IBIMA Publishing Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies https://ibimapublishing.com/articles/JMRCS/2018/119678/ Vol. 2018 (2018), Article ID 119678, 12 pages, ISSEN : ISSN : 2165-7009 DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678



Research Article

Consumer Resistance:

An Exploration of the Moroccan Case

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Received date: 27 March 2018; Accepted date: 27 July 2018; Published date: 25 October 2018

Academic Editor: Haykel Ben Khelil

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Abstract

Considering the diversity of approaches characterizing the research area of consumer resistance, this paper meets two goals. The first is to review the literature to explore this interesting theme and better understand its origins, current state and perspectives. The second is to conduct a preliminary exploratory study aimed at studying the forms of resistance shown by Moroccan consumers, as well as the factors that stimulate their opposition. The results of an exploratory quantitative survey of 130 people are presented. The analysis highlights several forms of resistance; individual and collective, to marketing practices, as well as the elements that trigger this resistance.

Keywords: consumer resistance, opposition, Moroccan consumer, quantitative exploratory study.

Introduction

In 2011, an American mom sued Italian giant Ferrero for promoting Nutella in its commercials as "an example of a balanced and tasty breakfast" with a "healthier" spread than it actually is. In her complaint, the young Californian mother said she was shocked to discover that Nutella was neither healthy nor nutritious food, but that it was hardly better than candies, and that it contained dangerous levels of saturated fats. After a nationwide dissemination of this contestation, American consumers became resistant to the brand, which went too far with its abusive marketing to sell its productⁱ.

This example brings out two truths. Firstly, it underscores the fact that the client is the company's major source of revenue, the guarantor of its value, which is considered

Cite this Article as: KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), " Consumer Resistance: An Exploration of the Moroccan Case "Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, Vol. 2018 (2018), Article ID 119678, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

to be a fundamental part of its development and a condition for its sustainability, and that it is one of the primary external factors influencing its future. Secondly, the consumer is no longer able to accept all the producers' proposals, and as soon as confidence disappears, the consumer can regain power in order to face what he considers to be a negative influence against him (Roux, 2014). Today, consumers can exert an influence on the market's balance of trade with companies, by using several tools at their disposal.

The equipment available to everyone today amplifies their ability to dialogue together, to organize them to act and sometimes even to resist. The consumer has at his disposal mass communication tools such as internet and social networks: he can thus contest against brands that can be considered as dominant. In this way, observers of these developments are talking, particularly in the marketing area, of a "new consumer" or at least one newly studied from this perspective whose "resistant" behavior is becoming the subject of increasing attention. Over many decades, consumer resistance has been very interesting to researchers, not only because it offers a new perspective for exploring consumer dynamics in a postmodern marketing environment characterized by significant changes in people's lifestyles, but also because resistance in all its forms has the potential to undermine a company's strategic objectives, damage its reputation and brand image, and even drive it out of a particular segment or market.

Most research on consumer resistance, despite its abundance, focuses on studying a specific type of practice by analyzing it in depth without considering other resistance practices that consumers may adopt (Le Roux et al. 2014). We add to this that the literature has only highlighted collective resistance phenomena such as boycotts, which have been the subject of many works about individual forms of resistance (Roux, 2007). It is therefore interesting to study consumer resistance in a multitude of behaviours. Following a review over the definition of consumer resistance and the main research findings, the results of an exploratory quantitative study will be presented and discussed.

Our problematic fits perfectly into the Moroccan society which appears to be an open society, attracted by mass consumption and influenced by the discourse conveyed by the European media on their products in particular (Kaissouni, 2014). Therefore, we propose to conduct a preliminary exploratory research to answer the following questions: Which resistance practices are the most frequent and used by Moroccan consumers? Are these manifestations are rather collective or individual?

Literature Review

Protests about consumption are relatively ancient. The first boycott movements date from the 19th century. However, it was the emergence of consumer society in the 50s that led to criticisms of the market system as a structure of domination in which consumers are stuck (Murray and Ozanne, 1991; Rudmin and Richins, 1992; Hetrick and Lozada, 1994; Roux, 2007; Izberk and Bilgin, 2010). Among these criticisms was Packard's (1958), which already stressed the illusion created by advertisement and marketing. Resistance movements have been supported by multiple actors for reasons such as defending the purchasing power of the working classes as well as democratizing access to goods (Roux, 2014). Scholars such as Fourier, Marx, Proudhon, Gramsci, Marcuse, Baudrillard, Horkheimer and Adorno have fed criticism of capitalism and the logics that support it, and denounce consumer society as a structure of alienation and domination (Murrav and Ozanne, 1991; Hetrick and Lozada, 1994; Roux, 2007).

All the comments advanced by the researchers share the idea that the commercial sphere is accused of creating " fake needs " (Marcuse, 1969) or " artificially stimulated phantasms " (Fromm, 1967). The consumer-business relationship is characterized by an illusion of market freedom. This leads us to conclude that, due to some hedonistic behaviour of firms, consumers are beginning to feel vulnerable, manipulable and dissatisfied. As a result,

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

they are prepared to engage efforts in resistance to regain control (Fournier 1998).

Concept and Evolution of Resistance

Resistance finds its origin in Hirschman's (1970) work, which proposes three ways of individual protest against any form of frustration or dissatisfaction that consumers show towards companies and. in general, towards the consumer culture as a whole; which are Exit for defection, Voice for the power of expression and Loyalty for the fidelity. This concept was only introduced into marketing a few years later through the work of Murray and Ozane (1991) who presented the consumer as being able to resist marketing tactics by separating marketing communication from the true uses and value of the product. While Poster (1992) was the first to give an exact definition "resistance is the way individuals or groups practice strategies of appropriation in response to structures of domination".

With the emergence of a new consumer society that dominates individuals through its marketing strategies, consumers have become increasingly resistant by creating product diversions that allow them certain freedoms that are beyond the control of firms (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995), as well as several behaviours that can be observed. Peñaloza and Price (1993) and Hermann (1993) propose resistance as a way to describe consumer behaviour as opposition and defiance, namely; boycotts (Friedman, 1999), complaints (Roux, 2012), negative word-of-mouth, defections, as well as product diversion or creative DIY. Fournier (1998) describes resistance as "a set of acts that engage someone in response, neutralization or opposition, in order to thwart, foil or defeat maneuvers judged oppressive", and completes previous research with other forms of resistance represented as a continuum of actions from avoidance to rebellion. An irritated consumer can express his resistance through consumption reduction behaviour, refusal to buy, rejection or rebellion.

Knowles and Linn (2004) identify four elements to define the notion of resistance:

reactance, suspicion, vigilance and inertia which they link to the affective, cognitive or motivational sphere of resistance. This reasoning inspired Roux (2007) to describe resistance as "a motivational state that pushes the consumer to oppose practices, logics or commercial discourses that are considered dissonant". This interpretation adds the situational determinant that can trigger a negative internal emotion (Damasio, 2001) in the consumer towards a product, a brand or a situation generally perceived as a dissonant that will subsequently push him to resist. In the same perspective, Dandeau (2010) bases himself on internal conflict and discovers that those who show the most resistance are those who feel the most negative emotions and who perceive the most provocation. That said, resistance may be the result of individual consumer dispositions to defeat any attempt at market influence in order to protect against it (Banikema and Roux, 2014). The resistant attitude is thus fed by knowledge which, depending on its importance in relation to individuals, provokes feelings which can be negative.

It appears that resistance brings together several possible theoretical frameworks, and sees itself as a form of consumer participation and involvement, but also as a rational as well as an emotional response to market conditions (Ritson and Dobscha, 1999; Moisio and Askergaard, 2002). It is also a form of defence (Kirmani and Campbell, 2004) and a form of criticism of the market system coming from an educated, warned and conscious population of the "conspiracies" concocted by the big firms for the lucrative profit. However, resistant awareness is only noticed in developed Western countries (Demirbag-Kaplan, 2018), developing countries or third world countries are less due to several historical and geopolitical factors that may be the object of future research.

Consumer Resistance As A Result Of Marketing Practices

The emergence of the consumer resistance concept was not by coincidence, marketing researchers' reflections were the cause.

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

This discipline stipulates that the client is the company's main source of revenue and that its sole purpose is to satisfy the consumer's wishes (Cochoy, 1999), excluding the possibility of resistance on his part. Except the resistance is there, the consumer rejects commercial offers even if they are made to fulfill his needs. Several marketing researchers (Kotler and Levy, 1971; Lazer, 1969) have responded to this paradox by reconsidering the basic concept of marketing. Consumer choice must be directed to convince consumers to buy which seems contradictory to the fact that businesses were at their service. Thus, any "consumer resistance" was the result of his cognitive deficiencies (Martel, 2015). We can, therefore, see in marketing practices forms of disciplining consumers (Foucault, 1982 ; Marsden, 2001 ; Shankar et al. 2006 ; Kazabov, 2007 ; El Euch Maalej and Roux, 2012) through discourses and methods aimed at guiding their purchasing decisions (Marsden, 2001 Cova and Cova, 2009; Sitz and Roux, 2015).

Methods used are varied, such as segmentation tools, targeting, databases, direct marketing, CRM, customer loyalty programs (Shankar et al. 2006; Beckett, 2012; El Euch Maalej and Roux, 2012), store architecture and layout (Dulsrud and Jacobsen, 2009; Lunardo et al. 2011), Internet monitoring and customization systems (Humphreys, 2006). These tools represent a control system, i.e. a discrete consumer control in order to adjust his "the physical forms behaviour: of dominance are partly replaced by subtle control measures based on the collected information, and on correcting digressions" (Kasabov, 2007). However, the individual is no longer free to make his own choices, he feels manipulated himself, and always under pressure from companies that, on the contrary, do not put him first but use him as a means to achieve their ends and earn more money. By over-orienting consumer behaviour, marketers are approaching the manipulation borderlines. This leads us to consider marketing not as a victim of consumer resistance, but as the source.

Forms of Resistance

The literature shows multiple forms of resistant manifestations in the resistance area. The first forms of opposition emerged in the 21st century when Hirschman (1970) proposed a continuum where the first phase (Voice) consists in expressing resistance or opposition to the company's actions, the second (Exit) consists in stopping consuming the company's products, and the third (Loyalty) is to continue the relationship with the brand while hoping for change. Simultaneously, Ram and Sheth (1989) suggest three other forms of resistance to innovation, which may be "inert" when consumers do not feel inclined to adopt the product or "passive" when consumers feel that the product presents a risk and then delay the decision to adopt. Finally, it can take an "active" form when consumers consider the product unsuitable and decide to attack its producer, which seems like a form of boycott.

According to Peñaloza and Price (1993), resistance manifestations differ from one consumer to another. There are four axes of analysis to structure resistant attitudes: collective versus individual behaviour, reformist versus radical, directed against offers versus signs conveyed by firms, and internal versus external to marketing Fournier (1998) then institutions. suggested that resistance would be represented by a "continuum" of adverse behaviour and activities ranging from avoidance of certain brands or products, through intermediary adjustment or reduced consumption, to more aggressive actions against companies such as boycotts, complaints and defections. This approach assumes that these manifestations are of the same nature and differ only in intensity. Ritson and Dobscha (1999) add that there are behaviors that go beyond corporate sanctions alone and are expressed by acts of Deconsumption and market avoidance, that is, a more massive rejection of the system consumption (Roux, 2007). and Einwohner Hollander (2004)distinguish between visible resistance and secret resistance, individual or collective, and localized or massive.

Roux (2007) identifies several forms of resistance, namely; targeted resistance

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

against signs, speeches, devices, and firms' behaviour against the functioning and logic of the market. The manifestations of resistance are not necessarily visible or audible, they can be silent and examined in individual or collective practices that involve situations of diversion, circumvention, de-consumption or alternative sourcing (Roux, 2014).

Triggers of Resistance

It seems essential to understand the drivers or motivations, grouping internal and/or external forces that trigger the behaviour, its direction, intensity and persistence, but also its interruption (Vallerand and Thill, 1993). Brehm (1999) and Gray (2002) add the notion of motivational state which is described as a "state of activation" that "pushes an individual to act" and «guides him in the direction in which his action should be directed". Several characteristics can be identified in the literature and are apt to influence opposition behaviour depending on the perception given to situations. According to Roux (2007), resistance arises from perception; there is no resistance to what we do not perceive; this says that the perception of disturbing or irritating elements in a given situation is a main determinant.

Moisio and Askegaard (2002) propose three elements/ reasons: market conditions deemed and perceived as unacceptable, products or brands that are not adequate with the consumer's self, and dominant cultural values that are rejected because of their hegemonic character. We cannot speak of resistance springs without referring to Foucault, who has linked the notion of power directly to resistance (Marsden, 2001; Vinthagen and Lilja, 2007; Roux, 2014), which he also refers to as insubordination, contestation and indiscipline (Billier, 2000); his approach stipulates that power and resistance are inevitably linked "when there is power, there will be resistance" (Foucault, 1980). Thus, he defines power as a «way of acting on others' actions» which supposes simultaneously and potentially the "insubordination" of a free subject (Foucault, 1982). According to Roux

(2014), companies use legitimation strategies on three levels, offers and contents, rhetorical processes to justify their promises and the promotion of their role as qualified partners in the exchange. The legitimation efforts used by companies to convince their audience and to reduce their vulnerability to their environment are at the root of the resistance expressed by consumers (Pfeffer, 1981).

Conflict of interest contributes to consumer resistance against stakeholders and the market system; normally, we will not resist if we adhere to the companies' logic (Roux, 2007). Resistance occurs when the characteristics of a stimulus, its source, content and objectives conflict with the individual's prior representations, especially when these representations are stable (Ram and Sheth, 1989). Thompson and Arsel (2004) show that if some brands are rejected, it is because they are symbols of a mass culture to which some consumers do not adhere. According to some researchers, emotions can also be a source of resistance.

Bagozzi and Lee (1999) assert that the rejection of an innovation results in partly not only from the evaluation of the attributes of a new product and the anticipated consequences of its adoption, but also from the negative emotions that result, such as skepticism (Obermiller and 1998) defined Spangenberg, as a predisposition not to believe the content of an allegation, and cynicism defined as "suspicion of the intentions, fidelity and benevolence" of their emitter (Kanter and Wortzel, 1985; Boyer et al. 2006; Dobscha and Ozanne, 2001).

Dissatisfaction and discontent toward society and market functioning are often evoked, although little measured (Fournier, 1998; Fischer, 2001; Lambert, 1980; Zavestoski, 2002; Shaw and Newholm, 2002). In this context, the individual seeks not only a functional response to a need but also a successful consumer experience (Hirschman, 1983); in so far as the company does not provide a precise response to this concern, dissatisfaction will fuel a negative attitude that will not allow a subsequent attachment to the

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

brand, ultimately, the customer will become resistant.

There are other factors that play an important role in certain resistance behaviours, such as age ("Wright, Friestad, & Boush, 2005) and education level. The more educated and knowledgeable the consumer is, the richer his cognitive patterns are in representations of sources of influence, and he is more capable and likely to resist them (Friestad and Wright, 1994). Such consumers become more sensitive to ecological problems (Giannelloni, 1998; Dobré, 1999) and more vigilant regarding any kind of persuasion (Knowles and Linn, 2004); advertising persuasion is generally referred to (Elliot and Speck, 1998; Yankelovich Study, 2005; Touati and Bouchrara, 2016).

Methodology

Most research on consumer resistance has so far opted for a qualitative approach (Cottet et al. 2008, 2009; Collange, 2010; Roux, 2007) due to the lack of a measurement scale, but also to the difficulty of measuring and identifying a variable that seems to be hard to objectify (Roux, 2006). An exploratory quantitative methodology was deemed necessary given the little exploited field of research in Morocco and the nature of the issue. This methodology was not chosen to propose a measurement scale, but to highlight the diversity of resistance behaviour and its drivers, thus, allowing us to identify cases that could be the subject of an empirical study of resistance in Morocco.

The study was conducted using a survey distributed face-to-face, by e-mail and published on Facebook to a convenience sample of 130 individuals. The sample includes individuals with a diversity of

professional, family and generational characteristics in order to have a varied population. 28% of the sample are males and 72% are females with ages ranging from 18 to 65 years. The questionnaire includes resistance behaviours and resistance triggers (Inspired by Le Roux et al. 2014) chosen after a peer literature review. We have considered the axes defined by Peñaloza and Price (1993) by including individual and collective behaviours as they are the most common and adapted to our case study. The questionnaire focuses on the Moroccans' awareness of resistance, the different resistance behaviours and the reasons that lead consumers to reject the market offer. The support used for the questionnaire and data collection is Google Forms.

Results

After analysis of sorting flat data, the responses collected regarding the respondents' level of knowledge about resistance show us that they relate the notion of consumer resistance to opposing marketing practices (37%). 29% of respondents associate it with the rejection of commercial offers proposed by the seller, 18% with boycotts and 16% with non-consumption.

The frequent behaviours mentioned several times (Tab. 1) correspond essentially to individual practices, such as individual boycotts, negative word-ofmouth with entourage, changes in consumption habits, or deconsumption. Infrequent behaviours include abandonment, individual complaints, illegal downloading from the web and do-ityourself crafts. The rare behaviours include collective actions, such as boycotts, complaints, and digital piracy.

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

Resistant behaviours	Frequency (Number of times cited)	Percent %
Individual Boycott	60	18
Negative Word of Mouth	59	18
Change in consumption habits	57	17
Deconsumption	56	17
Abandonment	29	9
Individual Complaint	27	8
Illegal Downloads	12	4
Creative DIY (DIY)	12	4
Collective Boycott	9	2
Group Complaint	5	2
Digital Piracy	3	1
Total	329	100

The drivers of resistance that were most cited by respondents (Tab. 2) were doubts about the quality of the product or service, the feeling of being forced to consume, the price at which they were purchased, and the perceived risk to their health regarding the product. Having an unpleasant experience with point-of-sale service staff is also one of the reasons for resistance. Other factors were moderately cited such as the country of origin of the product or service, the perceived risk of privacy on the Internet, the uselessness of the product, and the change of a product that has already been adopted and satisfying for responders. Doubts about product performance, negative emotions about the product, non-conformity of the good with ecological standards or even its innovative aspect are least cited by respondents.

Resistance motives	Frequency (Number of times cited)	Percent %
Product/service quality doubt	80	14
Sentiment of obligation to consume	75	13
Product/service price	61	11
Perceived Product/Service Risk	60	10
Unpleasant experience with the seller	56	10
Country of origin of the product/service	48	9
Confidentiality risk	47	8
Product/service uselessness	41	7

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

Product/Service Change	40	6
Product/service performance doubt	28	5
Negative emotion towards the product/service	27	4
Product/service not environmentally friendly	13	2
Innovation	5	1
Total	581	100

According to respondents (Fig. 1), countries with a reputation for low quality are the most likely to be a target of resistance (30% of responses), and also advertising (17%), in-store techniques (15%), online purchasing (14%), and high-

tech products (10%). While products from countries exploiting its employees and products made in Morocco are less concerned than others by resistance.

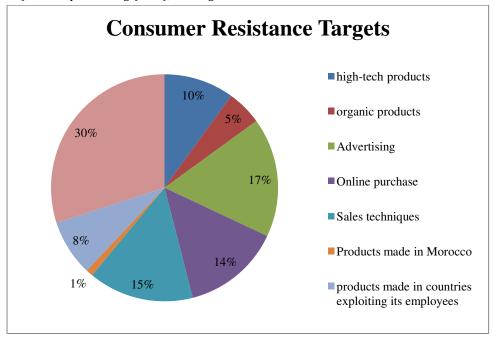


Figure 1: Consumer resistance targets (done by the author)

Discussion

The research results highlight the wide diversity of consumer resistance to corporate marketing and commercial practices. Research findings indicate that individual resistance behaviors are the most common, such as individual boycotts and negative word of mouth, and were most frequently cited by respondents. This was also in line with the results of Le Roux (2014), which notes that the most frequent activities among its sample are essentially individual activities. Collective behaviors are the least cited by the target population than the collective boycott and the

KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678

collective complaint. We can give a first interpretation to its results, which is that Moroccans prefer to act individually. It may be due to socio-cultural factors that influence how they act in an unpleasant or inappropriate situation. We therefore propose to develop a study in the future in order to better situate the Moroccan consumer's behaviour which will help us to understand even more his preference for individual resistance behaviour. As mentioned earlier, forms of individual resistance, stealthy and often silent, are the subject of less work in the literature.

Regarding the variables that induce resistance in the population studied, concern for quality and the feeling of being submissive and obliged to consume, price pressure and perceived risk regarding the product were the most cited by respondents. Given the results, Moroccans do not want to feel obliged to consume, are concerned about the quality of the product or service they intend to buy and its impact on their health, but are also sensitive to price. The unpleasant experience with the seller and the origin of a product are variables not to be neglected and strongly influence the decision of resistance, since they are as frequent as those mentioned before. The least cited factors are resistance to non-ecological products and innovation. The ecological aspect is not as important among Moroccans as price or quality, but innovation seems welcomed and does not affect respondents' choices.

Conclusion

First of all, the research confirms the wide diversity of resistance behavior of Moroccan consumers with which market players are confronted, and presents the different drivers or factors that could provoke resistance in individuals. It thus makes it possible to identify the most widespread behaviours in the population studied and to target the activities to be treated as a priority. We also recall that this study's value is to clarify the concept of resistance in the Moroccan's mind and to better understand his "resistant" behavior. The results of our research showed us that the majority of respondents preferred to be individualist (individual boycotts and negative word of mouth) rather than collectivist (collective boycotts and collective complaints) resisters. As well as the main resistance factors considered by our sample are the perception of an obligation to consume, the product or brand's low-quality, and its purchase price.

The study proposes clear avenues for researchers to identify potential new directions and to situate their work in the field. These results can help companies to define policies to take into account, prevent or combat these practices, and also to know to what degree consumer resistance can serve the marketing field. The consumer resistance can be a positive transforming driver for marketing science. This research has several limits. The study was carried out with a sample of convenience, therefore cannot claim any representativity, for reasons of time and financial resources. Even if it presents a diversified range of resistant consumer behaviour, it cannot be exhaustive and therefore remains very limited.

However, as far as we know, this study is the only one to explore the consumer's resistance to market practices in a Moroccan context, and so it provides perspectives and possible areas for research. A first step is to re-conduct the study with a more representative sample of respondents in order to confirm the results presented here. A second way is to deepen the results by focusing on certain types of behaviors that are rarely studied or segments in particular. Finally, the behaviors studied here were chosen and considered as resistant on the basis of a literature review, consequently, it would be interesting to verify if the consumers consider themselves as resistant to these practices, and if there are other forms appropriate to the Moroccan context.

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KEMMOU Soukaina and AOMARI Amina (2018), Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies, DOI: 10.5171/2018.119678