



Child and Teen Consumption 2012

**Food Consumption, Communication,
Life Styles and Fashion**

**5th International Conference on Multidisciplinary
Perspectives on Child and Teen Consumption**

PROCEEDINGS

Massimo Bustreo, Vincenzo Russo (Eds)

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 Please think about the world that our children will live in before printing this pdf version.

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Lifestyles and buying behavior of adolescents towards the brand

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Abstract

The new social and existential conditions that characterize today's society, imply a post-modern identity with easy adaptability, continuous reinvention and versatility. The exceeding market opportunities, enable the individual to choose the most appropriate models of identity essential for the representation of the self and allowing each individual to feel desirable in multiple circumstances. The present study had the objective to identify the life styles of adolescents through a reading of the dimensions which occur in the purchasing behavior. The dimensions investigated were: the cognitive associations that adolescents attribute to known and established brands (Keller, 2001; 2003), the evaluative and affective attitudes toward the brand, purchase intentional behavior (Bagozzi, 1999). The sample consisted in 150 participants aged between 15 and 17 (47 Male, 103 Female). The results showed that there is a good degree of satisfaction towards the use of cash. Therefore, the youths interviewed were able to develop a model on spending and consumption which combined personal needs to the financial sphere. **The analysis of consumption practices among adolescents can be considered one of the landmarks** aimed at analyzing contemporary society and the universe of youth so as to understand and learn how to build identity, define lifestyles and develop intra and intergenerational relations (Lazzarini, 2004; Hochschild, 2006). Consumption, therefore, has become outstandingly striking and obvious in contemporary culture, as it defines the vision of the world constellated with specific value orientations, behavior, identities, languages and social meanings that emerge through action (Harrè, 2000; Codeluppi, 2002).

Keywords: Consumption, Brand, Behavior, Choice, Lifestyle, Social needs

Topic: C. Life Styles and Fashion
c. 1 Youth trends

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past few years the deconstruction of universal values has favoured the collapse of certain logical assumptions such as moral strictness, coherence and rationality giving way to the principles of flexibility, multi dimensionality and to the consistent opportunity to seek for change. These changes have represented the main interest in the analysis and the understanding of these new dynamics, which, all in all, can be mainly considered as economical and social phenomena of an individual behaviour. The study on consumption is of interdisciplinary nature and the act of purchasing is not just an 'objective' fact, that is just merely economical (Bettman, 1979). It actually is the sum of the actor's actions providing a

meaning to individual behaviour, this means that every consumer spends money according to fashion and is influenced by the traders selling skills, publicity and advertising, peculiar social positions, the ideology of 'prestige', certain psychological uncertainties/weaknesses, and the pleasure that the cognitive and emotional action linked to the act of purchasing enables the individual to experience (Douglas & Isherwood, 1994).

According to this perspective, the analysis and study of consumption behaviour takes into account the psychological, social and individual meanings which the dynamics of consumption assume in the post-modern culture; in particular it investigates qualitative and motivational variables, the subjective "making sense", by emphasizing global processes linked to the 'self', to the identity and to the social interaction existing within the "person-consumer" (Siri, 2001; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

The consumers' choices are partially bound to forces which go beyond any conscious behaviour and which often reflect the need to please and satisfy impulses and removed conflicts. This means that the consumer today makes decisions driven by certain unconscious symbolical features connected to personal background, although he remains aware of the unconscious pressures coming from the outside (Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard, 2002).

It is through consumption that individuals wish to satisfy their needs, once drawn from social living: to conceive a better image of the 'self', man must always collect new goods in order to satisfy credibility as if the value belonging to the object could be applied to the self through a renewal of the appearance then offered to the world surrounding. Today's society seems like a large global container where all mankind, willing or not, is cast and where what counts the most is 'having' and not 'being' (Fromm, Suzuki, De Martino, 1960) This has put in evidence the irrationality of most consumption behaviour which no longer manifests any authentic enjoyment, which should happen to occur when using the products purchased, while it seems to carry out as a function, and often not so effective, a disillusioned fulfilment of an anguish state and of the existential vacuity of the individual (Hafstrom, Chae & Chung, 2005).

Post-modern man sails the ship of need imposed by production and the increase of income drives towards an acceleration of consumption which always features a purchase that does not belong to ordinary expenses and shopping. Therefore, the consumer purchases not just the objective, practical and functional qualities of the item, but also its meanings, symbols, emotional values that it embodies. Among these meanings some may be connected to dynamic impulses of unconscious nature, others may be more superficial and trivial, merely cultural products deriving from social traditions (Mittal, 1989; Mittal & Lee, 1989). Consumers' goods break into

our daily lives adding to it more meaning which enables us to communicate to others.

The consumer always tends to distinguish by surrounding himself with superfluous object, non functional, and often expensive. The desire of competition, of social climbing, tingles the consumer who's dominated by the importance given to appearance, and the engagement to captivate other people's attention in order to feel 'unique'.

These individuals long for and set their happiness and their success upon the sphere of consumption. The wide range of possibilities which guide us to choose the goods are stimuli that tickle our desire to possess and which lead us to research constant satisfaction, to achieve a social position (notion of *standing*), the pleasure of "gratuity" (desire to possess the useless or *gadgets*) or the pleasing of a concealed dissatisfaction (Gunter & Furnham, 1998). The switch of the paradigms which represented the landmarks of modern age has determined the multiplication of social identities where "*the experimenting and the storing of a wide range of the possible 'selves' stands as a decisive resource for social success and for personal self-esteem*" (Siri, 2004, p.165). The exceeding number of possible offers within the market enable the individual to choose the most appropriate identity models for self representation, allowing him to feel desirable in several circumstances. However, such easy accessibility to choice often puzzles the individual who, while on one hand means to determine his own identity, on the other hand ends up homologating to the predominant trends of consumption and lifestyles. For instance, Melucci (1991) has defined *protective mimetism* the phenomenon which characterizes those who tend to comply to all in vogue trends (social, cultural, relational, etc.), instead of aiming at finding an exclusively personal definition of their lives. Then follows the building-up of an individual identity and the subsequent definition of personal subjectivity, enhanced by the consumption of goods and experience.

The analysis on the consumption procedures of adolescents may be considered a key reading with the objective to analyse contemporary society and the world of youth, since it allows to understand and study in depth the way identity builds up, how to define lifestyles and how intra- and inter-generational relations develop (Hochschild 2006; Gunter & Furnham, 1998). Therefore, consumption becomes an extremely distinctive and evident trait/feature of contemporary culture, defining a world vision characterized by specific value orientations, behavior, identity, languages (codes) and meanings which emerge from social action (Codeluppi 2002; Laurent, & Kapferer, 1985).

2. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the study was to carry out an analysis about lifestyles among adolescents through a reading of their purchasing and consumption behaviour. For the purpose three specific analysis dimensions were appropriately used.

The first concerns the cognitive associations that adolescents attribute to well known and established brands, with specific reference to the studies which deal with the brand as a cognitive and trustworthy/reliable tool that inspires the purchasing and consumption behaviour (Aaker 1991, 1996, 2001; Keller, 1993, 2001, 2003; Vicari, 1995; Busacca, 2000). To analyse the cognitive basis on which the consumer's purchasing behaviour lies, and which deals with the relations that the consumer establishes with the brand, we have used the CBBE (Customer Based Brand Equity) theorized by Keller (2001; 2003). The dimension reference considered by Keller is to spot the value the consumer attributes to the brand which also provides him with a meaning and identity. Keller sets up a *brand equity* model (CBBE) which measures (*Brand Building Blocks*) certain areas useful to investigate the value every consumer attributes to the brand when purchasing and which represents the basic enquiry in the given research. To this extent Keller (2003) outlines six essential factors or dimensions: *salience*, which indicates the strength the brand has to remain impressed in the memory; *performance*, that deals with the effectiveness of the brand; *the image* which represents the modality through which the target perceives the *mass marketing brand*; *judgements*, based on the opinions expressed by the consumers about *mass marketing brand* and that branch out into several other subdimensions such as credibility, quality, concern and superiority; *the bond to the brand*, which builds up according to certain emotional responses that the consumers manifest when dealing with the brand (*mass marketing*); the *feedback*, based on the consumer's identification with the brand, and in this case, with mass marketing, which includes the four basic dimensions of fidelity, attachment/bond, community and engagement.

The second dimension of analysis has the purpose to identify the youth's behavioural intention of purchase with reference to the brand on the basis of Bagozzi's theory dealing with the Regulation of the Self (1998). This theory makes reference to two previous theories such as 1) The Theory on Reasoned Action by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), which is one of the essential models for the comprehension and explanation of social action: *attitudes, behaviours and values* that regulate the individuals' lives; 2) The Theory of Planned behaviour outlined by Ajzen in 1991 which is a varied version of the previous Theory of Reasoned Action, where features the

addition of the concept of behavioural intention, *the perception of control upon behaviour*. According to the Regulation of the Self theory (Bagozzi, 1999), behavioural intentions are affected by an evaluative and emotional attitude, social identity, subjective norms, desire and perception of control upon behaviour.

Finally, the third objective of the study is to outline the main profiles of adolescents in order to identify different attitudes towards consumption and that specific literature has classified as sober, hedonistic and selective (Marini, Ferrari & Santagati, 2006). To achieve the objective three dimensions of analysis were taken into account: *the orientation of consumption of adolescents*, that is the satisfaction and pleasure they experience or not through shopping or the saving function which favours a more rational and conscious consumption; the adolescents' *attitude towards consumption*, which studies whether they are inclined to a consumption that gives priority to quantity and the quality of the goods owned and/or purchased; on the other hand, the way to choose which products to use, that is the tendency to copy other people's behaviour or, contrarily, to purchase unique and unusual goods which are useful to affirm one's identity in relation to others and proposing a different version of the 'self' when compared to his peers; and finally, *the attitude towards expenses* which deals with the orientation the adolescents have in managing their expenses, that is the more or the less they tend to save money (desire vs saving) and how they choose what product to purchase, following reason or contrarily on impulse (Katona, 1962; Marini, Ferraro & Santagati, 2006).

3. METHOD

3.1 PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

The participants who were administered a semi-structured questionnaire were 150, chosen within second degree high schools in Catania. The adolescents interviewed were 47 males (31.3%) and 103 females (68.7%) and the average age of 16.4 (SD=.76).

3.2 MEASURES

The cognitive basis of purchasing behaviour. To outline the cognitive basis of purchasing behaviour, the young consumers were asked to answer to a total of 64 items which represented the six factors proposed by Keller (2003), Salience (4 items), Image (6 items); Performance (9 items); Feelings (7 items); Judgement/Assessment which is subdivided into other 4 subdimensions: Quality (4 items) Credibility (10 items), Consideration (3 items), Superiority (2 items); Feedback which subdivides into other four: Fidelity (6 items), Attachment/Bond (4 items); Community (4 items),

Commitment (5 items).

For instance, the following items: *"The people I admire and respect use designer accessories and clothes"* (Image Factor) and *"Wearing designer accessories and clothes makes me feel respected by others"* (Feeling Factor). For each item corresponds a range of 5 points, where 1 means total disagreement and 5 equals to total agreement.

The reliability of the factors is estimated between .69 (Relevance/Evidence Factor) and .94 (Assessment/Judgement Factor).

Behavioural basis in Purchasing. To outline the behavioral basis in purchasing, behavioural intentions and variables which affect them were immediately focused (Bagozzi, 1999; Bagozzi et al., 2002; Bagozzi & Heathernon, 1994).

Behavioural Intention. This variable was outlined through the item: *"How many chances are there you shall buy designer clothes and accessories again?"* The participants answered between 1 "never" and 4 "many times".

Assesing and emotional attitude. This aspect was measured by the use of a semantic differential (Osgood, 1957) based on 7 points made up of 17 bipolar pairs: 10 measured the assessing/evaluating attitude (that is reliable-unreliable), 7 to measure the emotional attitude (for example, remarkable-unremarkable) The consumers were asked to express the concept *"The Brand is"*. The alpha measuring the evaluating attitude is .75, while the one for the emotional is .73.

Social Identity. The individuals were asked to express the relation between two identities (*"those who purchase known and established Brands"* and *"themselves"*) by expressing an opinion on a 7 points scale ranging from "Broadly Seperate" to "Completely Overlapping" (Bagozzi & Bergami, 2000).

Subjective Norms. To describe this factor we asked the young participants to answer the question *"Most of the important people for me agree with my decision to purchase designer clothes and accessories"*, on a 4 point scale (from "absolutely true to me" to "absolutely false").

Desire. This dimension was shown by asking the adolescent consumers to express an opinion on a 4 point scale (from "totally true" to "absolutely false to me") in relation to the statement *"I would like to buy designer clothes and accessories once more"*.

Behavioural control perceived. This variable was expressed through the statement *"Shall I ever wish to buy again designer clothes and accessories, it would be easy for me/there would be no problem for me"*. The participants answered between 1 and 4, that is from "totally true..." to "absolutely false to me".

Consumption/Purchasing Trends. To outline and put in evidence the profiles of adolescent consumers, the research based upon three specific

dimensions.

The orientation of consumption. This dimension measured whether the interviewed adolescents' orientation of consumption aimed at personal satisfying and pleasing, i.e. hedonistic type, or if it represented the rational and utilitarian type. In order to assess the teenagers were asked to express an opinion about 7 items according to Likert's scale ranging from 1 (Absolutely disagreeing) and 5 (totally agreeing). An example may be "I'm a careful buyer, I prefer saving money" and "I love dedicating my free time to shopping". The total alpha of the scale equaled to .67.

Consumption attitude. The consumption attitude is measured by using two paired statements "I prefer having few high quality goods" / "I love possessing many objects no matter the quality" and "I want the objects that my friends and mates possess" / "I search for the exclusive that only very few possess". The interviewed with reference to each pair were asked to express which statement they related to best, by indicating 1 for the chosen and 0 for the excluded.

Purchasing Attitude. Even the purchasing attitude was measured by the means of two paired statements which the participants answered according to the bond they felt with the statements offered: "I'm careful at saving money" / "I fulfill my desires" and "I choose reasonably" / "I follow my instinct". The answers were expressed by indicating 1 for the chosen and 0 for the excluded.

Perception of the social position. Social position perceived by the adolescents was measured through the item "The financial resource available (owing to your parents' occupation) allow you to possess all the things you consider essential?"; the interviewed answered 'yes' or 'no' to this question.

4. RESULTS

4.1 THE COGNITIVE BASIS OF PURCHASING BEHAVIOUR

The results related to the cognitive associations that adolescents attribute to known and established brands were measured through the CBBE model by Keller (2001; 2003). All in all, as shown in table 1, the mean/average values are not elevated. The highest average value is provided by the "Performance" factor, followed by Salience, Quality and Superiority, so that the interviewed demonstrated that the most competitive factor provided by a known and established brand derives especially from its performance, from how able it is to remain impressed in the consumer's mind and from the quality and superiority (it represents).

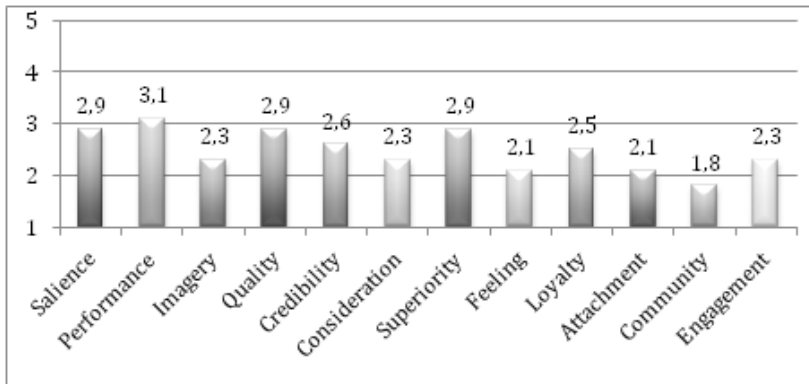


Fig. 1: Means of Keller's factors for young consumers.

4.2 BEHAVIOURAL BASIS IN PURCHASING

To study the variables which influence the intention to repurchase a product (subjective norms, desire, perceived behavioural control, social identity, evaluating attitude and emotional attitude) a stepwise linear regression was adopted (Bagozzi, 1999). As the results show in table 1, the intention to repurchase derives especially from social identity (step 1), followed by the desire to repurchase (step 2) and by perceived behavioural control (step 3). The higher/stronger are the identification with the known and established brand, the desire to repurchase the product and the perceived control, the higher/stronger is the intention to repurchase the product.

Intention to repurchase brand by young consumer				
Step		Beta	R ²	R ² Change
1	Social identity	.52***	.27***	-
2	Social identity	.36***	.31***	.05***
	Desire	.28**		
3	Social identity	.31***	.34**	.03**
	Desire	.29**		
	Perceived behavioural control	.19*		

Note. Betas are standardized coefficients. *p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001.

Table 1: Stepwise linear regression for young consumers

4.3 CONSUMPTION TRENDS/STYLES/FASHIONS

Orientation Consumption

With reference to the Orientation of Consumption of the young consumers interviewed (see Table 3) it is evident that the item showing the highest average value is "I sometimes spoil myself", therefore these young consumers perceive purchasing as mainly pleasing. These orientations show differences related to the social position variable perceived and the gender. According to the social position perceived, those who consider that the 'money they receive from the family allows them to possess what they consider essential" are those who also spend their money more carefully and prefer saving ($M=3.44$ $SD=.985$) compared to those who think that the money given from their parents is not enough/sufficient ($M=2.88$ $SD=.641$, $t^{(148)}=2.33$; $p<.05$); this group can have the pleasure to spend more than they can afford ($M=3.25$ $SD=1.753$) compared to the first ($M=1.95$ $SD=1.07$, $t^{(148)}=2.08$; $p<.01$). Finally, about gender, the girls ($M=2.13$ $SD=1.250$) state they mostly love spending their free time shopping, compared to the boys ($M=1.79$ $SD=.907$, $t^{(148)}=5.58$; $p<.01$).

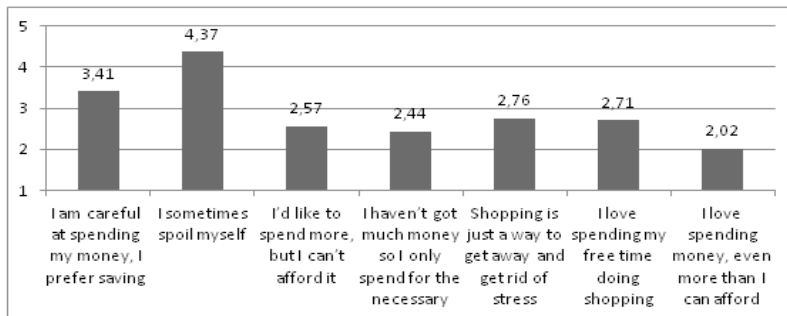


Fig. 2: Means of Scale Orientation Consumption

Consumption Attitudes

About consumption attitudes there emerge four profiles based on the cross-over of two factors: on one hand the quantity and quality of the goods possessed and/or purchased, on the other the purchasing behaviour in relation to the goods which manifests through the differing-imitation process, as useful to affirm one's identity and individuality. By crossing over the two variables we notice that 46.6% of the participants shows a certain consumption attitude known as elitarian, followed by a 32.7% of other young consumers which belong to the category of show-offs. Moreover, there is a significant connection between those who desire objects possessed by friends and mates and those who receive good financial support/aid from the family ($\chi^2(1)=3.86$; $p<.05$).

Imitation-Differentiation	Quantity and Quality of the goods	
	I love possessing a lot of objects no matter the quality	I'd rather have few objects as long as they're high quality
I desire objects that also my friends and mates possess	Conformists 10%	Selective Imitators 10.7%
I search for unique objects that only few people possess	Show-Off 32.7%	Elitarians 46.6%

Table 2 For each pair of sentences, which statement do you feel closer and which further? (N=150)

Purchasing Attitudes

Results on purchasing attitudes derive from the cross-over of two dimensions: the major and the minor inclination towards savings and the consequential choice and attitude towards purchasing which can be rational/reasoned or impulsive. These data show how young consumers are pennypinchers and good at saving (48%), that is whoever falls within this category reveals having complete knowledge of the instrumental value of money. Nevertheless, this category is followed by a 20.7% of consumers who manifest a selective attitude towards consumption goods. There is not to be found any significant relation to the perceived social position.

Rationality- Impulse	Savings- Consumption	
	I'm careful to how much I can save	I satisfy my desires/needs
I choose rationally	Sober 48%	Selective 20.7%
I'm driven by impulse	Practical 14.7%	Hedonists 16.6%

Table 3 For each pair of sentences, which statement do you feel closer to you and which further? (N=150)

5. DISCUSSION

The initial objective of the study was to read through the lifestyles of adolescents by observing the consumption behaviour in relation to the brand. The results obtained through the use of the diverse dimensions of analysis have provided several other considerations. Considering the co-

gnitive associations that the adolescents apply to known and established brands, the strongest bond is observed within the features of performance which the adolescents attribute to the product, on the basis of positive opinions/judgements and the ability the brand has to remain impressed in the memory so to be recognisable in other contextual situations (Keller, 2003). About the adolescents' intention to repurchase known and established brands, this is determined by a process of identification the adolescents build up with the brand, by the growing desire they will nurture in relation to this brand and by the "belief that they may be able to develop and perform a certain behavior in relation to it" (Bagozzi, 1999, p.174). From the third objective, which aimed at outlining the main profiles of adolescents, emerges, in relation to the type of consumption orientation, that they love spoiling themselves; concerning, instead, the consumption attitude, we observe two main profiles: the elitarian and the show-off; finally, in the analysis of purchasing attitudes what emerges is the profile of the sober consumer who manifests the ability to judge according to the family expenses and the selective consumer. To say it briefly, the adolescents we interviewed had an inclination towards consumption which we could distinguish into two separate types in relation to the lifestyles young people manifest: on one hand, we find the desire to purchase high quality products, to satisfy one's social needs by showing off a selected and high quality product (Baudrillard, 1976; Besozzi, 1997). Therefore, in relation to this last aspect we observe certain dynamics and fashions that are linked to wider and more complex socio-cultural processes within the field of consumption behaviour (Douglas, Isherwood, 1994; Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell & Kardes, 1986). The matter is about processes related to sense of belonging, identity building up, alterity, to intentional and reactive behaviour, to choices all making reference to the complex bond between the individual and the social context, important especially when analysing adolescents and youth during their growth and maturing stage of life, and which is always best to study in depth (Durvasula, Lysonski, & Andrews 2005; Hafstrom, Chae & Chung, 2005; Santagati, 2006).

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Puppets, consumers or personal brands? Children, teens and the roles of brands in their lives

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Abstract

The paper provides insights on four main issues dealing with children and teenagers. It explores: the overall approach that children/teens have towards consumption; the meanings and roles of brands in their lives; the main features of their relationships with brands; teens' online personal brands on Facebook. Data are collected by phenomenological interviews on two "samples" (aged 5-to-10 and 13-to-18 years old) of 20 people each. As participants were not of age, before being interviewed it was necessary to ask for and obtain their parents' formal, written consent. Besides the pervasive presence of brands, kids/teens' consuming be-

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Child and Teen Consumption 2012

Food Consumption, Communication, Life Styles and Fashion

CTC Child and Teen Consumption is the most important international and multi-disciplinary Conference on Food Consumption, Communication, Life Styles and Fashion dealing with children and adolescents in contemporary society. It aims to promote exchanges, debates and discussions with relevant international experts in a stimulating, friendly, and fruitful atmosphere in both a scientific and a relational perspective.

On to the success of the previous editions - France 2004, Denmark 2006, Norway 2008, and Sweden 2010 - the *Institute of Consumption, Behavior and Organizational Communication "Giampaolo Fabris"* at IULM University of Milan hosts the 5th edition of CTC, in order to continue this tradition that is worthy of the growing academic interest in the field.

This conference aims to establish and continue a dialogue between specialists from a variety of academic disciplines in order to explore the phenomenon of children and teens as consumers in current society. The more specific objective is to strengthen the interdisciplinary approach of the Conference by arranging more thematically sessions, to explore and stress the conflicts within the fields, to question the linearity of consumption. In particular it focuses on Food Consumption with a special emphasis on children's, teenagers', and their parents' consumption practices and behaviors.

Within the Conference there will be two Special Open Symposia on food consumption and lifestyles of children attending primary school: *Food and Fun*, a Project co-financed by Regione Lombardia through the Fund for the Promotion of institutional accords and Lombard university system inside the collaboration agreement signed on July 1, 2009.



Scientific Coordinator of the inter-university project: Vincenzo Russo; Research Team Coordinator of the University of Milan: Ella Pagliarini, Scientific Supervisor: Paolo Moderato (IULM University & IESCU); project leader of IULM Team Research Group: Giambattista Presti. Herein some preliminary results of a prevention program hold in Italy will be presented.