Explaining Consumer Resistance and Anti-consumption with deviant careers?
Insights from the case of illegal downloading

Garcia Bardidia Renaud, University of Nancy, CEREFIGE
Nau Jean-Philippe, University of Nancy, CEREFIGE
Remy Eric, University of Rouen, NIMEC
Plan

- Illegal downloading: a massive deviance produced by market actors?
- Deviant careers: an insightful framework?
- Method: chosen approach and collected data
- Main findings: careers and resistance, consumption changes and anti-consumption cultures
- Discussion: theoretical and managerial implications
1.1. Illegal downloading : when market explicitly produces deviance

- A massive shift from traditional mediations to P2P uses
  - 1999 : creation of Napster, 2010 : millions of users worldwide
- Majors facing new services' failures and developing moral labeling campaigns
  - « Downloading is a crime », «Let the music live on »
- Law enforcement framing « acceptable consumption practices »
  - 2009 : Hadopi in France, similar projects all over Europe

→ A huge amount of consumers labeled as deviant
1.2. Deviant careers: an insightful framework?

- Similarities with Becker's (1965) social construction of deviance
- Deviant identities constructed through careers with social learning to cope with multiple tensions
- Outsiders' lifestyles as coherent subcultures emerging from careers
- In the context of deviance produced by the market:
  - deviant careers structuring/expressing consumer resistances
  - deviant subcultures as expressions of anti-consumption
2. Method

- An inductive approach to articulate practices, discourses and representations in everyday life
- 74 in-depth semi-structured interviews with various profiles of downloaders to reflect the diffusion of downloading practices at micro and macro-social levels
- A thematic analysis to reveal downloaders' careers and related changes of consumption patterns or representations induced
3.1. Deviant careers in a double bind

- Resisting: keeping on downloading through different stages of deviant careers
  - Beginners' euphoria, increase use, pathological behavior, naturalization...
- Coping with two recurrent challenges:
  - flow of content and guilt
- Resolve through technical, relational, supply or taste learning
- In an enabling and constraining socio-technical system
  - External hard drive, USB stick, random/shuffle
3.2 Multiple anti-consumptions

- Frequent changes in the quantity and/or quality of cultural consumption patterns
- Leading to alternative consumption cultures:
  - Assumed utilitarian trivialization
  - Individual re-moralization of the market
  - Double detachment
  - Defense of free access
- Expressing a combination of relations to the marketplace previously observed in a specific context
4.1. Contributions

- Consumer resistance as the dynamic product of tensions resolved while struggling with internalized marketplace tensions
- Implying situated moral, economic, technical or relational tradeoffs
- Reflecting consumers' governmentality at work in an extreme case of moral labeling to mainstream consumers
- Articulating anti-consumption and consumer resistance in a marketplace experiencing a major shift: from resistances to new attachments?
4.2. Managerial implications

- Keys to understand failures of « anti-piracy » programs: tactics of avoidance and limits of labeling
- Practices and online offers' failures: using marketing as a translation to moral or interpersonal attachments?
- Cultures of consumption as values to be proposed by other business models?