

Questioning the BtoB/BtoC Dichotomy: The Contribution of the Consumer Culture Theory

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Abstract

- **Purpose:** To question the pertinence of the differences which were established 20 years ago between industrial marketing and consumer marketing.
- **Research method:** This article includes a historical review of the principal texts of the IMP group (Industrial Marketing and Purchasing) to bring to the fore the constant reassertion of the four specific challenges of industrial marketing: active versus reactive customer; atomized versus aggregated customers; single versus dyad as relevant unit of analysis; transaction versus relation. Subsequently, this article confronts the contributions of the CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) which is considered as a powerful renovating current in consumer marketing.
- **Research findings:** The dichotomy of BtoB/ BtoC no longer works if we boil it down to the four historical challenges of industrial marketing that are today adopted by the renovator current in consumer marketing. The question is therefore: should a certain homogeneity of the two fields be confirmed or should new channels of differentiation be sought out?
- **Main contribution:** This paper allows us to come back on a controversy that had apparently been swept under the carpet. It injects the most recent developments of consumer marketing research in the context of industrial marketing theories.

Keywords

CCT, Marketing Theory, Paradigm

Paper type

Competitive Paper

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Introduction

In the field of industrial marketing and then B to B marketing we can observe a succession of ruptures with B to C marketing management qualified as dominant or traditional. These ruptures have been punctuated by numerous controversies within the scientific community, the internal yardstick i.e. the standard that is used as a basis for comparison, being clearly consumer marketing. Consumer marketing management has been criticised for its universalistic pretension, capable of encompassing all situations of exchange whatever the nature of the actors present and the object of the exchange. At the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s a series of controversies took place on the issue of the specificities of industrial marketing, the question being: are the marketing situations encountered for industrial goods and for consumer goods really so different that different approaches must be used? For Fern and Brown (1984, p. 68) "this distinction is unjustified". For some other scholars (Bonoma and Johnston, 1978; Corey, 1976; Webster, 1979) industrial marketing situations show unique characteristics that must be distinguished from consumer marketing: a small number of customers for any given supplier, buyer-seller interdependence and the existence of the durable customer-supplier relationship. These approaches are historically important in so far as there is a tentative to make the industrial marketing field exist in an autonomous manner. This being so, they remain in the dominant framework of marketing management and the marketing mix model, i.e. taking into account a sole organisation, that of the supplier. During this same period (the 70s and the beginning of the 80s) a group of European researchers of the IMP Group largely contributed to a paradigmatic change of the industrial marketing discipline. Models of interaction and of customer/supplier relationships (Hakansson, 1982) and industrial networks (Mattsson, 1985; Hakansson and Snehota, 1995) are today largely accepted within the scientific community of B to B marketing, even if this has taken a long time. Furthermore, it can be added that it appears that the dyadic and network view is becoming more prominent in North America as well.

This school of thought therefore conveys the paradigm that seems to structure industrial marketing today: interaction, relationships, networks (Ford, 1990). However, reading the works of IMP (Cova and Salle, 2003), we can be surprised by the practically-ritualised repetition of arguments explaining the difference with the dominant marketing management which has stemmed from consumer marketing. This dichotomy was conceptualised in the mid 70s (Hakansson and Otsberg, 1975, Hakansson, 1982) and largely communicated as it stands throughout the two following decades (Ford, 1990; Ford et al., 1998, 2002, 2003). Today the following question is being raised: is the consumer marketing of the 70s still a pertinent yardstick to confront industrial marketing? This question is pertinent considering the array of trends in ways of thinking (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) and in particular post-modern trends (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Brown, 2001) which have led the discipline of marketing to significantly evolve. The objective of this article is to bring a meta-theoretical contribution to the discipline of industrial marketing through a confrontation of the representations of the consumer marketing such as those written by prominent members of the IMP research network with the more recent scientific developments of this same consumer marketing through the CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) body of works. The result of this confrontation should bring us to reconsider the fundamental dichotomy (or not) between consumer and industrial marketing without for as much looking to deny it nor make it disappear: the ultimate goal being to no longer define industrial marketing by reflex but for what it really is.

A constant reassertion of the four challenges of industrial marketing

We start off from the following observation: the theoretical building blocks of the work of the IMP group presented in 1982 (Hakansson, 1982) draw on the difference they have with dominant marketing management born from the field of consumer goods. In written works this marketing management has been identically reproduced and become practically ritualised for more than twenty years. To follow the permanence of these foundations in this period, we focus on founding works and also those regularly published by prominent members of the IMP group, as well as the special issues and works drawing together the most significant contributions made during the IMP conferences. Through this choice, we give more importance on one hand to actors who, through their position in the community, are the

most legitimate in giving an overall perspective of developments and in carrying the official school of thought (most often founding members) and on the other hand to key events (conferences) and their consequences (the special issue of reviews and collective books) which rouse the research community.

The publication of the first works of the IMP group (Hakansson, 1982) by laying down the conceptual bases constitutes the founding stage. From the onset of the book, the position of the group is affirmed and hence the theoretical framework to be criticised are clearly identified: "this book is based on an approach which challenges the traditional ways of examining industrial marketing and purchasing" (Hakansson, 1982, p. 1). Four key differences between the traditional and IMP approaches of industrial markets are established:

- The first difference is relative to the duration of the event that has brought the supplier and customer into contact. Therefore, the actors oppose a practically–instantaneous logic of a single discrete purchase to a logic concerning the duration and intensity of the relationship – a relationship which is close, complex and long term oriented.
- The second difference bears on the manner in which the customer is apprehended by the two approaches. For the IMP group, the customer is active in the interaction with the supplier, even if in traditional marketing approaches the customer is considered to be passive. On the basis of this difference, doubt is cast on the marketing mix model in so far as it gives suppliers disproportionate power and roles.
- The third difference refers to market characteristics and structure. On one hand, for traditional approaches, the market is atomised and instable, which signifies that changes are frequent. On the other, for the IMP group, markets are concentrated and stability dominates in so far as the density of the supplier-customer interaction is such that it curbs changes.
- Finally, the IMP group indicates that the pertinent unit of analysis in industrial marketing is the supplier-customer interaction over time. It is therefore not pertinent to adopt the point of view of a sole actor: the supplier or the customer.

Taking into consideration the criticism made by the IMP group concerning the indisputable paradigm in academic research that the marketing mix model and its theoretic foundations represent, the attack is directed towards the marketing management promoted worldwide by Kotler and the numerous additions of his basic works. Therefore, the approach of the IMP group explicitly criticises the approach of Kotler and Levy (1969) and their presuppositions: "It is implicit that buyers are passive and only react to the stimuli of the seller by buying or not buying. The selling firm is the active partner in the buyer-seller relationship. Further, this relationship is largely seen to be between the seller and some 'generic market' rather than with individual customers" (Hakansson, 1982, p. 11). The IMP group refers also to the textbooks of Kotler (1976) by indicating that consumer marketing "has formed a basis for the development of literature in the industrial marketing field." (Hakansson, 1982, p. 27)

Ford (1990) put forward a collection selected from the most significant articles published by different scholars from the IMP network. In the introduction of the book, in the same way as Turnbull and Valla (1986), Ford insists on the fact that the approach of the IMP group is strongly anchored in the empirical. The different research of the IMP group "shared a strong empirical tradition expressing crudely that it is better to spend lots of time listening to managers and developing ideas rather than assembling a towering edifice of quantitative analysis on the basis of a mailed questionnaire" (Ford, 1990, p. 2). The presentation of Ford is articulated around a comparison between two eras: before when only a traditional view was considered and now with the development of a different interpretation brought by the IMP group. These four differences between these two views presented in the founding work (Hakansson, 1982) are reiterated in a very corrosive style to carry conviction, going sometimes as far as being farcical: "they (individual buying companies) do not buy just because they see an advertisement on television or because a salesman calls" (Ford, 1990, p. 1). If we follow Ford, individual consumers would be average 'idiots' who react to a stimulus such as Pavlov's dog. But we can wonder if Ford speaks about the reality of how consumers operate or about the unsuitability of models used in terms of how consumers behave.

In 1998 (Ford et al.) and then in 2002 (Ford et al.) and 2003 (Ford et al.), a succession of collective works with a managerial and pedagogical orientation are published. These works group together several enlarged teams made up of researchers of the IMP group. The objective is both to present the foundations of the model and the work accumulated over twenty years and to put new developments to the fore. In the first works in the series, the authors draw on the knowledge of the reality of market

operation acquired through a weighty empirical work in order to criticise again the traditional vision of marketing. We find in the four foundations the difference between traditional marketing and the marketing revamped by the IMP group. The authors criticise the fact that the marketing approach dispenses the point of view of a sole supplier who develops his offer in an autonomous manner through the mix: “a manufacturer, in isolation from other companies, that develops a marketing mix of product/service, price, promotion and distribution” (Ford et al., 1998, p. 4). The authors also criticise the fact that “the marketer is seen as the active party in this process and its customers are essentially passive” (Ford et al., 1998, p. 4). The market structure is yet again presented as being different: “a supplier in these [industrial] markets is likely to face fewer customers than in a consumer market” (Ford et al., 1998, p. 5). The authors even go as far as provoking consumer goods marketing on its home ground: “the traditional view of markets described in many marketing textbooks does not even relate closely to the real situation faced by manufacturers of *consumer goods*” (Ford et al., 1998, p. 5).

The subsequent works (Ford et al., 2002) follow suit. Even if, again, the authors point out the commonalities and the differences between the industrial purchase and the consumer goods purchase, the discourse appears slightly different on several points. The authors conduct their works by carrying out comparisons: they give an industrial example which they oppose to an example of consumer goods without going so far as to really make a sharp contrast with the real differences. Basically, ‘it depends’. Here is a series of examples:

- There are purchases in the consumer market that can last, as in the industrial milieu. This type of presentation brings to mind the approach of Fern and Brown (1984) treating the commonalities and differences between marketing of consumer goods and industrial goods.
- To illustrate the idea of the concentration of markets, we can draw on the fact that a sole customer or a sole supplier can individually be important for the other party, the supplier or the customer. On this point, we are concerned by the fact the one of the four basic differences reiterated since 1982 is now cast into doubt: “in the consumer case, each customer is usually relatively unimportant to a supplier, but a single supplier can be very important to a particular customer. Many people buy almost all their food from a single supermarket or completely furnish their house from Ikea” (Ford et al., 2002, p. 5).
- All the literature that we have quoted upholds that industrial relationships are complex, that they last and that they are oriented towards the long-term, which is not the case in consumer marketing. Here we discover a much more subtle statement: “consumers have also continuing relationships with supermarkets, fashion stores and producers of everything from cars to coffee. When they need to make a particular purchase they are likely to go to the supplier with whom they have a good relationship. Consumer marketers try to cultivate these relationships using the techniques of relationship marketing. However, the interaction between consumers and their suppliers are likely to be one way, from supplier to customer by impersonal media such as mail shots their offerings to customer requirements” (Ford et al., 2002, p. 6)

In 2003, Ford et al. publish a revised edition of the 1998 book. In this new edition, we see a return to the tenet of the founding discourse of 1982. The authors affirm: “over the years, the Group has sought to counter a number of myths that we believe condition the way that business in general, and marketing and purchasing in particular, are analysed and practised. We refer to these myths as: the Myth of Action, the Myth of Independence and the Myth of Completeness” (Ford et al., 2003, p. 2). The basic idea is to present these myths and to provoke a debate. In the myth of action, the authors yet again decline the four differences put forward twenty years before: “the supplier acts and the customer reacts...; each customer is individually insignificant: each is part of a relatively homogeneous and faceless market, or market segment...; the marketing actions of a supplier and the purchasing reactions of a customer can be analysed separately from each other...; business sales or purchases are considered as isolated events” (Ford et al., 2003, p. 2). Over twenty years there has therefore been a constant reassertion of the four challenges of industrial marketing. This has given rise to considerable empirical and conceptual research work (Easton et al., 2003).

An alternative construction of consumer marketing comes to maturity

To be aware of, with an aim of confronting, the parallel evolution of the IMP school of thought in the context of BtoC research carried out over the last twenty years, we draw on the article very recently undertaken by Arnould and Thompson (2005) and published in the *Journal of Consumer Research (JOCR)*. According to Arnould and Thompson (2005), “the past twenty years of consumer research have produced a flurry of research addressing the socio-cultural, experiential, symbolic, and

ideological aspects of consumption”, that the authors propose to name *Consumer Culture Theory* (CCT). In their article, they offer an overview of the motivating interests, conceptual orientations, and theoretical agendas that characterize this research stream to date, with a particular focus on articles published in *Journal of Consumer Research*. “Owing to the length constraints of this forum, we regrettably cannot give due consideration to the full spectrum of culturally-oriented consumer research that appears in other publication venues such as the *European Journal of Marketing, Culture, Markets and Consumption; International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Consumer Culture; Journal of Marketing; Journal of Material Culture, Research in Consumer Behavior*, and a host of books and edited volumes. Accordingly, our thematic review is by no means intended to be exhaustive or all-inclusive” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 868). We therefore draw on this panorama that we complete by neighbouring writings from publications other than those of the JOCR when we consider the usefulness of stipulating the confrontation with IMP representations, notably with relation to certain managerial aspects which are not always totally developed in the JOCR but developed elsewhere by authors quoted in the article of Arnould and Thompson (2005).

Overall, the twenty years of research have “encouraged investigation of the contextual, symbolic and experiential aspects of consumption as they unfold across a consumption cycle that includes acquisition, consumption and possession, and disposition processes, and analysis of these phenomena from macro, meso, and micro theoretical perspectives” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 868). CCT research has emphasized the productive aspect of consumption. CCT explores how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals. From this perspective, the marketplace provides consumers with an expansive and heterogeneous palette of resources from which to construct individual and collective identities. All of this gives rise to criticism and theoretical developments of BtoC marketing that reflect the four points of difference which have been noted and referred to by IMP.

Reactive consumer? Towards the blurring of the consumer/producer boundary

The view of a passive consumer in BtoC markets must be juxtaposed with one derived from the key contributions of the last twenty years of research (Arnould and Thompson, 2005): the ‘prosumer’ (producer-consumer). CCT researchers witness the emergence of the customizing consumer - the consumer who takes elements of market offerings and crafts a customized consumption experience out of these. In modernity, the consumer was increasingly divorced from his ability to control the objects or his life; he ended up being a stooge. In postmodernity, the consumer may be finding the potential to become a protagonist in the customization of her/his world (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). The contemporary consumer is interested in becoming part of processes and in experiencing immersion in thematic settings rather than merely encountering finished products and images (Firat and Dholakia, 1998; Joy and Sherry, 2003).

Thus, in order to live consumption experiences, consumers rebel against planned functions and images of products. This rejection of ready-made images leads the consumer to interpret them differently, to add meaning to them, to divert them from their original purpose (Ritson and Elliott, 1999). Postmodernist insights alert us to the fact that products are only arbitrarily linked to their original functions, and therefore, infinitely open to subversion and diversion through everyday life experiences. Consequently, the images and uses of products cannot be entirely controlled by the producer. The consumer exercises her/his freedom (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995) to create new meanings for goods through her/his own experience of everyday life. This freedom can be used for collective and individual resistance against the imposed meanings of marketing, particularly through the use of diversion tactics. Thus, the consumer is potentially liberating in the sense that to escape dominant meanings is to construct her/his own subjectivity. One important consideration is the ability of individuals to twist or divert consumption-based meanings in order to achieve congruence with self-image. Consumers re-negotiate intended meanings, subjectively, according to their own self-constructs. They re-shape, adapt, pervert, resurrect and otherwise modify the meanings of the manufacturing industry. Thus, the BtoC research contributions of the last 20 years emphasize the ability of consumers to re-signify commodity-signs in personalised, unintended directions (Keat et al., 1994). This means that marketers must not study the consumer as someone seeking to satisfy an end (needs), but as someone seeking to construct (experiences) symbols. Thus, the consumer is not a passive target for marketing but an active link in the continual production of meanings.

Atomized consumer? Towards consumers' collective action

The view of an atomized consumer in BtoC markets must be juxtaposed with one derived from some of the CCT contributions (Arnould and Thompson, 2005): the tribe member. The word tribe (Maffesoli, 1996) refers to the re-emergence of quasi-archaic values: a local sense of identification, religiosity, syncretism, group narcissism... The common denominator is the community. Tribes try to revive the community archetype of the village or the district, but they are not communities that are solely definable in spatial terms; some use the latest technical means of communication (micro-computers, Internet, fax...) in order to form virtual tribes. Face-to-face encounters or co-physical presence is no longer compulsory. These communities are inherently unstable, small-scale, affectual and not fixed by any of the established parameters of modern society; instead they can be held together through shared emotions, styles of life, new moral beliefs and consumption practices. Where the notion of tribe achieves a break with traditional BtoC marketing is in the comparison with the concept of segmentation, which until recently was thought to provide reliable consumer profiles to the marketer (Cova and Cova, 2002):

- A segment is defined as a group of homogeneous persons -they share the same characteristics- who are not connected to each other; a segment is not capable of collective action, its members are simple consumers.
- A tribe is defined as a network of heterogeneous persons -in terms of age, sex, income, etc. - who are linked by a shared passion or emotion; a tribe is capable of collective action, its members are not simple consumers, they are also advocates;

The symbolic (re)construction or (re)possession of meanings through shared experiences is acknowledged as the most potent form of maintaining communal identity for these tribes of consumers (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). This process occurs by taking two constituent elements of the marketing system - the product and its meaning - and relocating or repossessing them in order to defy marketing forces, to oppose the dominant semiotic system and to maintain subcultural identity. Because these newly appropriated signs are common only to the tribe, their apparent secrecy lends added identity to the subcultural group. In fact, the tribal identity derives from both the creation and maintenance of these re-appropriated, re-signified sociological meanings. Thus, tribes or subcultures of consumption provide opportunities for marketers to engage in symbiotic relationships with consumers. Over the past decade, tribal marketing paved the way for so-called communal approaches to consumption and marketing (Cova, 1997). The behaviour of consumers driven by a similar passion or ethos to assemble into a group, thereby becoming a sub-culture or tribe, came to be seen as an object of study with relevance to the field of marketing (Bagozzi, 2000; Kozinets, 1999, 2001 and 2002; Thompson and Troester 2002). The advent of the Internet subsequently advanced the idea that brands can create consumer communities revolving around their websites. Reincorporating recent studies on the complex relationship between brands and consumers into this consumer community construct, a "brand community" concept (McAlexander et al., 2002; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) then came to the forefront of the marketing scene, sharing the spotlight with a "brand tribe" construct (Arnould et al., 2002). We are now in a situation where a whole host of brand management parameters (notably the level of control a company wants to wield over its brand on-line) come under the aegis of what some observers call a tribal branding outlook.

Unit of analysis? Towards the customer in context

CCT has its historical roots in calls for consumer researchers to broaden their focus to investigate the neglected experiential, social, and cultural dimensions of consumption in context (Belk 1987; Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Thus, the field rather than the laboratory became the natural context for CCT. CCT strives to systematically link meanings on an individual level to different levels of cultural processes and structure and then to situate these relationships within historical and marketplace contexts. CCT methodologies are based on participation with consumers and they resemble the anthropology of consumption (Sherry, 1995). Some define this range of methods as market-oriented ethnography or ethnomarketing (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994). These methods enable observation of how the meaning resident in objects is transferred from the object to the consumer or how it is altered, diverted and twisted. The meaning ascribed to products and services is often related to experiences, and rituals are one of the best collective opportunities to affirm, evoke, assign, or revise these meanings. Consequently, the objective of these methods is to pin down elements of an intangible nature that are imperceptible taken one by one, but can be discerned in experiences taking place in an atmosphere of trust established over a period of time between researchers and consumers. "Instead of observing people doing what they might do or say if real-world complexities did not impose on them, as in laboratory experiments, ethnographers observe actual people's

behaviour in real time; and rather than asking respondents to generalize about their behaviour as in survey research, ethnographers record the particulars of naturally occurring behaviours and conversations” (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994, p. 486).

For CCT researchers, the long-term immersion in consumer context improves the likelihood of experiencing the revelatory incidents that give meaning to cultural patterns. Thus, the ethnographic method is primarily concerned with the ability to contextualize elements of culture and to make systematic connections among them. Ethnography is appropriate for the analysis of service encounters and other marketing research problems concerned with human interactions observable in everyday life. Thus, ethnographic representations may be used to penetrate the meanings that corporate culture has for employees, the way in which corporate culture shapes strategy formulation, organizational self-understanding, and the meanings that channel relations have for channels members (Arnould, 1998).

Isolated events? Towards the brand as relationship partner

CCT addresses the socio-cultural complexities of exchange behaviours and relationships (Belk, Sherry and Wallendorf 1988; Belk and Coon 1993; Penaloza and Gilly 1999; Deighton and Grayson 1995). Starting with the premise that relationship principles have virtually replaced short-term exchanges notions in marketing thought, CCT suggests an alternative to the well-known construct of brand loyalty in BtoC in the notion of brand relationship quality. Fournier (1998) argues that brands can and do serve as viable relationship partners and that consumer-brand relationships are valid at the level of lived experience. She induces from phenomenological interviewing a six-faceted brand relationship construct. The multifaceted nature of this construct highlights that there is more to keeping a relationship alive between a consumer and a brand than the pull of positive feelings: affective and socioemotive attachments (love/passions and self-connection), behavioural ties (interdependence and commitment), and supportive cognitive beliefs (intimacy and brand partner quality) combined to yield strength and duration over time.

For the brand to serve as legitimate relationship partner, it must surpass the personification qualification and actually behave as an active, contributing member of the dyad. Customer-brand relationships are constituted of as series of repeated exchanges between the two parties; they evolve in response to these interactions and to fluctuations in the contextual environment. Strong brand relationships according to CCT are distinguished by a high degree of interdependence that involves frequent consumer/brand interactions. Brand relationship quality evolves through meaningful brand and consumer actions (episodes) as per reciprocity principle on which all relationships are grounded. One factor affecting relationship strength that has received much attention concerns the transgressions that befall long-term relationships (Aaker et al., 2004). Transgressions are defining episodes that distance the relationship in some instances but propel it forward in others. CCT research shows that brands characterized by sincere traits encourage progressively stronger relationships analogous to close friendships, but this is only the case when the relationship proceeds without a transgression episode. A transgression episode appears to damage the fundamental meanings on which this seemingly close partnership between the brand and the consumer is based; it provides contrary evidence (Aaker et al., 2004) that disconfirm expectations of the consumer, as per deterioration of partner quality perceptions (e.g., “this brand is not concerned about me as I thought”) and violation of assumed intimacy levels with the brand (e.g., “this is not the brand I thought it was”).

An outdated justification for BtoB/BtoC dichotomy?

The developments in consumer marketing carried out by the CCT partly converge with the image of marketing operation defended by the IMP Group. But, these developments also diverge from the dated image of consumer marketing promoted by the different written works of the IMP over the last 20 years. In this way we can make IMP’s vision of BtoC marketing and the vision put forward by the CCT correspond to each of the four aforementioned challenges of industrial marketing (see table 1). It comes to light that the challenges of industrial marketing on the four criteria (consumer / market / unit of analysis / time perspective) are no longer as specific as they had been 20 years ago (table 1). Here we can observe, at least on a conceptual level, that parallels are being drawn between industrial marketing and consumer marketing in relation to the four large challenges supposed to be specific to the industrial field.

PLACE TABLE 1 AROUND HERE

Our analysis therefore brings to the fore numerous similarities between the two streams of research, i.e. IMP and CCT:

- Both take a critical stance in relation to the dominant paradigm of marketing management;
- Both are preoccupied by referring to on the field experience and observation as opposed to relating to models and laboratory simulations. They perceive the observed phenomenon in a re-embedded fashion contrary to the hypothetical-deductive approaches which require the research in question to be initially formulated;
- Both highlight the same challenges, which as a result confirm the global legitimacy (and not uniquely business-to-business legitimacy) of these challenges; *a posteriori* this comforts the visionary position of the IMP approach in their criticism and in the necessary deconstruction of dominant marketing management.

The grid of the 4 challenges is therefore a grid on the level of macroscopic analysis of market operation. This is today no longer pertinent for us to be aware of the differences between these two fields, BtoC and BtoB. Do differences still exist or are we going towards a global theoretical reintegration? A recent article of the members of the IMP group seems to suggest this. In this article, Hakansson and Waluszewski (2005) reinterpret the traditional model of the 4 Ps from an interactive, resource heterogeneity perspective. Are there other criteria to take into consideration to differentiate the two fields? Or is the difference, if it exists, more on the level of the modes of practical application that remain specific to each field? For example, when the CCT, like the IMP, speaks about an active customer, does this concern the same kind of customer activity? Does the customer interact directly with the supplier or does he make do with giving a different meaning to the supplier's offer?

Through our comparison we have been able to cast in doubt the 20-year old dichotomous grid structured by IMP between industrial marketing and consumer marketing. But, and here lies the limits of this work, it is not possible to bring all the research currents of industrial marketing to the approach of IMP alone. Similarly, if the CCT has been a federator of numerous diverse approaches in consumer marketing, not all researchers are of the same mind and identify with this research stream which, moreover, presents a rather marginal managerial will. Finally, the concepts put into play so far to differentiate the two fields can today appear to be a catch-all where very divergent realities can find themselves.

Conclusion

The theories put forward by the CCT do not claim that the differences between BtoB and BtoC have been erased; they go much further by criticising the marketing management foundations themselves. Without going so far as to reinterpret the contributions of industrial marketing in marketing management, as was done by Addis and Holbrook (2001) or Hakansson and Waluszewski (2005), the current of CCT proposes a kind of rapprochement between its vision of the way markets operate to that put forward by the IMP Group in industrial marketing. By doing so, industrial marketers are obliged to go beyond the dominant models of marketing management and to update their knowledge of consumer marketing theories. Subsequently new ways of qualifying the specificity of the industrial field in marketing will have to be sought out and researched.

From a managerial point of view, the approaches of the CCT allow a symbolic, imaginary and emotional dimension to be given to episodes of interaction between the customer and the supplier by bringing into play the concept of consumer experience. In the case of a relationship where there is an intermediary (industrial distribution; the Internet) and where the role of the brand seems to have become preponderant in the relationship, the contributions of CCT in terms of brand-commitment management notably through clubs or user communities, events of collective rituals still seem to be pertinent levers.

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Table 1: Comparison between BtoC seen by IMP and BtoC seen by CCT on 4 key criteria

CRITERIA	INDUSTRIAL MARKETING CHALLENGES	BtoC according to IMP	BtoC according to CCT
CONSUMER	PASSIVE VS ACTIVE CONSUMER	"The supplier acts and the customer reacts"	"The customizing consumer: the consumer who takes elements of market offerings and crafts a customized consumption experience out of these"
MARKET	ATOMIZED VS AGREGATED CONSUMERS	"Each customer is individually insignificant: each is part of a relatively homogeneous and faceless market, or market segment"	"A tribe is a network of heterogeneous persons who are linked by a shared passion or emotion; a tribe is capable of collective action, its members are not simple consumers, they are also advocates"
UNIT OF ANALYSIS	SINGLE (ISOLATED) VS DYAD UNIT OF ANALYSIS	"The marketing action of the supplier and the purchasing reactions of the customer can be analysed separately from each other"	"CCT has its historical roots in calls for consumer researchers to broaden their focus to investigate the neglected experiential, social, and cultural dimensions of consumption in context"
TIME PERSPECTIVE	TRANSACTION VS RELATION	Sales or purchases are considered as "isolated events"	"CCT addresses the socio-cultural complexities of exchange behaviours and relationships" especially brand-customer relationships