

VRM a technology of domination of self - The effects of vendor relationship management systems as tools for consumer empowerment

Marina Alvarez

MSc in Information Systems and Digital Innovation
Department of Management
London School of Economics and Political Science

KEYWORDS

Consumer empowerment
Choice
Governmentality
Knowledge
Online marketing
Power
VRM

ABSTRACT

This research paper studies how VRM (vendor relationship management) systems, as tools for marketing and consumption practices, can affect aspects of consumer empowerment. I conclude that while better consumer producer relationships can be fostered the dangers of techno-plebiscitarianism and increased disciplining can affect wider parts of society. The theoretical framework relies on a combination of the Foucauldian notion of governmentality and Kasabov's narratives of consumer dissatisfaction. Through recognizing the effects of discourses of knowledge, choice and power on narratives of information inequities and disciplining I establish a basis for understanding consumer empowerment through VRM systems for marketing and consumption practices.

Introduction

"The house always wins" - Danny Ocean, *Oceans 11*, 2001.

Narratives of consumer dissatisfaction cannot be dissociated from the discourses of knowledge, choice and power. Modern information systems, such as social media networks, are already affecting discourses of knowledge and truth. The Internet has allowed consumers to enact more control over many aspects of their lives. But to what extent is individual subjectivity being formed by existing structures beyond their control? Discourses of knowledge, choice and power will inevitably be altered through VRM systems, causing spillover effects to society. Breaking down consumer empowerment into the two levels of analysis has helped to understand the concerns with VRM systems that lie ahead.

VRM systems, aim to provide consumers with two functions: firstly, independence from vendors and secondly, better ways to engage with them. Customers would have more autonomy and agency to act on their data making just about every service customizable. In 2017 a VRM system was created to reengineer business processes in isolated areas of Hawaii (Augustin and Albritton 2017). Their research found that these technologies allowed vendors and consumer to focus on

what they do best, but they did not bring about a significant increase in revenue. The tailored technology enabled vendors, who were once isolated, to enter a customized market. Augustin and Albritton (2017) were able to show the benefits of using such technologies for business growth, but there has been very little research aimed at understanding the power effects of individualized technologies on society. This essay intends to shed light on the consequences of VRM services for consumer empowerment and advertising.

The Foucauldian concept of governmentality (1988) becomes increasingly relevant in the field of consumer empowerment. The techniques, technologies of domination and technologies of self, reveal defining attributes to this analysis, which seeks to provide a marketing narrative associated with already existing information inequities and disciplining. I suggest how these narratives evolve as a consequence of empowered consumers through VRM systems. These consequences are defined as techno-plebiscitarianism (Gerbaudo in Trottier and Fuchs, 2015) and also the reverse, where the few control the many. For marketing and consumption purposes both techniques of self and domination are present online and can therefore generate unintended consequences. For some societies, the increase in online activity has meant the spread of globalization and a post-industrial worldview that increasingly fits more traditional views of power. Mark Poster (1995) believed that electronic communications enhance significantly our postmodern potentialities by

Corresponding Author
Email Address: marina.alvarezc@gmail.com (M. Alvarez)

allowing us new relations between human and machine, greater decentralization, a new space-time complex and the obliteration of racism, sexism and homophobia – in a sense the development of a reconstituted identity through cyberspace. For Heather Menzies (2006) this meant that the restructuring effects of the Internet create new sets of inequalities that marginalize and displace workers. She fears that the forces of globalization are stimulating new social arrangements that encourage a further concentration of corporate power and increased consumer visibility (Mehta and Darier 1998, p. 109). Certain societies do not necessarily benefit from increased consumer control or personalization online (Fuchs 2014). If, as Campbell (2004) suggests, personal ontology relies on acts of consumption, then we discover ourselves by exposure to consumables and through acts of consumption. Online power structures form consumers and producers alike. The dual formation of actors fits the logics of governmentality and consumer empowerment that when acted on can enhance certain divides. I argue firstly that information inequities can be generated between actors in three ways : (1) Consumers/consumers (2) Producer/producer (3) Producer/Consumer. Secondly, these knowledge divides can increase narratives of discipline, both from consumer to producer and vice versa. When used for marketing and consumption purposes, VRM systems could facilitate the rise of disciplining and structuring of human behavior. To support this argument the notion of governmentality will firstly be contrasted with the concept of consumer empowerment to draw parallels. The essay then places consumer empowerment within the context of marketing, utilizing Kasabov's narratives as a framework for analysis. Structures of power, knowledge and choice are affected through this narrative and must then be placed within the context of VRM use.

Governmentality and consumer empowerment

Mayhew (2004) has divided the definition of governmentality as: the way governments try to produce the citizen best suited to fulfill those governments' policies. It is the establishment of organized practices (mentalities, rationalities, and techniques) through which subjects are governed. The components of this notion are: centralization around the government; an intensification of the effects of power at the levels of both the entire population and the individual; and, the emergence of new forms of knowledge useful for the implementation of the centralization/ intensification components (Mehta and Darier 1998, 109). In effect, the role of governmentality becomes central in the successful disciplining of the subject (Rose 1998, 1999). So, if to govern is to structure the possible

field of actions of others (Foucault 1982, 221), then in the case of the Internet the power structures are produced in three ways: using instrumental technology, constructing reality and shaping human subjectivity (Mehta and Darier 1998, 111).

Our economies increasingly rely on information trade-offs to facilitate day-to-day activities, allowing citizens to self-govern themselves within available choices, while facilitating and encouraging choices to be made. A paradox emerges: not only are consumers expected to choose, but they are also forced to choose in order to be "free" (Rose 1999). Because governmentality occurs between eternal domination and self-government (Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford 2006 1017), parallels can be drawn with consumer empowerment. Consumers are free to choose amongst the choices made available by using techniques of technologies of domination and technologies of self: where discipline and liberation become two sides of the same coin (Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford 2006, 1020). Each implies certain modes of disciplining and modification of individuals, not only in the obvious sense of acquiring certain skills but also attitudes (Foucault 1988). The information highway is no different; both effects of domination and liberation exist simultaneously in online marketing practices. On one hand, database marketing offers the perfect tool for isolation, specification, and transformation of the subject. Certain practices such as profiling, targeting, DR, CRM are disciplinary mechanisms that can be regarded as transforming a heterogeneous mass of people into more homogenous segments. The market forces then shape an individual's sense of personal empowerment and how this flows into consumption practice (Henry 2005). Current online marketing practices have led to certain forms of resistance due to their level of intrusion and data collection. The rise of ad blocking software, namely Adblocker, can be seen as a form of resistance as it provides the consumer with increased privacy and control of their data and user journey.

So, a shift in the use of technologies for consumption will affect already existing power structures and consumer behavior. If, knowing oneself becomes the object of the quest of concern for self (Foucault 1988, 26) and subjects discover themselves through acts of consumption (Campbell 2004), then technologies for consumption emphasize these socially constructed mechanisms through which people understand and experience themselves as subjects (Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford 2006, 1019). In other words, online consumption now constitutes a prime technique of governmentality whereby people are taught and

learn how to be consumers by developing greater self-knowledge within the available options. On the other hand, authors Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford (2006, 1021) argue that empowerment involves the withdrawal from relations that construct people as consumers.

Through the use of VRM systems consumers do not withdraw but choose to be engaged with brands, emphasizing the constant state between self-discipline and domination online. Other factors, such as subjective dissonances with corporate entities, could cause consumer passiveness increasing the trend in lack of engagement with brands. Marketing narratives of consumer dissatisfaction (Kasabov) then, shed light on how consumers could react to the use of VRM systems. Consumer subjectivities are produced through discourses of knowledge, choice and power, which are also necessary to sustain their empowerment.

Kasabov's marketing narratives

While these narratives were evaluated in small-scale physical environments, as opposed to online, there are still visible parallels that can be applied to the virtual world. Kasabov (2004, 6-7), following Foucauldian concepts (1975, 1988), explains how power is enacted between consumers and producers to create contextualized narratives. For the purpose of my argument I focus on Kasabov's latter two narratives. Information inequities occur when providers possess superior knowledge about consumers. This dissatisfaction is concerned with the transparency of such providers in processing and accumulating data beyond consumer's knowledge. Disciplining, reflects a historical shift in the refinement of instruments of observation, inspection, and controlling that are becoming the norm of modern society. The discourses present in online marketing and consumption practices help understand how the Internet has allowed for modern power structures to be produced. The aim of which is to construct reality and shape human subjectivity through the use of instrumental technologies (Mehta and Darier 1998, 111).

Discourses of knowledge, choice and power

Tracking online behaviors and targeting consumers form the basis of modern marketing techniques. In Foucault's (1979, 201) perspective this could create a "state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power". The practices mentioned above, can disprove our accepted beliefs that the Internet offers unparalleled access to information (Harrison, Waite and Hunter 2006, 987). While information is key to empowerment, algorithms and inferences limit what

is knowable by dictating what is displayed online. Those who have less knowledge of technological practices and capabilities will see inequalities increase against their favor. For consumers there are implications to not being fully informed. Ultimately, it can affect their choices and overall well-being. Due to consumers' limited knowledge of institutions, individuals can have a limited impact on institutional dynamics (Kasabov 2004, 9). An individual's governmentality must be understood through the historical and social contextualization of their experiences. It becomes important to question whether the construction of human reality and subjectivity through instrumental technology could be at odds with the concept of consumer empowerment.

Technological innovation is not neutral but takes place within the context of existing power relations. In this sense, choices are shaped in order to offer advantage to specific groups, individuals or institutions that have more knowledge of online usage. If technologies are limiting what we know then, how relevant is "the power to exercise choice" for consumer empowerment? The spread of capitalism has created greater choice among competitors. As the unparalleled access to information online leads to practically unlimited choices, Jenner (1994) suggest that this increases consumer power. However, there has been little to support that the increase in choice has led to greater consumer emancipation. Researchers Shankar, Ch errier and Canniford (2006) questioned whether consumers benefit from more choice. They found that, choice or the freedom to choose is, a double edged sword that can be empowering and liberating, while also chaotic and paralyzing (Schwartz 1994, 2000, 2004). In many cases the cost of processing information can outweigh the benefits. Having control of choices to be made is important to the psychological well being of consumers. But, unlimited choice can produce genuine suffering (Schwartz, 2005, 201- 4) and a sense of claustrophobia (Ohm, and Peppet 2016). Then, can the majority of consumers feel more empowered within these structures?

Dominant neoclassical economics and neoliberalism go hand in hand to make the case to relocate power to the individual (Friedman and Friedman 1962, 1980). This was based on the assumption that consumers seek to maximize their quality of life by seeking to optimize the worth of their existence to themselves. Consumers in this perspective can be regarded as rational utility maximizers, assuming that consumers know what they want.. This modernist axiom of rationality allows consumers to decide who they are and what they want (Slater 1997, 37). However author Willmott (1999) critiques

this theory on two premises: firstly the rational theory approach doesn't hold when a decision is an emotional one (Elliott 1998), and secondly because, at best, there can be an inadequate acknowledgement of asymmetrical relations of power between consumers (Shankar, Cherrier, and Canniford 2006, 1015). In other words, the market will favor those with greater choice, increasing already existing inequalities of knowledge and power.

Corporations have often understood that giving back to the consumer can encourage loyalty and increased ROI. Branding and customizing techniques have served the purpose of creating another avenue of power emanating from the consumer to the producer. Engaging in this exchange of data increases the fluidity of the consumer/producer power relationship but it also increases the asymmetric power of normalization. Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford (2006, 1016) note that this power is not acting on subjects but forming them by limiting and defining what is knowable. They suggest that the role of power in creating social practices and form a discourse in modern societies, rests upon the use of technologies – that is physics and material practices with transformative functions (Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford 2006, 1017). These technologies alter a consumer's self-perception, conduct, and modes of thinking as they construct these discourses through the constant creation of online data. Not only do these describe consumer behavior, but they also prescribe it to the point of influencing those behaviors.

Kasabov's marketing narratives of consumer dissatisfaction (2004) serve as a helpful premise for understanding the development of knowledge, power and choice online. By contextualizing the purposes of the technologies their unintended consequences can become clearer. What is the correct balance of these structures of empowerment and who do they ultimately benefit?

Consumer narratives of VRM systems

The Internet creates an interesting dynamic between a variety of forces in which new power configurations and communicating individuals exist (Mehta and Darier 1998, 114). In the following analysis I attempt to unpack the possible consequences of increased consumer power through VRM systems on narratives of information inequities and disciplining. I will outline the information inequities and disciplining narratives can be present between consumers and producers affecting society and consumer behavior. I conclude that the implementation of VRM systems for marketing and consumption purposes can

encourage ways of establishing better relationships with consumers. For this reason, it is important to remain optimistic about this technology. With that said, consumer empowerment can only take place within systems that permit control over available choices. Because choices are defined by technologies, and technology is never neutral, techniques of technologies of domination and self, can take place. In 1999 Nick Rose argued that the management of the self had become central to organizations and government and in this way technologies of self can be viewed as internalized extensions of a dominant disciplinary power (Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford 2006, 1025). Marketers have, throughout history made extensive use of disciplining. The permanent visibility of social information induces institutions to devise ever more ingenious ways of carrying out this 'big project' of data accumulation, monitoring and normalization (Kasabov 2004, 9). The use of VRM systems for marketing and consumption purposes could be used for resistance, but it can also lead to the creation of two narratives that cannot be understood without each other.

Firstly, VRM systems can constitute technologies of exclusion through the increased risk of information inequities. This occurs at 3 levels between actors: (1) Consumers/consumers, when access, predisposition and knowledge of information systems affect consumer's ability to maximize their utility and define themselves online. For many, this creates a divide between different factions of society. Activities related to shaping the future of the Internet rests in the hands of technologically savvy. Those who have not been formed by the acts of online consumption will face greater disadvantage, as choices will not be structured in their interest. The available consumer data can be structured to alter these individuals in more ways than one. (2) Producer/Consumer, use of personalization techniques and algorithmic structure could reduce knowledge or willingness of consumers to engage with brands that are not iconic or well known. The spread of globalization can cause reduced knowledge of smaller, independent and local brands. A large number of consumers could engage in a form of techno-plebiscitarianism, reducing overall brand competition online. (3) Producer/producer inequities occur as a result of the first divide. Personalized platforms could reduce online engagement with smaller brands affecting smaller providers' ability to compete in the market. Simultaneously, the formation of corporate partnerships can establish penalties based on the correlation of behaviors that can bring about consequences such as the "khaki speculation" (see Ohm, and Peppet 2016). Therefore, a paradox is present: empowering more consumers can

disempower other actors through the creation of information inequities.

Secondly, these information inequities can affect provider's ability to affect what users see and know disciplining users in the process. If consumers begin to rely more on fewer companies for their online activities, the accumulation of this data could lead to more subtle forms of surveillance and also of disciplining. For consumers the normalization process would occur in two ways: (1) increased dependency on fewer brands, could mean that customers might find that in certain situations they will be disciplined into providing more sensitive information to vendors in order to consume a product. Corporations could form partnerships to establish a better understanding of consumer behavior in order to legitimize the cost of certain premiums based on inferences. (2) Reduced choice could shift power to producers who would dictate the look, feel and quality of products. If consumers define themselves through acts of consumption, but what they consume is defined by a brand that is normalizing its audience, what could be adverse effects on the subject's psychological well-being? The powerlessness of the consumer in situations where the producers have highly valued knowledge, technical and specialized skills, can be of concern.

VRM systems also affect the consumers' disciplining power. Their passivity to engage with marketing tactics could have implications for several brands that rely on marketing promotions for increased awareness. The customers, by having increased control over their data, can normalize the producer through negotiations to mutual advantage. Producers will have to learn how to engage in negotiation processes where they no longer have control over specific information. While this could push producers to find better ways of engaging with consumers it begs the question of whether consumers will want to engage to begin with. In a world where Adblocker penetration is increasing, and faith in the media and large corporations is dwindling, it seems unlikely that control over one's data will be incentive enough for consumers to engage with marketing or purchasing tactics on VRM systems. Consumers' increased control over their bargaining power could lead emancipation from marketing practices altogether having implications for marketing and advertising industries across the globe.

The opportunities to redress power imbalances and increase the bargaining power of consumers are several through VRM systems. Therefore, the empowerment of consumers through VRM systems can lead to techniques associated with techniques of domination and self.

The analysis satisfies governmentality components stated by Mehta and Darier (1998, 109) such as the centralization around institutions or private corporations. There can also be an intensification of the effects of power at both the individual and organizational levels due to the emergence of new forms of knowledge. The implications of the shift in discourses of knowledge, choice and power can affect both sides of the narratives. In turn, creating new interpretations of technologically enabled consumer empowerment.

Conclusion

I have attempted to show how the use of VRM systems can constitute techniques of technologies of domination and techniques of technologies of self. The techniques, present in the Foucauldian concept of governmentality show increasing parallels with the state of consumer empowerment. Both concepts exist between the states of eternal domination and self-government (Shankar, Cherrier and Canniford, 2006, 1017). The scope of research has been limited to marketing practices from which I derive narratives of consumer dissatisfaction: information inequities and disciplining. I then used these narratives as a basis for contextualizing discourses of knowledge, choice and power in modern marketing and consumption practices. I apply the framework to establish how the narratives could reveal themselves in the context of VRM tool use. I suggest that narratives of information inequities and disciplining can be created through VRM systems by increasing the risk of techno-plebiscitarianism (Gerbaudo 2012), and increased corporate power. Mehta and Darier (1998, 115) argue that in order to be efficient modern power must be subtle. Because of the Internet and the power that renders power less obvious the disciplining and normalizing effects are much greater. They suggest that the commercialization of the Internet might be merely the result of the trend toward the globalization of capitalism, while surveillance increases. The dominant languages and procedures present in technological advancements can become a barrier to many other consumers around the world. This could have profound effects on the way individual and collective subjectivities are formed in the future.

Marketers have made extensive use of disciplining capabilities throughout history (Kasabov 2004, 9), but consumers are starting to find ways around intrusive targeting methods. Adblocker and its subsequent rise have symbolized a new trend in consumer rebellion. VRM systems could either make it or break it. The possibilities the platform enables could be the foundation for establishing better, more profound, relationships with consumers. But, will this be enough to discipline

consumers into exchanging their data with brands? Research on consumer loyalty and trust online could be conducted, but until the functionalities of VRM systems are made clear, we can only make an educated prediction of the outcomes. The limitations policy makers impose on the usage of VRM systems will ultimately determine whether consumers can be fully empowered online. While my speculative predictions remain somewhat pessimistic, personalized control over data could encourage innovative business processes leading to states of mutual advantage. Virtually constructed realities and identities can be considered as signs of inclusion into an established market structure but also as emancipation from reality. VRM systems affect consumer identity when used for other purposes such as online gaming, dating or gambling. Research related to society's ability to self-govern online and offline could be conducted to understand this point in more depth. The right approach in this instant is not to deny the light side of Big Data, but rather to devise techniques that bring human judgment and technological prowess to bear in a meaningful balanced manner (Ekbia et al. 2014)

VRM systems certainly offer some emancipatory promises, but these too are inevitably structured within market relations and algorithmic designs. The fast developing pace of technological innovation means that discourses of knowledge, choice and power are continuously changing. Policymakers are becoming increasingly more challenged to draw the lines between ever-changing power structures online. Research should combine an array of disciplines to understand these challenges. In my analysis I have attempted to combine Foucauldian concepts of governmentality and marketing narratives of consumer empowerment to develop discourses of knowledge, power and choice. These discourses evolve through the use of VRM systems establishing narratives of information inequities and disciplining online.

References

- Armstrong, M. (2006). Competition in two-sided markets. *RAND Journal of Economics*, 37, 668-691.
- Augustin, J.M., Albritton, W.M.D, "Vendor Relationship Management: Reengineering The Business Process Through B2B Infrastructure To Accelerate The Growth Of Small Businesses In Geographically Isolated Areas". *Semantics Scholar*. N.p., 2017. Web. 1 Apr. 2017.
- Burton, D. (2001), "Critical marketing theory: the blueprint?", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 35 Nos 5/6, pp. 722-43.
- Bush, J. (2004), *Consumer Empowerment and Competitiveness*, National Consumer Council, London.
- Dholakia, N. and Dholakia, R.R. (1985), "Choice and choicelessness in the paradigm of marketing", in Dholakia, N. and Arndt, J. (Eds), *Changing the Course of Marketing: An Alternative Paradigm for Widening Marketing Theory*, JAI Press, Greenwich, CT, pp. 173-85.
- Shaw, D., Newholm, T., and Dickinson, R. (2006), "Consumption as voting: an exploration of consumer empowerment", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 40 Iss 9/10, pp. 1049 - 1067
- Du Gay, P. (1996), *Consumption and Identity at Work*, Sage, London. Elliott, R. (1998), "A model of emotion-driven choice", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 14, Nos 1/3, pp. 95-108.
- Foucault, M. (1979), *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. New York.
- Foucault, M. (1982), "The subject and power", in Dreyfus, H.L. and Rabinow, P. (Eds), *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Harvester Press, Hemel Hempstead, pp. 208-26.
- Foucault, M. (1988), "Technologies of self", in Martin, L.H., Gutman, H. and Hutton, P.H. (Eds), *Technologies of Self*, Tavistock, London, pp. 16-49.
- Friedman, M. and Friedman, R. (1962), *Freedom and Capitalism*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, IL.
- Friedman, M. and Friedman, R. (1980), *Free to Choose: A Personal Statement*, Harcourt Brace, New York, NY.
- Fuchs, C. (2014). *Social Media: a Critical Introduction*. London: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Gainous, Jason, and Wagner, K. M., *Tweeting To Power*. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Print.
- Gerbaudo, P. (2015), "Populism 2.0: social media activism, the generic Internet user and interactive direct democracy", in Trotter, D., and Fuchs, C. (Eds), *Social Media, Politics And The State*. 1st ed. New York: Routledge. Print.
- Harrison, T., Waite, K., and Hunter, G.L., "The Internet, Information And Empowerment". *Emerald Insight*. N.p., 2017. Web. 2 Mar. 2017.
- Henry, P.C. (2005), "Social class, market situation and consumers' metaphors of (dis)empowerment", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 31, pp. 766-78.
- Hodgson, D. (2001), "Empowering customers through education or governing without government", in Sturdy, A., Grugulis, I. and Willmott, H. (Eds), *Customer Service: Empowerment and Entrapment*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, pp. 117-34.
- Jenner, R.A. (1994), "Changing patterns of power, chaotic dynamics, and the emergence of a post-modern organizational paradigm", *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 8-21.
- Kasabov, E. (2004), "Power and disciplining: bringing Foucault to marketing", *Irish Marketing Review*, Vol. 17 Nos 1/2, pp. 3-12.
- Kozinets, R. (2002), "Can consumers escape the market? Emancipatory illuminations from burning man", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29, pp. 20-38.
- Lincoln, N.D., Travers, C., Ackers, P. and Wilkinson, A. (2002), "The meaning of empowerment: the interdisciplinary etymology of a new management concept", *International Journal of Management Reviews*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 271-90.
- Martin, Luther H et al. *Technologies Of The Self*. 1st ed. London: Tavistock, 1988. Print.
- Mick, D.G., Broniarczyk, S.M. and Haidt, J. (2004), "Choose, choose, choose, choose, choose, choose: emerging and prospective research on the deleterious effects of living in consumer hyperchoice", *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 52, pp. 207-11.
- Mehta, M. D., Darier, E., (1998). "Virtual Control And Disciplining On The Internet: Electronic Governmentality In The New Wired World". *The Information Society* 14:2, 107-116. Web. 12 Mar. 2017.

Menzies, M. (1996) *whose brave new world: The information highway and the new economy*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Murray, J. and Ozanne, J. (1991), "The critical imagination: emancipatory interests in consumer research", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 18, pp. 129-44.

Peñaloza, L. and Price, L.L. (1993), "Consumer resistance: a conceptual overview", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 20, pp. 123-8.

Poster, M. (1990) *The mode of information: poststructuralism and social context*. Cambridge: Polity Press

Poster, M. (1995), *The second media age*. Cambridge, MA: Polity Press.

Rose, N. (1998), *Inventing Our Selves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Rose, N. (1999), *Governing The Soul: The Shaping of The Private Self*, 2nd ed., Free Association Books, London.

Schwartz, B. (1994), *The Costs of Living: How Market Freedom Erodes the Best Things in Life*, W.W. Norton, New York, NY.

Schwartz, B. (2000), "Self-determination: the tyranny of freedom", *American Psychologist*, Vol. 55 No. 1, pp. 79-88.

Schwartz, B. (2004), *The Paradox of Choice*, Ecco., New York, NY.

Shankar, A., Cherrier, H., and Canniford, R. "Consumer Empowerment: A Foucauldian Interpretation". *European Journal of Marketing* 40.9/10 (2006): 1013-1030. Web. 3 Feb. 2017.

Slater, D. (1997), *Consumer Culture and Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Wathieu, L., Brenner, L., Carmon, Z., Chattopahyay, A., Wetenbroch, K., Drolet, A., Gourville, J., Muthukrishnan, A.V., Novemsky, N., Ratner, R.K. and

Wu, G. (2002), "Consumer control and empowerment: a primer", *Marketing Letters*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 297-305.

Willmott, H. (1999), "On the idolization of markets and the denigration of marketers: some critical reflections on a professional paradox", in Brownlie, D., Saren, M., Wensley, R. and Whittington, R. (Eds), *Rethinking Marketing: Towards Critical Marketing Accountings*, Sage, London, pp. 205-22.