

Consumer Behavior

Week 8

SESSION 15

20. Consumption Theses

Purpose: outline major theses on consumption

SESSION 16

Final exam

20. Consumption Theses

Four theses

The issue is the construction of **consumer identities** in the equation $I = \text{consumer}$

- **Producer Hero**: consumers are shaped by firms
- **Consumer Hero**: firms follow consumer desires
- **Multifaceted consumer**: consumer identity is too changy to even be theorized
- **Ethical consumer**: consumers have die-hard habits

Producer Hero

In the case where the maker is the producer, consumption is a 'self-regulated' and 'structured act' undifferentiated at the level of individuals as well as massive and homogeneous, a global phenomenon.



It is unchanging, simulated, *in*-authentic governed by producers to serve their economic and political interests, it is thus predictable, measurable and a posteriori to production.

Consumers are therefore ‘made up’ by producers because the latter have the ability to influence the decisions of the former.

Consumption is then a ‘passive’ act in that consumer identities are shaped by firms; hence “I am what firms decide I should be”.

10 corporations control all we consume – or almost



Consumer Hero

Where the consumer is assumed to be the maker, consumption is a productive act of creativity, an act of creation.

It involves the differentiation of signifying processes.

Consumption is then an 'active' act in that consumer identities are shaped by consumers themselves; hence "I am what I decide I should be".

Multifaceted Consumer

Not siding with the passive or the active consumption thesis, consumers may be seen to be unmanageable, moreover, indescribable.

Hence “I am not sure what I should be”.



Ethical Consumer

Yet consumers have their habits (ethos), since they tend to consume what satisfies them.

Hence “I am what my habits are”.

