it is the same as the one of the members of the group that they want to join in order to be accepted". Similarly, LFT said that "people whose goal is to move socially upward believe that, by

exhibiting the behavior they believe their target group has, the transition to that group will be easier and smoother since they will be accepted faster". Two marketing managers (PAP and DAS) said that the group that consumers already belong and the group that consumers want to become members are equally influential. Finally, one of the eight interviewed marketing managers (PPT) said that the most influential group is the one that the consumers already belong to. The statements of the marketing managers were confirmed by ten out of the fourteen members of the focus groups. Accordingly, the preferred group's influence is regarded as a dominant factor that influences symbolic consumption, but there were some variations in their answers. EJF, APF and ATF, three women in their 30s, as well as PPM, a man in his early 30s, who have very similar demographic characteristics since they currently belong to the middle class differentiate according to age. They said that when they were younger, at school and at college, the most influential group for them was the group that they wanted to join. Now, this group

is still influential but not to the same extent. That is probably because young people always want to be in the group with the most popular people and, thus, conform to their buying behavior in order to be accepted into the popular group. Concordantly, EJF said: "I remember when I was in school and at college that I used to buy the same things as a specific group of popular girls so that they would accept me as a friend, but this reduced as I got older". APF agreed by stating: "Something similar has happened to me, too. I can also say that this happens more when you are younger". Thus, it is obvious that age plays an important role as to the extent of adaptive status orientation. XPM pointed to another dimension on which almost everybody agreed. He copies the extravagant consumption patterns of his colleagues at work in order to be accepted by them. He said: "I had to start behaving as they did and buying the same expensive things as they did, so that I could join the group and be part of the team". OKM, IPF and AIF from the second focus group provided reasons for the attraction of people to a group in terms of the social position of the group members rather than the members themselves. The statements imply that Cyprus might be considered to emphasize personalization as a reflection of a being orientated culture rather than personalization as a characteristic of a doing orientated culture (Usonier and Lee, 2005). This is something very similar to what JPM said who talked about lifestyle. IPF said: "I think that we all have the need to socially advance. Some people in Cyprus, however, overdo it. I know many people who have no credentials or education but act and buy things like millionaires in order to be accepted in a higher status group".

Showing off- normative comparative and/or identification reference groups

Seven out of the eight marketing managers interviewed (PAM, PPT, KCT, DAS, PAP, DGM, XST) held that Cypriots like to show off their wealth to an extreme. This would make them engage in symbolic consumption and buy branded goods that signify wealth. PPT, in this context, said: "In my opinion, everybody shows off in Cyprus. Sometimes it goes beyond the limits as it becomes some kind of a competition between neighbors, for example". Similarly, half of the participants in the focus groups agreed with this statement. This is reflected in statements as: "we are all show-off maniacs in Cyprus and this is the main reason that we buy branded things" (PPM); or: "In my opinion

it is a kind of competition between most Cypriots. The winner is the one who shows off the most expensive and luxurious material goods" (IPF). It is very interesting that this informal "competition" was mentioned by both, the marketing managers and the consumers. A possible reason for this might be the small size of the society, population and geographic area of Cyprus as always all marketing managers mentioned it. XST is quoted: "Because we live in a very small society and everybody wants to show off their wealth and social position". This is confirmed by another interviewee: "When you live on a small island like Cyprus where everybody knows everybody's business you feel you are under pressure to look your best and because women in Cyprus tend to talk and to show off a lot, you feel you are not performing well if you are not dressed in designer clothes". This is confirmed by a manager of a boutique stating: "if you look at the Cypriot women's magazines there is a huge difference. Women are pressurized into buying expensive clothes, if you don't then you are cheap" (Cyprus Mail, 2006, p. 2). This perception of pressure to conform signals a very strong normative character of comparative and/or identification reference groups not referred to in literature.

Culture:

Even though most Western societies are considered to be individualistic societies, there seems to be a high degree of collectivism regarding the consumer behavior of Cypriots which is in line with the emphasis on the personalization aspect and the strong normative character of comparative and/or identification groups. People seem to feel conditioned in their brand consumer behavior in order not to be considered to be different.

Collectivism

Four of the marketing managers agreed on the significance of collectivism influencing the consumer behavior of Cypriots. Thus, since most are status oriented, the rest tend to copy this behavior: "We know that people are watching us and making comments. The issue is not the personal mentality but the collective mentality. We are expected to behave in this way and so we do" (LFT). In the same vein, PAM stresses: "They don't want others to consider them different or think less of them if they see them using inferior or unbranded products".

The participants in the focus groups were more explicit in their comments confirming the findings of the interviews. Most of the 11 out of 14 who gave this as a reason said that they do what everybody else is doing so that they are not considered to be different and also to avoid negative comments. ATF said: "We buy the brands so that we are not different from the rest". PHM said: "Trying to avoid comments by trying to be the same with others is a reality in Cyprus. People tend to buy the same brands, go to the same restaurants, clubs or cafes and generally behave like a flock in order not to be different and to avoid becoming a target due to their difference".

Salient Identity

Preferred Lifestyle

All marketing managers who were interviewed unanimously agreed that lifestyle and, to be more precise, the lifestyle which people would like to have is a very important determinant of the buying behavior of Cypriots. PPT said that "if we want to achieve a certain status that has a certain lifestyle attached to it we start modifying our behavior, especially our buying behavior in order to suit that lifestyle and the people who have already achieved that lifestyle". In their opinion, Cypriots tend to buy products that represent the lifestyle that they would like to emulate. Thus, the symbolic meaning of these brands is the lucrative lifestyle, social position and status. To be more precise, six marketing managers said that lifestyle is one of the greatest determinant factors, because people seek membership into these groups in order to achieve their goal of moving socially upwards and enjoy the lifestyle that these people are enjoying.

Interestingly, the responses of six members from both focus groups were very similar to the answers given by the marketing managers. The focus group members said that lifestyle is one of the most important determinants and provided a similar justification: "Most times, people do not want to join a group because of the group members but because of the social position of the group members. Sometimes, the lifestyle of these people is what attracts us to them rather than the group members themselves" (OKM). It is obvious that there is a strong interrelation between preferred lifestyle and preferred group/class membership.

Preferred Identity

It might be concluded that Cypriots want to change their identity by their brand purchases in an attempt to either advance socially or to join a group with a higher status. Four of the marketing managers confirmed this view: "They are people who achieve their identity without having the actual qualifications for that identity through their wealth that is visible from the products that they buy" (KCT). Similarly LFT said: "You can see more extreme symbolic purchases from them rather than from those who are already members of the target group since they are trying to adopt the identity of that group without really deserving it most of the times".

Ten out of the fourteen participants in the focus groups agreed with the statements of the marketing managers: "We try to impress the group's members by adopting an identity that might not really be our own, so that this group's members will accept us" (IPF). Similarly AIF said "Many times we try to advance socially by adopting an identity that other people who belong in an upper class have, so that we can be friends with them. We usually do that by buying the same things that they buy". It can be seen again that both, preferred lifestyle and preferred identity are interrelated with target group influence.

Job Role

Some of the participants in this research linked preferred identity to job role. Summarizing, they said that Cypriots adopt an identity which is in accordance with their job or work environment and work group. One of the marketing managers mentioned: "There is a group of people who consider their jobs to be managerial; they buy a mobile that suits their position" (XST)

Four participants in the focus groups gave a similar explanation. XPM said that groups are influential but for him the most influential group is the group of people with whom he works since he had to modify his behavior and buying behavior in order to fit his new work environment and be accepted by his new colleagues as a member of the team. OKM echoes this view: "an equally important factor that influences our buying behavior is our job and work environment. If you are an accountant, a doctor, a lawyer or a bank employee, you are expected to wear a nice suit and drive a nice car".

Media

Two of the marketing managers said that television is a very influential factor since it sets standards with which people must comply: "In my opinion what influences Cypriots is television, the stupid box, which dictates certain standards of behavior to the society that if someone does not comply with, he becomes alienated from the rest" (PAM).

Ten out of the fourteen participants in the focus groups agreed on the normative role of the media: "I think that actually we are influence by TV and other media that expose these famous people" (EJF).

Categories of Status Revealing Products

The interviewed marketing managers mostly agreed on this subject. Although some of them, like DAS, said that all products are potentially status revealing, they reached the same opinion on the main categories of status revealing products to be the following:

- Housing
- Automobiles (cars and other means)
- Technology (mobiles, home appliances, TVs, computers and other).
- Clothing, Footwear and Accessories.

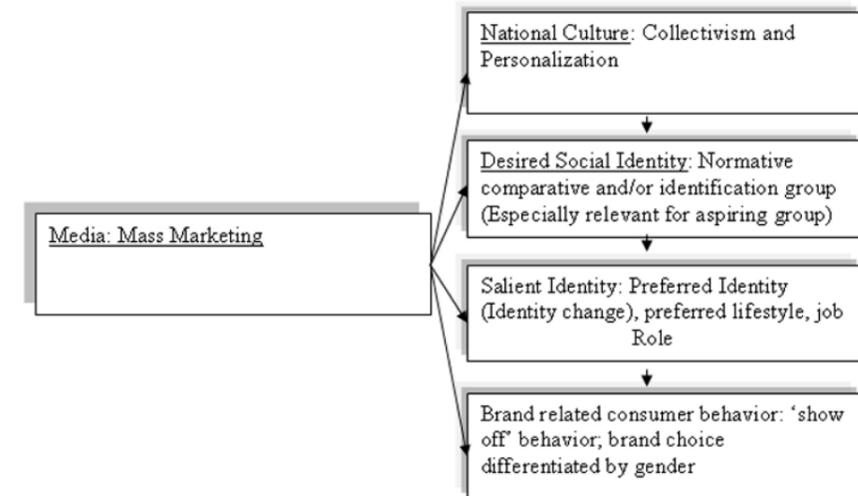
The focus group members contributed to this discussion by a clear differentiation on the basis of gender. Women stated that for them products like clothes, shoes, bags, cosmetics and mobile phones are status revealing (categories of Clothing,

Footwear & Accessories and Technology) whereas men stated cars, houses, mobiles and TVs which lie in the categories of Housing, Automobiles and Technology.

Conclusions and recommendations

Brand related consumer behavior of Cypriots seems to be embedded in a national culture characterized by collectivism and personalization. Whereas culture refers more to formal role organization, the applicability of the identity concept epitomizing the spiritual and behavioral repertoire of people was confirmed by this research. A preferred social identity is regarded as the underlying driving force of brand related consumer behavior and as creating the salient identity of Cypriot consumers. This preferred social identity, however, is not only reflected in a sense voluntary belonging to the aspired group or social class, but also in a perception of a strong normative character or even pressure by the comparative and/or identification group and even the media. This normative perception, however, decreases with achieving and establishing the accepted membership in the desired group and/or social class. The preferred social identity, in line with Laverie (1995) creates the salient identity expressed by preferred identity or desired identity change, preferred lifestyle and the job role by symbolic consumption. Finally, the brand related consumer behavior seems to be characterized by an excessive 'show off' behavior and a brand selection which has to be differentiated by gender. The brand related consumer behavior is summarized in the following figure 1.

Figure 1: Brand related consumer behavior of Cypriots



The limitations of the research refers to its exploratory nature. Explanatory research based on inferential statistics is suggested to validate the qualitative research and to provide for weight and direction of the factors and to more clearly differentiate brand related consumer behavior as to socio-demographic aspects, especially age. A further limitation refers to the lack of differentiation between national and international brands. Last but not least, it is suggested to investigate possible contributions of retailing (i.e. in the sense of conative retailing), preferably in concerted strategies with academic education providers, to strike the balance towards a more individualistic, voluntary and self-determined identity development of the brand consumers considering seemingly neglected elements of identity such as character or existential identity. This would be in accordance with the underlying mission of the micro sociological/micro psychological concept of identity in the sense that the consumers should draw other social or emotional benefits from its application rather than only economic ones (Arnett et al, 2003). This aspect coupled with the finding of normatively perceived influence of the comparative and/or identification group might be used as a starting point for research to develop brand consumer behavior conceptualizations differentiated as to small island populations. Suggestions for corporate brand strategies refer primarily to position the family and/or individual brand highly based on image, status and, in tendency, highly priced. TV advertising is recommended due to

its high level of intimacy penetration and status perception. Another preferable promotional mix element to be suggested refers to event marketing, as fashion shows, executive parties and, most importantly, charity events. The use of testimonials representing the desired social identity is also recommended.

References

- Antoniou, E. (2009), How much is YOUR wardrobe worth? The Cyprus Mail: http://www.cyprus-mail.com/news/main.php?id=18575&cat_id=5
- Arnett, D.B., German, S.D. and Hunt, S.D. (2003), The Identity Salience Model of Relationship Marketing Success: the Case of Non-Profit Marketing. *Journal of Marketing*. Vol. 67. pp. 89-105.
- Baer, R., Bond, E., and Underwood, R. (2001), Building Service Brands Via Social Identity: Lessons from the Sports Market Place. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. Vol. 9. No. 1., pp. 1-13.
- Belk, R.W. (1988), Property, Persons, and Extended Sense of Self. In: *Proceedings of the Division of Consumer Psychology*. American Psychological Association Annual Convention. Washington DC. USA

- Cote, J.E and Levine, C. (2002), Identity Formation, Agency and Culture. New Jersey. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dawson E. M. and Chatman, E. (2001), Reference Group Theory with Implications for Information Studies: a Theoretical Essay. Information Research. USA
- De Mooij, M. (2003), Consumer Behavior and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising. Sage. The Netherlands.
- Denzin, N.K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (2000), Handbook of Qualitative Research. 2nd Edition. Sage Publications. USA
- Encyklopedia Britannica. (2007), In: <http://www.britannica.com> accessed in June 2008.
- Feagin, J., Orum, A. and Sjoberg, G. (1991), A Case for Case Study. Chapel Hill. University of North Carolina Press. USA
- Giddens. A. (1991). Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age. Policy Press. Cambridge. UK
- Hawkins, D., Best, R. and Coney, K. (2004), Consumer Behavior. 9th Edition. McGraw Hill. New York. USA
- Hofstede, G. (1980), Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values. Sage. Newbury Park. USA
- Hofstede, G. (1997), Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind, Intercultural Co-operation and its Implications for Survival. Mc Graw Hill. USA
- Hofstede, G. and Hofstede, G.J. (2005), Cultures and Organisations. Software of the Mind. Mc Graw Hill. New York.
- Kaufmann, H.R., Zagorac, Z. and Sanchez Bengoa, D. (2008), The influence of identity on international consumerbehaviour in transitional settings: a case study of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian banking market. Journal for International Business and Entrepreneurship Development. Vol. 3. Nr. 3-4 pp. 241-253
- Kleine, S. Schultz, Kleine, R.E. and Allen, C.T. (1995), How Is a Possession "Me" or "Not Me"? Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment. Journal of Consumer Research: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly. Vol. 22. Issue 3, pp. 327-343
- Kleine, R.E. III and Kleine, S.S. April (1999), Consumption and Self-Schema Changes Throughout the Identity Project Life Cycle. In: http://www.gentleeye.com/research/cb/id_cycle/id_cycle.html
- Laverie, D.A.(1995), The Influences of Identity-Related Consumption, Appraisals, and Emotions on Identity Saliency: A Multi-Method Approach. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Arizona State University.
- Levy. S.J. (1959), "Symbols for sale". Harvard Business Review. Vol. 37 No.July/August, pp.117-24.
- Lustig, M. and Koester, J. (1999), Intercultural Competence. Addison Wesley Longman Inc. New York. USA
- Maital, S. and Pierides, A. (2003), Reinventing Cyprus: The Role of Entrepreneurs in the Era of Innovation. Nicolaou & Sons. Ltd. Cyprus
- Marmot, M. (2004), The Status Syndrome: How Social Standing Affects Our Health and Longevity. Times Books. USA
- McNamara, C. (1997), General Guidelines for Conducting Interviews. Authenticity Consulting, LLC. In: <http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/interview.htm>. accessed in June 2008
- Neuendorf, K. (2002), The Content Analysis Guidebook. <http://academic.csuohio.edu/kneuendorf/content/>
- Olson, J.C. and Peter, J.P. (1996), Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategy. 4th Edition. Irwin Publishers. USA
- Puiu, C. (2008), Considerations about Group Influences on Consumer Behavior. In: <http://steconomice.uoradea.ro/anale/volume/2008/v4-management-marketing/209.pdf> (accessed in March 2009).
- Reed, A. II (2002), Social Identity as a Useful Perspective for Self-Concept- Based Consumer Research. Psychology and Marketing. Vol. 19. No. 33. pp. 235-266
- Rushkoff, D. (2005). Get Back in the Box: Innovation from the Inside Out. Collins. New York. USA

- Samovar, A. and Porter. R. (2001), Communication Between Cultures. Wadsworth. Australia.
- Seidel, J. (1998), Qualitative Data Analysis. The Ethnograph v5. Appendic E. available at: <http://www.qualisresearch.com/>
- Shimp, T.A. (1997), Advertising, promotion & supplemental aspects of integrated marketing communications. Dryden Press Fort Worth. USA
- Tracy, S. and Trethewey. A. (2005), Fracturing the Real-Self-Fake-Self Dichotomy: Moving Toward "Crystallized Organizational Discourses and Identities". Communication Theory. Vol. 15. Issue 2. pp. 168.195. Interscience Wiley.com
- Trochim, W.M.K. (2006), Research Methods Knowledge Base. Wiley. USA
- Usunier, J-C. and Lee, J.A. (2005), Marketing Across Cultures. Fourth Edition. Prentice Hall. London.
- Ward, S. (1974), Consumer Socialization. Journal of Consumer Research: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly. University of Chicago Press. Vol. 1(2), pp 1-14
- Wood C.M. and Suter, T.A. (2004), Making Marketing Principles Tangible: Online Auctions as Living Case Studies. Journal of Marketing Education. Vol. 26, No. 2, pp.137-144.
- Other Internet source
<http://www.geocities.com/lazaridous/consumer.htm>

International Journal of Management Cases

SPECIAL ISSUE

**CIRCLE
Conference
2009**

Dornbirn, Austria

Volume 11 Issue 2

EDITORS

Western Europe

Professor Barry J. Davies

Professor of Marketing, University of Gloucestershire, UK
bdavies@glos.ac.uk

The Rest of the World

Professor Claudio Vignali

Arnold Ziff Chair in Retailing, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK
c.vignali@leedsmet.ac.uk

Central Europe

Professor Tihomir Vranesevic

The Graduate School of Economics, The University of Zagreb
tvranesevic@efzg.hr

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. David J. Bennett

Head of Department, Operations & Information Management Division, Aston Business School, Birmingham, UK
d.j.bennett@aston.ac.uk

Dr. Leo Dana

University of Canterbury, New Zealand
leo.dana@canterbury.ac.nz

Professor Alberto Mattiacci

Professor of Retailing and Marketing, The University of Siena, Italy
mattiaccialbunisi.it

Professor Mark Dupuis

Professor of Marketing, Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Paris, France.

Dr. Labros Vasiliadis

Business Academy, Chalkida, Greece
labvas@yahoo.gr

Dr. Henk J. Gianotten

Director, Centre for Retailing Research, Economisch Instituut voor het Midden en Kleinbedrijf, Netherlands.

Dr. Hans-Rüdiger Kaufmann

University of Nicosia, Cyprus
kaufmann.r@unic.ac.cy

Professor Dr. Jürgen Polke

Associate Dean, University of Applied Science, Vorarlberg, Austria
jürgen.polke@fhv.at

Professor Carlo A. Pratesi

Professor of Retailing Marketing, University of Urbino, Italy
capbox@tin.it

Professor Jurica Pavicic

Professor of Marketing, University of Zagreb, Croatia
jpavicic@efzg.hr

Professor Antonella Reitano

Professor di Economica & Gestione, Università di Calabria, Italy
a.reitano@unical.it

Professor Brenda Sternquist

Professor, International Retail Management, Michigan State University, USA
steinqui@msu.edu

Dr. Tomasz Wisniewski

The University of Szczecin Poland
t.wisniewski@univ.szczecin.pl

Dr. Demetris Vrontis

Dean, University of Nicosia, Cyprus
vrontis.d@unic.ac.cy

PRODUCTION EDITOR

Gianpaolo Vignali

g.vignali@mmu.ac.uk

www.ijmc.org.uk

ISSN 1741-6264

International Journal of Management Cases is published by:

Access Press UK, 1 Hillside Gardens, Darwen,
Lancashire, BB3 2NJ

Subscription Fees

2009 subscriptions are available in a number of major currencies. Exchange rates and prices will be held throughout 2009.

Subscription fees per volume are:

\$US 300 £Stg 150 \$Aus 370

€ 210 SFr 345 ¥ 33,740

Individual journal editions can be purchased at the following prices:

10 Journals @ £15 per journal
20 Journals @ £10 per journal
50 Journals @ £7 per journal

Subscription information is available from the Publishers at:

G Vignali
Access Press UK
1 Hillside Gardens
Darwen
Lancashire
BB3 2NJ
UK

+447815737243

Reproduction Rights

The publishers of the International Journal of Management Cases have granted, free of charge, unlimited photocopying and other reproduction rights to subscribers, for teaching and study use within the subscribing organization. Authors may also photocopy or otherwise reproduce their particular case from International Journal of Management Cases, subject to an acknowledgement of publication and copyright details.

Contents

CALL FOR PAPERS: SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE FOR CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND RETAILING RESEARCH (CIRCLE) VORARLBERG, AUSTRIA	9
CIRCLE 2009 PROGRAMME	13
Consumer Behaviour	
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN APPAREL ATTRIBUTES AND ADVERTISING ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR MADALENA PEREIRA, SUSANA G. AZEVEDO, JOÃO FERREIRA, RUI A. L. MIGUEL & VILMA PEDROSO	17
ATTITUDE-BASED VERSUS ATTRIBUTE-BASED CONSUMER DECISION-MAKING: THE EFFECTS OF INFORMATION DIAGNOSTICITY, PROCESSING OPPORTUNITY AND PROCESSING MOTIVATION ANAGNOSTIDOU ZOI & KOKKINAKI FLORA	32
BRAND-CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP: FROM ATTRACTIVENESS TO COMMITMENT ALFONSO SIANO & GIANPAOLO BASILE	42
EXPLORING CHINESE WELL-OFF CONSUMERS' BELIEFS, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR YIFAN LIA, XIONGWEN LUA, XIAOXIAO CHENG & RUNYUAN HUANG	52
STATUS ORIENTATION AND SYMBOLIC CONSUMPTION OF CYPRIOT CONSUMERS ALEXIS KITSIOS & HANS RUEDIGER KAUFMANN	61
REGIONAL CONSUMPTION PATTERNS: THE GREEK CASE VALMA ERASMIA	72
PERCEPTION OF CHOCOLATE BRANDS IN THE CZECH MARKET: THE CASE OF DORINA NENAD PERIĆ, VESNA BRČIĆ - STIPČEVIĆ & IRENA GUSZAK	80
THE INFLUENCE OF PRODUCT DISPLAYS ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN THE FASHION MARKET DAMIEN O'REILLY & KATIE DODDY	92
CONSUMER TRENDS AND BEHAVIOUR IN VIDEO GAMES. ITALY AND SINGAPORE ANTONIO FERACO	107
A STUDY ON GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND FASHION INTEREST AFFECTING FASHION STYLE PREFERENCE IHN HEE CHUNG	113
THE ROLE OF CONSUMER KNOWLEDGE IN RELATIONSHIP MARKETING IN THE WEB CONTEXT JANTIMA BANJONGPRASERT	121