Chapter 16

Consumerism and Entrepreneurial Opportunity: The Case of MMM

Adedayo Abinusawa
University of East London, UK

ABSTRACT

Despite significant research on consumerism, little is known about its impact on entrepreneurial opportunity production. Where existing literature focuses on describing consumerism, this chapter investigates how consumerism can influence the production of entrepreneurial opportunity for some. The case study of Mavrodi Mundial Movement (MMM) is examined from secondary data sources (such as articles, journals, magazines, etc.) to obtain historical information. The analysis shows that by understanding consumerism, the individuals behind MMM were able to produce and exploit an entrepreneurial opportunity in different markets.

INTRODUCTION

Consumerism, according to Wright and Rogers (2015), is the belief that personal well-being, to a large extent, depends on higher levels of consumption. This statement builds on Goodwin et al.’s (2008) argument that to say that some people have consumerist values or attitudes means that they always want to consume more, and that they find meaning and satisfaction in life, to a large extent, through the purchase of new consumer goods. This belief has inspired social movements seeking to increase the rights and power of buyers in relation to sellers (Kotler, 1971). There have been three key waves of anti-consumerism in modern times: the first emphasises value for money, information and labelling; the second stresses investigative anti-corporate work; the third focuses on global issues (New & Ramsay, 1997). These have been driven by the long history of organisations incorporating emancipatory ideals into marketing campaigns, often with limited transformative outcomes (Gbadamosi et al., 2018; Johnston & Taylor, 2008).

Entrepreneurs (i.e. entrepreneurial individuals and firms) can have transformative impact. Acs et al. (2013) illustrate this point in their paper on ‘the social value of productive entrepreneurship’. They

showed that enterprises have had a profound impact on the world. Entrepreneurs can impact consumerism
because where the market is not in equilibrium, profit opportunities exist, and entrepreneurs discover
and act on these profit opportunities to equilibrate the market (Holcombe, 2003). By understanding
consumerism, and societal concerns, entrepreneurs can produce better entrepreneurial opportunities. For
example, Barksdale & Darden (1972) show that as public concern regarding consumer issues increases,
the consumer forms definite opinions about business policies and practices, the consumerism move-
ment, and government legislation. Hence, where consumer demand and market deficiencies exist, the
entrepreneur, if s/he is to be successful, must fill in for them (Burg, Podoynitsyna, Beck, & Lommelen,
2012; Leibenstein, 1968). However, little is known about the linkages between consumerism and entre-
preneurial opportunity. It is this gap in knowledge that this chapter aims to address.

THEORITICAL BACKGROUND

The Concept of Consumerism

Consumerism, the notion that personal well-being to a large extent depends on higher levels of consump-
tion, has eroded pervasive value systems that were well established before the eighteenth century in
various societies around the world (Stearns, 2006). None of these societies provided a fertile ground for
consumerism, as widespread consumerism did not exist, particularly as some of them were quite hostile to
any potential consumerism (Day & Aaker, 1970; Stearns, 2006; Trentmann, 2004). Businesses have long
sought to address the negative impacts of consumerism by developing products and marketing practices
that combine short and long term consumer values (Kotler, 1971); however, where consumerism leads
to overconsumption and unacceptable levels of inappropriate social behaviour, it is detrimental to both
business and society (Yani-de-Soriano & Slater, 2009). Consumerism is strongly associated with wealth
and inequality. For instance, Schor (2002) describes consumerism as an unusually large increase in the
dominant norm of consumer aspiration. She suggests that the previously dominant norm of comfort has
been replaced by a norm of affluence or luxury. In structural terms, this can be described as a shift to a
situation in which the upper 20% of the income and wealth distribution (whose consumer patterns are
roughly synonymous with affluence and luxury) become a widespread emulative target throughout the
society (Schor, 2002). In fact, this indicates that majority of society has shifted from being content with
little, to being discontent with much. As affluence increases, it breeds consumerism and impatience
thereby undermining wellbeing (Offer, 2006). Therefore, despite widespread recognition of the relationship
between diet, exercise and heart disease, the flow of food, the immediacy of pleasure, and associations
between appetite and health override latent concerns about the negative impacts of dietary excesses on
long-term health and chronic illness (Wilson, 2010). Consequently, although individual prosperity and
consumerism may be encouraged, there is a sense that this prosperity will be curtailed in the presence
of social calamity, because if things were going well for an individual, it is of little consolation if the
person’s family, friends, and community are in crises (Jackson, 2010).

The concept of consumerism has multiple meanings, many of which are heavily value-laden (Shaw
& Aldrigde, 2003). Many scholars follow the illustrations outlined by Peter Drucker (1969) and Philip
Kotler (1971), who focused on the opportunity consumerism provided for marketing (Buskirk & Rothe,
1970; Jolibert & Baumgartner, 1981; Yani-de-Soriano & Slater, 2009). They suggest two main oppos-
Related Content

Market Testing Procedures for B2C and B2B in Perspective of Radical Innovation
www.igi-global.com/article/market-testing-procedures-for-b2c-and-b2b-in-perspective-of-radical-innovation/172048?camid=4v1a

Relational Proximity With Customers in the Retail Industry
Marcello Sansone, Roberto Bruni, Annarita Colamatteo and Maria Anna Pagnanelli (2019). *Predicting Trends and Building Strategies for Consumer Engagement in Retail Environments* (pp. 268-286).
www.igi-global.com/chapter/relational-proximity-with-customers-in-the-retail-industry/228225?camid=4v1a

Determinants of Attitudinal Loyalty in Retail Banking: Evidence from Nigerian
www.igi-global.com/article/determinants-of-attitudinal-loyalty-in-retail-banking/159109?camid=4v1a

Government Stewardship of Online Information: FOIA Requirements and Other Considerations
www.igi-global.com/chapter/government-stewardship-online-information/27743?camid=4v1a