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- ENGLISH ABSTRACT -

FASHION AND CONSUMPTION OF TECHNOLOGIES.
DISTINCTION, DIVESTMENT AND GENDER STRATIFICATION OF THE IPOD

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Among consumption objects, technologies represent an example that is at the same time conventional and peculiar. Indeed, on the one hand, as for other consumption objects, people appropriate technologies with the aims of reabsorbing objects' materiality and meanings in the own cultural universes and identities (Miller, 1987). On the other hand, technologies present a different features, which are not only connected with fact that they embody, in their same technical evolution, «the desire for the new» (Campbell, 1992). Even more deeply, use and consumption of technologies introduce further processes in the objects' social appropriation, and especially the need to articulate around them specific technical skills and competences (Pantzar, 1997; Sorensen *et. al.*, 2000; Shove, 2003).

In this paper we will show, by presenting qualitative data resulting from a research on the use of music listening technologies – based on 20 in-deep interviews and the analysis of media representations of technical objects – how the Apple iPod player is at the centre of both cultural and social processes of consumption and, moreover, how specific forms of stratification, which are connected with technical and «expert» skills and practices, emerge. Specifically, the paper will present at least three different processes involved in the use and consumption of the iPod.

Firstly, it will be shown how appropriation of the iPod is connected with distinction processes (Bourdieu, 1979) and, moreover, how this technology represents a tool in order to develop forms of recognition, among young high school scholars, in particular by the practice of the gift (Mauss, 1923/24). Secondly, the paper will present iPod's ritualities of consumption, such as that of the *divestment* (McCracken, 1988). Indeed, iPod's cultural and social meanings are also generated by a large-scale signification process, which is embodied in the cultural value of the global *brand* Apple (Lury, 2004), and which generates ambivalent forms of dissociation and recognition among consumers.

Finally, the paper will focus on the different forms of appropriation among males and females young consumers. This gender stratification refers to two distinctly, but interwoven questions. On the one hand, uses of iPod are inscribed in pre-existent social practices (Schatzky *et al.,* 2001; Warde, 2005), which are differently articulated among males and females, such as the use of computer, the musical passion and the new technology-based leisure practices. On the other hand, these different and stratified practices are at the basis of distinct interpretations of the utility, the use and therefore, of consumption and appropriation of digital portable music players.

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