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## Buying monastic products, gift or purchase?

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Focusing on the act of purchasing retail monastic products, this article applies a cause-related marketing (CRM) approach within a Management, Spirituality, and Religion (MSR) framework. When they purchase monastic products, are individuals simply buyers or do they, by means of their actions, support a religious cause by combining a gesture of purchasing with a gesture of gift-giving? We conducted qualitative interviews with individuals making purchases at religious and secular points of sale in France, and subjected the data acquired to textual analysis. Four classes of meaning emerged. It transpires that gift and purchase are intertwined and systematically associated with a hedonistic sentiment combining pleasure, trust, and love. The soft expression of religiosity illustrates the phenomenon of spirituality taking refuge in the private sphere. Our results enrich the interdisciplinarity of MSR research, confirm the findings outlined in CRM literature, and provide monasteries with a better understanding of their customers.

**Keywords:** gift-giving; cause-related marketing; purchasing act; monastic products; religious branding; secularization

### Introduction

Havens of peace and contemplation, Christian monasteries sell the fruit of their labor in order to ensure their survival. In so doing, they come into contact with consumer society. In this article, we focus on the point of view of the purchasers of monastic products at the moment of purchase. What do they feel? Are they merely effecting a banal market transaction? Are they carrying out an act of gift-giving disguised as a purchasing act? Are they expressing their religiosity? Applying elements from consumer research and cause-related marketing (CRM; Varadarajan and Menon 1988), our research is inscribed in the Management, Spirituality, and Religion (MSR) approach (Yip 2011, Aadland and Skjorshammer 2012). Analyzing the impact of the

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religious origin of retail products on the meaning of the act of purchase, our approach reflects the concerns of MSR, while at the same time strengthening their interdisciplinary links (Perry *et al.* 2003, Giacalone 2010, Giacalone 2012).

The management of religious organizations, principally studied from the perspective of the influence of secularization on their place in society (Aadland and Skjorshammer 2012), is the object of marketing research in the field of Church Branding; we attempt to understand how various religions segment their markets and adapt their spiritual offer to each of those segments (Moore 1994, Stark and Iannaccone 1994, Roof 1999, Twitchell 2004, Einstein 2011, Casidy 2013). Focusing on the point of view of the consumer of religious products or services, researchers have studied religious tourism, concentrating on the typologies, motivations, and behaviors of tourists on pilgrimages and visiting religious sites (Finney *et al.* 2009, Haq and Jackson 2009, Kresic *et al.* 2013). Meanwhile, research in CRM is principally concerned with determining the predispositions of purchasers of charity products to supporting specific causes linked to particular products (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998, Gutpa and Pirsch 2006).

In this article, we focus specifically on purchasing and gift-giving encapsulated in the gesture of buying a charity product. We do not know of any research that attempts to analyze the feelings of the individual purchaser–gift giver at the moment of the act of purchase, nor of any research on the marketing approaches used by French Christian contemplative monasteries. Indeed, it would be of interest to cross the MSR and CRM research approaches with a view to studying a field that has not yet been investigated, that of the purchase of retail products manufactured by contemplative monks who use those products to generate the revenue necessary for the survival of their monasteries. From an MSR perspective, we hope to shed light on the influence of the religious origin of products on the meaning given to their purchase; at the same time, it is our intention to contribute to CRM by examining the offer of monastic products designed to provide monasteries with financial support. Lastly, we suggest that our results could be used to help monasteries improve their understanding of the role of purchaser–donors and subsequently adapt their offers.

The article is divided into five sections. Firstly, we anchor our work in the theory of the gift, focusing on the relationship between gift and market as seen by marketing researchers. This approach enables us to define the objectives of our research. We then present an analysis of the monastic world, outlining its historical and contemporary contexts, and examining the marketing approach applied by French monasteries against the background of the secularization of society, before describing the methodology employed to collect and analyze data. Lastly, we present our results and conclude with a discussion of the contributions and limits of our work.

## **The gift theory, from anthropology to consumer research**

The question of the role of gift-giving in the act of purchasing monastic products places our research in the theoretical framework of the gift. We use the founding anthropological approach embedded in this concept to focus on the links between the gift and the market. Lastly, we present a brief overview of consumer research literature applying the theory of the gift, in order to pinpoint the CRM in which we are situating the discussion.

### ***Gift in society***

#### *A total social fact with various forms of reciprocity*

According to Mauss (1925), the gift is “obligatorily and voluntarily given and obligatorily and voluntarily returned.” It is characterized by the inextricable paradox of the constrained freedom of returning an apparently free gift and contains as much altruism, freedom, and disinterest as it does violence, obligation, and interest (Godelier 1996). Expected or not, obligatory or not, immediate or not, reciprocity can take a number of material or immaterial forms, primary amongst which is the bond created between the giver and the receiver (Salhins 1976, Marcoux 2009). Beyond their function of creating bonds, gifts and reciprocity take different forms. Both can be material – for example, money, goods, or even an organ – or immaterial, for example, the pleasure of giving, recognition, gratitude, reputation, and grace (Weber 2007).

#### *The gift and the market*

In premodern and modern societies, the gift and solidarity were part of the personal sphere of the family, the neighborhood, and the Church (Giesler 2006), caught between the state and the market, between the sphere of calculated interest and that of obedience to the law (Le Gall-Ely 2013). In postmodern societies, the gift and the market, and the gift and the state reciprocally impregnate one another: market and state call upon the gift to compensate for their shortcomings in terms of solidarity, redistribution, and trust (Godbout and Caillé 1992). Theorists of economic sociology have long studied relations between economic and personal spheres. The phenomenon of embeddedness (Polanyi 1944) demonstrates that the existing economy, a site of interests and exchange, is embedded in institutional frameworks that make redistribution possible, and in personal relations that allow for reciprocity (Godbout and Caillé 1992).

Seemingly opposed to market relations, the gift generates bonds within the network of personal relations, which is itself embedded in economic networks (Granovetter 2000). Market relations, formalized by the act of purchasing, coexist with non-market relations that sometimes take the form of gift-giving: the logic of the gift is, in short, compatible with that of the market (Polanyi 1944). Market transactions are often one-off actions inscribed

in permanent social relations, “the flow of goods installs or acts as a guarantor of social relations” (Salhins 1976, p. 238). The borders between the gift and consumption become less distinct (Cova and Remy 2007): the market can be used for giving and the gift can be given as part of an economic transaction. Complementing this socioeconomic viewpoint, researchers in marketing and consumer behavior have applied a microeconomic perspective by focusing on the coexistence of purchasing and gift-giving in the behaviors of economic agents.

### ***Gift and market relations, between avoidance and impregnation***

#### *Marketing and the ambiguity of the gift*

Following in the wake of Mauss, Sherry (1983) analyzes, in his founding article, the behavior of the gift-giver in an anthropological perspective. Sherry’s article suggests a wide variety of research possibilities concerning the kind of tensions caused at the microeconomic level by reciprocities induced by the gift addressed by consumer culture theorists. These tensions include the “dark side of the gift” (Sherry *et al.* 1993) and the state of dependence induced by the gift (Giesler 2006). Today, three modes of consumption challenge existing thought in the field of consumer behavior: commodity exchange based on merchant relations, gift-giving based on reciprocity exchange, and sharing, a non-exchange-based relation (Belk 2010, 2011). We are focused on the two dominant modes based on exchange (market relations and gift) and analyze their relations: are the gift and market relations compatible or are they impossible to reconcile in the same gesture? It seems that, very often, the one is the avoidance of the other, or the one impregnates the other. In this case of impregnation, the third and less dominant mode of consumption, sharing, is emerging.

#### *Avoidance*

The market and its inevitable interest-based calculations provoke resistance (Penaloza and Price 1993, Banikema and Roux 2012) or even rejection (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Consumers seek to escape from the market (Arnould 2007), either on a one-off basis (Kozinets 2002) or, more permanently, via alternative behaviors (Hanson 1980, Pepper *et al.* 2009, Belk 2010). While acknowledging its ambiguous aspects, consumer culture theorists see the gift and, more recently, sharing, as positive alternatives to commercial transactions (Marcoux 2009, Belk 2010).

In the other sense, in order to avoid the “dark side of the gift” (Sherry *et al.* 1993) and the ambiguities that it generates in relations between the recipient and the donor, consumers may choose to resort to market relations in order to reassert their independence by escaping the gift sphere (Marcoux 2009). The gift can thus also generate behaviors of resistance expressed in recourse to calculating market-based logics (Urbain *et al.* 2012).

The avoidance movement goes both ways, translating the vision of rejection of one of the two spheres into an escape into the other sphere. But a substantial amount of research demonstrates that the two categories are only very rarely mutually exclusive, and then only in cases limited in time and space (Kozinets 2002). The inverse movement does exist – this one positive – which expresses the attraction of one of the spheres for the other, and provokes a mutual impregnation.

### *Mutual impregnation*

The impregnation<sup>1</sup> is due either to the invasion of the gift sphere by market relations or to the invasion of the trade sphere by the gift.

The sphere of the gift has long since been invaded by the market. More precisely, the market invited itself into the sphere of the gift, notably for gifts made to family and friends on traditional, sometimes religious occasions, which have, over the course of time, become commercial (Belk 1990, Wallendorf and Arnould 1991, Babin *et al.* 2007, Bartunek and Do 2011). Even in the most agapic situations, such as amorous relationships (Belk and Coon 1993), the market is present in terms of the type of object given as a gift and the way in which it is acquired (Le Gall-Ely 2013). It is possible to maintain that, of the three components of a gift-giving situation – the object given, because it can be purchased; situational factors, when the cultural context of giving is impregnated with market culture; and the donor and the receiver, one of whom can buy the gift, while the other, the receiver, can sell the gift on – at least one is associated with the market (Sherry 1983). The problem of reciprocity, whether it is generalized, balanced, or negative (Marcoux 2009), is systematically evoked in the field of consumer research. It is perceived as a source of tension that can be accentuated by the emergence of market relations in the gift-giving situation (Giesler 2006, Marcoux 2009): it is impossible to avoid the “dark side of the gift” (Sherry *et al.* 1993).

However, in another sense, the gift invades the market through two modes. The first one is re-enchanting consumption by means of its innate ideals of free products and services, solidarity, and sharing (Kozinets 2002, Maffesoli 2007, Belk 2010, 2011). In this case, sharing allows somebody to use something owned by someone else, without any calculability, without any reciprocity, and without any ritual. Joint possessions are shared through a communal act which “creates feelings of solidarity and bonding” (Belk 2010, p. 717). Thus, collaborative consumption enables consumers who have purchased a product to share its use with both people they know and with strangers (Albinsson and Perera 2012). The second one is CRM, focused on the purchase of objects associated with a charitable cause. We are interested in this area, since it is possible to consider monastic products as charity products: the profits that they generate are directed back into the monasteries.

### **Current research in CRM**

#### *CRM, when the buyer is also a donor*

CRM studies examples of impregnation of the gift by the market (Varadarajan and Menon 1988, Berglind and Nakata 2005). Thanks to a single act, individuals are at once purchasers and donors, simultaneously buying a product and giving money to a charitable cause. Research in this area has conceptualized the field of CRM (Gutpa and Pirsch 2006), and has been focused on two themes, that of charity organizations associated with products and brands, and that of brands associated with causes (Grounds 2005, Newman and Shen 2012). Associating a product with a charitable monetary gift enables the cause being supported to materially express its gratitude vis-à-vis the donor in the form of tangible reciprocity (Bennett and Gabriel 2000), while at the same time, associating a brand with a charitable operation significantly boosts revenue streams and improves brand image (Strahilevitz and Myers 1998, Strahilevitz 1999). In regard to consumers, in their founding article, Strahilevitz and Myers (1998) compare purchasing behaviors in terms of whether products associated with specific causes are hedonic or utilitarian. The authors conclude that an act of charity is more effective when the product associated with the cause is hedonic. More broadly, the reactions of consumers are analyzed with the aid of the concept of the “fit” between the cause supported and the company, brand, or type of product associated with it (Hamling and Wilson 2004). We can ask if, in the situation of buying monastic products, the purchaser of these pleasant products is receiving a tangible hedonic reciprocity for his disguised gift, and feeling a coherent fit between the cause and his or her act of buying this kind of product.

#### *The purchaser–donor, an area of research to be explored in a religious context*

Inscribed in complement of current research, our approach focuses on the meeting between two stakeholders in CRM, namely the buyer and the seller (Gutpa and Pirsch 2006). We pinpoint the precise moment of the purchase and seek to analyze what happens when individuals make a purchase based on market codes while, at the same time, giving their money to a cause. In such circumstances, is the individual a purchaser or a donor? Is he or she more one than the other? This research question, which echoes the sometimes complex problematic between gift and market, will be studied in the very particular, as yet unexplored, context of the purchase of monastic products. In effect, research into consumerism in a religious context has essentially focused on pilgrimages in which religious tourists are transformed into consumers (Finney *et al.* 2009). Analyses of the purchase of tourist services and objects of devotion have been made for Jewish pilgrims (Kosansky 2002), as well as for Christian pilgrims (Kresic *et al.* 2013), and Muslim pilgrims (Haq and Jackson 2009, Mouhafim 2013). But none of this research addresses the precise situation of the purchase of a product made by religious people from the CRM perspective as a configuration in which the roles of purchaser and donor are mixed.

## Research goals

The objective of this study is to ascertain whether or not, in purchasing monastic products, consumers are also making a gift. While economists have long insisted on a watertight separation between market and non-market spheres, we know that, due to phenomena of embeddedness, the acts of purchasing and gift-giving can be linked (Polanyi 1944, Granovetter 2000). Furthermore, the multiplicity of existing forms of reciprocity, the close historical relationship between monasteries and charity, the fact that religious communities are obliged to sell goods and services, and the desire of consumers for products that give meaning to their activities converge in a legitimate questioning of the relationship between consumerism, generosity, and religion.

Inscribed in the general field of MSR research concerning the management of religious organizations and faith-based institutions, and, more precisely, the marketing approaches that they apply, our research contributes to consumer research and CRM literature on religious causes. From an empirical point of view, our research focuses on the context of the purchase of Catholic monastic products in France, a field as yet unexplored in marketing studies. The results obtained should help monastic communities to better understand the meaning that consumers give to the act of purchasing food and cosmetic products. What is the role of the gift in the purchasing act? Are products merely epiphenomena supporting the central charitable act, of which they manifest one of the forms of reciprocity? Or are they, on the contrary, the principal element around which the market transaction is articulated? Answers to these questions should help monasteries better adapt their offer, both in terms of products and the messages by which they are accompanied.

## Empirical context

Our research focuses on the specific context of French monasteries. To understand the evolution of the French monastic economy, it is necessary to take a look at the history of these institutions and at their role in what is an increasingly secular society.

### *Contemplative monasteries and the regular clergy involved in society*

#### *The development of monasteries in the Middle Ages*

Christian monasticism first developed in the fourth and fifth centuries in Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Europe (Berlioz 1994). In the fifth century, the Italian monk, Benedict of Nursia (Benedetto da Norcia), declared Patron Saint of Europe by Pope Paul VI in 1964, proposed a monastic discipline based on the rule of silence, obedience to the master, humility, poverty, charity, and a life of prayer, reading, and manual work (de Nursia 6th century). This rule, imposed in 817 on the monasteries in the West, gave birth to the Benedictine Order, of which the abbey at Cluny, founded in 909, is the most powerful symbol.

Around 150 years later, in 1068, the Cistercian Reform, comparable in scope to the Lutheran Reform (Berlioz 1994), marked a desire to return to the “true apostolic life.” The Cistercian Reform can be explained in terms of a reaction against the gradual enrichment of Benedictine monasteries, for some of which the accumulation of wealth had become a goal in itself, rather than a means whereby to glorify the Creator (Clerc 1998). It is this reaffirmation of the role of manual work that made possible the development of important economic activities, considered today to be at the origin of the European economy.

### *Contemplative monasteries and the origins of the European economy*

Playing a religious, social, economic, political, artistic, and cultural role, the monastic orders represented a “total phenomenon” in the medieval West (Berlioz 1994). At its apogee, the Benedictine abbey at Cluny possessed 1000 priories and 50 houses, while monasteries were the leading landowners in Europe. The lands attached to monastic domains were primarily acquired by gift and as security against loans made to the nobility (Nizet 2003). Organized and frugal, the Cistercians owned thousands of hectares, from Cîteaux Abbey, near Dijon, to Hungary (Stark 2007). Cistercian monks, young, educated men without either wives or children, were considered genuine innovators (Pouillon 1964). Applying the *Ora et Labora* rule imposing a balance between prayer and manual work, they invented numerous agricultural, hydraulic, and industrial processes (Collin 2004), and developed a number of territories (Righetti Tosti-Croce 2004). The granges at Cîteaux, the forges at Clairvaux, the tile works at Châalis, the sawmill at Remiremont, and the vineyard at Clos Vougeot are all examples of the extraordinarily active inventiveness of Cistercian monks.

### *Monasteries and the gift*

*The religious roots of the gift.* Christian morality is based on three virtues: faith, hope, and charity. “The indispensable duty of the Christian” (Giraud 2007), charity is the heritage of the unconditional love given by God in the sacrifice of His Son for humanity, an unconditional love than Man bestows upon his kind to confirm his love for God: “just as I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 13: 34–35). Charity thus expresses compassion, especially for the poor, for indigents, even for enemies, and is made manifest in deeds, attitudes and intentions. But, unlike Judaism, with the *Tsedaqah*, and Islam, with the *Zakat*, Christianity has not rendered charity obligatory; every person is free in their charitable actions and gifts in that the decision about whether or not they will enter the Kingdom of Heaven will be taken on Judgment Day. More precisely, Catholics see in the act of love and charity a positive value, a human effort to obtain God’s grace (Ammari and Özcaglar-Toulouse 2011), and include the notion of spiritual reciprocity on the part of God, expected by generous men: “Give and it will be given to you in

good measure ... ” (Luke 6: 38). This is the counter-gift in exchange for God’s love of humanity (Caillé *et al.* 2001).

But this angelic vision of Christian charity does not take into account the scandal of the sale of indulgences that led to the Protestant schism. Based on the doctrine of the “Treasure of the Church,” this trade enabled believers to exchange devotions against a reduction in the time they would have to spend in Purgatory. Applied since the third century, the practice was institutionalized in the twelfth century, and spread significantly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Gradually monetized, the practice gave rise to a lucrative trade, denounced by Luther in 1517, an event that was one of the triggers of the Protestant Reform (Sibué 2011). This trade in indulgences, organized, controlled, and delegated by the Vatican, was practiced by the non-monastic secular clergy, which regarded it as a reliable means of encouraging the faithful to observe the sacraments and carry out acts of piety, while, at the same time, providing an important source of revenue. The image of the contemporary Church still suffers from these abuses (o.p., Frère 2010). Meanwhile, throughout the Middle Ages, the regular, monastic clergy carried out a similar form of trade with the nobility, without officially becoming involved in the trade of indulgences (Bertrand 2004). The wealthy paid a “price of passage” for the salvation of the souls of their ancestors. This form of *pro anima* gift gradually established itself, thereby respectively consolidating the financial and spiritual powers of the nobility and the monastic communities (Lauwers 1997).

*The pro anima gift.* Amongst the many different kinds of gifts made to monasteries in the Middle Ages, there are numerous traces of the *pro anima* gift in the archives recording gifts in abbeys (Magnani 2002). Ritualized, presented in public, and recorded in writing, *pro anima* gifts had the effect of inserting the Church into the system of production, thereby legitimating its role in society. “Gifts of earthly goods in exchange for spiritual goods delivered by means of the liturgical service conducted by monks”, they incarnated the idea of giving to monasteries in order to receive, reciprocally, the grace of God. A genuine system for transforming earthly goods into spiritual goods linking men to God, the *pro anima* gift involved actors from various categories: the wealthy donor, monks, the poor, God, and the saints (Figure 1). Viewed from a global perspective, the *pro anima* gift can be seen as a system of multiple alliances between monks and lay people, the poor and the saints, men and God, and the living and the dead (Magnani 2008).

The disciplined character of geographically isolated monastic communities, their reputation for frugality and simplicity both in terms of the liturgy and of their way of life, their close ties with the local community, and their contribution to agricultural, industrial, and commercial development have probably, throughout history, added certain luster to the image of the regular clergy. A sort of “sect within the Church” (Hill cited by Jonveaux 2011), the contemplative monastic world has become an element of cultural and architectural heritage structuring French society. Although the regular clergy practiced

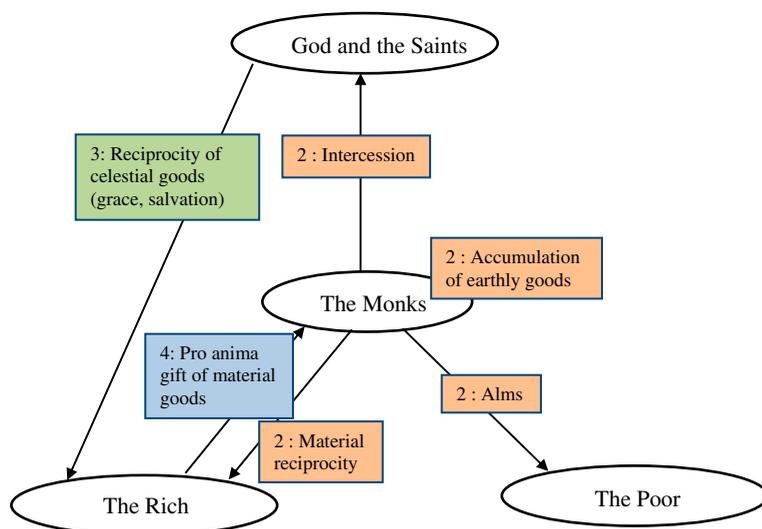


Figure 1. The *pro anima* gift.

a system based on the exchange of terrestrial goods for the salvation of the soul (*pro anima* gifts), it avoided the scandals associated with the trafficking of indulgences, a practice attributed to the secular clergy. This positive image of monastic life is mirrored by the contemporary development of religious heritage tourism across the globe (Noppen and Morisset 2003), particularly in France, as is witnessed by the growing attraction of retreats and seminars organized by over 300 monastic communities in the country (Christophe 2014).

### *The distribution of monastic products in contemporary France*

French Catholic monasteries and abbeys played a major economic role in the Middle Ages. Today, their presence in society is, like their faded political power, more discrete (Collombet 2010). However, these sacred places apply the profane methods of commerce and marketing. In 2014, of the 220 Catholic contemplative communities in France,<sup>3</sup> 143 have a shop selling monastic products or books, 103 have a showcase website, and 13 have a commercial website. By means of their products and services, monasteries isolated from the secular world come into contact with the world of consumption.

### *An improbable meeting between two different worlds*

Most of the products sold are manufactured by or under the supervision of monks and nuns during periods dedicated to work as defined in the monastic *Ora et Labora* scheme deriving from the rule of Saint Benedict (de Nursia 6th century). The sale of products or services is a vital source of revenue for

monastic communities, who are subject to two kinds of pressure. On the one hand, gifts and inheritances are becoming increasingly rare, while, on the other, costs are increasing as members of communities and the buildings they live in and use get older. In addition, money has to be found to ensure that manufacturing facilities meet legal norms (Jonveaux 2011). In order to survive, monasteries must achieve a delicate balance between the inevitable professionalization of their manufacturing and sales procedures, and the absolute priority given to the rhythm of monastic life (prayer, silence, and detachment from material things).

In terms of monastic products and services, the most highly developed sector is, without question, hospitality and accommodation, followed, in descending order, by food products, cosmetics, textiles, books, and music, and, lastly, various services. Our research focuses on monastic products sold in the consumer products sector. Thus, our definition of monastic products is limited to food products, cosmetics, and textiles manufactured by or under the supervision of monks and nuns in active monasteries and abbeys observing the rule of Saint Benedict, a source of precise management guidelines (Grün 2012, Roberts 2012). As we shall see, these monastic products are conscientiously marketed.

At the same time, a growing trend towards a quest for meaning has been observed in consumer behaviors. Doubtless accentuated by a calling into question of the dominant economic model, this quest for meaning is summed up in behaviors characterized by an emphasis on social bonds (Muncy and Vittel 1992). Behaviors reflecting this preoccupation include the quest for authenticity (Gilmore and Pine 2007), frugality (Shaw and Newholm 2002), commitment (Dubuisson-Quellier 2009), solidarity (Bergadaà 2011), gift-giving (Bajde 2009, Belk 2011), and spirituality (Buchholz 2003, McKee 2003, Skougaard 2006, Camus and Poulain 2008, Rinallo *et al.* 2012, Biglin 2012). Consuming monastic products, materially useful and spiritually connoted, is perhaps one of the ways in which individuals express their quest for meaning.

### *The monastic marketing mix*

Generally speaking, abbeys and monasteries have developed ranges of up-to-date products (food and cosmetics) accompanied by a coherent marketing mix.

Monastic products are available in product ranges of various sizes (Table 1). Products are handcrafted and made from natural materials. Only 8–10% of them are certified as organic (for example, the products of the Abbeys of Sept-Fons and Rieunette). In order to authenticate and protect monastic provenance, 220 French abbeys and monasteries have come together to create the “Monastic” logo. The logo features on all products that respect the three following conditions: products must be made at the monastery, by or under the supervision of monks and nuns, and have been the object of a “substantial degree of artisanship.” This definition makes it possible to hire non-religious staff to work for the monks and nuns, and to purchase semi-finished products or raw materials to be assembled at the monastery.

Table 1. Monastic food and cosmetics ranges.

Food products	Cosmetics
Alcohol (beers, wines, liqueurs)	Creams
Honey, jams	Balms, lotions
Confectionery (sweets, fruit pastes, chocolates)	Soaps, shampoos, shower products
Biscuits	Eau de toilette
Condiments (oil, vinegar, mustard)	Essential oils
Cheese	
Charcuterie	
Food complements	

In general, prices, aligned with organic and fair trade products, are higher than those of comparable products sold in the retail sector. Prices are similar to those in selective distribution channels, such as delicatessen products in the food sector or cosmetic products sold in perfumeries and pharmacies.

There are currently a number of different types of monastic points of sale in France. Abbeys and monasteries provide the basis of a multi-channel distribution network with a number of forms and characteristics: sales in stores/remote sales/home sales; local/national coverage; religious/non-religious points of sale. The religion-based approach corresponds to a commercial model developed by religious communities, while the non-religious approach is taken by entrepreneurs who have isolated a development opportunity in the sector (Table 2). This variety of distribution channels – some of them introduced very recently – bears witness to the vitality of this market, both from the point of view of the monasteries themselves, on the lookout for outlets compatible with their monastic life, and from that of distributors conscious of a growing demand for quality handmade products imbued with meaning.

Lastly, communication, which is discrete, is characterized by the use of relatively innovative relational and communitarian tools; mass advertising is

Table 2. Religious and non-religious, physical and virtual distributors of monastic products.

	Religious	Non-religious
Physical	143 abbey shops 7 <i>Artisanat Monastique</i> outlets	<i>Comptoir des Abbayes</i> Delicatessens Wine stores Retail outlets Souvenir shops
Virtual	<i>Boutiques de Théophile</i> Commercial abbey websites <i>Artisanat Monastique website</i>	<i>Eole-Agape VPC</i> <i>Boutique Saint Benoît</i> <i>Dans les Jardins des Monastères</i>

eschewed (Paquier and Morin-Delerm 2012). This discrete communication on the part of the monasteries, a veritable echo of their world of silence, is characterized by the soft but determined voice of cloistered communities in secular society.

### ***The trend towards secularization***

The trend towards secularization in Western European societies can be explained in reference to three elements of modernity: rationality, empowerment of the individual, and differentiation of institutions (Stark and Iannaccone 1994). Three factors have led to the emancipation of the temporal order from the religious sphere (Hervieu-Léger 1999), to a decline in religious practices, and to a displacement of religion toward the private sphere (Casanova 1994). In France, the 1905 law on the separation between Church and State gave birth to the secular society, the rules of which are not governed by religion and in which religious practice is a private affair. The spiritual reality of the early twenty-first century is characterized by globalization, ultra-individualism, freedom of choice, a desire for personal fulfillment, a quest for meaning, the reign of authenticity, and nomadism. People's relation to religion is evolving towards an attitude of "believing without belonging" (Bréchon 2000), an attitude corresponding to an individualization of practices: "this tendency may be interpreted as an expression of the fact that secularization means a reduction in organized religion, while privatized and individualized spirituality proliferates" (Aadland and Skjorshammer 2012). Furthermore, the Church has responded to this trend by enriching its "range" of services with Bible discussion groups, and meetings of families and young people that, statistically, attract more people than Sunday mass. Meanwhile, monastic products probably play a role in the spiritual panoply of individuals, who, by buying these kinds of items, manifest a material interest in the religious world.

But, as demonstrated by Stark and Bainbridge (1985), secularization does not mean the death of religion. Indeed, secularization has been accompanied by a contrary movement of spiritual and religious intensification: the revival movement of traditional religious organizations, and the religious innovation movement in new spiritual and religious traditions (Stark and Bainbridge 1985). Confronted with uncertainties about the future, pressures to change, and the disillusion of individualism, a need for belief and for points of reference emerges. In an era characterized by major crises and deep anxieties, religious and spiritual currents help to "re-enchant the world" by entering the private sphere of individuals (Lenoir 2003). Since the 1970s, adepts in search of authentic experiences and spirituality have turned to psycho-esoteric and psycho-corporal practices. The border between spiritual quests and the market sector is becoming increasingly porous: spirituality and consumption have become intertwined, on the one hand, by the commercialization of the spiritual offer (Obadia 2013), and, on the other, by the response of brands to the spiritual quest of consumers (Buchholz 2003, McKee 2003, Skougaard 2006, Camus and Poulain 2008,

Rinallo *et al.* 2012, Biglin 2012). Thanks to their economic activities and their application of commercial methods – their links with distributors, clients, and lay employees – deriving from the profane world, monks are in touch with the modern world. They take a place in the trends toward secularization.

In summary, theoretical and contextual “chunks” can be linked (Perry *et al.* 2003). In a context of secularization which provokes a more intense spiritual quest, contemplative monasteries, with their market offer of food and cosmetic products, are building a relationship with consumer society. But what about the buyers of such products? Are they simply making a purchase in a sphere that they consider to be entirely commercial, or do they become a *homo donator* by combining their act of purchasing with a dimension linked to the gift? If this is the case, what motivates the gift? Is it a *pro anima* gift or a gift of solidarity? While the material reciprocity of the purchase/gift in the form of a monastic product is explicit, what of the potential implicit reciprocity anticipated by the purchaser/donor: God’s grace, intercession, recognition of an act of solidarity, or the simple, personal satisfaction of consuming an authentic product produced in an artisanal way?

## Methods

### *Data collection*

#### *Places where data were collected*

In France, monastic products are distributed by a multi-channel network of distributors composed of religious and non-religious stores and commercial websites. Our exchanges with actors in this market (commercial managers in abbeys, the head office of the *Monastic* association, the presidents of *Boutiques de Théophile* and *Artisanat Monastique*, managers of *Comptoirs des Abbayes*, the director of the *French Monasteries Foundation*) make up for the lack of availability of precise figures on business generated. It seems that the most effective distribution channels are the 143 abbey stores, followed by non-religious delicatessen-type brands like *Comptoir des Abbayes*, and religious brands like *Boutiques de Théophile* and *Artisanat Monastique*.

Data were collected by means of interviews conducted with consumers using three types of distributors: the shop at the Cistercian Abbey of *Aiguebelle*, the non-religious shop *Comptoir des Abbayes*, and the *Boutiques de Théophile* religious commercial website (Table 3). At *Aiguebelle* and *Comptoir des Abbayes*, interviews were carried out face-to-face as consumers were leaving the stores. Meanwhile, consumers using the *Boutiques de Théophile* website were interviewed either face-to-face or by telephone after they had surfed the site and made one or more purchases.

Interviewing individuals in our sample immediately after they made their purchases, we used a semi-directive approach posing three non-directive, non-suggestive questions about the characteristics interviewees associate with monastic products, in general, about the characteristics they attribute to their

Table 3. The three distributors from which data were collected.

	<i>Aiguebelle</i>	<i>Boutiques de Théophile</i>	<i>Comptoir des Abbayes</i>
Type	Abbey shop: religious/physical	Commercial website: religious/virtual	City outlet: non- religious/physical
Location	Drôme, France	Internet, site in French	Paris, France

purchasing act, and about the meaning that they give to the act of purchasing monastic products. In order not to influence our informants, we were careful to avoid explicitly formulating the concept of giving.

### *Data collected*

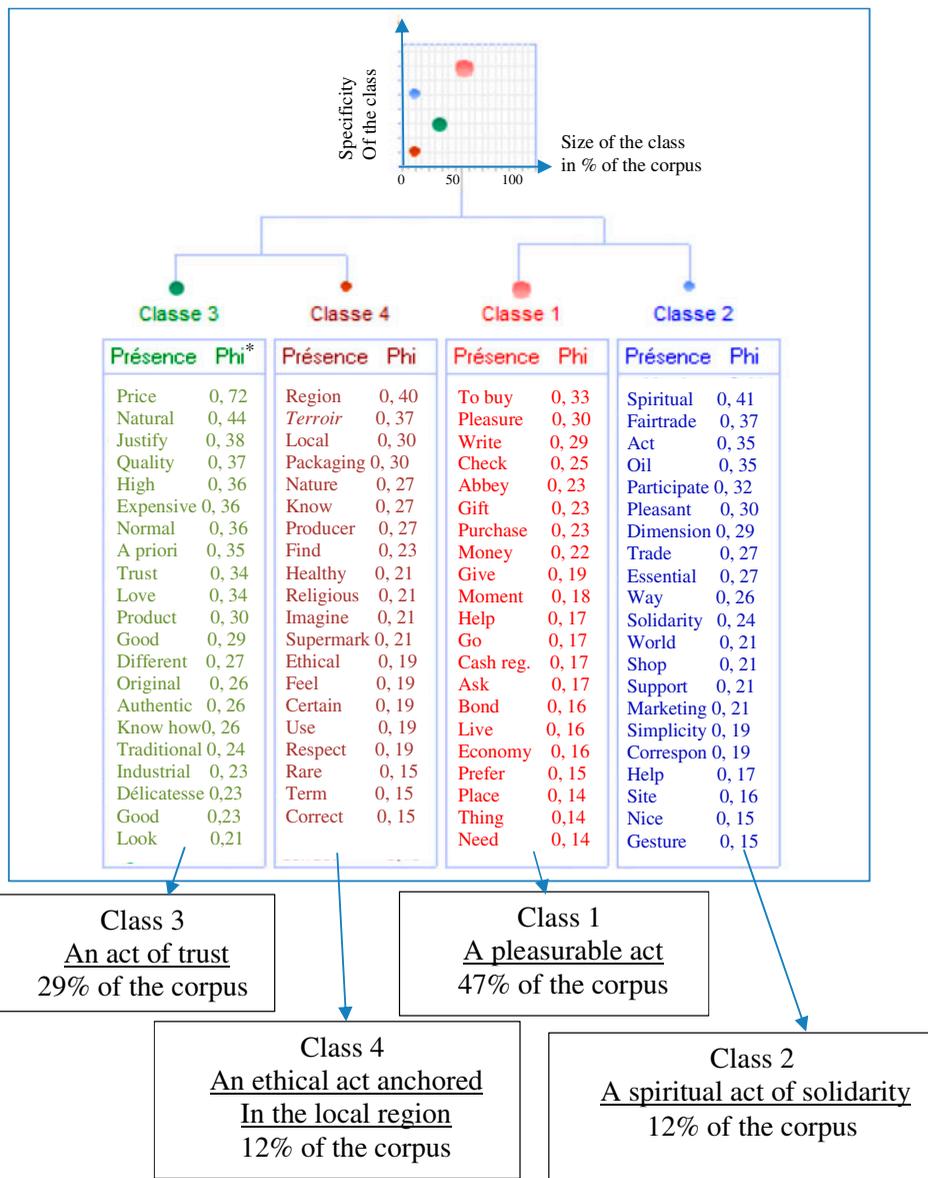
Between 120 and 160 min of interviews were recorded for each of the three distributors. Six interviews were carried out with shoppers at *Aiguebelle*, 16 with shoppers at *Boutiques de Theophile*, and 31 with shoppers at *Comptoir des Abbayes*. Although the profiles of the interviewees varied, Catholics – practicing or otherwise – and people aged between 30 and 65 were overrepresented which, according to managers, reflects the normal profiles of individuals using this kind of outlet.

### *Processing the data*

Based on 53 semi-directive interviews, the oral contents of our transcribed corpus runs for 6 h and 20 min. The manifest content of the interviews was analyzed using a hypothetico-deductive approach. An effort was made to describe the shopping experience, or, in other words, to “describe what people are talking about” (Fallery and Rodhain 2007), by analyzing the oral linguistic content of the interviews from the lexical and textual points of view using Alceste® software, which produces a statistical analysis of textual data and divides those data into various semantic classifications. This statistical approach has been completed by a deeper interpretation of significant verbatim.

### **Findings**

After the data were processed using Alceste® software, four stable classes emerged (Figure 2). The shopping experiences of the 53 individuals interviewed in three different points of sale were divided into four non-exclusive categories (an individual can have several different types of experience), depending on how many times they were mentioned (%), and in which order, indicating the decreasing specificity of the vocabulary employed (from 1 to 4). The words in each class are presented in decreasing order of correlation with the category of experience. The words at the top of the column are those that have the strongest link with the class in question; they are the most significant words of this class.



\*The Phi correlation coefficient classifies in decreasing order the more significant words in each class. It allows us to define the most representative topic treated in each class.

Figure 2. The four classes obtained according to a descending classification.

**Class 1: A pleasurable act**

This class, which stands out the most from the rest of the corpus, accounts for the largest percentage of the interviews analyzed (47%). Its content expresses a clear and dominant facet of the meaning given to the purchase of monastic products, regardless of the points of sale frequented. It seems that, above all,

the individuals interviewed derive pleasure from buying monastic products. An analysis of most frequently uttered significant words, co-occurrences, and verbatim indicates that this feeling of pleasure is linked to the fact of purchasing products for other people and helping the abbeys. This feeling of pleasure is multidimensional and enables individuals to create social bonds with those to whom they offer the products and with the communities that they are helping (Table 4).

Pleasure is thus the emotion most frequently associated with the act of purchasing monastic products. This emotion derives from two sources linked to the act of giving: offering good products as a gift and giving money to the religious communities. In the light of what is maintained in the literature, this pleasure can be assimilated to a form of non-material reciprocity of the act of giving (Weber 2007). This first classification provides a perfect illustration of the phenomenon of the embeddedness of the market in the sphere of personal

Table 4. Significant verbatim from Class 1 and analysis of the sources of pleasure expressed by interviewees.

Interviewee	Verbatim	Sources of pleasure
Man, 18–30, practicing Catholic	A lot goes to the monasteries from the sale; it's a kind of gift, and that's a pleasurable thing	Giving money to monasteries
Man, 18–30, non-practicing Catholic	It's a special purchase, from somewhere that needs money, so I think my purchase will help them, and that makes me happy, even if the product is the most important thing for me	Giving money to monasteries Buying a good product for himself
Man, 30–45, atheist	It'll make people happy, the impact of my purchase is positive, with the gift I'm going to give to the person I'm thinking of	Giving gifts to close friends and family
Woman, 45–60, practicing Catholic	We have bought gifts to make others happy, but we have also bought gifts for ourselves	Giving a gift to close friends and family Buying a good product for herself
Woman, 30–45, practicing Catholic	I'm giving something to the abbey, but it isn't like writing out a check; the product is the cherry on the cake; the pleasure of beautiful products as gifts or for oneself	Giving money to monasteries Giving a gift to close friends and family Buying a good product for herself
Man, 45–60, non-practicing Catholic	It's a purchase for me; I give myself a little treat by buying these cakes which are like my grandmother's, and knowing that it's from a community I know is something that also give me pleasure	Buying a good product for himself giving money to monasteries

relations (Polanyi 1944, Granovetter 2000). More precisely, it clearly confirms Strahilevitz and Myers' (1998) affect-based complementary concept, which shows how emotions stimulated by hedonic products are often accompanied by feelings inspired by gifts made to charitable causes. In CRM, hedonic products are more readily associated with altruist causes than are utilitarian products. Here, hedonic pleasure and an oblique approach to support and gift-giving are closely linked, providing a demonstration of how a single act of purchasing can at once be "self-oriented" and "other-oriented" (Holbrook 1999, Bajde 2006). This observation, which validates the relevance of hedonic pleasure, as a source of value, but which contradicts Holbrook's dichotomic approach, contributes to the debate about sources of value for consumers (Aurier *et al.* 2004, Rivière and Mencarelli 2012). Two opposing positions (self-orientation and other-orientation) can be represented in a single item.

### ***Class 2: A spiritual act of solidarity***

Representing 12% of the corpus analyzed, this second class presents the purchase of monastic products as a voluntary act combining solidarity and spirituality. An attentive analysis of the words used by interviewees reveals the preponderance of the topics "fair-trade" and "solidarity." In effect, more terms from the lexical field of solidarity (help, fair, participating, togetherness, support) are used than from the lexical field of spirituality. Purchasing monastic products is, above all, an act of support carried out in an agreeable store, a way of helping and becoming involved. It is an active approach to providing support, with that support motivated by a sense of spirituality or by a desire to show solidarity for an alternative economic sector (Table 5). Spirituality is less directly verbalized than solidarity, but an analysis of the interviews reveals that the monastic "cause" – the act of providing support for the religious communities – is of decisive importance. In this context, it is interesting to underline that what is expressed first and foremost is a desire to offer support, as if the spiritual dimension was still implicit.

Implicit spiritual solidarity is clearly associated with the act of purchasing monastic products. The notion of the gift, inherent in the solidarity displayed in the act of providing financial support, is thus also present in this class of the corpus, but this time not in the form of pleasure. It is a gift that provides meaning for individuals searching for solidarity (Bergadaà 2011) and spirituality (Skougaard 2006, Rinallo *et al.* 2012) through their consumer acts. Here again, it can be considered that individuals are motivated simultaneously by an oblique approach based on solidarity and a hedonic approach based on the satisfaction derived from a coherent fit between ideals and acts. Our results suggest that people who purchase monastic products have a positive feeling for the fit, the coherence between the cause that they support and the type of products available (Hamling and Wilson 2004). In this instance, the cause is primarily equitable and, to a lesser degree, spiritual. This soft expression of spirituality should be considered in the light of the profound secularization of

Table 5. Significant verbatim from Class 2.

Interviewee	Verbatim
Woman, 30–45, practicing Catholic	The decisive motivation for my purchase is an indirect involvement in supporting the communities. It's as involving as fair trade, and there's also a spiritual dimension
Man, 30–45, practicing Catholic	It's a particular kind of purchase, to encourage monastic production, there's a participatory approach, helping a healthy cause, perpetuating a tradition. It's buying as a form of encouragement
Man, 45–60, non-practicing Catholic	There's a spiritual dimension, you get the impression you're involved, that you're helping them survive
Man, 30–45, practicing Catholic	It is a voluntary act carried out in support of a cause in which I believe
Woman, 30–45, non-practicing Catholic	It's similar to buying fair trade products, there's an aspect of solidarity, it helps them, and there's also a kind of spiritual aspect
Woman, 18–30, non-practicing Catholic	These products are an alternative to major brands, I compare them to fair trade products, with an added religious dimension

French society, the consequence of which is the interiorization of religious convictions (Casanova 1994, Aadland and Skjorshammer 2012). Oriented towards others as well as towards the self, consumers provide support and receive, reciprocally, the satisfaction of helping, while, at the same time, giving meaning to their act.

### ***Class 3: An act of trust***

This class accounts for 29% of the corpus analyzed. The words most frequently used by interviewees (high prices, natural, justify, quality, and trust) reveal that they accept the high prices of monastic products, justified by the natural and original character of those products. In addition, the fact that they are handmade and produced in monasteries, strongly suggests that the work was carried out with love. Trust in monastic products is based on the idea that they are made to high standards. Interviewees expressed the view that monastic products were to be associated with organic, rather than industrial products. These characteristics imply that interviewees will agree to pay more for a product, the price of which they regard as justified. A thorough analysis of the interviews reveals that, behind the easily verbalized presumption of quality, there is a high degree of esteem for the monks and nuns described as “good people” with “a love of work well done” (Table 6).

This third class in the corpus can be read on a number of different levels. A first level of analysis clearly shows that consumers are willing to pay more for products regarded as being of high quality, original, handmade, and trustworthy. These terms echo studies carried out on the notion of a fair price,

Table 6. Significant verbatim from Class 3.

Interviewee	Verbatim
Man, 30–45, practicing Catholic	The price is high, but that's ok, it's justified, the product is handmade, artisanal, all things being even you know where it comes from
Woman, 30–45, non-practicing Catholic	I know that the products are well made, basically I trust them
Man, +60, practicing Catholic	They are quality products, a little more expensive, but it's normal, they're handmade by monks, it's marvelous, there's something special happening because they work lovingly
Man, 45–60, atheist	The products are artisanal, homemade, at least that's what we're told; we have a very positive view of them, we can put our trust in them, there are no middlemen and the monks take a serious approach to their work
Man, 30–45, practicing Catholic	These products are almost made-to-measure, they are made with love, and they carry the Monastic label, so the price is justified

especially in the fair trade sector (Robert-Demontrond 2008), as well as research into trust in marketing (Morgan and Hunt 1994). A second level of analysis, less specific due to the variety of terms employed by the interviewees, shows that this trust is accorded specifically because of the monastic provenance of the products in question, and that this provenance provokes a sentiment of esteem and recognition. In this context, referring directly to the notion of spirituality, buyers of monastic products consider contemplative monks and nuns to be “good people” and thank them for the love that they spread by buying their products at high prices. The trust accorded to these products is, in the final analysis, the result of the trust placed in the men and women behind them. It is, in this context, a gift given by consumers in two senses: a gift of money (agreeing to pay a higher price) and a gift of trust. Here again, the act is characterized by reciprocity and duality.

#### ***Class 4: An ethical act anchored in the local region***

The fourth and last class, which accounts for 12% of the corpus analyzed, expresses the association made by interviewees between the purchase of monastic products and the *terroir*. The allusion is to the region and the local producers who provide it with a concrete, geographically anchored identity. This identification of monastic products with a particular region gives consumers the impression that they are in some way close to those producers, and provides the products purchased with a healthy ethical connotation. An analysis of the interviews illustrates the importance of this regional aspect of monastic products; it is as if the way in which they were produced had not changed since the Middle Ages (Table 7). Values associated with tradition and the conservation of local expertise confer a timeless character on the products.

Table 7. Significant verbatim from Class 4.

Interviewee	Verbatim
Woman, 45–60, atheist	A little like regional, <i>terroir</i> products from producers of regional specialties, for example, the lavender water you find in the Drôme
Man, 18–30, non-practicing Catholic	These are products with spiritual and ethical value, products comparable to <i>terroir</i> products, to local products from a specific region
Woman, 30–45, atheist	Products from the earth, <i>terroir</i> products are used by monks, of course they're good products, our vision of monks is that they respect the earth
Woman, 30–45, practicing Catholic	It's anchored in a specific region, it's my belief that they're made in the region, in the abbey, and even if they are not labeled as organic, they're made with a respect for nature, with a certain tradition

Furthermore, the fact that they are by no means industrial in character, combined with their religious origin, provides the act of purchasing with an ethical, authentic dimension.

Unlike the first three classes, the fourth does not make any reference to gift-giving. Here, products have a regional identity and an ethical value for those who purchase them. Like organic and fair trade products, monastic products respond to current trends about how to consume more ethically, in respecting both Man and Nature. The idea of creating bonds is very important here as well, since we know that buying locally creates social bonds, as does supporting fair trade (Merle and Piotrowski 2012).

### *Synthesis, limitations, and contributions*

Our research question focuses on the part played by the notion of the gift in the purchase of monastic products. When envisaged from a Maussian perspective, the analysis of data gathered in interviews with buyers exiting three different types of point of sale highlights the central and multiform role of the notion of the gift and of the reciprocities associated with it. Gifts in the form of money, products, committed support, and trust; reciprocity in the omnipresent form of the social bond and love, but also of products with a variety of associated values, and, lastly, of the feeling of pleasure, of meaning given to the purchase, of solidarity, of spirituality, and of a form of empathy with regional traditions (Table 8).

By characterizing the meaning given by the interviewees in our sample to their purchases of monastic products, we have been able to demonstrate in this microeconomic system, the pronounced degree of embeddedness of gift-giving in the market (Polanyi 1944). This result confirms the ideas expressed in the cause-related marketing literature and illustrates the strength of the secularist trend in French society. In effect, following Strahilevitz and Myers (1998), by defining monastic retail products as charity products, we observe that the

purchasing act, systematically accompanied by an act of giving (a gift of money, trust, and objects to others), is a source of hedonic sentiments. Pleasure, solidarity, trust, ethics, love, and identification with a certain patrimony are felt at the emotional, rather than the utilitarian, level. Like other studies (Bajde 2006, Rivière and Mencarelli 2012), these results contradict the dichotomic character of value sources based on the criterion of Holbrook's "turned to the self/turned to others" duality (Holbrook 1999). Individuals can, through the simple act of purchasing an object, display two orientations at the same time: while buying a product, they also perform an act of gift-giving that involves various forms of gifts, as well as material and immaterial reciprocities. The act involves, above all, purchasing a product, combined with a variety of forms of gift-giving ranging from implicit aid to committed support, underpinned by trust and solidarity. These forms of gift-giving give rise to material and immaterial reciprocities, and involve a wide variety of actors, with points of sale playing the intermediary role of recipient third parties (Figure 3).

These multiple forms of material and immaterial, direct and indirect reciprocity, are not marked with any explicit verbal trace of a spiritual quest. If, during the Middle Ages, most gifts made to monasteries were *pro anima* gifts – material goods to be transformed into celestial ones – today, it seems that the act of purchasing monastic products is no longer informed by transcendental concerns. There are two main differences in the regard to the *pro anima* gifts of the Middle Ages. Firstly, the balance of power has probably shifted: if, in the Middle Ages, the grace of the wealthy depended on

Table 8. Multiple forms of gift-giving and reciprocity in the act of purchasing monastic products.

Class	Forms of gift	Reciprocity in the form of a social bond	Direct material reciprocity	Indirect immaterial reciprocity
An act of pleasure	Money for the communities Monastic product presented as a gift to other people	General bonds Oblative bonds	Quality product	Pleasure of helping Pleasure of giving
A spiritual act of solidarity	Financial commitment	Bond of solidarity Spiritual bond	Equitable and, in the end, spiritual product	Meaning of the act of purchase: solidarity, spirituality
An act of trust	Trust granted	Bond of trust	Product made with love	Gratuity of trust
An ethical act anchored in the local region	Purchase of the product	Regional bond Social bond	Ethical regional product	Evocation of the local region

monasteries, today, the financial security of French monasteries depends on customers; lay people have more power, thus, the sustainability of monasteries depends on their purchasing acts and gifts. Secondly, if God was “present” in the Middle Ages *pro anima* gift through the reciprocal exchange of spiritual goods, today the immaterial reciprocity inherent in the gift is not necessarily religious: God was not mentioned by the interviewees, their interior feelings are more broad-ranging and more secular than in the Middle Ages.

In order to complete our research, it would be worthwhile attempting to isolate trends in the sale and purchase of monastic products depending, firstly, on the points of sale frequented by consumers (physical, virtual, religious, and non-religious), and secondly, in terms of the characteristics of the interviewees (age, religion, and religious practices). This study is based on qualitative data deriving from samples that are neither statistically representative nor comparable with one another. Our research could, therefore, be followed up with a quantitative investigation of representative samples. It would thus be possible to elaborate typologies of purchaser–donors, depending on where they buy their products and on their personal characteristics.

From a managerial point of view, these initial results could be used to help French contemplative monasteries to understand their customers better. The varied palette of hedonic sentiments felt in the act of purchasing monastic products is a subject that should be taken into account by those responsible for developing monastic products marketing strategies. Such sentiments should be integrated into new product ranges, merchandizing choices, and advertising campaigns. Far from the guilt-inducing approach of the Medieval Church, they perpetuate the positive image of monasteries and demonstrate that the spiritual

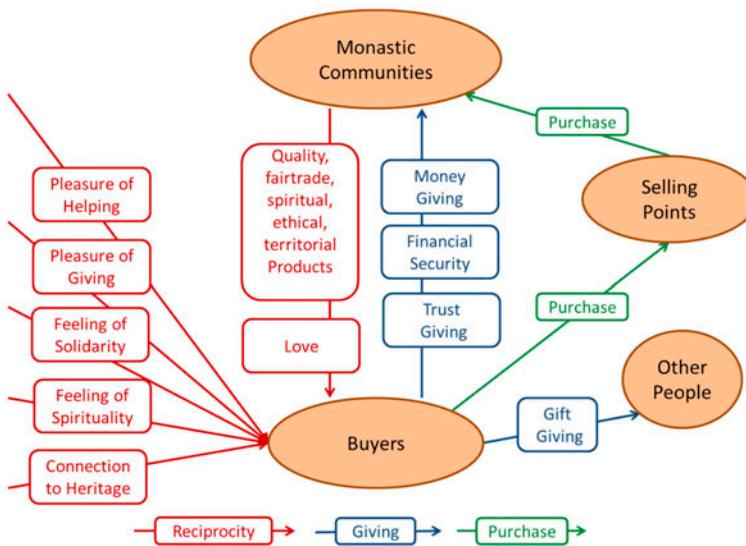


Figure 3. The various forms of gift-giving and reciprocity in the act of buying monastic products.

quest of secularized society is compatible with the consumption of hedonic religious products.

### **In conclusion, a word about sharing**

We have observed the act of buying monastic products through the lens of the place of gift-giving in market relations. The results show that both are combined: the act of paying is, such as “giving money, financial security and trust”, and the reciprocity of this money movement is both tangible by receiving “quality, fair-trade, spiritual, ethical, territorial products” and intangible by receiving “love” (Table 8). These results are obtained from a corpus composed by interviews of clients in three types of shops: a true monastic shop in an abbey (*Aiguebelle*), a merchant website organized as a marketplace by 14 abbeys (*Boutiques de Théophile*), and a lay specialized shop in the center of Paris (*Comptoir des Abbayes*). By compiling the interviews into one corpus, the results reveal the common denominator of these three types of shops: globally, the notion of tangible and intangible reciprocity is pregnant during all the process of buying monastic products, whatever the type of shop.

It seems that, regarding the type of shop, the idea of “sharing” could be mobilized to deeper understand the type of interaction between buyers and monks and nuns, especially in the shops which are situated in the abbeys. By using the definition given by Belk (2010), enriched by his distinction between “sharing in” and “sharing out”, we can say that the monastic shop situated in an abbey is closer to the idea of a moment of sharing. Indeed, during the act of buying monastic products, buyers, on the one hand, and monks and nuns, on the other, are making “the act and process of distributing what is” theirs (money or products) “to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for” their “use” (Belk 2010, p. 717). In this case, monks or nuns are at home, they welcome visitors “as Jesus”<sup>4</sup> (de Nursia, 6th century) in their life based on prayer, work, *lectio divina*, and silence, always practiced in community: their monastic life is a sharing life! By welcoming people in their shops, monks and nuns are “sharing in” with them their extended self, which is materialized by the products they have handmade together during the rhythm indicated by the rule of Saint Benedict. The physical presence of monks or nuns in the shop allows a true “communal act” of sharing tangible and intangible goods: monks and nuns are “sharing in” because they are “regarding ownership as common, such that the others are included within the aggregate extended self”, whereas clients are “sharing out” by “giving to others outside the boundaries separating self and other, and” are “closer to gift giving and commodity exchange” (Belk 2010, p. 725). Finally, the “joint possessions” are the intangible things mentioned in the results and shown in Figure 3: trust, love, feelings of solidarity and spirituality, pleasure of helping and giving, connection to heritage. These intangible “joint possessions” are shared by two parallel processes materialized by tangible things: money *shared out* by buyers, and monastic products *shared in* by monks and nuns.

The best way to confirm this potential interpretation about sharing is to complete the current research with deep interviews of the offers themselves, the monks, and the nuns: How are they interpreting their own act of making and selling monastic products? Are they simply selling products to earn money? Are they giving back some tangible and intangible reciprocity like buyers feel in this current work? Or are they sharing their spiritual life by distributing their extended self through the products they made in community under the monastic rhythm devoted to the work as a prayer?

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### **Notes on contributor**

Marie-Catherine Paquier teaches Marketing and Research Methodology at Novancia Business School in Paris, France. She is doing her doctoral dissertation on the purchasing experience of monastic products. For four years, she has been involved in researching French monastic business models, including acting as a consultant to monastic brothers and sisters in charge of the economic life of their communities.

### **Notes**

1. We are aware of the gender bias of the term “impregnation” (Bristor and Fischer 1993). We could have replaced it by infusion, imbrication, under weaving or imbue, which are more neutral. But we think that a natural balance is operating with the term “sharing”, whose typical prototype is the feminine metaphor of “mothering and the pooling and allocation resources within the family” (Belk 2010, p. 717).
2. <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07783a.htm>.
3. We mentioned earlier the very important historic role of the Benedictine and Cistercian orders in Europe. Their economic and agricultural role is explained by the masculine nature of these communities which dominated during the Middle Ages. Less cloistered than the feminine communities, the medieval masculine Benedictine communities, followed by the Cistercians, were very active in their territories. Today, feminine communities are in the majority and have somewhat softened the rules of the cloister. In 2014, in France, we have approximately 220 contemplative communities tending to manufacture monastic products: Annonciades (4), Bénédictines female (43), Bénédictines male (35), Carmelites (43), Carthusians (4), Cistercians female (18), Cistercians male (15), St Clare nuns (38), and Visitation sisters (16). We do not mention here the begging orders, such as the Dominicans or Franciscans, non-contemplative orders that live outside of the cloister and are engaged in secular life through work in education, social work, and health care.
4. ‘All guests arriving at the monastery should be welcomed at Christ Himself’ (Rule of Saint Benedict, chap. 53).

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