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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the on-going cultural turn in retail marketing by offering an overview of the interdisciplinary field of socio-cultural retailing and discussing how this body of work can contribute conceptually, methodologically and substantively to the field of retail marketing.

Design/methodology/approach: This paper is based on a literature review of socio-cultural retail studies in marketing, cultural geography, sociology, and anthropology. The literature is analysed in relation to the substantive, conceptual and methodological domains of retail marketing.

Findings: Drawing on the literature review, the authors argue that socio-cultural retail studies can contribute to the field of retail marketing substantively, conceptually and methodologically, thus broadening its current scope and domains.

Originality/value: This paper provides an overview of an interdisciplinary field and identifies how it can contribute to the field of retail marketing. It is valuable for retailing researchers interested in socio-cultural approaches to the study of contemporary retailing.

Keywords: retailing, retail marketing, review, socio-cultural, marketing, cultural geography, sociology, anthropology

Introduction

Recent reviews of retail marketing show a prominent field that addresses a number of substantive issues (topics, themes and questions) and makes use of a multitude of conceptual resources and methodological approaches to do so (Brown and Dant 2008, Brown and Dant 2009, Grewal and Levy 2007, Levy and Grewal 2007, Brinberg and McGrath 1985).

Substantively, retail marketing has studied consumer behaviour, pricing, promotion, product/branding, services, loyalty, channels and organizations, the Internet, ethics, globalisation and formats (Grewal and Levy 2007). Most common within retail marketing are studies of consumer behaviour. Many of these studies have been oriented towards how retail sites affect consumer behaviour, e.g., how different "atmospherics" (such as light, colour, smell and music) impact consumer evaluations and behaviours (Turley and Milliman 2000, Babin et al. 2003, Baker

et al. 2002, Eroglu et al. 2005, Wakefield and Baker 1998, Donovan et al. 1994). Other consumer behaviour studies have focused on developing consumer typologies (e.g., Jin and Kim 2003, Reynolds et al. 2002, Sinha and Uniyal 2005), examined specific shopping phenomena - such as fast fashion (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood 2009) or ethical shopping (Carrigan et al. 2004, Carrigan and Attalla 2001, Creyer and Ross 1997) - or focused on specific aspects of shopping such as unethical behaviour (Shaw and Shiu 2003, Strutton et al. 1997) and the pleasures of shopping (Cox et al. 2005, Babin et al. 1994). The consumer has been a central object of study within the field of retail marketing.

Conceptually, the most common theories used in retail marketing studies are various psychological theories for individuals, marketing theories and microeconomic theory (Brown and Dant 2009). Although other theories such as social psychological theories, consumer choice theory, information processing theory, satisfaction theory, reference price theory, competitive theory and attribution theory are used, they do not play the same central role as the three major theoretical approaches mentioned above. Retail marketing has, like the field of marketing in general, tended to favour theories from the disciplines of psychology and economics.

Methodologically, retail marketing is dominated by (student and consumer) surveys, analysed through regression or analysis of variance (Brown and Dant 2008). As one can expect from a field so heavily influenced by psychology and economics, quantitative methods, and the ontological and epistemological assumptions that often come with these methods, have been the norm. Although other approaches are used, qualitative studies are rare. This is particularly true in studies of consumer behaviour (Brown and Dant 2008).

As demonstrated here, retail marketing research has produced an impressive and insightful body of work that has certainly revealed a great deal about retailing. However, valuable as it may be, this research also tends to view retailing, shopping and consumption from a specific vantage point (as all research does). Absent from most mainstream retail marketing accounts is the socio-cultural dimension of retailing, shopping and consumption. While consumption research within, for example, sociology, anthropology, cultural geography and certain streams of marketing has shown that consumption practices are inherently social and cultural (see e.g., Arnould and Thompson 2005, Crewe 2000, Crewe 2003, Goss 2004, Goss 2006), many traditional retail scholars still treat consumers as rational, autonomous, self-interested, calculative agents. Similarly, while social and cultural research has shown that retail spaces are performative spaces where identities (see, e.g., Miller et al. 1998, Jackson and Holbrook 1995), gender (see, e.g., Gregson and Crewe 1998, Clarke 2000, Pettinger 2005), ethnicity (see, e.g., Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009, Friend and Thompson 2003), experiences (see, e.g., Kozinets et al. 2004, Sherry et al. 2001, Falk and Campbell 1997), ideologies (see, e.g., Arnould et al. 2001) and multiple meanings (see, e.g., Jackson and Holbrook 1995) are produced and reproduced, retail marketing tends to treat retail spaces mainly as technical and psychological spaces. And while socio-cultural retail studies have shown the useful of qualitative studies, retail marketing remains dominated by quantitative approaches.

This is, however, starting to change. Over the years, a number of socio-cultural studies of retailing have been conducted and published in retailing journals. For example, Kozinets et al. (2002) offer a cultural analysis of theme

brand shops. Arnold et al. (2001) analyse the Wal-Mart ideology as it is enacted by its flyers. Hollenback et al. (2008) offer a cultural analysis of museum shops. Griffith (2011) analyses the multiple meanings that people derive from shopping over the course of a lifetime. Uusitalo (2001) investigates the meanings that consumers attach to different retail formats and brands and Bäckström (2006, 2011) conducts a socio-cultural analysis of recreational shopping. Socio-cultural studies of retailing are starting to enter the field and, in light of this development, researchers have even begun to talk about a cultural turn within retail marketing (Borghini et al. 2009).

Against this background, the purpose of this paper is to contribute to the on-going cultural turn in retail marketing by first (1) offering an overview of the interdisciplinary field of socio-cultural retailing and second (2) discussing how this body of work can contribute conceptually, methodologically and substantively to the field of retail marketing.

There is, as we will show below, a broad range of studies from which culturally inclined retail marketing scholars can draw (and contribute to); theoretical perspectives to be inspired by, methodological approaches to make use of and a number of insightful cultural analysis regarding the role of retail in contemporary consumer culture to learn from. What we aim to do, then, is to review this field in an effort to make available conceptual resources, methodological approaches and themes that may be useful for scholars interested in contributing to the cultural turn within the field of retail marketing.

This text is organized as follows: In the coming four sections, socio-cultural retail studies are reviewed within four disciplines: marketing, cultural geography, sociology and anthropology. Building on these reviews, we discuss how a socio-cultural approach to studies of retail might affect the conceptual, methodological and substantive domains of retail marketing. The paper concludes with a discussion concerning the implications for continued research in the field.

Marketing, Retail, and Culture

As mentioned above, there are a number of studies within marketing that take the social and cultural aspects of retailing seriously and that have begun to speak of a cultural turn in retail marketing (Borghini et al. 2009)[i].

Peñaloza (1999), for example, presents a visual ethnography of Nike Town in Chicago. This five-storey flagship store, filled with sports artefacts and imagery, is described as a hybrid space, a combination between museum and store, a space where consumers come to both look at sports memorabilia and purchase sports merchandise. Peñaloza argues that Nike Town, through its retail environment, urged and made possible the consumption of spectacle "both in the store experience itself and as context for additional purchase behaviour" (Peñaloza 1999: 379). But more than that, she shows that Nike Town works to produce consumer desire by positioning consumers within a sports world populated by celebrated and heroic athletes, a world in which the products of Nike inspire and help consumers to follow the example of their idolized athletes and "just do it".

In a similar vein, Kozinets et al. analyse the themed environment of the ESPN Zone in Chicago (Kozinets et al. 2004, Sherry et al. 2001) – a 35.000-foot retail complex dedicated to the theme of sports and operated by the Walt Disney Company. Focusing on the relation between retail space and consumer experience, the authors argue against critical accounts of retail space, showing

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that consumers do resist the rules and lures of this themed retail environment. Indeed, the authors show that these spectacular experiences depend on the consumer actively participating and co-creating the experience. Spectacular consumption, they argue, has a do-it-yourself quality that has not been acknowledged in the past. It is not a matter of producers dominating consumers; instead, "consumers produce producers' products at the same time and as much as producers produce consumption" (Kozinets et al. 2004: 671).

The issue of producer-consumer relations is recurring in this work. For example, studies of malls have discussed the tensions and difficulties that arise between owners and consumers as malls try to be both economic and social spaces, that is, spaces that allow for certain forms of sociality but that also are designed to sell products and generate profit (Sandikci and Holt 1998, Maclaran and Brown 2005).

Another stream of research within culturally influenced marketing studies of retailing explores the production of retail ideology and its role in making stores and the products they market meaningful to consumers. Arnold, Kozinets and Handelman, for example, argue that what makes Wal-Mart successful in the U.S. market is, at least in part, that this retail chain "connects itself symbolically to the dominant ideologies of American life" (Arnould et al. 2001: 244). Through a semiotic analysis of Wal-Mart flyers they show that this retail chain reproduces notions of values associated with the traditional American "hometown". That is, "through the imagery of frugality, family, religion, neighbourhood, community and patriotism, Wal-Mart locates itself centrally on Main Street of a nostalgic hometown" (Arnould et al. 2001: 244).

Borghini et al. take the retail ideology discussion a step further by exploring how the retail brand ideology of American Girl – a brand of dolls and children's books, mainly – is materialized through retail space (Borghini et al. 2009). This study shows how American Girl, in order to sell products, enacts a brand ideology by positioning their dolls (and other products) as moral and virtuous products. American Girl dolls have none of the vanity and shallowness of Barbie and none of the sexiness of Bratz dolls. American Girl dolls are inscribed with a set of different values: these dolls are patriotic, virtuous and heroic. They are dolls that teach young girls to be moral, social and caring. This is why "Ownership of the dolls, with their ethical implications, indicates one's parents´ significant investment, and indication of taste, distinction and morality." (Borghini et al. 2009: 370). In both these cases, products and retail spaces are made meaningful to the consumer by connecting to and reproducing wider American ideologies.

Common themes are readily apparent in these studies, two of which are worth noting here. First, marketing scholars often take a particular interest in the large and the spectacular settings (in addition to those mentioned above, see Kozinets et al. 2002, Hollenback et al. 2008, Haytko and Baker 2004). Like many other scholars within the social sciences, they focus mainly on the more visible and impressive retail sites. So, although there certainly are studies of smaller, more mundane retail sites and shopping phenomenon (e.g. Friend and Thompson 2003), and even some early studies of what could be called "alternative retail spaces" (e.g. Sherry 1990, McGrath et al. 1993, Belk et al. 1988), this research is characterized by a preoccupation with large and spectacular retail sites.

Second, when investigating these sites, these studies often focus on the relationship between retail space and consumer experience, trying to counter the "consumer as dupe" (Gabriel and Lang 2006) approach. Accordingly, these

studies often emphasize the agency of consumers and explore the experiences produced at these retail sites and show that consumers take an active role in the co-production of retailing sites.

Cultural Geographies of Retail

Retail and its connection to consumption have long been of interest to geographers (for reviews of this work see, e.g., Wrigley and Lowe 1996, Wrigley and Lowe 2002). Inspired by the cultural turn, a group of scholars in geography set out to investigate the relationships between retailing, consumption, space and culture producing. Their efforts have resulted in an extensive body of literature that addresses the cultural geographies of retailing (Crewe 2000, Crewe 2001, Crewe 2003). Within this vast amount of literature one may discern two distinct approaches to retail sites.

One stream of geographical research critically examines the spectacular spaces of retailing. Focus here is on how retail sites such as shopping malls and supermarkets work (through design, imagery and organization) to exclude, oppress and manipulate consumers (Jackson and Thrift 1995). Goss, for example, provides a critical reading of malls, arguing (among other things) that these retail sites work to control consumers, exclude minorities, produce a false sense of community and symbolize commodities (Goss 1999, Goss 1993, Goss 2006). According to Goss (1999, 1993), shopping malls work to persuade and even bully consumers into consuming (see also Clarke 1997).

This approach to retail has been criticized within (and outside of) geography. There are, critics argue, at least two problems with this work. The first is that it tends to "ignore the active role of consumers in shaping contemporary consumer cultures" (Crewe and Lowe 1995, Jackson and Thrift 1995: 210, see also Crewe 2003), thereby producing a far too deterministic account of retailing in which consumers are passive and powerless. The second problem with these critical studies is that they focus on a limited range of formalized retail sites such as malls and department stores (Jackson and Thrift 1995, Crewe and Gregson 1998). Like the marketing studies discussed above, this work has privileged large and spectacular retail sites (however, unlike the marketing studies discussed, they have not taken into account the agency of consumers).

In response, a second stream of geographic research has developed that does (at least) two things differently. First, these researchers take the active role of consumers seriously. Studies in this stream argue and convincingly show that consumers do not "just buy passively or uncritically but transform the meaning of bought goods, appropriating and recontextualizing mass market styles" (Crewe and Gregson 1998: 47, Crewe 2000). Retail sites, it is argued, are not deterministic, but can be and often are remade and reorganized by consumers. Consumption does not merely happen in space-time; it plays a role in the production of place (Jackson and Thrift 1995, Ytterhus et al. 1999). These studies take a shopping-as-practice approach to retail, interrogating not only how retail practices happen in space but also how they perform that space (Crewe 2003). This work has shown that malls, shops and other sites are not simply, or at least not solely, spaces of oppression and manipulation. Retail spaces can also be fun and social; they can be meaningful and pleasurable (Jackson and Thrift 1995).

For example, Jackson and Holbrook (1995) illustrate the multiple meanings of shopping and discuss the relation between shopping and identity. Through an examination of shopping at North London shopping centres, the authors show that

shopping is "not an undifferentiated and impersonal activity; it encompasses a wide range of social activities whose meanings vary with the dynamics of class and gender, ethnicity and generation…" (Jackson and Holbrook 1995: 1928). In making this point Jackson and Holbrook also show that this particular type of retail site – shopping centres – are not deterministic; these retail spaces are appropriated in different ways by different groups of consumers.

Second, in addition to the reinvestigation of conventional retail sites this stream of geographic research also sets out to widen the scope of inquiry. In response to the second critique mentioned above, a series of studies have been conducted that move geographic research beyond the often-studied retail sites, such as malls and department stores (Crewe and Gregson 1998, Crewe and Lowe 1995).

For example, Gregson and Crewe (1998, 1998, 2011) investigate car boot sales. Car boot sales, they contend, are very different from conventional malls and department stores. These alternative retail spaces, they argue, are socially, culturally and geographically embedded spaces in which the importance of fun and sociality is emphasised. These studies show that while vending is for many a full-time activity, there were also many vendors at car boot sales who do not sell primarily to achieve profits but rather because they enjoy the activity of buying and selling. Car boot sales are retailing spaces in which prices are flexible and haggling is part of the fun, and in which consumers turn into retailers and the other way around. "(T)he car boot sale provides a consumption experience characterized by excitement, anticipation, risk and unpredictability" (Crewe and Gregson 1998: 50) precisely because it is different from conventional retail sites. These studies also show that vending at car boot sales is an activity that requires considerable skill and knowledge. To be a car boot seller you do not only have to know how to sell but also how to buy. Most vendors get their products from other car boot sales, charity shops, jumble sales, or even the local refuse tip. Therefore, knowing what to buy, where to buy it and how to differentiate prices across geographical locations is central to the activity of vending at car boot sales (Crewe and Gregson 1998). In the same way, consuming at car boot sales is also an accomplishment that requires skill, knowledge, and considerable work. Specific knowledge and know-how is often required to purchase items at car boot sales, and the commodities purchased often need repairing, altering or "polishing up" (Crewe and Gregson 1998). For many, this work is part of the fun of consuming second-hand goods, and a way to infuse the products with value and make them one's own.

Joined by Kate Brooks, Gregson and Crewe have also taken on the world of retro retailers and their professional talk, showing that the positioning of retro retailing as "alternative" is a difficult and unstable accomplishment (Crewe et al. 2003). Retro retailers become special by differentiating themselves from an imagined mainstream. Retro retailers make an effort to enact themselves as creative, their products as authentic and unique, and their shops as fun and creative places while simultaneously constructing mainstream retailing as boring, purely economic, and bland. However, as the mainstream incorporates more and more elements of the alternative by, for instance, selling second-hand products along with regular product lines, the alternative/mainstream boundaries becomes difficult to maintain. Simply put in a context where all retailers try to be different in the same way, being "alternative" becomes a difficult accomplishment. As the paper explains, this is a serious problem for retro retailers for whom

"alternativeness" is absolutely necessary, not only to uphold the identity of the retro shops and the retro retailers, but also to attract consumers and keep business going.

Other examples of this type of work include studies of charity shops (Gregson et al. 2002b, Gregson et al. 2000, Gregson et al. 2002a) and the investigation of pioneer clothing retailers and their positioning strategies and practices (Crewe and Lowe 1995). By investigating alternative retail spaces, these studies teach us something about how these retail sites work and also shed some light on conventional retail spaces and practices. These studies remind us that exchange does not always happen in the manner described by economics (see also Callon 1998, Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006, Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007), and that goods can have more than one life.

To sum up, the first stream of research produces mainly critical readings of malls and other "cathedrals of consumption". In contrast, the second stream of research provides new interpretations of well-visited retail sites – such as shopping centres – as well as exploring alternative retail spaces. These studies show that consumers are active and knowing subjects and, in the process, question some of the understandings of exchange and the circulation of commodities that we take for granted.

The sociology of retail

Despite the economic and cultural importance frequently attributed to retailing there is little sociological work done on this issue (du Gay 2004, du Gay 1996). The work done is organized around two streams of research.

First, not surprisingly, sociology has also been attracted by the powerful lure of the malls and departments stores. The result is a group of studies that, not unlike their counterparts in geography, focus on critical analysis of these "cathedrals of consumption". These sociological studies show, like those in geography, that malls and supermarkets can be deceptive, manipulative and illusionary spaces of consumerism.

Perhaps most representative of this tradition is the work of Gottdiener (but see also Chaney 1990, Chaney 1983). In a series of influential publications, Gottdiener has, drawing on Barthes and Baudrillard, argued that malls (and other themed environments) have turned to "theming" as a means of competing for shoppers with downtown city centres (Gottdiener 1998, Gottdiener 2000b, Gottdiener 2000a). Malls have to be attractive, unique and desirable destinations in their own right; they have to attract consumers to an area where there is nothing else except for the mall (for a more detailed discussion on the competition between spaces see Urry 1995). Looking more closely at the Mall of America – a 4000 square foot mega-mall with over 100 different stores located in Bloomington, Minnesota – Gottdiener explains that thematic space serves two purposes. First, it recreates a (romanticized) pedestrian urban milieu appropriated for shopping. Second, themed sections organize the different retail sections, creating distinction through signification. The mall, he goes on to argue, tries to disguise its commercial purpose by producing a semblance of the social space that consumers are accustomed to. In other words, in order to be attractive to consumers, the mall must hide its instrumental purpose while simultaneously functioning as an attractive and commercially functional space.

A second stream of sociological retail research stands in stark contrast to the first. Instead of critical semiotic readings of malls, supermarkets or entire retail

landscapes, this work stays much closer to the shop floor. Using predominantly ethnographic methods, this work is often concerned with what happens in the everyday lives of shops. These sociological studies investigate the complex relationships between workers, managers, consumers and commodities.

Pettinger (2004), for example, draws on an ethnographic study of three chains of retail clothing stores (which she refers to as Distinction, Cheap Chic and Fashion Junction) to explore how store brands shape the work done by retail sales assistants. In this work, she shows that store brand influences both who is hired and how these people then carry out service work. As Pettinger points out:

> Sales assistants' cultural capital and social attributes of gender, age, class and ethnicity and lifestyle are appropriated by employers, as is any tacit knowledge about clothes and customers that such workers have, in order to enhance the brand aesthetic and sell more effectively. (Pettinger 2004: 179)

The workers hired are intended to enact the brand not only through the clothes they wear at work but also through their appearance. Workers embody the brand, and these bodies are put to work to produce specific service cultures that fit with and reproduce the store brand.

For instance, at Distinction, a high-end fashion store, the workers wear suits and are highly styled and made-up, and the shops are usually kept well organized, display few goods and offer a high degree of personal service (for a more detail discussion of the role of uniforms and appereance in the provision of service see, e.g., Solomon 1998). In contrast, at Cheap Chic, which sells more affordable women's clothing, the workers are predominantly young women (under 20) and "wear coloured t-shirts and black trousers or skirts, supplemented by hair and make-up styles that reflect the class, age and gender background of the workers, a form of working class femininity" (Pettinger 2004: 178). Furthermore, the shops are usually messier, display greater quantities of goods in smaller spaces and rely heavily on self-service.

In conclusion, Pettinger shows that the store brand is enacted through a combination of service work and aesthetic labour. Through this analysis, Pettinger illustrates the close relationship between store brand, workers and their bodies and the service they provide. She also, on another level, demonstrates the close relationship between culture and economy and consumption and production (on the interconnections between economy-culture and production-consumption see also du Gay 1996, du Gay and Pryke 2002, Negus 2002, du Gay 2004).

Cochoy (2007, 2008, 2009) focuses instead on the role of artefacts. In a series of publications he argues that we need to take into account the materialities involved in exchange. He argues that we need to get involved in what he calls a sociology of market-things (Cochoy 2007, Cochoy 2008, Cochoy 2009). Cochoy argues that although the circulation of products may involve culture or institutions it "also rests upon some very mundane, immediate and material 'market-things' such as boards, flags and shelves" (Cochoy 2007: 125). Therefore, the study of these things and their materiality deserves serious attention if we are to understand retail and consumption (Cochoy 2008). In his ethnographic examinations of supermarkets, Cochoy (2008, 2007) shows that mundane artefacts such as a shopping carts, shelves, price tags and other items can have great impact on the practices of shopping, consumption, and market making by contributing to consumers' calculation capacity in different ways.

Taking a similar approach, du Gay explores the development of self-service in the retail industry and how it is closely tied up with the creation of a specific type of consumer subjectivity: consumers as "creatures of freedom, of liberty, of personal powers of choice and self-realisation" (du Gay 2004: 151). He investigates the growth of self-service retailing in mid-twentieth-century Britain, showing that this process was neither easy nor problem free. The introduction of self-service, at least in a British context, required not only the complete reorganization of shops but also the transformation of how shopping conduct was understood. It required, in other words, the simultaneous reinvention of both shops and consumers.

Other examples of this stream of sociological retail studies include work that discusses the materiality of service work (Pettinger 2006), the gendering of both goods and work (Pettinger 2005) or the way in which the commodity (or type of commodity) influences both who is hired to work at shops and how they in turn view their work (Wright 2005). What all these studies have in common is that they explore what actually happens at shops. They investigate how these shops function both as work and as consumption spaces, examining the myriad and complex relationships that are forged between managers, workers, consumers, commodities and other retail artefacts. In relation to the tradition of a semiotic reading of malls, these studies offer a more nuanced analysis of retail, one that takes into account the historical background of retailing, actual consumption and marketing practices and the multiple and often conflicting meanings and identities produced at these sites. However, it is important to keep in mind that these studies are also trying to say something that goes beyond the specific empirical setting, even trying to say something that goes beyond retail. That is, keeping with the sociological tradition, these studies can teach us something about larger issues such as market exchange, the relation between consumption and products or the interconnectivity of economy and culture.

Retail anthropology

Finally, retail has also been of interest to anthropologists. Perhaps most well known is the work of Daniel Miller, in particular his often-cited book *A Theory of Shopping* (1998, but see also Miller 2001). In this book, Miller argues that, far from being a hedonistic, self-indulgent practice, most shopping practices are about "making love". That is, everyday shopping practices are carried out with others, real or imagined, in mind. Miller observes that, in accordance with traditional gender roles, women carry out much of the shopping for the benefit of other members of the household, or in hope of constituting such members. Everyday shopping practices, then, are carried out as a way of caring for others, a way of showing love. Shopping becomes a way in which these women constitute relationships with "desiring subjects". Here supermarkets, shopping centres and other retail sites are spaces that consumers navigate with great skill in order to accomplish their shopping goals and establish relationships. That is, by looking at shopping as lovemaking, it becomes clear that retail sites are not only spaces in which to purchase household necessities, but also spaces where social relationships are reproduced.

Another example of Miller's work on retail and consumption is the co-authored book *Shopping, place and identity* (Miller et al. 1998)[ii]. In this book, Miller examines, together with geographers Peter Jackson, Nigel Thrift and Beverley Holbrook, and fellow anthropologist Michael Rowlands, shopping at

two British shopping centres – Brent Cross and Wood Green – and the relation of this shopping to household provisioning. This interdisciplinary research team show that shopping centres are not necessarily the tools of an all-conquering market capitalism, as critics would have it. Instead, shoppers commonly use these commercial spaces in ways that challenge the plans of designers and marketers. There are, this ethnography shows, many ways of shopping, and most of these ways differ from the assumed understanding of shopping as a hedonistic practice. These authors show that shopping at these shopping centres is closely connected to the enactment of ethnicity, gender and class identities. Certain shopping centres, shops, and forms of shopping become associated with certain social groups. And shoppers, in turn, seek out these shopping spaces and practices in order to express and renegotiate their ethnic/gender/class identities. Shopping and shopping centres are clearly associated with the making and remaking of identities. *Shopping, place and identity* shows that these commercial spaces are not only arenas were these identities are played out, but can also be spaces in which these identities are actively made and remade.

Anthropological work has of course not been focused solely on the formal spaces of retail. Clarke, for example, discusses the phenomenon of "home shopping" through a close examination of how *Loot* – a London-based free-advertising paper sold daily – and *Argos* – a 500-page catalogue that focuses on "hardware" such as home electronics, sports equipment, toys and jewellery – are used in different households (Clarke 1998). Shopping non-standardized secondhand goods through *Loot* involves one-to-one negotiations with buyers and requires considerable skill to comprehend and assess the chaotic array of goods and their price levels. *Loot* offers its reader a way to stay in touch with what is on "the market", a means of keeping track of price levels, and the possibility of finding a bargain. It also serves as a venue through which people can (in a more sustainable and economically beneficial manner) get rid of things they no longer need or want as a result of changing taste, fashion or life situation. *Argos*, on the other hand, is a standardized catalogue that sells brand-new products. Customers flip through the catalogue, choose the goods they want, and then order and purchase directly at a local showroom. To many, it offers a portable shop window and a convenient and inexpensive way of shopping.

But *Loot* and *Argos* are, just like the other retail sites discussed above, more than simply practical/economic sites. The examination of six different households and their provisioning practices shows that *Loot* and *Argos*, although they have different roles and are ascribed different meanings, both serve as "vehicles of sociality and knowledge formation" (Clarke 1998: 96). As these very different retail artefacts become part of the wider provisioning systems of the households studied, they also come to play a part in the sustainment of family ties, the transformation of identities and the production of social class.

In another publication, but keeping to the same theme of informal retail venues, Clarke examines the exchange of second-hand children's clothes in a "nearly new" sale in North London (Clarke 2000). Like the car boot sales discussed by Gregson and Crewe (1998, 1998), the nearly new sales studied by Clarke are alternative retail spaces characterized by face-to-face transactions, price negotiations and commodity heterogeneity. Vending and purchasing in these spaces require, therefore, considerable skill and knowledge from both buyers and sellers. Clarke convincingly shows how this informal retail space serves as an arena for the production of a specific type of motherhood and femininity. These

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sales serve as spaces where women can, through the practices of vending and shopping second-hand clothes, acquire both valuable products for their children and, equally important, construct themselves as caring mothers and build a local community of mothers. The creation of this local second-hand market is thus not motivated by economic or functional purposes alone. Instead, Clarke argues, "it operates as a public arena in which the 'trafficking' of semi-devotional goods of babies and children is celebrated and the knowledges (sic) and skills of mothering practices" (Clarke 2000: : 97).

An interdisciplinary field

As has been illustrated above, there is a considerable body of work within the social sciences addressing retailing as a social and cultural phenomenon, though different disciplines have approached retailing in somewhat different ways. While spectacular retail sites and the experiential consumption of these spaces have been the topics of choice in marketing, geography has in contrast tried to bring into focus the alternative spaces of retail. And while sociology has made the relationships between work, consumers and commodities its central concern, anthropology has focused more on shopping as a culturally rich and spatially dispersed practice. This body of work addresses multiple issues from a number of perspectives, and it is a body of work characterized by theoretical and methodological pluralism.

There is also much common ground, however. Most (not to say all) of these studies are either implicitly or explicitly influenced by cultural theory and use qualitative interpretive methods. Themes of inquiry and approaches to retail are also recurrent. Critical semiotic readings of malls, for example, are present in several disciplines. Likewise, there is an effort to bring the experiences and practices of consumers into focus across disciplines. From marketing to anthropology, there has been concern that consumers and their experiences are being neglected.

Taken together, these studies cover much ground. They explore different types of retail spaces: mega-malls, shopping centres, brand stores, supermarkets, small retro shops, car boot sales, charity shops, the home and much more. And these studies also discuss a number of different retail actors and entities such as shop managers, shop workers, consumers and even the shop space and the retail artefacts that are part of this space. Finally, these studies also explore different commodity worlds: dolls, books, fashion clothes, children's clothes, sports equipment and sports memorabilia, foods and many other types of commodities have been the subject of close ethnographic examination.

While certain disciplines or streams of research can be criticized for being too focused on one type of retail space, type of commodity or type of retail actor, when these studies are put together, one gets a body of work that displays a great deal of breadth. Thus, although some themes remain underdeveloped, for instance the issues of ethics and citizenship (although see Mansvelt 2008, Barnett et al. 2005, Ählström et al. 2009, Popke 2006) or green retailing, this is an interdisciplinary field that has produced a number of important insights.

Discussion

What, then, can retail marketing learn from the disparate body of work that has here been referred to as socio-cultural retail studies? Drawing on the literature review above, we have identified a number of possible contributions to the

conceptual, methodological and substantive domains of retail marketing. We begin in the next section by discussing the conceptual domain.

Conceptual domain: new theoretical perspectives on retail
First, and most important, socio-cultural retailing approaches may broaden the conceptual domain of retail marketing. What the studies reviewed show above anything else is that retailing is a social and cultural phenomenon. Retailing does not exist apart from socio-cultural processes of identity and meaning construction, but is intrinsically interlinked with these complex processes. What socio-cultural retailing research shows is that retailing, shopping and consumption practices both depend on and contribute to the reproduction of these socio-cultural processes.

Retailing practices, these studies clearly indicate, are anchored in and also reproduce wider social and cultural processes. For example, involved in the retailing of outdoors products are ideas of nature, the good life, what being in the outdoors means and much more (Fuentes 2011). Likewise the retailing of sports goods, such as Nike products, often draws on notions of performance and the importance of being "in shape" (Peñaloza 1999). Daily provisioning is closely connected to the idea and enactment of family (Miller 1998) and, as discussed above, the retailing of children's toys is sometimes connected to the idea of the child as a pure and untainted being, as well as ideas of a moral and virtuous family life (Borghini et al. 2009). Malls and other retail spaces are often used as social spaces where relationships are maintained and in which sociability plays an important role (Haytko and Baker 2004, Sandikci and Holt 1998). Also, shopping is often connected to the enactment of gender roles (Gregson and Crewe 1998, Pettinger 2005) and can furthermore be a way to renegotiate ethnic identities and categories (Miller et al. 1998, Friend and Thompson 2003, Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009, Varman and Belk 2012).

Methodological domain: new ways of studying retail
Second, socio-cultural retailing studies may also enrich the methodological domain of retail marketing. Most (not to say all) of the studies reviewed above use qualitative interpretive methods. Ethnographic methods (Peñaloza 1999, Sherry et al. 2001, Miller 1998), critical semiotic readings (Gottdiener 2000b, Goss 1993) and narrative analysis (Cassinger 2010, Friend and Thompson 2003) are just a few of the different qualitative methods used within the field of socio-cultural retailing.

The review by Brown and Dant (2008) shows that there are few studies in retail marketing that use qualitative methods, especially in the case of studies of consumer behaviour. Against this background, socio-cultural studies of retailing bring a great variety of qualitative approaches to the study of retailing phenomena and consumer behaviour. This methodological variety, one could argue, is needed in order to capture the complex social and cultural phenomena of retail marketing.

Substantive domain: new issues and sites in the study of retail
Third, and finally, drawing from socio-cultural retail studies may allow marketing scholars to broaden the substantive domains of retail marketing. New theoretical and methodological approaches tend to focus attention on different issues, and the field of socio-cultural retailing is no exception. Approaching retailing as a social and cultural phenomenon and using qualitative interpretive methods to study this

phenomenon opens up a number of issues and objects of study that have previously received only scant attention within the field of retail marketing.

Topics of interest could include the gendering of goods (e.g., Pettinger 2005, Gregson and Crewe 1998), issues of identity construction and shopping (e.g., Miller et al. 1998), cultural branding (e.g., Borghini et al. 2009), the socio-cultural work of retail spaces, the relationship between retail workers and brands (e.g., Pettinger 2004), the co-creation of retail experience (e.g., Kozinets et al. 2004) and the active role that devices play in retailing (e.g., du Gay 2004, Cochoy 2007). Not all of these topics are new to the field of retail marketing, but they are, we argue, under-examined.

The substantive domain of retail marketing can also be broadened through the inclusion of a large variety of retail settings that so far have received less attention, but also by addressing new entities in these and in more familiar sites. In addition to studying the usual and spectacular spaces of retailing such as mega-malls, shopping centres, brand stores and supermarkets, socio-cultural retailing studies also broaden the scope by examining alternative retailing spaces such as small retro shops, car boot sales, charity shops, and the home as shopping space.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have presented a review of socio-cultural retail studies. The purpose of this paper and review has been to contribute to the emergent cultural turn in retail marketing by bringing together and making accessible the disparate body of work that can be called socio-cultural retail studies. More specifically, we have tried to show how socio-cultural retail studies can contribute to the substantive, conceptual and methodological domains of retail marketing. This review has shown that socio-cultural retail studies have much to offer the field of retail marketing. By drawing on socio-cultural retail studies, marketing scholars can broaden the theoretical, methodological and substantive scope of retail marketing.

In short, socio-cultural retail studies teach us one thing: retailing and society are not separate entities. This conclusion might seem evident, even banal, but it has far-reaching consequences if taken seriously.

First, given that we accept the argument made above, retailing cannot solely be understood in technical and/or psychological terms. To understand why some store concepts, marketing practices and products work and others fail, an understanding of the socio-cultural processes underlying the practices of retailing, shopping and consumption is important. That is, if retail scholars and practitioners want to know why some brands are more desirable than others, how retail space should be organized, how staff should behave and how and why all this varies between countries, product groups and consumer segments, they need to understand the socio-cultural dimension of retailing (see also Kozinets et al. 2002, Arnould 2005). This means understanding the cultural discourse that marketing draws on and examining the cultural notions that marketing practices are reproducing. It involves understanding how retailing practices and spaces work to make products and services meaningful to consumers as well as understanding why and how consumers shop products and put them to use (Fuentes 2011).

Second, accepting that retailing practices and spaces are not only linked to socio-cultural processes but also actively reproduce these processes also means acknowledging the political role of retailing. From this perspective, retail practices and spaces are actively involved in the construction of identities,

meanings and worldviews; they shape, to some extent, the way we view the world and ourselves. They play a part in making products and services meaningful to us, and are thereby implicated in deciding what counts as "the good life" (Brodin 2007, Peñaloza 1999, Arnould et al. 2001). Retail practice and spaces are involved in defining the beauty ideal and gender roles (Pettinger 2004, Pettinger 2005), and they sometimes work to reproduce racism and class oppression (Friend and Thompson 2003, Houssay-Holzschuch and Teppo 2009). However, retail practices and spaces can also be used to express love (Miller 1998), work to promote sustainable consumption (Fuentes 2011), or simply be a way to enjoy oneself (Bäckström 2011). Regardless of the outcome, the point is that retail practices and spaces do not merely exist in society; they also shape society. Acknowledging the performative work of retailing makes it possible to ask more critical questions, to examine not only what makes retailing work, but also how different retail practices and spaces affect society. This acknowledgment allows us to problematize retailing and, employing social and cultural theory, explore the performative effects of retail.

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[i] This is in turn part of a broader cultural turn in marketing which started within the field of

[ii] It can be worth noting that all the publications discussed in this section are the result of a joint one-year ethnography of a street in North London referred to as "Jay Street," conducted by Daniel Miller and Alison Clarke. This ethnography was part of a larger interdisciplinary study conducted on "Consumption and Identity" in which Peter Jackson, Nigel Thrift, Beverley Holbrook and Michael Rowlands also participated.