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Parallel Session: Translating practice theory into consumer research with coherent research strategies

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Translating Practice Theory into Consumer Research with Coherent Research Strategies

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***Abstract:** This article contributes to the underexplored methodological issues of translating practice theory into empirical consumer research. Practice theory conceptualises consumption as meaningful outcomes of social accomplishments which decentres the traditional influential roles of consumer emphasizes the performative dimension of the doings, saying, and material objects. Because consumers involved with practices are treated merely as „carriers“, the analysis focus is shifted from consumer to consumption practice. However, practices are difficult to access, observe, measure or represent because practices are hidden, tacit, and often difficult to articulate. These challenges and specifically methodological issues of social practice theory are seldom acknowledged and addressed. This paper reviews and discusses applications and challenges of deploying practice-based theory to consumer research. Finally, the article concludes with some considerations on how the methodological approaches can assist in advancing the field of consumer consumption research in general, and the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) proposition in particular.*

***Keywords:** Practice theory, performative, qualitative research methodology*

1. Introduction

Practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996; 2001; Warde, 2005; 2014) is not a new and unified theory, but it represents a new perspective in consumer consumption research. Focusing on the micro-social processes of consumption, practice theory offers an alternative analytical framework from the dominant behavioural decision theory (BDT) and econometric modelling approaches in consumer research which tend to view consumers as highly rationale and skilful in cognitive information processing (Arnould and Thompson, 2007). However, this approach has been criticised as portraying people as information processing computers whose are motivated for utility maximization (Hirschman, 1993). In addition, such conceptual framework which assumed consumers and their desires are inherent and original, and exist largely outside the culture and social structure is also be criticized (Maclaran, 2009), especially under the influence of post-structuralism (cf Holt, 1997) and post modern perspective (cf MacInnis, 2010) on consumer research. Within the interpretive consumer research, especially the consumer culture theory (CCT) tradition (Thompson and Arnould, 2005), practice theory challenges the dominant individualistic approaches characterized by phenomenological (Thompson et al., 1989) and experiential (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) approach which tend to focus on symbolic and communicative parts of consumption (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

A practice refers to “saying” and “doing” that is contextually situated and is “carry out” and “carry through” continuously by individuals in their daily lives (Reckwitz, 2002). Under practice theory, consumption is conceptualised as “moment in almost any practice” (Warde 2005:137) where consumers are “downgraded” as “carriers” of various activities and tasks that the practice requires (ibid). It is through these engagements with the practices that individual or consumer comes to understand the world around them and the meanings of life. Practice theory is thus a move away from the mental cognitions happening in the „mind“, commonly labelled as perceived value, attitudes, needs, wants, quality etc. (Arnould and Thompson, 2015; Warde, 2005). A move away from cognitive process does not imply that cognitive process is absent from the consumption moment, but instead, under the tenet

of practice theory, the traditionally dominance role of cognitive is downgraded and comes after the practice (Warde, 2005).

Treated as carriers of practice, practice theory does not treat consumers as passive individuals, but rather conceived as skilled agents who actively negotiate and perform a wide range of practices in their everyday lives (Warde, 2005). Thus, practice theory deemphasizes moments of individual decision making and focuses on the „doing“ and „saying“ of various social practices. In particular, practice theory advances a perspective that social life or in consumer research context, consumer behaviour is best understood through an analysis of on-going engagement with bodily and mental processes concerning material things as well as immaterial processes embedded and embodied in a complex socio- material configuration of “practices” (Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Magaudda, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Watson and Shove, 2008; Warde, 2005).

This distributed view of agency between humans and non-humans (materials) and the dialectical relationship of materiality is the focus of practice theory (Gherardi, 2009). Under practice theory, consumption is thus understood as social life constituted by on-going routines, engagements and performance, and is preceded by individual’s wants, desires or moments of choice (Warde, 2005).

This paper discusses the underexplored and underexploited methodology used in practice theories in consumer research (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Halkier and Jensen, 2011). The goal of this paper is to contribute to the discussion of methodology in carrying out a practice-based study of consumption research in the consumer research field. The methodological issues of practice theory discussed is relevant to the on-going debate on marketing to the consumers of the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) and the promise of BOP in poverty alleviation (Chikweche et al., 2012; Jaiswal, 2007; Karmani, 2006).

This paper focuses on the interview and participation observation methods, two most widely used data collection methods approaches in practice-based consumption research. By doing so, this paper seeks to contribute to the pursuit of a coherent methodology with the practice theory framework in consumption studies. The paper begins with a brief introduction of practice theories, the fundamental concepts, and the challenges in translating these abstract elements into research methods that will be coherent with the theoretical framework. Second, a summary of the data collection methods used in consumer consumption research are provided, this is followed by a discussion on the interview and participation observation methods which are commonly used in practice-based studies. Finally, a conclusion on how these approaches can assist in advancing the field of consumer consumption research as well as consumer research at the bottom of the pyramid (BOP) is provided.

2. Practice Theory: The Fundamental Concepts and Methodological Challenges

This paper discusses the methodological strategies of using practice theory in consumer consumption research. Often practice theory is associated with the notion of “routine” and “habit”. This is a rudimentary interpretation but does have an unfortunate effect of undermining its analytical power and methodological challenges. Therefore, when deploying practice theory in consumer studies, a few key fundamental issues warrant further explanation.

First, practice theory is not a unified theory, it has been used in diverse disciplines from philosophy, cultural theory, and history to sociology, anthropology, and science and technology studies (Schatzki, 2001). In consumer studies, researchers use practice theory to argue that consumption could be best understood as social practice (Arsel and Bean, 2013) in which „practice“ is conceived as organized and coordinated set of doings and sayings that are held together by various elements and are collectively shared across time and space (Gram-Hanssen, 2011), These elements include body, mind, things, knowledge, discourse, structure/process and the agents (ibid). This article adopts the synthesized theoretical framework by Reckwitz (2002). In his framework, Reckwitz (2002) focuses on core socio-

theoretical elements and conceptualised practice theory in a broader cultural theory context. According to Reckwitz (2002), practice is “a routinized way in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described, and the world is understood” that involves “bodily activities, forms of mental activities, „things” and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge” (p.202). Essentially, Reckwitz’s framework emphasizes the tacit and discursive processes covering both bodily and mental processes, involving material things and immaterial processes (Warde, 2005). Under the theoretical lens of practice, consumption is thus approached as an interconnectedness of physical body routine behaviour, and mental routines involving understanding and competency in using things and artefacts.

Second, practice theory focuses on the performative aspect of carrying out practices. Acts of carrying out practices, i.e., the performing/engagement of practices is viewed as skilful accomplishment and it is through the performing of practices that understanding, knowing how and desiring are produced (Reckwitz, 2002). Consumption is viewed, therefore as not generated by the individual’s mental motives and moment of choices, and is neither depends on cultural structure such as individual’s lifestyle (Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Warde, 2005), but as „moment in almost any practice” (Warde 2005:137). Performance or engagement of practices thus forms the unit analysis of practice theory.

In summary, practice theory in consumer research conceives consumption as an interconnectedness of physical body routine behaviour, and mental routines involving understanding and competency in using things. This approach implies a major departure from conventional approach in consumer research which prioritized and privileged consumers as rational and purposeful (*homo economicus*), or as unconsciously shaped by social structure (*homo sociologicus*) (Arsel and Bean, 2013; Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005;). Reckwitz’s framework (2002) has been adopted by researchers in the consumption research (Arsel and Bean, 2013; Campbell, 2005; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010; Magaadda, 2011; Truninger, 2011).

After establishing the fundamentals of practice theory, attention now turns to translating these performative, embodied “doings” and “sayings” abstract elements into research methodology coherent with the performative theoretical framework. Practices are difficult to access, observe, measure or represent because practices are hidden, tacit, and often „logistically inexpressible in propositional terms” (Gherardi, 2009:116), therefore, applying practice theory to the study of consumption requires adopting an appropriate epistemological stance. Halkier and Jensen (2011) and Gherardi (2009) argue that the analytical power of practice theory is most evident when it makes and connects implicitly to the social constructionist epistemology. Social constructionist epistemology held that meaning or knowledge is not to be found or discovered but is rather actively constructed by individuals against a backdrop shared understandings, practices and languages (Schwandt, 2000). Halkier and Jensen (2011) contend that social constructionist approach gives the researcher the opportunity to analyse activities of consuming as an act of continuous dynamic, relational accomplishments intersect with other multiple practices in everyday life. The analytical power of “what” and “how” of social constructionist aligns nicely with the “sayings” and “doing” of practice theory. Therefore, following Halkier and Jensen (2011), this paper adopts a moderate social constructionist perspective of practice theory. This social constructionist interpretation of practice theory will serve as a starting point for discussing methodology strategies for practice-based consumption research.

3. Practice-Based Consumption Research

The application of practice theory in marketing and consumer studies is relatively new but has made a few inroads (Araujo, Kjellberg, and Spencer, 2008; Arnould, Hartmann, and Wiertz, 2011; Hartmann, Wiertz, and Arnould, 2015). Holt’s (1995) study on baseball and typology of consumption practice is arguably the pioneering study which adopts the practice-based perspective. However, it was not until the early 2000s that the emergence of interest in engaging in practice theory was witnessed in marketing and consumer research. These include Korkman’s (2006) study on customer value formation in services

marketing, Schau and Munir (2009) on brand communities and value creation, Hartmann (2015) on value creation, Araujo et al. (2008) on exchange concept in marketing, and specifically in consumption studies, Allen (2002) on postsecondary education choice, and Arsel and Bean (2013) on taste consumption. It should be mentioned that works from science and technology studies (STS) researchers such as Shove and Pantzar (2005) and Magaudda (2011) have had a considerable influence on consumer researchers. For example, Arsel and Bean (2013) adopt Magaudda's (2011) operational interpretation of practice theory which links objects, doings, and meanings in a triad relationship called "circuit of practice".

A typical practice theory-based research in marketing and consumer behaviour frequently utilizes multi-method research approach. Arsel and Bean (2013) use a combination of netnography, participation observation and interview in their investigation of aesthetic consumption practice; Hargreaves (2011) uses participation observation and interview method in sustainable consumption; and Truninger (2011) utilises participation observation and interview in cooking practices. Similarly, Magaudda (2011) uses interview and narrative method in digital music consumption. Clearly, interview and participation observation are the two most commonly used methods in practice-based research. However, beyond the mere mention of the methods used, there is surprisingly very little detail about how they reflect and are coherent with the performative practice theory framework. The obvious question is—is interview method appropriate for the investigation of performative oriented practice theory? Further add to this ambiguity is, frequently, interview used in the study is merely described as „in-depth“ interview. This raises another question; what exactly an in-depth interview is as compared with other qualitative interview techniques (e.g., biographical, collaborative, life-history, conversational, etc.). Following Halkier and Jensen's (2011) lead, this paper seeks to review and suggest coherent methodological strategies for practice theory in consumption research.

The next section reviews and discusses both the interview and participation observation methods in practice theory in consumption research. It should be pointed out that due to its multifaceted, complex, and fragmented nature, practice can never be captured by a single method or reproduced (Nicolini, 2009).

3.1. Interview and Participation Observation

Because of its multifaceted, complexity, and tendency of being "taken for granted", practice remains invisible and hidden most of the time (Nicolini, 2009). Practice, therefore always needs to be brought to the fore, and made visible in order to realize its analytical power (Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Nicolini, 2009). In view of this, ethnography is the obvious choice as it can provide rich and thick descriptions of the practice. Ethnography is however, time-consuming and also due to difficulties recruiting informants and budgetary constraints, a relatively short period of observation is deemed more practical (Penaloza, 1994). Subsequently, interview and participation observation methods have thus become more practical despite the obvious benefits of ethnography in practice-based study of consumption.

Interview and participation observation are two closely linked methods. Historically, participation observation is preferred over interview based on the assumption that participation observation provides direct access to an action, whereas interview only infers about an action based on the researcher's subjective interpretation (Atkinson and Coffey, 2002). However, Atkinson and Coffey (2002) argue that observational data is just as problematic to use as it is also subject to social interpretation just like interview data. To Atkinson and Coffey (2002), observation and interview methods are not simply collecting information about non-observable or unobserved actions, or past events, or private experiences, but both are able to generate accounts and narratives that are forms of social action in their own right. Advancing this argument further with the social constructionist perspective, Atkinson and Coffey (2002) contend that all events, accounts, and experiences under observation and interview can be treated as enactments (social acting), and thus release the burden of reconciliation between "what people actually do" and "what people say". They conclude that both participation observation data and

individual interview data can be treated as social practitioners' performances in different contexts, and that such data are products of "participants" social performing with others or in relation to others.

In the following paragraphs, three interview methods from different disciplinary areas are discussed. They are active interviewing (Gubrium and Holstein, 2004) from social science; ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979) from cultural and anthropology studies; and interview to the double (ITTD) (Nicolini, 2009) from management and organization studies.

3.2. Active Interview

Interviewing is probably the most widely used technique for systematic social inquiry (Gubrium and Holstein, 2004) and has become an integrated part of contemporary social life (Silverman, 2011). The standard qualitative interview method treats individuals as passive vessels of answers, and as repositories of facts ready for extraction (Gubrium and Holstein, 2004). The key challenge thus is to skilfully formulate questions and to create a conducive atmosphere to gain unadulterated facts and details as a representation of the reality (Rapley, 2004). This individualist approach is however, not well suited for practice theory primarily for two good reasons. First, practice theory theorizes individuals as agents bounded by socio-culturally constituted nexus (saying, doing and understanding), and not purely structure-dependent and rational (Reckwitz, 2002). Second, conventional treatment of interview as a passive vessel fails to recognize the performative part of interview, in which interview is viewed inherently interactional, locally situated (in situ) and collaboratively co-created (Gubrium and Holstein, 2004).

In many ways, Gubrium and Holstein's (2004) active interviewing which conceives interview as an on-going co-creation, interpretive, and performative is consistent with practice theory. Active interviewing (Gubrium and Holstein, 2004) is an interpretive practice involving both the interviewer and the informant in the co-construction of meanings in all phases of the interview process. Borrowing from the 1957 writing of Ithiel de Sola Pool, Gubrium and Holstein (2002) reiterate that every interview is an interpersonal drama with a developing plot. Conceiving interview as an interpretive practice thus casts participants as virtual practitioners of everyday life (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002) and assumes a social constructivist position. For example, a female interview respondent uses the statement "speaking as a woman" when she wants a female voice to be heard, and uses "If I were a man" when she wants to express a viewpoint of a man as spoken by female (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002:16). This simple example demonstrates that the interview talk is a fluid, dynamic process in which the respondent's subjectivity and related experience are continually being assembled and modified. The analytic value of active interview thus lies both in their meanings construction (what was said) and how meanings are constructed (how it was said), and the ways the "what" and "how" are interrelated, in relation to ongoing interview interactions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002). Data generated by active interviewing is thus treated as an expression of action, a performance, and an "enactment" (Halkier and Jensen, 2011).

The key to successful active interviewing is that the respondent's interpretive or narrative capabilities must be activated, encouraged and stimulated, including intentionally suggesting of narrative positions, resources, orientations, and precedents throughout the interviewing process (Gubrium and Holstein, 2004). Hence, active interviewing is in sharp contrast with the standardized interview which concerns itself with the neutral, naturalistic, value free approach, as found in many qualitative text books.

Following Atkinson and Coffey (2002), Gubrium and Holstein (2004), and Halkier and Jensen (2011), this paper concludes that active interviewing underpinned by social constructionist is methodologically coherent with the performative oriented practice theoretical framework. Data generated by active interview is equivalent to an action, a performance, and an "enactment" consumption. The paper further argues that interview method used as analytical tool in any practice-based consumption research must be made explicit its theoretical foundations, and not just merely describing interview method as "in-depth".

3.3. Ethnographic Interview

Ethnographic interview (Spradley, 1979) is not an ethnography study which calls for search of thick description and deep immersion in the field, but does share some similarities with ethnography. Spradley's (1979) ethnographic interview is a qualitative interview in which a researcher establishes an on-going relationship with the informant through repeated contacts and engages with multiple interviews over time. In the process, a genuine exchange of views and openness is developed which allows the informant to explore in a meaningful way with the researcher the meanings of actions and events they held in their worlds (Heyl, 2001). Translating this to the theoretical concepts of practice theory, ethnographic interview produces narratives about socially embedded experiences, descriptions and enactments of social performance. Specifically, ethnographic interview goes beyond the interest of the co-construction and reconstruction of meanings as emphasized by the active interviewing. Instead, it includes elements of cultural meanings, mutual respect, empowerment and reflexivity in interviewing. While cultural description is at the heart of the ethnographic interview, however, elements of mutual respect, empowerment and reflexivity formed the critical part of a successful ethnographic interview. Mutual respect and empowerment is about the researcher adopting a position of "student" by asking "I want to know what you know in the way you know it...Will you become my teacher and help me understand?" (Spradley, 1979:34). Data or narratives generated subsequently are analyzed reflexively, in the social-material context of the informant and the researcher. Such reflexivity is a critical aspect to understand and allows the interactional and mutual influence between the researcher and the informant.

Ethnographic interview and active interviewing essentially shares a similar social constructivist philosophy stance but instead of one-off contact, ethnographic interview seeks repeated interactions with the informant to learn the life world of the informants. Interview data generated are treated as enactment or performance. For example, focusing on what it means by „doing healthy food“, Halkier and Jensen (2011) use ethnographic interview in their practice-based study of healthy food eating among Pakistani Danes to reveal consumption as processes of practical and social accomplishments.

Ethnographic interview is a useful interpretive and reflexive tool for practice-based study on consumption as it helps reveal the informant's life world. Its usefulness lies in its ability to uncover both the discursive and practical knowledge in which the informants tend to take them for granted, and remain opaque to the researcher. Discursive knowledge refers to the understandings and knowledge that have been embodied which are acting out intuitively without efforts of the will or consciousness. Practical knowledge, on the other hand, are actions based on reflection and reasoning that were learned. To carry out an ethnographic interview, first, the researcher needs to learn to listen well and cultivate mutual respect with the informant at all stages of the research. Second, the researcher needs to be aware of his/her role in the co-construction of meaning. Third, the researcher needs to be sensitive on how the broader social context can affect the informant, the interview processes, and the research outcomes. Lastly, the researcher needs to recognize that the interview is a discovery process and thus only capable of providing partial knowledge that will ever be attained (Heyl, 2001). Spradley's "The Ethnographic Interview" (1979) provides an extremely useful reference in conducting ethnographic interview.

3.4. Interview-to-the-Double (ITTD)

Interview-to-the-double (ITTD) is relatively unknown outside the field of management and organizational studies. It was originally developed in work place related research. ITTD is an interview technique that requires informant to imagine he/she has a double/twin who will replace him/her and do his/her work the next day. The informant is then asked to provide the necessary detailed instructions to ensure the double is not unmasked (Nicolini, 2009). Essentially a type of projective technique, the evaluative nature of ITTD tends to produce long monologue accounts filled with strong normative and moral stands, description that is publicly acceptable and socially sanctioned, and has the tendency to emphasize the accountability of their conducts (Nicolini, 2009). At this stage, the data produced do not represent the result as these verbal representations from the informant are not necessarily true reflection of the ground (Nicolini, 2009). Nicolini (2009), however, sees such idealized narratives generated by ITTD provide analytical window to the normative and moral make-ups (texture) of a local practice. In

particular, Nicolini (2009) notes that first, the monologue account articulates and documents the conventional moral ideas of what is good, what is right, what to expect and what is to be expected in the local practicing field. The data becomes especially useful when interpreted against a broader data set. Second, the narratives with rich instructions and task elements reveal some of the main practical concerns in carrying out a task and achieving its goals. Third, the use of local lexicons reflects the local version of reality and how they are used in the broader social context to reproduce the practice.

ITTD is not a standalone method and is best to combine with other investigative methods. This paper contends that although ITTD was used by management and organization researchers in the context of work place (Nicolini, 2009), it can be extended to the study of practice-based consumer research in consumption as it is useful in providing a multifaceted representation and reflexivity of practice. Take the example of doing healthy eating earlier by Halkier and Jensen (2011), ITTD can be used to extract the „right“ way, the „morally correct“ way, and the practical concerns of „doing“ of healthy food eating in a community that practices high fat diet.

This paper has so far discussed three different methods of interviewing—active interviewing, ethnographic interview, and interview-to-the-double (ITTD). These interview methods should not be defined and used as field work technique or methodological strategies, but should be best approached by their appropriateness and coherent with fundamentals of practice theory. In the following section, two observation techniques will be introduced and discussed.

3.5. Shadowing

Shadowing participation has its origin in management and organization studies as a fieldwork technique to study the ways of work and life of mobile people (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2007). Essentially, shadowing is about tagging informant along as he/she goes about doing his/her things or routines. By „shadowing“ the informant, it helps in answering the question: “what people actually do?” Miller (2013) in his study of theory of shopping uses shadowing technique where he accompanies householders during their shopping to understand “the nature of shopping” (Czarniawska-Joerges, 2007). Shadowing and tagging of the informants may cause potential psychological discomfort, therefore, researcher has to continuously renegotiate access with them in order to resolve any issues that may arise. Reflexivity during the fieldwork period is required as the data generated is prone to the impression management issues, similar with interview-to-the-double.

This paper contends shadowing informant can be a useful tool for practice-based study on consumption, its power lies in the opportunity of observing how „practices“ of the informants unfold and configured in multiple social and spatial contexts.

3.6 Commented Observation

Commented observation seeks to combine interview and observation technique in which the informant is encouraged to interpret his/her consumption environment and materiality (Emontspool, 2011). Emontspool (2011) uses commented observation in her study of ethnic consumption behaviour and finds rich data emerged when the informants were asked to compile an inventory list of items/artefacts. Informants were then encouraged to detail the circumstances in which a particular product/item is used, followed by reflections on the informant’s consumption behaviour, including narratives and life stories. This produces not only rich description, but also reveals various complex and interrelated material relationship, thus yielding a more complete consumption picture for analysis. Arsel and Bean (2011) use commented observation as part of the multi-method approach in their investigation of taste consumption.

Commented observation method works in three sequence of phases (Emontspool, 2011). First is the exploratory interview of the informant. Second, the informant proceeds with establishing an inventory of the materials/things/artefacts related to the research. Lastly, discussion of the

materials/things/artefacts contain in the inventory list. The first and the last steps provide the necessary contextual structure of the consumption behaviour, but the second phase is the most crucial as it focuses on the sense making of the informant, how informant interprets his/her behaviour, and not what he/she actually does. In many ways, commented observation falls into the familiar theme of the social constructionist philosophy. Accordingly, good narrative skill and activation of reflexivity of the informant are keys.

While shadowing technique is to learn about the informant's routines, performances and engagement (i.e., practice) in different and multiple social locations and spatial contexts, commented observation complements the construction of informant practices by emphasizing on the „thing/item“ or artefacts that are crucial part of social practices, in which practice is theorized as an interaction between sayings/ideas, ways of doing, and the materials (Arsel and Bean, 2013; Shove and Pantzar, 2005)

4. Implications for Consumer Research at the Bottom of the Pyramid (BOP)

BOP which argues that selling to the poor can be a profitable undertaking for marketers and help eradicate poverty represents a very attractive proposition, but also a controversial one (Chikweche et al., 2012; Jaiswal, 2007; Karmani 2006). In fact, BOP proposition was criticized as much of a hyperbole with very weak research methodology (Karmani, 2007). One of the main debates on consumer of BOP is centered on their consumption practice. Proponents of BOP such as Parahalad (2002; 2009) has argued strongly that poor people do desire and buy quality products, and are aspired to fully participate in the consumer market. On the other hand, sceptics such as Karmani (2007) contends that poor people do desire quality products, however they simply cannot afford them. Citing example of branded salt fortified with iodine marketed for iodine deficiency, a common problem of developing countries especially among the poor population, Karmani (2007) doubts that BOP segment would be willing, let alone afford to pay the price premium of 250% of such „quality product“. Besides the iodized salt which is health related, Karmani (2007) also questions the myth of BOP consumer buying „luxury“ items such as ice cream, shampoo in sachets, skin whitening, and others.

Much of the argument between the proponents and opponents of targeting BOP consumers is centred on the concerns of possible exploitation of the poor. This concern stems from the assumption that the poor are likely to make choices that are not in their own self interest primarily due to low level of education, limited access to information, and other economic, cultural and social constraints. As a result, it could be argued that BOP initiatives may have resulted in the poor spending money away from higher priority needs such as nutrition, education, and health to ice-cream, and whitening cream (Karmani 2007).

Practice theory and its methodologies discussed earlier offers a potential useful approach for understanding consumption practice of BOP consumers. By not treating consumers either as rational and purposeful, or as unconsciously shaped by social structure, practice theory bypasses the antagonistic stands of both the proponents and opponents of BOP proposition, and advances a new perspective to better understand BOP consumers' consumption practice. This could be achieved by treating consumer as a carrier of practice who takes part in a repetitive and routine behaviour, where these repetitive behaviours emanate from embodied and embedded capacities—learned through experience and retained as a store competence in the form of mental, material, and bodily skill procedures (Warde 2014).

5. Conclusion

This paper has briefly discussed practice theory and reviewed and suggested relevant research methods that are coherent with the theory. Following Reckwitz (2002) and Halkier and Jensen (2011), this article locates practice theory in the cultural theory framework and social constructionist, shifting the consumption behaviour focus away from the popular abstract cognitions happening in the „mind“,

labelled as perceived value, attitudes, needs and wants. By assuming this perspective, and following Atkinson and Coffey (2002) and Halkier and Jensen (2011), this paper treats both interview and participation observation data produced as social performance, or social actions in different contexts, which can be used actively to elicit and foreground embedded, mental activities of understanding and knowing in a complex of doing and saying of practices.

The rest of the paper discusses the different interview and participation methods from multiple disciplinary areas at length which include ethnographic interview, active interview, interview-to-the-double, shadowing interview and commented observation. The strengths and limitations of each technique are highlighted. This paper notes that most of the methods discussed are best combined with other techniques to produce a possibly more complete picture of consumption practices. It also appears that most of the methods suggested and discussed are filled with subjectivity and relied greatly on the researcher's reflexivity.

However, it is only expected that in the development of theory, subjectivity should not be denied and masked, but rather it should be reflexively and self critically cultivated and mobilized to discover interesting research issues (Alvesson and Karreman, 2011).

Finally, to further advance the application of practice theory in consumption research, the case of ongoing debate of BOP consumers is discussed. This paper ends by urging the theoretical foundations of practice theory (i.e., practices are performative, and are context-dependent practical accomplishments) to be made more explicit, and the linkage between these fundamental concepts with methodological strategies decision to be made visible and explained by the researcher.

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