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Abstract

In this paper we analyze the social and historical construction process of marketing, and how it is inherently linked to the reproduction of capitalism in times of crisis. Based on Foucauldian discourse theory, we critically interrogate marketing's discursive change from a production- and sales-led to a consumption-led paradigm in the 1960s and 1970s. We use Lacan's (1977, 1998) theory of individual desire as lack, and Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) logic of antagonism to discuss how the modern individual is constituted as desiring subject. Marketing acts both to produce and fulfil this lack aimed at the satisfaction of customers' needs and desires. Based on Boltanski and Chiapello's (2005) analysis, we argue that marketing plays an important role in the way capitalism is able to regenerate and legitimize itself through its capacity to incorporate critique and resistance.

Keywords: critical marketing; marketing discourse; capitalism; Lacan; lack; resistance; customer needs; desires

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INTRODUCTION

Marketing was constituted as a field of study in the late 19th and early 20th century (Wilkie and Moore 2003), and until the beginning of the 1950s marketing thought was mostly concerned with helping managers to sell companies' products in the most efficient and effective way. That is, up to the 1950s marketing could be seen as production- and sales led (Keith 1960; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2006). This changed during the 1960s and 1970s when the most important debates about the definition, purpose and scope of marketing took place (Kotler and Levy 1969; Lazer, 1969; Lavidge 1970; Luck 1969, 1974, Dawson 1971; Kotler and Zaltman 1971; Kotler 1972; Enis 1973; Bagozzi 1974, 1975). Although marketing began to be used as a key managerial function to understand people's inner motivations and tailor corresponding products and services earlier in the 20th century (Tadajewski, 2006b), it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that the customer started to occupy the central role in marketing discourse. Today, this consumption-led purpose of marketing is seemingly unchallenged. For example, the American Marketing Association (AMA) says in its definition of marketing: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (AMA, 2007). Here, marketing is not mostly concerned with selling products and services, but with customer's needs. That is, it is the satisfying of needs and desires – the creation of value for consumers and even society at large – that is expressed as the central concern of marketing today.

In this paper we critically interrogate this discursive change in the field of marketing by arguing that the change from a production- and sales-led paradigm to a consumption-led paradigm coincided with the period when capitalism faced its first major crisis since 1929 – the 1960s and 1970s. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) show, capitalism faced a major legitimization crisis in the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in the moral order of capitalist society to be questioned, not only by resisting students and workers on the streets of Paris, London and New York, but also by a new generation of managers. As a result of this crisis, the old spirit of capitalism, characterized by the protestant work ethic, industrial mass-production, bureaucratic management and long-term planning, was replaced by a new spirit that was feeding on the values of the '68 generation: individual freedom and desires, equality, networks and short-term flexibility (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005). It is our argument that marketing played a crucial role in this process of regenerating capitalism at this important historical juncture.

A number of critical marketing scholars (e.g. Badot et al. 2007) have rightly suggested that capitalism regenerates itself by drawing from outside existing commercial spheres and colonizing non-marketized fields. In fact, changes to the marketing discourse itself can be understood as "a set of attempts to maintain marketing through an intravenous drip of fresh blood coming from fields external to the market" (Badot et al. 2007, p. 93). This means that marketing should be understood as a social construction (Peñaloza and Venkatesh 2006); that is, marketing is not just a firm-based and managerial activity, but one that needs to be seen as being embedded in wider social and historical contexts (Skálén et al. 2008; Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2006). If marketing is a socially and historically constructed process that is inherently linked to the reproduction of capitalism, then we arguably need to know exactly how this process of reproduction and regeneration takes place, and how it is legitimated.

In this paper we discuss the contribution Lacanian discourse theory can make for understanding this process of regenerating capitalism through marketing. Based on a Foucauldian frame of discursive analysis, we make use of the work of the French psychoanalyst Lacan – as well as Laclau and Mouffe (1985), who are readers of both Foucault and Lacan – to understand the discursive changes in the marketing field in the 1960s and 1970s. The key Lacanian concepts that we interrogate are lack and desire, which, as we will show, play a crucial role for our understanding of marketing’s role in reproducing capitalist society in times of crisis.

MARKETING’S DISCURSIVE CHANGES IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

Until the beginning of the 1950s¹ marketing thought was embedded in a production- and sales-led paradigm (Keith 1960), being mostly concerned with helping managers to implement marketing programs (Wilkie and Moore 2003) that were focused on selling mass-produced products. In the 1950s, however, a relative consensus about the need to broaden the scope of marketing emerged. Hence, the marketing concept was developed (McKitterick 1957), which – being still prominent in the field today – featured the satisfaction of customers as a major concern for marketing for the first time. There had been concerns with customers in marketing’s texts before, for example when Philips et al. (1941) sustained that marketing should be aimed at satisfying human wants, and that any study about marketing efficiency should begin with these wants. Yet the historical conditions of the 1940s did not allow customers’ needs to play a major role in field’s discourse. This situation began to change in the 1960s in the early 1970s when capitalism arguably faced its biggest crisis since the global depression of 1929, resulting in strong criticisms of marketing practices.

These critics of marketing were divided into two broad types: those critiquing the economic role and those dissatisfied with the social role of marketing (Andreasen, 1982; Arnould and Fisher, 1996). Economic criticisms focused on the efficiency of marketing activities, maintaining, for example, that they cost too much, that advertising was a wasteful expenditure, that the amount of money spent on promoting similar products and brands was exaggerate, etc. The critics of the social role analyzed marketing as a force for good or ill in terms of quality of life and contribution to society. These criticisms were broader in scope, since they dealt with aspects such as marketing’s stimulus to materialism and to unnecessary consumption of luxurious goods; wasteful life-styles; marketing’s “manipulative” aspects; creation of desires; contribution to increasing social distance between rich and poor; pollution and environmental deterioration; and overspending of nature’s resources. All these were reasons for heated debates about the role of marketing (Lavidge 1970; Lazer, 1969).

These critiques of marketing had widespread effects on both the academy and practitioners, resulting in a strong “identity crisis” (Bartels 1974; Sweeny 1972). In the 1960s and 1970s there were torrid debates in the academy about how to react to this crisis, which can be categorized into three paradigms (Sweeny 1972): first, the organization system perspective, which sustained that marketing was “only” a management technology; second, the distribution system level of social aggregation, which considered marketing as system of

¹ It is not our goal here to analyze the precise historical development of marketing. For a more detailed view of this history, see Alderson (1952), Alderson and Cox (1948), Bartels (1944, 1951a, 1951b, 1988), Blakenship (1949), Hagerty (1936), Keith (1960), Philips (1941). More recent papers might also provide a broader view of marketing’s history, such as Fullerton (1988), Jones and Richardson (2007), and Wilkie and Moore (2003).

distributive institutions whose main concern was to carry on economic functions; and third, the social system perspective, considering marketing as a social process, an integral and inherent part of society.

These paradigms resulted in three broad groups of responses to the critics of marketing (Arnould and Fisher 1996): first, the apologists, such as Luck (1969, 1974), who rejected societal values and the critiques of marketing, focusing on reaffirming marketing's intrinsic economic value to society by emphasizing its role for improving the efficiency of market transactions; second, the social marketers, such as Kotler and Levy (1969) who, concerned with the erosion of marketing's value to society, sustained that the marketing concept needed to be expanded recognizing its social dimension and the need to satisfy the desires of customers of both business and non-business organizations; and third, the reconstructionists, such as Dawson (1971) and Sweeny (1972) who challenged marketing's core foundations, proposing its redefinition to a social process concerned with exchange value of all types and their overall effects to society.

While Arnould and Fisher (1996) sustain that the apologists' more circumspect view of marketing has been "validated", it is clear that the social marketers with their emphasis on the satisfaction of customers' desires and the importance of marketing as wider social process have had an immense impact on the development of marketing since the late 1960s. This impact becomes even clearer when we consider the following quotes, and how relevant these statements still seem for today's marketing world: "The marketing concept ... calls for most of the effort to be spent on discovering the wants of a target audience and then creating the goods and services to satisfy them" (Kotler and Zaltman 1971, p. 5); "The marketing concept...holds that the key to achieving organizational goals consists of...determining the needs and wants of target markets" (Kotler 1980, p. 22); "The marketing concept means that an organization aims all its efforts at satisfying its customers – at a profit" (McCarthy and Perreault 1984, p. 35).

These changes to the customer's importance came along with a redefinition of marketing's scope, and the broadening of its boundaries to include non-profit organizations. Although Luck (1969) warned of such an expansion project, at the beginning of the 1970s the hegemonic idea was that marketing should broaden its scope (Dawson 1971; Enis 1973). Lavidge (1970) defended these expansive ideas by affirming that marketing was being strongly criticized for its lack in contributing to the solution of social problems. According to him, the changes in its scope were necessary to justify marketing's role in the continuity of economic growth and, above all, to legitimate the field as a relevant organizational function that would also consider the "goals of society" (Lazer 1969). Kotler and Levy (1969) reaffirmed this development, as marketing was, in their view, much more than a product-pushing managerial function. They argued that, in a way, all organizations use marketing, because each of them has products (tangible ones, but also services, or even social causes) and customers, and all of them could apply marketing techniques, such as product, pricing, distribution and communication management.

Summarizing the discursive changes to the marketing field since the 1960s and 1970s, it is clear to us that the satisfaction of customers' needs and desires has become a central concern for organizations (profit and non-profit). Cooke et al. (1992) support this view by showing that marketing definitions began to address concerns with customers and their needs only in the 1950s, with a substantial increase in the 1960s and the 1970s. Tadajewski (2006a) confirms that this view of the marketing concept subsequently gained "wider acceptance"

within the business community. In short, our analysis of the marketing literature shows that the satisfaction of customers' needs and desires became part of the field's discursive system in the 1950s, but only became prominent as the hegemonic core of the discipline by the late 1960s and early 1970s. As shown above, these changes can be understood as a direct response to the strong critiques marketing (and capitalism as a whole) was subjected to at that time. In the remainder of this paper we will show how this process of broadening and changing the scope of the marketing discourse helped to regenerate capitalism in times of a deep legitimization crisis.

CRITICAL MARKETING AND LACANIAN DISCOURSE THEORY

Questioning the historical role of marketing in the development of capitalism (Shankar et al. 2006b) is to uncover the fallacy of the alleged neutrality of marketing theory and practice (Brownlie 2006). It is this questioning that differentiates mainstream marketing from critical marketing. Critical marketing is a relatively new field of study, not yet been considered a "school of thought" (see Shaw and Jones 2005). As Burton states, "critical perspectives have not been widely embraced in marketing; it is largely a minority interest comprising different factions" (2005, p. 11). Yet, the field is clearly growing, beginning with the first efforts by authors like Alvesson (1994), Hetrick and Lozada (1994), Murray and Ozanne (1991), Murray et al. (1994), Brownlie et al. (1999), Catterall et al. (2002), Burton (2002), Rumbo (2002), and continuing more recently with Saren et al. (2007), Tadjewski (2006a), Tadjewski and Brownlie (2008), Skålen et al. (2008), Shankar et al. (2006b) and others.

For Burton (2001), critical theory is based on three elements: first, demystifying the ideological basis of social relations; second, the questioning of positivist methodologies; and third, the importance of self-reflexivity of the investigator and the linguistic basis of representation. According to Burton (2001), marketing – as theory, practice and education – should be exercised in a self-reflexive way, continuously questioning the "truths" of marketing as a field of knowledge. While we do not disagree with the critical marketing manifesto put forward by Burton (2001), what is perhaps missing in her analysis is a theory of the marketing subject that is firmly put on a negative footing. That is, the language of self-reflexivity embraced by her – as well as other critical management scholars (e.g. Alvesson and Willmott 1996; Alvesson and Sköldberg 2000) – makes an uncomfortable reading within the (admittedly non-unified) tradition of critical theory.

For Adorno (e.g. 1973a, 1973b), one of the most important representatives of the critical theory of the Frankfurt School, there can be no authentic, unified subject who is in control of herself, making self-reflexive judgements about her place in history. Instead, the subject should be understood as the un-determined outcome of a dialectical process. Adorno writes: "The name of dialectics says no more than that objects do not go into concepts without leaving a remainder" (1973a: p. 5), which means that the dialectical process constructing the subject will always be unfinished, leaving a remaining, un-determined hole amidst the imagined whole of the self-identical and self-reflexive consumer, seemingly making product choice in the supermarket of endless possibilities. For Adorno (1973b), this fetishized discourse of authenticity and self-reflexivity is itself a product of particular social relations determined by capitalism.

Similarly, Foucault (1969, 1971) – whose work has been put to use in marketing theory by a number of authors recently (e.g. Skålen et al. 2008; Shankar et al. 2006a; Denegri-Knott et al.

2006) – sees the subject as something determined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a discursive corpus of propositions considered as true. To be a subject means to belong to a discursive structure: a discipline, such as marketing. It is necessary to be “inside the truth” and to obey the rules of a “discursive policy” to integrate a discipline, because it is a principle of discursive control (Foucault 1971, p. 32-37). To be a marketing subject, hence, means to be subjected to a discursive structure with a high degree of homogeneity. That is, marketing ideas are taken up, repeated, conveyed by various examples, pass nimbly from one relay to another; from one marketing journal to the next, from one author or editor to another, from the marketing academy to marketing practitioners, from the written word to lessons and specialist radio broadcasts (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 60). All of these statements constitute the marketing discourse.

In line with this tradition of critical theory, Lacan – who was a significant psychoanalytic theorist in post-war France – maintains that “the subject as such is uncertain” (1998, p. 188). In his view, individuals do not decide their future for themselves. Instead, the subject is produced by the symbolic order (words, meanings, narratives) that prepositions the social. Lacan calls this symbolic order the Other, which forms the subject’s identity. The Lacanian subject, then, is not *a priori* “full” – there is nothing to discover inside the subject, through self-reflexivity or any other psychological strategy. Instead, the subject is defined by an *a priori* lack. For Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, this Lacanian theory of the subject as lack constitutes a “*negative* ontology, since its center is designated and its circumference delineated by a hole” (1992, p. 126, emphasis in original). That is, the subject is not whole but constituted by a hole, an absence. The subject’s ontology, its being, is thus negative.

The implications of such a Lacanian theorization of the subject are substantial. It moves us away from the humanist essentialism that seems to underlie many marketing discourses, emphasizing consumer choices and individual desires. It links “the *I* to socially elaborated situations” (Lacan, 1977, p. 5); that is, the “*I*” is not viewed as *the* grand constructor of sociality, as conscious consumer or even critic. Instead, the choices of the consuming subject are always already the choices of and by someone or, rather, something else. Lacan talks about an identification of the subject with the Other, which therefore fills its lack. The crucial point is that this filling, this process of identification, is constitutive of the subject. This is the starting point for a Lacanian analysis of desire. Desire is the filling of the lack of the subject. Marketing’s historical task can therefore be seen as the creation of lacks for there to be consuming desires to buy ever more products and services.

However, for Lacan, it is not only the subject that is characterized by an inherent lack. The symbolic order, too, can never be a full, all-encompassing Other, which can provide a full identity to the subject. For Lacan, precisely because the subject always lacks something the Other must also be defined by an *a priori* lack. But what is this something that the subject and the Other lack? For Lacan, this something is *jouissance*, which could be translated as “enjoyment”, but it is not simply pleasure. For Lacan, pleasure is produced by the symbolic order, the Other. *Jouissance* is beyond socially sanctioned pleasure (1998, p. 184); it is located in what Lacan calls the Real, that which cannot be symbolized. *Jouissance* is therefore never fully attainable, it can never be subsumed or incorporated into the Other. As the Real and its *jouissance* are impossible to symbolize, the Other will always be lacking. Put differently, because the Other can never quite manage to provide full enjoyment to the subject, and because the subject fails to fully identify with the Other, there is a lack in the symbolic regime or the Other. It is this lack which is at the heart of the marketing discourse and its subjects.

Lacan's theoretical constructs have not been discussed in great detail in marketing theory (although there are exceptions, e.g. Shankar et al. 2006a; Brown 1995; Thompson 2000), and they have only recently had exposure in the wider field of management studies (see, e.g., Jones and Spicer 2005; Kosmala and Herrbach 2006; Arnaud 2002). For us, the key promise of Lacan for critical marketing is the determined move towards an understanding of the subject as negative ontology. Just like Adorno and Foucault – and other critical theorists – a reading of Lacan enables us to theorize the modern subject as a historical construct that is constituted by a fundamental lack, an absence that is filled by hegemonic discourses, currently mostly provided by capitalist relations of production of consumption, giving way to the marketing discipline and the subjectifications we are all too aware of.

It is this lack that makes Laclau and Mouffe (1985) – eager readers of Lacan – conceptualize society as inherently unstable and contingent. They call this the “logic of antagonism”, pointing to the fundamental impossibility and openness of social organization. Laclau (1995) also refers to this lack or openness as the “empty signifier” that describes every social concept and practice, such as marketing. It is this lack or “empty signifier” that Böhm and Brei (2008) discussed in their critique of the marketing of development in the pulp and paper industry in South America. For them, “development” is an “empty signifier” that is filled by the hegemonic marketing practices of large multinational companies, with severe environmental, social and economic consequences for entire communities in South America. What Böhm and Brei (2008) show is that marketing discourses are able to colonize the imagination of social development and progress by conquering new frontiers of hitherto non-capitalist relations.

It is precisely this process of capitalism occupying new ground that in this paper we want to conceptualize before a wider historical background. As Badot et al. confirm, marketing is crucial for “the marketization of goods and values which remained up to that point out of the commercial sphere” (2007: p. 93). Using Lacanian terminology, we can say that marketing creates lacks that are filled with new products and services. It is this process that keeps the capitalist machines going through good and bad times. What we show in this paper is that during a deep crisis in the 1960s and 1970s marketing played a crucial role for the regeneration of capitalism through a new discourse of the satisfaction of customers' needs and desires.

THE CAPITALIST CRISIS IN THE 1960s AND 1970s

Shankar et al. claim that “contemporary consumer-driven culture is an outcome of a market economy, and is intellectually legitimized by neo-classical economic theory” (2006b, p. 487). While we would not necessarily disagree with this statement, it is also clear from our analysis of the marketing discourse above that the consumer has not always been at the forefront of capitalism's attention. As argued above, there was a shift from a production- and sales-led paradigm to a consumption-led paradigm in marketing that coincided with the deep crisis of capitalism in the 1960s and 1970s. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) show in their acclaimed book, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, how this crisis came about and how it was overcome by incorporating the critiques and resisting discourses of the student and workers revolts that were taking place across the world at the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s.

Boltanski and Chiapello define a “spirit of capitalism” as the “set of beliefs associated with the capitalist order that helps to justify this order and, by legitimating them, to sustain the

forms of action and predispositions compatible with it” (2005, p.8). This is in line with Gramsci’s (1971) conception of hegemony stating that capitalist socio-economic relations can only sustain themselves over boundaries of time and space by “winning over” civil society. That is, the cultural legitimation of capitalism is equally important for establishing what Gramsci (1971, p. 181-2) calls an “historical bloc” that produces “not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity” creating a “universal plane” and thus a hegemonic social relation.

In Boltanski and Chiapello’s (2005) view, the 1960s and 1970s marked a decisive shift in the way capitalism legitimized itself culturally. They argue that the first spirit of capitalism, at the end of 19th century, focused on the individual bourgeois entrepreneur. Then, the aspirations to a greater generality and the construction of a common good were less based on economic liberalism but the belief in progress, the future, science, technology, and the benefits of industry. In the second spirit of capitalism, between the 1930s and the 1960s, the focus was less on the individual entrepreneur than on the organization. During those years, some common characteristics were observed in developed capitalist countries: firms expanded considerably in size, mass production based on economies of scale prevailed, product standardization became the hegemonic form of production, the rational organization of work and new techniques to expanding markets (i.e., marketing) were massively applied (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005).

The spirit or “historical bloc” of mass-production capitalism and state bureaucratic management was, however, comprehensively resisted, starting in the late 1960s, which saw the rise of a great variety of student, feminist, hippy, anti-war, civil rights and other social movements. As Curtis (2002) shows in the BBC documentary, *The Century of the Self*, the second spirit of capitalism was de-legitimized by a new spirit of individualism, autonomy and anti-state sentiments that spread through the Western world, particularly among the young generation – those who were supposed to take over the management jobs from the old cadres. This new generation was also decisively anti-corporate:

The firm was reduced to the function of oppressive institution on a par with the state, the army, the school or the family; and the anti-bureaucratic struggle for autonomy at work supplanted concerns about economic equality and the security of the most deprived. As was said at the time, ‘qualitative’ demands seemed more crucial, but also more revolutionary, than ‘quantitative’ demands, in that they attacked the very forms of capitalist accumulation. (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 78)

In other words, at that time resistance to capitalism was not only happening at the firm-level, where unions had been struggling for better conditions and pay for many decades, the capitalist system was now comprehensively put under attack – through the soft violence of de-legitimation – in the realm of civil society and culture (Spicer and Böhm 2007). As Curtis (2002) shows, the marketing of uniform mass products sold by large, all-encompassing capitalist conglomerates played a large part in what people rejected at the end of the 1960s. Instead, protesters celebrated individual differences, autonomy and community life. Large, uniform, bureaucratic, manipulative corporations did not have a place in this new world view.

As already mentioned, this critique of capitalism did not just take place on the street. Instead, it was counter-hegemonic in the sense of challenging the central pillars of the capitalist system, which are characterized by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005, p. 14) as: material progress, effectiveness and efficiency in the satisfaction of needs, and a mode of social organization conducive to exercising economic freedom compatible with liberal political regimes. With all of these pillars being critiqued and resisted in the 1960s and 1970s capitalism faced a formidable challenge.

Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue that the response to this challenge was to incorporate as many of the voiced critiques as possible without changing the constitutive pillars of capitalism. In fact, they argue that this incorporation of critique is the very constitution of the capitalist system:

If capitalism cannot do without an orientation towards the common good, whence it derives reasons for committed engagement, its lack of concern for norms means that the spirit of capitalism cannot be generated exclusively out of its own resources. As a result, it needs its enemies, people whom it outrages and who are opposed to it, to find the moral supports it lacks and to incorporate mechanisms of justice whose relevance it would otherwise have no reason to acknowledge. (2005, p. 27)

At the heart of capitalism is therefore a constitutive lack; a lack of a morale, a lack of an ethical and normative system that would legitimate capitalist accumulation beyond the technicalities of demand, supply and profit generation. However, capitalism, as any other socio-economic system needs this legitimation to reproduce itself across boundaries of space and time.

Curtis (2002) shows in his documentary, *The Century of the Self*, how in the 1960s and 1970s managers in the big corporations literally sat around the management board tables and asked themselves: “what do all these young people on the streets want”? One way to find out was to use psychoanalytic techniques that were recast by marketing professionals as focus group interviews or projective techniques (Shankar et al. 2006b). Even hypnosis was used to get into the brains and unconsciousness of potential consumers. As Curtis (2002) shows, soon we saw the results of these market research efforts. The third episode of *The Century of the Self* series starts with a handsome guy saying in an advert: “Don’t sell for anything less than you can be. Make your life a masterpiece.” Rather than marketing uniform products to a non-distinct mass society, corporations now used a discourse of individual liberation to sell their products and services. Complex market segmentation techniques were developed to find out what particular segments of society wanted. Individual wants and desires were now emphasized. People were offered the opportunity to “be themselves”. Now products and services were sold as if they were liberating people.

The age of the individual and their desires had begun. The discourse of individual rights, liberation, difference and non-conformity, which in the 1960s and 1970s was used to resist the state, large corporations and an all encompassing military-industrial complex, was now incorporated into the system in order to sell products and services to the new generation of “rebels”. Politically, the age of the individual was expressed in the surge of conservative, neo-liberal regimes, led by Reagan in US America and Thatcher in the UK, emphasizing small government, individual rights and liberation – the very values for which protesters went onto the streets in the 1960s and 1970s. Economically, the new spirit was enabled by a new regime of flexible specialization (Bell 1976) that would be able to produce customized products for the thousands of market segments in an efficient and effective way. The crisis of the 1960s and 1970s – which saw supply outstripping demand; the classic overproduction scenario – was overcome by a new spirit of capitalism that would make people go into the shops again and therefore ensure a new round of consumer-led accumulation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Capitalism has many virtues. Its revival after the deep crisis of the 1960s and 1970s proves its ability to assimilate critique in such a way that it uses the spirit of its opponents for its own

regeneration. As Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue, capitalism cannot develop itself exclusively from its own resources; it lacks a spirit or ethical morale. Capitalism has to continuously recruit such a spirit from outside its own boundaries. Thus, critique and resistance play a major role in the development of the capitalist system. The opposition to capital keeps capital not only on its toes, so to say, but provides the frame of justice and legitimation that capitalism itself cannot provide. That is, resistance opens up not only new ways of overcoming market saturation by commodifying spaces that have hitherto remained outside the commodity space; it also helps capitalism to create new ways of legitimating its own existence.

The changes to the marketing discourse in the 1960s and 1970s, discussed in this paper, show capitalism's capacity to adapt to changing times. For about fifty years of the history of marketing, the satisfaction of customers' needs and desires was, at most, an indirect concern. Yet, with the manifold critiques of capitalism and marketing arising in the 1960s and 1970s – which, more than anything, emphasised the expression of individuality and autonomy, which was pitched against large, monolithic institutions such as the state and big corporations – marketing had to come up with novel ways of selling products and services. Our above analysis has shown that in the 1960s the marketing discourse started to emphasise the satisfaction of individual needs and desires. In addition, the scope of the field was significantly broadened by the social marketers, such as Kotler and Levy (1969), who were concerned about the erosion of marketing's value to society and hence argued for the recognition of marketing's social dimension and the need to satisfy the desires of customers of both business and non-business organizations. Our argument in this paper has been that this change of emphasis and broadening of the scope of marketing could be seen as a direct response to the social movement critics that de-legitimized the capitalist system in the 1960s and 1970s.

Theoretically, this process of capitalism's incorporation of critique through marketing can be explained by an understanding of society as lack, which has to be filled by a hegemonic discourse. The starting point for such an analysis is what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) call the "logic of antagonism" that constitutes every society. This means that there is always an excess that cannot be symbolized and fixed into a coherent discourse. This is what Lacan names the Real. For him (1998, p. 184), the Real is the realm of *jouissance*, which is beyond socially sanctioned pleasure. *Jouissance*, in fact, is the excess to taken-for-granted language categories; it is the resistance to common sense; it does not make sense within socially sanctioned understandings of good and bad. The antagonistic resistances, expressed by a whole array of social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, could be seen as such *jouissance*. They were the expression of the fundamental lack of capitalist society; they were pointing beyond the capitalist system by emphasizing individuality and autonomy coupled with a strong anti-state and anti-corporate discourse.

For capitalism, these resistances and critiques are a double-edged sword. On one hand, they are questioning the legitimacy of the system as well as its underlying politico-economic foundations. In fact, they aim at the elimination of capitalism. On the other hand, and this is what Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) argue in quite some detail, capital is also dependent on the expression of such critiques, in order to commodify new spheres as well as incorporate new modes of legitimation. Resistance can thus be seen as the creative brain behind capitalism. That is, the techno-economic modalities of capital are not sufficient to ensure its continuity and survival. It continuously needs to conquer new ideas and spheres, in order to create new possibilities of accumulation and legitimation.

Because of this double-edge sword, capitalism cannot afford too much *jouissance*. That is, although it needs some *jouissance*, some resistance and some critique, it cannot risk for these expressions of the Real to question the whole system and its politico-economic foundations. This is precisely when marketing enters the stage. As Marion (2006) argues, marketing's primary function is to help marketers to maintain their ability to meet the demands of their occupation, which is the general implementation of the same collective framework, techniques and devices that reinforce the efficiency of the management of markets and contributes to the generalization of the market economy. Marketing, in other words, is not thinkable without a capitalist market economy. Hence, marketing's function is to ensure the continuity of the ideology of the market in whatever social and cultural context. If social and cultural discourses shift – and especially if these discourses threaten the very foundations of capitalism – it is the task of marketing to find new ways to sell products and services, that is, ensure continuity of accumulation as well as new ways of legitimating the system.

We have argued in this paper that in the 1960s and 1970s marketing has achieved this task by emphasizing the satisfaction of individual needs and desires. The marketing discourse was able to incorporate the values of the resisting social movements of the 1960s and 1970s by refashioning products and services as expressions of individual desires as well as expanding the scope of marketing to include non-business activities. In this way marketing managed to implant the logics of the market right into the ontological make-up of subjects as well as any type of organization, whether they work for profit or not. Still today, the marketing mantra is “be yourself”, “express yourself” – and marketing has a whole array of techniques available to help individuals and organizations to do just that. The resistance movements of the 1960s and 1970s opened up the space for such individuality, and what marketing has achieved is to turn this into a generalized system of justification for capitalism. In other words, by helping individuals to express themselves, capitalist enterprise serves the common good (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 10). This is what Marion (2006) defines as legitimacy – those representations that help to reinforce the stability of the social order by ensuring a shared description of the world and enabling each person's action. Marketing, we have argued, plays a major role in ensuring the continuity of capitalism's legitimacy.

To be sure, this legitimacy is continuously under threat, precisely because capitalism is always lacking. That is, there will always be resistance and *jouissance*. Today many people around the world are very aware of the fact that they, as seemingly free consumers, “are in fact completely in the grip of production”:

What they believe to be their own desires, emanating from their autonomous will as unique individuals, are, unbeknown to them, the product of a manipulation whereby the suppliers of goods enslave their imagination. They desire what they are led to desire. Supply subordinates and determines demand.” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005, p. 427)

In other words, the liberation that marketing offers is, of course, completely illusory. We, as seemingly free consumers expressing our innermost desires by buying a pair of Nike trainers, are, of course, not really free or express our true selves. Instead, following Lacan (1998), this purchasing act – which is precisely the act that keeps capitalism ticking – is a patching up of the fundamental lack that is at the heart of the subject. Understood as negative ontology, the desire of the marketing subject to fulfil itself with a new pair of Nike trainers is our desperate attempt to identify with what we perceive to be an all encompassing symbolic system, the big Other. Marketing takes advantage of our need to fill our constitutive lack by creating languages and symbols that make it easy for us to identify with. Marketing is thus inherently social in nature; it fulfils an ontological function of creating satisfied people who

identify with a legitimized social order. This is the very process that continuously reproduces the capitalist system, and hence marketing needs to be understood, first and foremost, as that discourse that fills the lack of capitalism, ensuring its continued accumulation and legitimacy.

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