



Toward an understanding of young consumers' daily consumption practices in post-*Doi Moi* Vietnam

Nhat Nguyen Nguyen^{a,*}, Nil Özçaglar-Toulouse^a, Dannie Kjeldgaard^b

^a Univ Lille, SKEMA Business School, 2 rue de Mulhouse, BP381, 59020 Lille Cedex, - France

^b Department of Marketing and Management, University of Southern Denmark, Campusvej 55, 5230 Odense M, Denmark

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Young consumer
Vietnam
Self-identity
Everyday consumption practices
Qualitative approach

ABSTRACT

More than 30 years have passed since *Doi Moi*, the economic and political reforms that transformed Vietnam into a lower middle-income market from one of the world's poorest markets. This transformation brought about changes in the consumption practices of Vietnamese consumers. Despite several studies focusing on these changes, the impact of the government's politics on young Vietnamese consumers' consumption practices has been largely unexamined. This study explores how young Vietnamese consumers develop and express their self-identity through their everyday consumption practices. Our findings from in-depth interviews and participatory observation indicate that consumption fosters reflexive self-awareness concerning the young consumers' competences, body sensitivities, and distinctive tastes in response to the control exerted by the government. The findings also reveal that young Vietnamese consumers use their everyday consumption practices to achieve individualization through self-emancipation, self-enrichment, and self-actualization, and to achieve socialization through self-authentication and self-cultivation. In this way, young Vietnamese consumers reject the communist identity and lifestyles promoted by the government.

1. Introduction

In 1986, in recognition of the inefficiency of the Soviet-type central planning of the national economic structure, the Vietnamese Communist Government (VCG) announced a reform program known as *Doi Moi* (renovation). This program introduced new market rules that set the business climate free, opening the market to transnational companies, privatizing national companies, and allowing global commodities and cultural contents (i.e., movies, music) to flow into the Vietnamese market (Shultz, Pecotich, & Le, 1994). In other words, the implementation of the *Doi Moi* policy transformed Vietnam into a market-driven economy. Since then, Vietnam has witnessed a steady economic expansion, reaching nearly 7% in 2015 (Deloitte, 2016) and achieved rapid growth of disposable income as well as consumers' expenditures, which reached up to \$150 million in 2016 (Euromonitor International, 2016).

The liberalization of the Vietnamese market is making way for the emergence of a consumer society (Breu, Salsberg, & Ha, 2010; Shultz & Pecotich, 1994) with dramatic changes in the social and cultural landscapes. These changes have been observed firstly in the emergence of new social classes (Van-Nguyen, Drummond, & Bélanger,

2012), the majority of which is middle-class, consisting of young urban educated professionals (King, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2007). Secondly, changes have been seen in the reconfiguration of social relationships and gender roles. For instance, some scholars observe that, despite the strong patriarchal structure of Vietnamese society, Vietnamese women today have an equal voice with their spouse in family decision making (Nguyen, Parker, Doan, & Brennan, 2012; Penz & Kirchler, 2012). Other scholars note that Vietnamese children also have a particular say in family purchase decision-making (Nguyen & Belk, 2013; Watne, Brennan, & Parker, 2013). Thirdly, changes include the replacement of pre-reform values and norms (e.g., asceticism, collectivism) by new ones (e.g., materialism, hedonism, individualism). These new values and norms have been introduced by global commodities and cultural flows (Le & Jolibert, 2001; Nguyen, Nguyen, & Barrett, 2007; Pecotique & Shultz, 1993; Soucy, 2003).

Finally, changes have also occurred in the VCG's politics on consumption. Although consumerism had been downplayed in favor of production and conspicuous consumption was discouraged before *Doi Moi*, these have since been legitimized. However, only commodities that are appropriate to the values and norms set up by the government are authorized. For example, the government has recently banned some

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: nguyen.hikaru@gmail.com (N.N. Nguyen), nil.toulouse@univ-lille2.fr (N. Özçaglar-Toulouse), dkj@sam.sdu.dk (D. Kjeldgaard).

popular songs written by South Vietnamese songwriters during the Vietnam War period. According to *Tuoi Tre News*,¹ a major daily newspaper in Vietnam, these songs displease Vietnamese authorities because of their alleged anti-government content. In addition, some books, music spots, and magazine or journal articles are also restricted by the government as their content is regarded as “poisonous and harmful,” “superstitious,” and “sexually stimulating” (Nguyen & Thomas, 2004).

Through the politics of consumption, the government keeps the consumption practices of Vietnamese consumers under its control and thus strongly influences how Vietnamese consumers, especially young consumers, experience and organize their daily life. These changes have also had a huge impact on Vietnamese consumers' perceptions of themselves and their relationships with others.

The transition in Vietnam since *Doi Moi* from a so-called communist society to a consumer society has attracted the attention of consumer researchers in two research streams. The first stream looks for objective measures to evaluate the impact of changes in the macro structure (socio-economic and cultural structure) on consumers' perceptions and behaviors, as well as on interpersonal relationships. For instance, Shultz (1997, 2007) and Shultz, Westbrook, and Nguyen (2007) have measured the effects of the *Doi Moi* policy on consumers' perceptions of life satisfaction, leadership, and product quality; Shultz and Pecotich (1994) have developed new assessments of consumption patterns in Vietnam; and Nguyen and Belk (2013) have dealt with changes in interpersonal relationships in the context of wedding rituals. The second stream of research focuses on the emergence of new values, attitudes, and perceptions that consumers adopt through consumption. For example, Nguyen, Jung, Lantz, and Loeb (2003); Nguyen et al. (2007), Nguyen and Smith (2012) have looked at shopping behaviors of Vietnamese consumers and shown that hedonism and status orientation motivate Vietnamese consumers to engage in impulsive buying and to choose foreign products over the local ones.

Previous work in these two research streams has offered an insightful and comprehensive look at changes in consumer behaviors in post-*Doi Moi* Vietnam. However, it has paid little attention to understanding the role and meaning of consumption in everyday life, and particularly the significance consumption may have in the tension between the values of an emerging consumer society and the values espoused through the government's politics of consumption. To address this research gap, we consider the government's politics of consumption in our investigation of consumers' day-to-day consumption practices in post-*Doi Moi* Vietnam.

We pay particular attention to young consumers (aged 15–29), who represent nearly 30% of the population and who form the largest consumer group in Vietnam (Euromonitor International, 2016). The reasons for our choice are several. First, these young consumers were born in the transition period of Vietnamese society from communist to capitalist. In contrast to individuals aged 30–44, who were born before *Doi Moi*, these young consumers have had no experience with the ascetic lifestyle (Nguyen, 2012). Rather, they have grown up with the rise of foreign commodities in the Vietnamese market (especially foreign movies, music and books) as well as the emergence of various global consumer lifestyles. Second, those young consumers are well known as pleasure-seekers, culture consumers, and creative trend-setters, both generally (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006) and also specifically in the Vietnamese market (Nielsen, 2016). Third, this segment of consumers is directly under the control and surveillance of the government and is the segment most affected by the government's politics of consumption. We believe that by studying the consumption practices of young consumers, we can explore the changes of and tensions in daily life experiences and life organization of consumers in post-*Doi Moi* Vietnam.

To gain in-depth knowledge from a sample of young Vietnamese

consumers, we conducted qualitative research, using in depth-interviews combined with participatory observation in the field to collect the data. These techniques are particularly suited for revealing the experiential aspects of consumption in daily life. Our dataset captures thoughts, feelings, and experiences of Vietnamese consumers in the post-*Doi Moi* period.

The structure of the paper is as follows. First, we introduce the theoretical framework that we used to study youth consumption practices. This overview is followed by an overall description of the youth policy of the VCG. Then, we detail the research process. In the findings section, we discuss the key themes that emerge from our data analysis. We subsequently highlight our theoretical and managerial contributions as well as some limitations of our research. Finally, we conclude by calling for further research on the daily consumption experiences of young consumers in other transitioning markets.

2. Theoretical framework – youth consumption and modernity

The liberation of the market has put Vietnam on the path of modernization. Traditional social order and structures have been breaking down and are being replaced by new systems, while new life chances and choices have been emerging. To build an understanding of the way that individuals, especially young individuals, deal with social and structural changes, we draw on work that has explored the social and structural changes of modernity in Western contexts (Giddens, 1991; Miles, 2000).

Giddens (1991) has argued that the process of modernization entailed “de-traditionalization,” which leads to new uncertainties. Indeed, the traditional institutions (religion, social class, local community, and so on) that individuals draw on for self-identification and daily practices have become unstable. The crumbling of traditional institutions that gave certainty of identity and destiny can on the one hand be positively valorized as emancipatory for the individual. However, the individualization process also means that subjects must articulate their own self-identity. Given the dynamic and processual nature of modernity, or the liquefying consequences of modernity (Bauman, 2000) such self-identity articulations must necessarily be reflexive. Reflexive identities are, according to Giddens (1991), expressed in lifestyles, which

can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfill utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular form of self-identity (1991: 81).

Drawing on Giddens' arguments, Miles (2000) sees young people as more flexible than other demographic segments in their construction of lifestyles. Thanks to their creative minds, they are able to transform limited social resources for their own ends (Willis, 1990). Young people deal with anxiety created by socio-structural changes by adopting consumer lifestyles (Miles, 2000), and they use consumption as a resource to build and maintain their identities. Consumer identity makes young people feel that their everyday life is more stable.

Such stability is not manifested in the form of a deep-rooted sense of sameness, but in a flexible, mutable, and diverse sense of identity within which consumerism appears to present the only viable resource (Miles, 2000: 158).

In other words, consumption bridges young people's experiences of social changes with their experiences of themselves. This idea is substantially illustrated by other works, such as research on the Buddhist self's construction of young Thai individuals through their symbolic consumption (Wattanasuwan & Elliott, 1999); study of lifestyle construction of young people in Denmark and Greenland (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006); work on the reflexive identity project of Iranian young people (Jafari & Goulding, 2013); work on identity construction of millennial youth of social network age (Doster, 2012),

¹ <http://tuoi tre.vn/tin/van-hoa-giai-tri/20170409/tu-vu-cam-vinh-vien-5-ca-khuc-ban-goc-va-di-ban/1294680.html>

or study of young people's coping strategies when faced with loneliness (Gentina, Shrum, & Lowrey, 2016).

Apart from expressing a sense of self, consumer lifestyles also allow young people to get a sense of the altered self of other persons (Miles, 2000). Through consumption, young people create a demarcation by constructing authentic identities between themselves as well as between themselves and adults. For instance, young people use clothing style to express the uniqueness of their self-identity through time (from past to future) and through space (from school to home) (Marion, 2003), but also use clothing choice as a barometer to judge others (Piacentini & Mailer, 2004). In addition, members of Generation Y seem to perceive consumption as a symbolic tool to mark their emotional, attitudinal, financial, and functional independence from their parents (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009; Palan, Gentina, & Muratore, 2010). Furthermore, young people engage in consumption practices to conform to their groups (e.g., peer groups, taste-oriented groups, or gender-oriented groups) and to demarcate the borderline with other groups. This conformity is illustrated in a substantial way in academic works on youth (sub)cultures, particularly the social class-oriented studies of Birmingham schools (e.g. Hall & Jefferson, 1993; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1990) and post-subculturalist studies (e.g. Chaney & Goulding, 2016; Goulding, Shankar, & Elliott, 2002; Goulding & Saren, 2009; Muggleton & Weinzierl, 2003; Yule & Tinson, 2017), which focus mostly on hedonistic aspects of consumption. Put succinctly, consumption plays a significant role in the individualization and socialization of young people.

Our study adds to this previous research. We take the works of Giddens (1991) and Miles (2000) as a theoretical framework to study the way young people use consumption in organizing their daily life in the context of post-*Doi Moi* Vietnam. Therefore, our research question is:

RQ: How do young Vietnamese consumers develop and express their self-identity through their everyday consumption practices?

However, we position our study differently from previous studies. Whereas that research—except for the investigation of Jafari and Goulding (2013)—implicitly assumes that young people can freely choose a consumer identity without any political constraints, we explore how the notions of identity that come with Western modernity and consumer culture can unfold in a context of political consumption ideals.

In the following section, we detail the youth policy that the VCG adopts to regularize cultural and consumption practices of Vietnamese youngsters.

3. Young people in the Vietnamese context

As soon as independence was declared in 1945, the government and the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) quickly appreciated the importance of the country's youth, in terms of both building a communist society and ensuring the long-term survival of the government. The authorities felt that young people paradoxically embodied hope yet constituted a threat. On one hand, they were seen as “the spring of [communist] society” (Ho, 1995: 167), “the frontline of the communist regime” (CPV, 1993: 538–539, cited in Nguyen, 2006: 330), and “the pillar of Vietnam” (CPV, 2008: 41, cited in Nguyen, 2006: 330). On the other hand, they were considered “white sheets of paper” (Rydstrom, 2001) on which all kinds of ideologies could easily be written. That is, for Vietnamese authorities, young people are ideologically immature and must be shaped, structured, and monitored to ensure their loyalty to the communist regime, as

youth in general...is a section in society that does not have its own ideology. Therefore, the worker's class and their vanguard party must seize the youth, mobilize, educate and awaken them in order to help them find the revolutionary truth and strive for this truth

(Nguyen, 1997, cited in Nguyen, 2006: 330).

This understanding leads the government and the CPV to place youth at the core of their political interests and their propaganda. They train Vietnamese young people in accordance with proletarian values, which emphasize hard work, self-sacrifice, altruism, and anti-materialism (Rydstrom, 2001). In addition, they use Confucian values as moral codes to shape and regularize the socialization of young people and to make them behave correctly according to the prototype of the young Vietnamese communist—that is, a means of youth control and sanction (Nguyen, 2012). To be a good young communist is to conform to and to obey the Party and the elders (parents, teachers, previous generations), as well as to display “good morality.” Good young communists should avoid so-called “social evils” such as gambling, drinking, smoking, and prostitutes, and refrain from consuming media products containing sexual or anti-party content (Nguyen & Thomas, 2004; Rydstrom, 2001). Additionally, they must perform well at school, be active in events organized by the Youth League movement, and especially, be politically mature (Nguyen, 2012). Generally speaking, the behaviors and practices of Vietnamese young people are regularized by Communist and Confucian norms and values set by the government and the Communist Party. Family, media, school and the Communist Youth League are all used by the government to ensure the appropriateness of young people's behaviors and practices (Nguyen & Thomas, 2004).

The youth policy of the Vietnamese government also concerns the consumption practices of young people. Young Vietnamese are allowed access only to those commodities that are approved by the government. Their internet and public space use is restricted, while the consumption of mass culture such as foreign music, books, magazines and television is strictly controlled. All consumption of cultural materials related to politics and sex is illegal. Further, “moral gatekeepers,” such as parents, teachers, or government experts, often intervene with respect to the clothing styles and body stylization of young people, making moral corrections (Leshkovich, 2008). For example, hair dying, tattooing, wearing make-up, and dressing in provocative clothes are strongly discouraged and often prohibited in a school context because of the deviant image of such acts, as labeled by the government (Nguyen & Thomas, 2004). To sum up, the Vietnamese government politicizes the consumption practices of young people, determining what young people can and cannot do in every aspect of their daily life from the public arena to the domestic sphere. This policy has a deep effect on the consumption practices of young Vietnamese, as well as on the construction of their identity. For this reason, we map out the way Vietnamese young people construct their identity through their restricted consumption practices.

4. Methods

In carrying out our study, we followed an inductive theory-building process. To collect the data, we applied participatory observation and in-depth interviews with 35 Vietnamese aged 15 to 28 (Table 1). Our informants live and study in five cities in Vietnam: Hanoi (in northern Vietnam), Da Nang, Tuy Hoa, Nha Trang (in central Vietnam), and Ho Chi Minh City (in southern Vietnam). The informants were recruited through snowball sampling. The data were collected by the first author, who is Vietnamese and is familiar with the research context (language, sign, socio-cultural norms, etc.). Living abroad for several years has given him some distance from the consumption practices of young Vietnamese. Before starting the data collection, the first author was trained by the second and third authors to conduct interviews with young people on their consumption practices. Although the second and third authors have no specific connection to Vietnamese culture, both are experts on consumer culture and youth culture.

Two rounds of interviews were organized. In the first round, friends and classmates of the first author were asked to invite their friends to

Table 1
Informant description.

	Name	Age	Gender	Home
First-round interviews	Ha	21	Female	Ho Chi Minh City
	Linh	23	Female	Ho Chi Minh City
	Anh	21	Female	Nha Trang
	Hoa	24	Female	Da Nang
	Hong	28	Female	Nha Trang
	Thao	25	Female	Ho Chi Minh City
	Vu	23	Male	Da Nang
	Ti	22	Male	Ho Chi Minh City
	Tuan	21	Male	Ho Chi Minh City
	Tung	20	Male	Ho Chi Minh City
Second-round interviews	Quang	22	Male	Hanoi
	Dung	16	Male	Tuy Hoa
	Minh	15	Male	Hanoi
	Hau	22	Male	Nha Trang
	Ky	16	Male	Hanoi
	Na	24	Male	Ho Chi Minh City
	Hoang	18	Male	Hanoi
	Bi	15	Male	Nha Trang
	Hai	21	Male	Nha Trang
	Huan	22	Male	Hanoi
	Bao	25	Male	Tuy Hoa
	Tam	25	Male	Ho Chi Minh City
	Trang	22	Female	Hanoi
	Mo	22	Female	Hanoi
	Vi	21	Female	Hanoi
	Le	18	Female	Ho Chi Minh City
	Min	20	Female	Hanoi
	Van	24	Female	Ho Chi Minh City
	Xanh	24	Female	Tuy Hoa
	Thoa	25	Female	Hanoi
Bo	23	Female	Nha Trang	
Thu	20	Female	Hanoi	
Thanh	25	Female	Ho Chi Minh City	
Nu	17	Female	Ha Noi	
Khanh	19	Female	Nha Trang	

Note: All informants were given pseudonyms.

participate voluntarily in an individual long, semi-structured interview (1–1.5 h) through Skype. Those interviews were recorded by Callnote software. Ten informants participated to the first round of data collection (40% male and 60% female). The informants' ages range from 20 to 28 years old, with a mean of 24 years old. They come from Ho Chi Minh City (60%), Da Nang (20%), and Nha Trang (20%). The first author kept memos during the interviews and discussed the emerging themes from the interviews with the second and third authors. These discussions helped the first author modify his interview guide and trained him to conduct his data collection in the field.

The second round of interviews was undertaken in Vietnam. The purpose of this second round was to examine whether the themes that emerged from the first round would be similar for a younger sample during face-to-face interviews and in other locations. We extended our data collection to other locations because we supposed that informants coming from north Vietnam would be ideologically different from those coming from central and south Vietnam. This assumption is based on the history of the division of Vietnam. Twenty-five informants participated in the second round (48% male, 52% female) aged from 15 to 24 years old, with a mean of 20 years old. The informants came from Hanoi (48%), Tuy Hoa (12%), Nha Trang (20%), and Ho Chi Minh City (20%), and were recruited through snowball sampling. The interviews lasted 1–3 h and were conducted mainly in coffee shops and restaurants chosen by informants.

During the interview, informants were asked to share their feelings, thoughts, and desires regarding their consumption practices in diverse daily life situations. They were also encouraged to talk about their leisure and clothing style preferences, their purchase experiences, their “life stories,” such as their vision of the future, past experience and so on (Özçaglar-Toulouse, 2009; Shankar & Goulding, 2001), and their

relationships with others during their everyday consumption practices. All of the interviews began with open-ended discussion in response to a general question about the leisure activities and product and brand preferences of the informant (McCracken, 1988). The subsequent structure of the interview developed according to the themes that emerged during the course of the conversation. The interviews took place in Vietnamese and were recorded and transcribed later.

Apart from the interviews, the first author also conducted participatory observation to gain the experiences of the informants in real situations (Grove & Fiske, 1992). The first author was asked by four informants to accompany them on their shopping trips, night hang-outs, and music festival participation. During these activities, exchanges between the first author and these informants were recorded. The first author also took notes about practices, clothing styles, behaviors, and language that he observed in the field. All field notes were translated into English. This participatory observation phase was very useful for improving the data collection and analysis of interviews.

The data analysis relied on three stages of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the first stage, the first author coded the data openly by identifying discrete ideas. Similar ideas were classified into categories and subcategories through a discussion between co-authors until consensus was reached. In the second stage, we sought to identify the connections between categories through axial coding. In the third stage, selective coding, we tried to find the storyline that emerged from the data. Importantly, the open coding in the first stage and the axial coding in the second stage were conducted in a non-linear way. We moved back and forth between these stages to (re)define the categories. Furthermore, to make sure that we understood the informants' discourses correctly, we asked them to check and clarify our interpretation of their discourse. This method helped ensure the objectivity, credibility, and trustworthiness of our data analysis according to the standards of qualitative research.

In the following section, we discuss the themes that we identified from the data. Illustrative quotes represent these themes.

5. Findings

Several key themes emerged when informants were discussing their consumption practices in everyday life and how they use consumption to construct their identity.

5.1. Self-awareness

All informants identified themselves as “young communist”—an obligatory title that they must acquire during their school times. This title is used by schools as the key assessment of personal achievement and morality in young people (Nguyen, 2012). Being a young communist means putting collective interests in the fore and keeping personal desires and feelings at bay. In other words, young communist is a collective identity (Nguyen, 2012). However, the experiences that our informants get from their consumption practices call that collective identity into question. Informants in this study confirm that they get an alternative “sense of self” through their daily consumption practices. They are aware of their own personal values, desires, feelings, and authenticity despite their young communist identity. They become more aware of the commonalities and differences between their “self” and the “other.” That is, consumption fosters the reflexive self-awareness of our informants (Giddens, 1991).

This reflexive self-awareness of our informants manifests in three aspects: competences, body sensitivities, and distinctive tastes. In the following, we develop three cases (Vu, Quang, and Ha) illustrating the reflexive self-awareness in the discourse of our informants.

Vu: I would like to work in a company with a dynamic and competitive environment, where I can test my abilities, acquire new skills and have the opportunity to move up the ladder based on my

skills and my hard work.... National companies don't have that kind of environment. People [in national companies] are hired more because of their political ties than their own abilities. Most of them don't have any skills, like the place where I did my internship. Whereas in international companies, like Japanese companies, people are hired for their own skills. And you have to be diligent, you have to constantly improve your skills in order to progress. Otherwise you will be fired.

Interviewer: How do you know that international companies have competitive environments?

Vu: Well, I read about it in books. And the films I've watched confirm what I've read.

(Vu, 23-year-old male student, in Da Nang)

Vu's interview excerpt illustrates his competence-related awareness. This awareness arose from his reflexive analysis of his "lived experiences" (i.e., internship experiences) and his "mediated experiences" (i.e., the information from his consumption of foreign books and movies) (Giddens, 1991). On the one hand, he observed that the workplace environment in national business is non-transparent in recruitment ("people are hired more because of their political ties than their own abilities") and inertia ("national companies don't have that kind of environment"). On the other hand, the information and images from his media consumption make him believe that the workplace environment in transnational companies differs from what he observed in his internship. This contrast between "lived experiences" and "mediated experiences" calls into question his competences, his desires for a workplace, and his life projects, in other words, the disparity of his "reflexive self-project" (Giddens, 1991: 32). For Vu, working in transnational companies could allow him to develop his skills, his knowledge, and his future career. This reflexive analysis monitors his choice for a better life according to his imagination. Here, the information and images from media consumption play a role as a tool that Vu can use to make sense of his experiences and evaluate working situations. Further, this information and these images reveal to him new life opportunities that he can imagine to improve his life and his development. In other words, Vu nurtures his "reflexive self-project" (Giddens, 1991: 32) by his "mediated experiences."

In a similar way, Quang's mediated experiences invoke his body sensitivity awareness. In the excerpt below, Quang (a 22-year-old, male journalist) explains his preferences for cosmetic consumption and make-up practices.

I'm a huge fan of cosmetic products. I use mild cleansing and face cream every day to have clean and bright facial skin. Sometimes, I use powder to cover my tired face before going to work or to customer meetings. It's time-consuming but it makes me feel more confident.... For me, men using cosmetics and wearing make-up is a very normal thing. For example, all K-pop [South Korean pop music] male singers wear make-up when they are on stage or off stage. It's normal when they take care of their face like this. And all South Korean men do [take care their face] because in South Korea face values are very important. Having clean and bright facial skin is necessary for their success in work and daily social interactions. In Vietnam, it is the same. The more you take care of your skin, the more people appreciate you and the more you succeed at work. For me, using cosmetics and wearing make-up is an expression of your respect toward others.

(Quang, 22-year-old, male journalist in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City)

As a fan of South Korean pop music (K-pop), Quang has searched for news and information about his favorite bands and South Korean society. From internet and K-pop music video consumption, he discovered the normalcy of South Korean men's cosmetic consumption and make-up practices. However, he has only just started using cosmetics and wearing powder to take care of his face since he got a job as a journalist

at a teen magazine. His cosmetic consumption decision comes from his reflexive analysis of the importance of face values at work in Vietnam and in South Korea. As Quang discusses above, both societies (Vietnam and South Korea) value good facial skin as a sign of social respect and healthiness. He cites the cases of K-pop male singers to illustrate his argument. These cases stimulate his desire to have a good skin to gain more confidence and facilitate his relationships at work. Quang uses the images of K-pop male singers and the information about South Korean society to make sense of his lived experiences in the workplace. In contrast to Vu, whose reflexive analysis was based on disparity between lived experiences and mediated experiences with foreign commodities, Quang emphasizes the commonalities, allowing him to justify his consumer lifestyle without feeling guilty about his choice.

In the case of Vu and Quang, images and information from foreign media (e.g., books, movies, and music videos) foster their reflexive analysis by inviting them "to engage with the Other [cultures], an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences" (Hannerz, 1990: 239). These experiences feed their awareness of "self" and "others," their sensitivity and their imagination of possible lifestyles. For some informants in this study, self-awareness comes from their reflexive analysis of their daily consumption practices. The case of Ha, a 21-year-old female student in Ho Chi Minh City, is an example.

Sometimes I find that I'm a complex person... someone who is different from others [young people] because of my passion for books and the things I choose to read. But I think I have real experiences. I don't pursue life's vanities.... Reading allows me to see the world as it is, to recognize my existence in the world, and to have accurate thoughts. I feel as if I have a complete intellectual life. At the same time, I feel alone because I can't find anyone to share my point of view with, anyone who understands me because very few young people are interested in books that deal with subjects that are very difficult to read, like the ones I choose. Sometimes, I feel more independent than other young girls.... I feel isolated by others [young people] because of my interests and thoughts. I feel like I belong to the small number of people whose natural light makes them shine. Although "my light" is not as bright as others, "my light" is natural, compared to their "artificial light," which is fueled by external possessions.

(Ha, 21-year-old female student, Ho Chi Minh City)

The excerpt above illustrates the awareness of distinct consumption tastes. Ha observes that her preferences and choice of books differ from those of other young people. While she is interested in topics about sexuality, war, and death, other young people are interested in love stories. For Ha, the contact with these topics opens to her a consciousness about her "true self" (Tiryakian, 1968) with her distinctive values, desires and feelings. These topics also give her a sense of her femininity and empower her independence from men ("I feel more independent than other young girls"). As Ha explains elsewhere in her interview, she "can do anything without the help of men." That makes her different from other young girls that she has contact with and observes in everyday situations. Ha sees herself as authentic thanks to her reading preferences.

These three illustrative cases demonstrate the reflexive analysis of our informants through their daily consumption practices. For our informants, consumed commodities give them alternative tools with which they can analyze themselves and evaluate and make sense of their life conditions and social relationships. They can opt from among multiple possibilities displayed in commodities that they consume to stylize their daily life and their "self." However, through consumption practices, our informants are aware of social constraints (with the strong presence of the government's youth policy) and existential struggles (Giddens, 1991) in choosing their lifestyles. For example, during his interview, Vu expressed feeling guilty about his choice to work for transnational companies. According to Vu, this choice

contradicts the virtue of the young communist promoted by the government, for whom working in national companies is a duty of young people (Nilan, 1999). As he further explained in his interview, “I know it is not correct. It is like I am not patriotic when I work for transnational companies in my own [country]. But I have no choice because I have to help my family”.

To deal with social constraints and existential struggles, our informants struggle to negotiate between collective identity promoted by the government and self-identity. This negotiation is essentially reflected in their daily consumption practices.

5.2. Making sense of self through consumption practices

The data reveal that consumption practices are involved in the individualization and socialization of our informants. On the one hand, our informants use signs, symbols, and symbolic meanings that reside in consumer goods to live their biography reflexively (Giddens, 1991) and express their authentic self-identity (Miles, 2000). On the other hand, our informants try to harmonize their self-identity with constraints from their peer groups (Noble et al., 2009), their family, and school.

5.2.1. Individualizing

The individualization of our informants consists of self-emancipation, self-enrichment, and self-actualization.

5.2.1.1. Self-emancipation. Emancipation is understood as the process by which individuals try to cast off social and ideological constraints (Chalmers, 2006) or to break away from the fixities of social practices and control (Giddens, 1991). In the Vietnamese context, our informants use consumption practices as a way to pursue their desires, especially their personal interests that are discouraged by the government or their family. The case of Linh, a 23-year-old female student in Ho Chi Minh City, is an example.

Linh: I've watched the movie “The Lover,” adapted from the novel of Marguerite Duras. I really like that movie because it's very romantic, sensual, erotic but elegant. It is not as vulgar and cheap as some said critics. I learnt many things from it such as the lifestyle of colonial Saigonese, the history of South of Vietnam in the colonial era, love and sex. I felt the power of love in sex scenes, not like pornography.

Interviewer: What made you choose that movie to watch?

Linh: [...] Actually, I am curious about sex but I don't want to watch vulgar porno materials. And I knew that Marguerite Duras wrote about that thing, so I searched to read that novel. It's great but I prefer the movie to the novel because the former depicts livelier sex scenes.

Interviewer: But that movie is banned in Vietnam. How did you find it?

Linh: Right, that movie is not authorized in Vietnam even though most of the scenes in the movie were filmed in Vietnam. How sad it is. I think that it is unfair to label it as sexual content. Fortunately, YouTube is not banned in Vietnam. So, you can find the movie on YouTube.

Interviewer: Did your parents know that you watched that movie?

Linh: Of course not. They'll “kill” me if they know it. I watched the movie while my parents were sleeping. I turned off the sounds, just read the subtitle.

(Linh, 23-year-old female student in Ho Chi Minh City)

Sex is taboo in Vietnam. Pornographic or sex-related materials are considered “social evils” and are banned by the government (Nguyen & Thomas, 2004). However, with the spread of the internet, Vietnamese young people can illegally access these materials to satisfy their curiosity and assuage their lack of knowledge about sexuality and sex issues (Nguyen & Thomas, 2004). Linh's excerpt shows her “marginal tactics” (de Certeau, 1990) to satisfy her curiosity about sex issues in the Vietnamese context. She searched for knowledge about sex issues

through literatures and movies. The aesthetic and artistic features of sex scenes depicted in these “mainstream” materials give her a feeling that she does not consume pornography. With such marginal tactics, Linh maintains her virtue of young communist and avoids her parents' control.

The case of Linh illustrates the marginal tactics that are also adopted by other informants in their consumption of materials related to sensitive themes (e.g., political and ideological issues). Some of our informants are more active and more adventurous in searching for access to these materials. They use anti-proxy programs and other tools to access websites censored by the government because of their contents (e.g., the BBC, and sometimes Facebook). For them, these materials are the sources for their “work of imagination” (Appadurai, 1990). Thus, they emancipate their curiosity, their tastes, and their desire for knowledge acquisitions without having trouble with the authorities.

Some of our informants search to emancipate their “self” through the body. Xanh, a 24-year-old female student from Tuy Hoa, is one of them. In the excerpt below, Xanh talks about her new haircut and hair color.

Xanh: I've just got my new haircut and hair color. I chose two bright colors, pink and blue-purple, for my hair because I love those colors and they make me look cooler. Those colors shine vividly in the light but, in the dark, they are hardly recognized. And I had a hairdresser dye a back undercut only because I don't want to get a trouble with my parents. They will not be happy if they know I have changed my hair color.

Interviewer: What made you decide to dye your hair?

Xanh: Hmmm, I wanted to renew myself. I felt that I was stuck in an image of a good girl. I'm OK with that image because it pleases my parents and I'm at ease with it. But, sometimes, I want to do something crazy like a rebellious girl, try new things. However, I don't want to displease my parents and get into trouble, so I chose to do risk-free things. Dyeing my hair is one of those. It's adventurous but it's worth to try.

(Xanh, 24-year-old female student from Tuy Hoa)

Bored with her conformist image, Xanh decided to renew herself by constructing an image of a cool girl, which is expressed through her hair color. Although dyeing hair is a challenge for her because of her parents' control, that practice excites her. It gives her a sense of freeing herself from the image of a good girl and controlling her own style, an expression of her self-identity (Miles, 2000), by her own will and preferences.

5.2.1.2. Self-enrichment. Self-enrichment plays a part in the reflexive self-projects of the individual (Giddens, 1991). The term coincides with the concept of self-completion (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 1981), which is understood as the improvement of an individual's daily identity performance by pursuing symbolic resources. This endeavor enables individuals to complete and enrich their definition of social roles and their own place in society. In the interviews, self-enrichment manifests from the way the informant addresses his or her personal deficiencies through consumption practices. For instance, Hoa, a 24-year-old female student from Da Nang, considers traveling as the best way to overcome her lack of knowledge for other cultures and art of living.

I like to travel. I'm curious about cultures and customs that are different to Vietnam. I have a French friend who's very close to me and travels a lot. She knows a lot of countries in the world. She has been to Israel, Vietnam and Asia except China. She's traveled all across Europe. She even studied in Canada. I admire her a lot. I think that people who like traveling like my friend feel a lot of empathy toward others. They understand why people from different countries resolve the same problem in different ways. They understand not only the customs but also the psychology of others. They also acquire knowledge about cooking, languages and the life experiences

of others so they can enrich their own. I'd like to be like my friend. I'll try to travel a lot while I'm still young, to explore different things in the world before I get married...It's normal for young people to want to travel like me, because youth is a journey.

(Hoa, 24-year-old female student from Da Nang)

For Hoa, traveling is about consuming the authenticity of other cultures. The knowledge and art of living acquired by traveling contribute as much to her personal development as to the accomplishment of the self and her image of youth. She feels that traveling and youth come together in open-mindedness, mobility, and change. What is more, traveling allows her to build her identity. Indeed, as Hoa's excerpt illustrates, traveling is "collecting places" (Desforges, 1998) so that she can enrich her "personal archive or museum" (Belk, 1988) with knowledge and experiences of other cultures and souvenirs (e.g., postcards) collected during her travels. From that cultural capital, she distinguishes herself from other young people (as the way she sees her French friend).

Self-enrichment can also be observed in our informants' daily media consumption. For example, Kha, a 17-year-old male high school student from Ho Chi Minh City, "improves [his] English skill by listening to Anglo-American music and watching MTV." Additionally, this Anglo-American music opens him up to "multiple facets of life so that [he] can learn how to live his life while [he is] still young." Similarly, for Anh, a 21-year-old female student from Nha Trang, watching South Korean films allows her to recognize "different emblematic categories of the human personality." These films also give her "examples which [she] can apply to resolve problems in daily life and in her relationships with others" thanks to the similarity between South Korean and Vietnamese societies. Lastly, Tam, a 20-year-old female student living in Hanoi, told us that through her passion for South Korean pop music (K-pop), she was able to teach herself the IT and linguistic skills needed to make and edit online music videos. All of these examples demonstrate that for our informants, consumption is not only a leisure activity but also a way to fill the lack of competences and develop new ones.

5.2.1.3. Self-actualization. Giddens (1991: 78) defines self-actualization as the control of (life) time, getting rid of "oppressive emotional habits" and having the chances for self-development. For our informants, consumption is a way of revitalizing the self when they lose control, when they encounter difficulties in their self-enrichment process, or when they simply want to withdraw temporarily from society. The case of Kha, a 17-year-old male high school student from Ho Chi Minh City, demonstrates this theme.

When I'm sad or when I get bad grades, I put on my headphones and play some rock music at a high volume. I get caught up in the beat of the music. The beat and rhythm of these tracks are so powerful that I feel as if I'm getting high, that I leave my body and dissolve into the tune. I feel stronger when I listen to it, I no longer feel tired.

(Kha, 17-year-old male high school student from Ho Chi Minh City)

In the excerpt above, Kha explains that he uses the therapeutic effects of music to reenergize himself. Here, "body" not only refers to his physical body but also the social body, which is structured and corseted by social conventions. "Leaving the body" signifies being emancipated from social constraints. The powerful beat and the rhythm of the music tracks deliver him away from reality. He feels absorbed into the tune and gets rid of his sadness and frustration. With this experience, Kha renews himself. In other words, listening to rock music is a symbolic consumption by which Kha overcomes existential struggles (Elliott, 1997; Giddens, 1991).

Like Kha, other informants consider their consumption practices as a means to comfort themselves. These consumption practices also encourage them to face the challenges of their daily lives as well as to adapt to social constraints. Through consumption, they regain control over their self-identity. While some of our informants consume in

conformity with social norms and the government's politics of consumption, others exert their consumption practices more critically. For instance, Thao, a 25-year-old female employee from Ho Chi Minh City, searches to empower her self-identity through tattooing. Having a difficult time in her work and love relationships, Thao decided to have her forearm tattooed with the image of a lotus flower and the Buddhist character "Om" in Sanskrit. In her interview, Thao explains that her tattoo symbolizes "the ultimate meaning of human life," the suffering which Buddhist discourse refers to repeatedly. Identifying herself as a Buddhist practitioner, Thao adopted this tattoo to "remind [herself] that suffering is a normal part of life and that [she] must accept and live with it." In other words, tattooing is a symbolic consumption practice through which Thao reconstructs and empowers materially her "Buddhist self" (cf. Wattanasuwan & Elliott, 1999). However, this process of self-identity reconstruction also marks the negation of Thao's young communist identity. Indeed, in Vietnam, tattooing is regarded as a deviant act that is associated with rebel masculinity. It is also considered to be a hedonistic consumption. By tattooing her forearm, Thao stylizes herself as a young pleasure-seeker who seeks emancipation from the constraints of youth policy set up by the government, while at the same time borrowing from traditional sources of belief.

5.2.2. Socializing

On the basis of their interviews, our informants appear very conscious of the use of consumption practices for social purposes. They use brands, products, and leisure activities as tools to blend into their peer groups, to distinguish themselves from other young people, and to manage their relationship with their family members. Generally, our informants use consumption practices for self-authentication and self-cultivation.

5.2.2.1. Self-authentication. In a consumption context, self-authentication is understood as a process of self-making in which an individual has to harmonize his/her construction of self-identity and collective identity performance (Arnould & Price, 2000). On the one hand, he/she draws on symbolic values of consumed products or consumption experiences to gain a feeling of being authentic (authenticating acts). On the other hand, the person seeks to fit into the group or the community in which he/she lives through shared participation or shared rituals (authoritative performances). As excerpt from the interview of Tuan, a 21-year-old male student in Hanoi, is an example.

My personal vehicle is a red Jupiter [a subsidiary brand of Honda] scooter. It's a present from my mother for getting into university. I chose the color red because all the members of my peer group have a scooter with the same brand and the same color. We choose red because we are fans of Manchester United [a football club]. We want to show off our passion as well as our distinctive image from other young boys. We always impress others each time we hang out together by the uniformity of our scooters. It's playful. We didn't choose Airblade [a middle high-end brand of Honda] because that brand for us is too popular. And driving an Airblade when you are still a student seems to be pretentious. Most Vietnamese young men dream about Airblade as a personal vehicle, but we don't.

(Tuan, 21-year-old male student in Hanoi)

Tuan expresses his self-identity and his collective identity through his scooter. By choosing the color and the make of his scooter, he displays his passion for his favorite football club and distinguishes himself from other young men who prefer other makes of scooter that he judges as irrelevant for youngsters. Here, choosing a distinctive color and make is an "authenticating act" (Arnould & Price, 2000) by which Tuan achieves his authenticity. Moreover, the scooter gives him a sense of belonging to his peer group and displays his "authoritative performance" (Arnould & Price, 2000). With the chosen scooter, Tuan shares his tastes with his friends and participates in the group ritual of driving

his scooter in the street with his peer group. The gaze of others legitimizes and intensifies his sense of authenticity and collective identity. In other words, the scooter and the relative cultural practices (i.e., choice of color, make) are involved in Tuan's self-authentication.

Like Tuan, Hau, a 22-year-old male student from Nha Trang, uses his personal vehicle as a means of self-authentication. However, Hau chooses a motorcycle that is less common in Vietnam, and does “motorcycle personalization and maintenance.” In his interview, he tells about his experiences “undressing” his new motorcycle to transform it into an original item. With help of members of a bikers' club in his hometown, he learned to recognize and remove the unnecessary parts of a motorcycle, replace the original motor with a more powerful one, raise the exhaust pipe, and so on. He also learned how to maintain his motorcycle. This process allows him to create a less common motorbike and establish his image as a masculine worker who understands mechanics and two-wheelers. This image helps distinguish him from other young people who he feels are not authentic because of their common scooters and their ignorance when it comes to mechanics. Moreover, through the process of “motorcycle personalization and maintenance,” Hau builds up and bolsters his relationships with other members of his bikers' club. Generally, Hau looks to “authoritative performances” for his self-authentication.

According to their particular self-project, our informants primarily emphasize “authenticating acts” or “authoritative performances.” For example, Thao, a 25-year old female employee from Ho Chi Minh City, engages in particularly “authenticating acts” for her self-authentication. In her interview, she reports that she seeks to stand out from other young people by wearing second-hand clothes imported from the West. She learned to browse for items in open-air markets, negotiate and buy them at the right place, and make alterations before wearing them. She feels “the garments of [those] clothes are unique because they are branded goods rarely found in official clothing stores.” Further, they give her “a retro-vintage look which other young women do not have.” In other words, the practices of searching, bargaining, and carrying out alterations of second-hand branded clothes make Thao feel authentic.

5.2.2.2. Self-cultivation. Self-cultivation is one of the principal concepts of Confucian philosophy. It is understood as a process by which an individual learns to be virtuous through self-educating, self-understanding, and harmonizing his self-identity with collective identity (Nguyen & Belk, 2013). According to Tu (2000), the familial relationship is an essential part of self-cultivation. An individual in Confucian society must fulfill his/her duties with all familial members (parents, children, brothers, sisters, husband, wife), learn to know and understand the differences between them, and coordinate his/her personal needs with theirs to maintain the harmony of family identity.

The interviews of our informants reveal the role of self-cultivation in their self-realization project. Our informants have to coordinate their personal desires with familial interests in every consumption-related decision-making task. They report various tactics. For example, in the case of Vu, self-cultivation is achieved by voluntarily pushing aside his personal desires in favor of his family interest.

I want to change my scooter for my working life when I finish university. My mother offered to buy me one but I'm not sure because my family has a modest income. If I buy a scooter now, our lives will be difficult. My little sister is also in her final year and we need to save money so she can go to university. My father lives with us but he has his own problems. My mother is the only one who can look after us. That's why I don't want to use her money to buy a new scooter. I'll buy a new one when my mother and little sister have got no more financial worries. If necessary, I'll give them my salary. And then I'll buy myself a new scooter, a Honda SH, which costs around \$3000–\$5000. I'm not happy about it because it means I have to be successful in my life. But as I already told you, I'll buy it when my mother and little sister have got better living conditions. You're not

a man if you have a successful life but your loved ones are living in misery.

(Vu, 23-year-old male student from Da Nang)

The scooter is an extension of the self (Freire, 2009), which the Vietnamese, especially young people, use to express their consumerist and hedonist lifestyles. It can also demonstrate the personal success and financial possibilities of a family (Nilan, 1999). Vu's desire for a new scooter exemplifies these characteristics. Nonetheless, he is resolved to show solidarity with his little sister and for the collective interests of his family. For him, personal development goes hand-in-hand with the development of all family members. This attitude involves fulfilling the duties of family piety and fraternity in accordance with Confucian norms and values (McLeod & Nguyen, 2001). The same phenomenon is observed in the interview of Lanh and Thanh, two 25-year-old female employees from Ho Chi Minh City, who limit their monthly consumption-related expenditure in order to send some of their wages to their parents.

In most of the interviews, we observe that, while achieving self-cultivation, some informants are forced to abandon their consumption practices on behalf of their family identity and parents' will. For example, Ti, a 22-year-old male student from Ho Chi Minh City, explains that he had his hair cut and dyed yellow to change his look. However, he was forced to return to his natural color at the request of his father. The latter felt Ti's hairstyle was vulgar and made Ti look like a delinquent, which could damage the family's image. Ti's submission to his father's will is a mandatory and non-negotiable act. His submission is totally passive.

In other cases, informants undertake their consumption practices in the form of a concession. For example, Trang, a 22-year-old female employee in Hanoi, told us that she was scolded by her mother every time she caught sight of the tattoo on Trang's hip. Like Ti's father, Trang's mother felt the tattoo was a mark of delinquency and could damage the image of a young person, especially a young girl. Therefore, to avoid quarrelling, Trang always covers up her tattoo when she is with her mother and only reveals it to her close friends. The same is true of Thanh, who has a preference for miniskirts. Her parents feel that overly revealing miniskirts do not conform to the clothing norms for young girls in Confucian society. They asked her to give up wearing miniskirts. Conceding to her parents, Thanh chooses long skirts that cover her knees. Neither Trang nor Thanh pushes aside her preferences to respect the interests of her parents. They both maintain these preferences by expressing them outside of the family context (Trang) or by choosing a substitute for the preferred goods (Thanh) in their self-making.

6. Discussion

For the Vietnamese young people who participated in this study, consumption practices involve making sense of their self. The mediated experiences that they get from foreign goods and local leisure activities enact their reflexivity, in which they consciously analyze and confront a series of questions related to their own sense of self and others' selves. This process opens them to the awareness of their personal values, their personal feelings, and their authenticity. However, they are also conscious of the socio-cultural changes and constraints of the context where they live, as well as the multiple possibilities of life-making in other cultural contexts. That stimulates their desire to realize their “project of self-identity” (Giddens, 1991) to make sense of their daily life and seize the life chances due to society changes. For these young people, the consumer lifestyle is the appropriate choice (Miles, 2000).

By adopting a consumer lifestyle, our informants strive to emancipate their body sensitivities, enrich their competences and skills that they judge important for their development, overcome existential struggles caused by confronting social and political constraints, establish their authenticity, and manage their relationships with family

members. In other words, a consumer lifestyle is part of their “life politics” (Giddens, 1991: 214)—a politics of choice that an individual in a post-traditional context adopts to achieve emancipation from social tradition and hierarchical domination through self-realization. This study has shown that Vietnamese young people embrace a consumer identity as the alternative to the “young communist” identity imposed by the government. They regard the latter as a form of inertia and an outmoded model that is irrelevant in the context of globalization. This perception is reflected in Vu's experiences in the workplace of a national company and in the search by Linh and Xanh for body emancipation. In adopting the consumer lifestyle, these young people implicitly negate the young communist identity and subvert the government control exerted on them.

Like the Iranian young people in prior research (Jafari & Goulding, 2013), the Vietnamese young people in this study are conscious of the government's politics of consumption—that is, social policing, media censorship, and market control. These young people acknowledge that they could get into trouble with the government and its institutional devices (e.g., school, family) if they push their self-realization too far. Therefore, they deploy multiple marginal tactics to avoid government control and surveillance while pursuing pleasures. For instance, Linh satisfies her thirst for knowledge of sensitive topics (e.g., sex and sexuality) through the consumption of mainstream materials (e.g., non-prohibited books and literature), while other informants use anti-proxy tools to access censored information on the internet. It is the same with regaining body control. Xanh dyes the back undercut of her hair, which is invisible in the dark; Thao covers up the tattoo on her forearm with a long-sleeved shirt, while Trang covers the tattoo on her hip. In other words, these young Vietnamese resist governmental control by choosing alternative information and knowledge systems as references in making sense of their daily lives. These systems are operated through consumption practices.

Although the young Vietnamese people in this study reject the standardized identity and anti-materialist lifestyle promoted by the government, they are still shaped by Confucian norms and values. In a Vietnamese context, global goods and media that promote the consumer lifestyle have not replaced traditional references (i.e., family, school, and government-controlled media) in structuring their self-identity (Miles, 2000). Rather, in their search for individualization and socialization, young people use multiple symbolic resources to negotiate with a particular life experience structured by those traditional references, and the family continues to play a crucial role in their choice of consumption practices. Thanks to symbolic resources from consumed commodities and leisure activities, these young people can balance their self-identity and their family identity (cf. Epp & Price, 2008; Lindridge, Hogg, & Shah, 2004) in their own ways.

The way our Vietnamese informants develop a sense of self and express their self-identity through everyday consumption practices can also be observed in other emerging market contexts, such as Nepal (Liechty, 2003), China (Dong & Tian, 2009), and Russia (Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2012). Iranian young people use different resources from global and local commodities in their self-actualization projects (Jafari & Goulding, 2013). However, we noticed an important difference between the Vietnamese context and other contexts studied in the literature. The reflexivity exhibited in our informants' narratives of self is caused not only by the plethora of lifestyle options and the crumbling of traditional fixtures of identity. It is caused as much by the social and political attempts of solidifying elements of identity expression from the liquefying process of global consumer culture (Bauman, 2000).

7. Conclusion

7.1. Theoretical and methodological contributions

The findings of the present study contribute to a consumer research stream on emerging and transitioning markets (Jafari, Firat, Sierdem,

Askegaard, & Dalli, 2012) in general, and a consumer research stream on Vietnam in particular. The study addresses several gaps. First, our examination tackles the translation of young consumers' perceptions on consumption in their daily life practices. While previous work on emerging markets has investigated consumption practices of young consumers (e.g., Jafari & Goulding, 2013; Kravets & Sandikçi, 2014; Strizhakova et al., 2012), that research has been grounded in a specific consumption context or product (e.g., media products, local and global brands). The investigation of consumption practices in everyday life contexts has been scarce. Moreover, researchers have paid little attention to the translation between consumers' perceptions of consumption and their daily consumption practices. Through the Giddensian lens, our study highlights the role of self-identity in that translation.

Second, our study underlines the controlling role of the government in the consumption practices of young consumers in emerging markets. However, while the meaning and role of consumption largely reflect the features of individualization noted by Giddens and others, this individualization takes place in a context of political and moral constraint. Therefore, while we do see spread of Western models of modernity, these models are always locally articulated in specific historical, social, and political circumstances (Liechty, 2003). Our study shows that identity reflexivity can emerge as much from attempts to maintain an embeddedness of individual identities as it can from the disembedding processes of modernity (Giddens, 1991). That distinction is rarely reported in previous work (except that of Jafari & Goulding, 2013).

Third, our study reveals the consumption politics young Vietnamese consumers adopt to resist government control and realize their self-identity. Our results shed light on behaviors and consumption patterns of young consumers in Vietnam. Fourth, by combining methods of data collection, our study responds to the call of Jafari et al. (2012) to develop new methodological tools to conduct research on emerging and transitioning markets.

7.2. Managerial implications

Our study reveals that young Vietnamese consumers regard consumption practices as a way to make sense of their self-identity in their daily life. Companies targeting the young consumer segment in Vietnam should structure their marketing campaigns around the concept of self. Companies can create messages in their marketing communication strategies that motivate young consumers to get more involved in their daily self-realization, provide them various possibilities for experiencing and developing their self-identity, and link the individuality of their brand images with the self-project of young consumers. For example, thanks to their communication messages stressing the image of individuality and non-conformism, New Balance, Converse, Adidas, and Nike are preferred by young consumers in Vietnam (HKTDC, 2017).

Companies should also pay attention to Confucian norms and values in creating their messages for young segments. In their interviews, our informants cited OMO (a detergent brand of Unilever) and Coca Cola as the two companies whose messages are well received and preferred, because the advertisements of those companies emphasize familial values. In contrast, Rejoice (a shampoo brand of Unilever) is disliked because of its irrelevant message content, which shows an ungrateful reply of a young model to the senior one.

7.3. Limitations and future research

This study takes an exploratory look at motivational factors of consumption practices of young Vietnamese consumers in the context of their daily life. To discover the underlying theoretical frameworks from the information provided by informants, we focus on the richness, quality, and depth of information rather than the quantity. To this end, we adopted a qualitative research design for this study. To guarantee the robustness of the results, we collected data from different age

groups and genders in different cities.

The limitation of qualitative methods lies in the limited generalizability of the findings, which cannot be established through any single study (Noble et al., 2009). While we have a large amount of data, we cannot generalize our results to the entire population of young people in Vietnam. However, we believe that the richness of the key themes identified in this study can offer a sample representation of motivational factors influencing situational purchase decision-making of young Vietnamese consumers (cf. Fournier, 1998). To temper the generalizability of the proposal framework, future research needs to empirically measure the key themes identified here.

This study does not consider other segments such as middle-aged consumers, which is the second largest segment in Vietnamese market (Euromonitor International, 2016). It would be interesting to examine whether the framework proposed in this study is extendable to the middle-aged consumer segment. Results would help to reinforce the understanding of the similarities and the differences in reactions to socio-cultural changes of various consumer segments. Furthermore, informants in our study often mention the places and retailers they usually frequent for their extra-school activities, yet we have not focused on the symbolism of such places and retailers. Future research could examine the consumption experiences of young Vietnamese consumers in these places and retailers as well as the symbolism of these places in their lifestyle construction.

Finally, this study does not examine the perception and reaction of young Vietnamese consumers to global and local goods. For instance, Nepalese young consumers consider global goods as the embodiment of modernity, whereas local goods reflect the stagnation of the country and its peripheral position in the world culture map (Liechty, 2003). In the same vein, the consumption of global goods by young consumers in Greenland evokes their peripheral consciousness and the feeling of ephemeral modernity (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006). Our informants, however, rarely mentioned their perception of global and local goods. It would be interesting for future research to examine how young Vietnamese consumers perceive global goods and whether they choose global goods over local ones to self-modernize.

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