

Rethinking Cultural Consumption Through the Lens of Categorisation

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The Topic: Cultural Consumption



The term cultural consumption *“refers to the consumption of goods and services with primarily aesthetic functions and only secondarily instrumental uses”* (Rössel et al., 2017).

We'll employ it to refer to the **consumption of artistic or cultural experiences** (i.e., music, films, literature, museum, theatre, TV, concerts...).

The Context: Cultural Abundance (Glevarec, 2021)



Cultural goods are intangible, and access has replaced possession (Belk, 2013, 2014).

Consumption is deemed as “liquid”, ephemeral and unconstrained (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017).



Platformisation with huge catalogs driven by algorithms (Hracs & Webster, 2021; Airolidi & Rokka, 2022)



France’s cultural policies favour a diversity of cultural practices and aim at reducing social barriers to cultural consumption (Bellon, 2016; Esclatine, 2013; Zask, 2016).

The Context: Diversity Issues and Latent Societal Discrepancies

Lack of consumed diversity



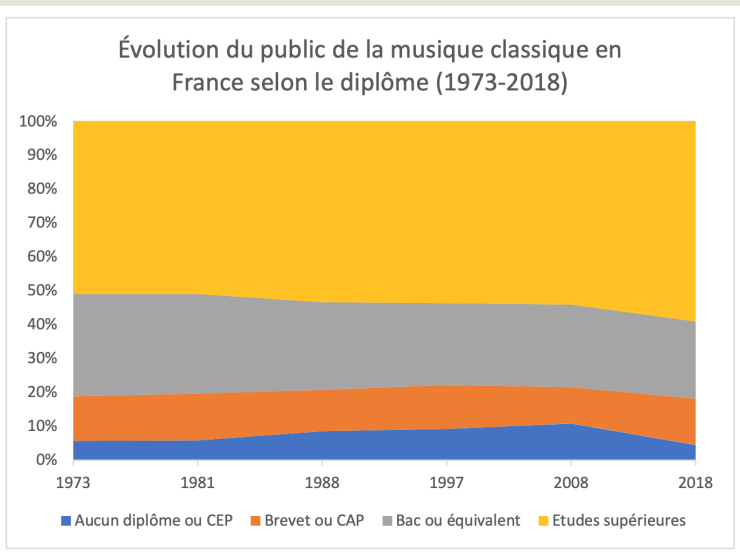
1% artists → 90% streams



7% titles → 50% streams (USA, 2016-2019)

12% titles → 90% books sold

Social discrepancies remain salient



The Experiential Paradigm

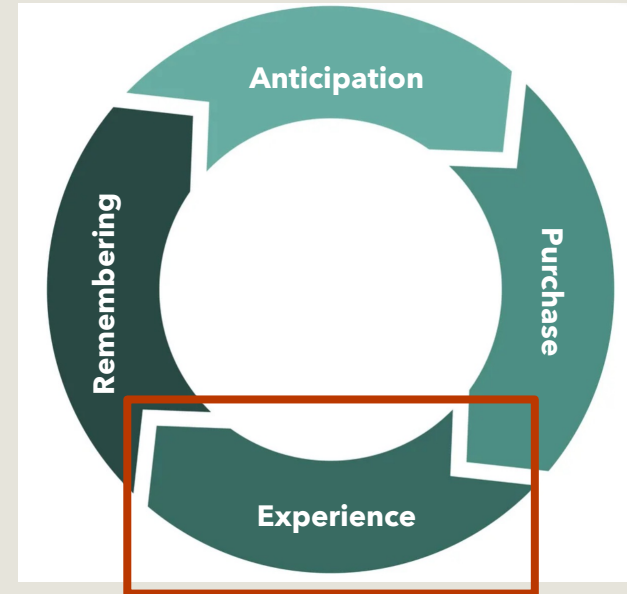
Considerable stream of research.

(i.e.: Bourgeon-Renault, 2000; Bourgeon-Renault et al., 2006; Bronner & de Hoog, 2019; Carù & Cova, 2005, 2011; Debenedetti, 2003; Debenedetti et al., 2009; Jarrier et al., 2019; Pulh & Mencarelli, 2015; Skandalis et al., 2019)

Primary source of value: the **interaction** between the consumer and the cultural experience (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Cultural consumption is **exploratory** and **hedonistic**.

Focus on the **lived experience** and **psychological determinants**. (Bourgeon-Renault, 2000).



(Arnould et al., 2002)

The Sociological Lens



Social determinism :

- The reason **why** consumers choose particular experiences is a product of context (Trizzulla et al., 2016), **opportunities** (Rössel et al., 2017) and **social dispositions** (Bourdieu, 1979; Peterson, 1992; Caldwell & Woodside, 2003).
- The way - **how** - consumers apprehend cultural experiences (Daenekindt & Roose, 2017; Jarness, 2015; Lahire, 2006; Michael, 2017; Peterson, 1992; Peterson & Kern, 1996).

Building on Existing Theory to Understand...

1. **How** people choose vs **why** they choose.
2. **The whole cycle** of the cultural experience.

Theoretical Lens: Categorisation

A **natural human process** of **grouping similar objects** (Mervis, 1981):

- To simplify complex environment (Mervis & Rosch, 1988)
→ **To explore how consumers make sense of the abundance?**
- Being a form of consumer expertise (Alba & Hutchinson, 1987)
→ **To understand how consumers apprehend the value of cultural goods?**
- That results from a social interplay between markets and consumers (Durand et al., 2017) and that help consumers define their consumption objectives (Barsalou, 1991)
→ **To study the determinants to cultural consumption?**

Methodology and Data

- **12 semi-directive interviews** with French consumers
- **Guided introspection** (Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993)
- We used **semiotic elements** (Mick & Oswald, 2006) to **recognize categories**

Signifiers → "Rock music" → A genre of music

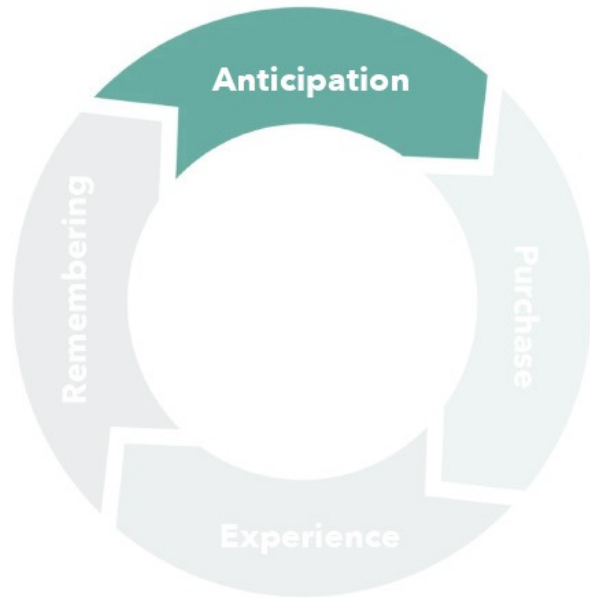
Archetypes → "beer cans piled up on top of each other" → Contemporary art

Metonymies → "the Picasso" → Abstract paintings

Our Findings...

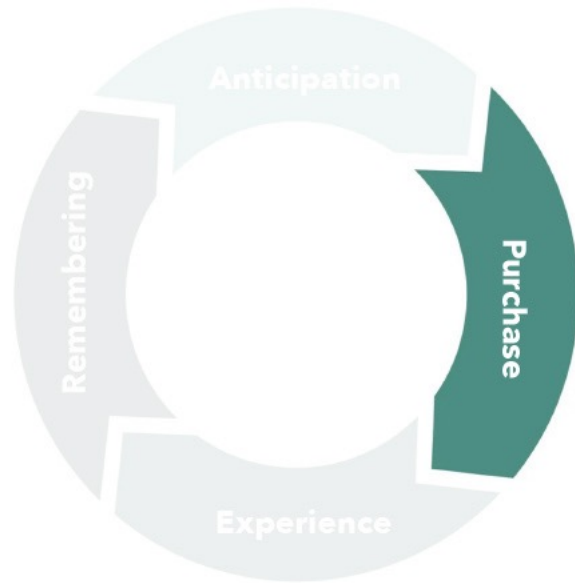
1. Categorisation **shapes the overall cultural experience**
2. Categories can help **reveal all the determinants to cultural consumption**

Categories Help Anticipate the Value of Cultural Experiences



"If we want to go to the movies together, as a family, we'd rather choose mainstream movies because we won't necessarily all be interested in a more confidential film or one that will address a problem that won't necessarily interest each other, while a mainstream movie will globally please all." – Pierre, 55 years old

Categories Orient the Purchase Decision



"I go see movies... Auteur films, social films, films that are real dramas, to cry. Sometimes I tell myself 'let's kill two birds with one stone', because I need it and it needs to come out." - Stan, 27 years old

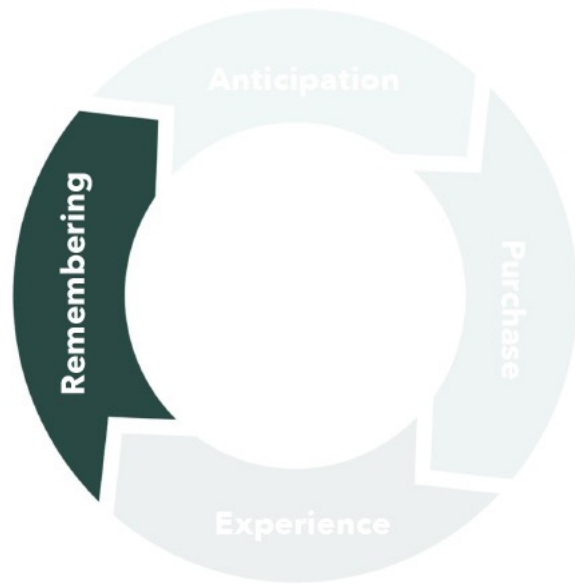
"I sometimes tell myself 'crap, I have a gap in my culture, I've never read - or just for French baccalaureate, so it's quite far and fuzzy - Le Rouge et le noir. So let's read it.' because I consider that it's a gap in my culture, one must read it. But apart from that, classical literature is really not what I prefer." - Joseph, 48 years old

Categories Shape the Lived Experience



"The entertainment dimension is way more important in TV shows, since I have watched several TV shows in which you don't need to think. I mean, the synopsis will interest me more than all the artistry and direction work." - Cedric, 43 years old

Categories Affect the Evaluation and the Remembrance Stage



"It was interesting, and at the same time, I didn't really understand what it meant. There... It was art. [...] Supposedly art. To me it wasn't art, but... [...] Sculptures... Well, not even sculptures, just things laid on the floor, things we could have laid there ourselves. So, I didn't understand how one could be amazed by that" - Liliane, 55 ans

Categories Reveal the Market Related Determinants

Market related → *"So it can be on Spotify because sometimes they propose new playlists, etc... So I usually listen, and then, when there's a music that I like, I put it on my list. So, Spotify. [...] and I also browse by types of music."* - Alice, 31 years old



Categories Reveal the Sociological Determinants

Sociological → *"There, at least it exists because there are millions of people that follow his music. So there is necessarily an interest for it, you see? But in any case, it does not create any sensibility in me. I told you about JUL, I could have told you instead about [...] 6ix9ine... What's his name? 'Tekashi', you know, the American. To me they're the same. [...] Yes, perhaps at 4:00 AM in a club, drunk, with, I don't know 8 grams of alcohol per litre of blood, perhaps I'd change my mind!" - Darryl, 34 years old*



It's crap



It's not my cup of tea



It doesn't create any sensibility in me, but perhaps I'd appreciate it... If I was awfully drunk

Categories Reveal the Psychological Determinants

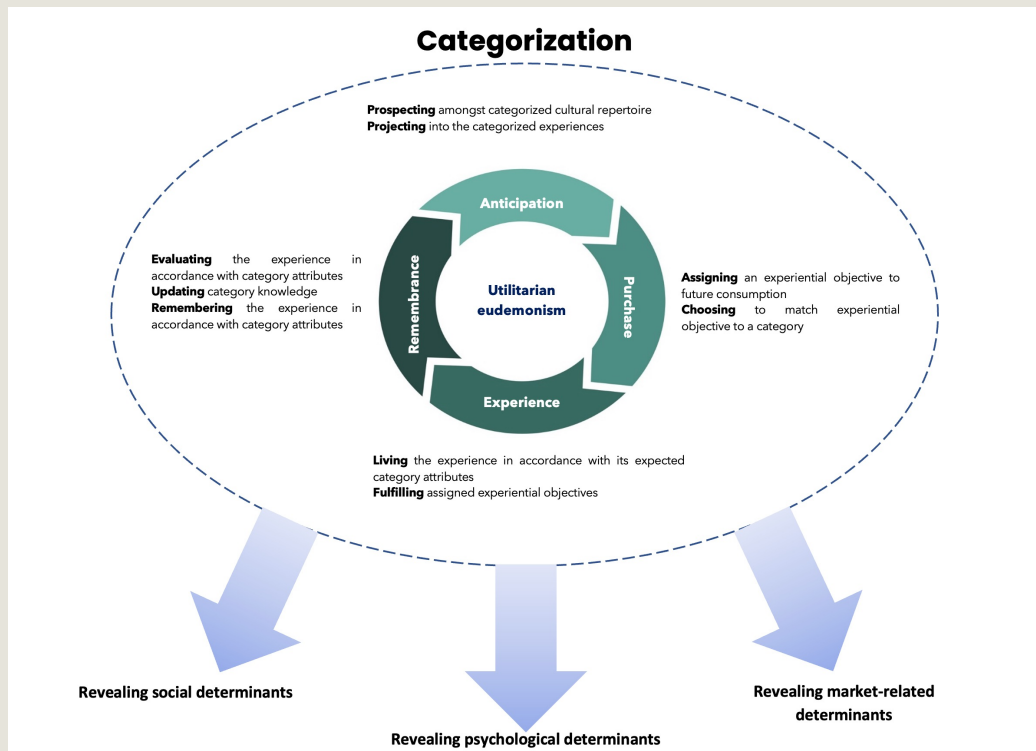
Psychological → *"First, I only read fiction and I don't read books that will remind me of the hard realities of our world. They bore me." - Simon, 27 years old*



Let's discuss!

1. Categorisation is a **holistic framework to study cultural consumption**
2. Categories might tell us a great deal about consumers' **strategies to cope with our liquid consumption environment**
3. Consumption opportunities *vs* consumption **goals?**

A Holistic Framework to Study Cultural Consumption



Boundaries to Solidify our Liquid Environment



Abundance might threaten the sense of **self** (Belk, 2013) or cause discomfort through **choice overload** (Chernev & *al.*, 2015): there is too much!

Categorisation can therefore be seen as an attempt for **resolidification** (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017) through category boundaries.

Opportunities or Goals?



The **anticipation** stage is crucial in **pre-determining the choice and the value** of the forthcoming experience.

Is the search for cultural experiences *really* “**exploratory**” (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Bourgeon-Renault, 2000)?

In an environment in which there are so many **opportunities**, aren't **goals** the prevalent factor instead?

This is all beautiful, but why should cultural businesses care?

Rethinking how to approach audiences

« A classical music concert »

or

« Immersive live music evoking nature » ?

