

THE GOURMET TRIBE

Postmodern marketing and the meaning of consumption

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Recently, consumer behavior researchers have become interested in postmodern. In the postmodern approach, consumer behavior is no longer analyzed based on psycho-demographic characteristics, but on dynamic and apparently contradictory lifestyles. It also studies the behavior of individuals as members of groups, the postmodern tribes, who consume products for the linking value they offer: those allowing or supporting interaction among its members (Cova & Cova, 2001). The choice of subject sought to contribute to the field of marketing from a practical and academic perspective, given the growth in the Brazilian gastronomy industry and the scarcity of studies on this consumer. Exploratory research was carried out through in-depth individual interviews and observations with sixteen informants. It aimed at analyzing their identification with a group through shared feelings; detecting the significance of cooking for friends and postmodern behavioral characteristics; identifying their views on gastronomic trends and symbols associated with the pleasure of gastronomy; and finally identifying the existence of linking value in their consumption. The results suggest that gourmets who cook compose a tribe with postmodern characteristics, and suggest the coexistence of two tribes: the authentic – who culturally inherited the connection to gastronomy – and the recent – motivated by the sophistication and trendiness surrounding gastronomy. Additionally, it's possible to suggest that some ingredients and kitchen utensils have high linking value, and that cooking for friends has various symbolic meanings.

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