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CCT Perspectives on Macromarketing: Introduction to the Special Issue

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In recent years, several analyses of macromarketing phenomena employing a Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) orientation have appeared in the *Journal of Macromarketing*. These studies have addressed the topics including:

- 1) globalization and marketplace transitions in emerging markets (Eckhardt and Mahi 2012),
- 2) the political-economic and historical dynamics of market systems (Kravets 2012),
- 3) authenticity in the context of macromarketing (Kadirov, Varey and Wooliscroft 2013),
- 4) advertising, hedonic consumption, and symbolism in marketing (Kadirov and Varey 2011; McQuarrie and Statman 2016),
- 5) markets, brands and place interactions (Askegaard and Kjeldgaard 2007; Brown and Campelo 2014; Visconti, Minowa and MacLaran 2014),
- 6) consumer co-production and ethical economy (Arvidsson 2008),
- 7) power, governmentality, and marketing ideology (Fougere and Skalen 2012; Yngfalk and Yngfalk 2015), and
- 8) consumer communities (Sinclair 2016).

While these studies illustrate the productive interaction between the two research domains, they also disclose a potential for further convergence and cross-fertilization.

Interest in cultural aspects of consumption has increased significantly in the past decades. In the early years, culturally-oriented research aimed at extending the analytical focus beyond the pre-purchase and purchase stages to consumption experiences. Scholars emphasized the autotelic, aesthetic, symbolic, and experiential aspects of consumption; these

scholars conceptualized consumers as capable of attaching individualized meanings to consumption objects and activities (e.g., Belk 1988; Thompson and Haytko 1997; Wallendorf and Arnould 1998).

In the coming years, such celebratory approaches that valorised consumer agency came under attack. Drawing from a wide range of theoretical perspectives (such as poststructuralism, social constructivism, critical theory, and practice theory), scholars sought to unpack various forces structuring consumption that might be ideological, social, historical, and institutional in nature (e.g., Holt 1998; Thompson 2004). By mapping out power dynamics, studies revealed the dialogical relationship between consumers and market structures; these studies discussed resistance in terms of 1) when it occurs, 2) how it occurs, and 3) what consequences result from resistance.

Three developments helped institutionalize cultural approaches as forming a legitimate paradigm within consumer research and marketing: 1) the publication of Arnould and Thompson's Consumer Culture Theory article in the *Journal of Consumer Research* in 2005 (Arnould and Thompson 2005), 2) the establishment of specialized conferences, and 3) the organization of doctoral seminars. However, the institutionalization of CCT also contributed to the debates about the ontological and epistemological premises of the field (e.g., Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Fitchett, Patsiaouras, and Davis 2014; Thompson, Arnould and Giesler 2013).

The CCT label has received criticism for its totalizing tendency that silenced and excluded divergent voices. Critics charge that despite its genesis, much of the CCT research has retained a micro-level focus and has decoupled consumption from societal, economic, and geopolitical contexts. Additionally, Askegaard and Linnet have offered criticism that CCT research has failed to adequately study how consumption "participates in the constitution of society" (2011, p.396).

The field of macromarketing, in its essence, has developed as an inquiry into the market-society interaction. As explained in Hunt's often-cited definition, macromarketing focuses on "the study of (1) marketing systems, (2) the impact and consequences of marketing systems on society, and (3) the impact and consequences of society on marketing systems" (Hunt 1977, p. 56). Since then, macromarketing scholars have been studying issues such as 1) competition, 2) socioeconomic development, 3) ethics and distributive justice, 4) well-being and quality of life, 5) globalization, and 6) sustainability in the context of market-society interaction. From its inception, an ethical and systematic approach to markets and marketing has guided the macromarketing tradition. Marketing systems are seen as having direct impact on societal well-being and on environmental sustainability. Hence, macromarketing encouraged research that would contribute to establishing marketing systems that produce fairer societies.

The interplay between markets and people has been of interest to CCT scholars, too. In the early years of CCT research, the market was generally conceptualized as a providing a source of symbolic and material resources for consumers to pursue their identity projects. CCT researchers sought to understand how people construct and enact their identities in relation and/or opposition to historically-conditioned, institutional arrangements (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Recently, there has been a growing interest in viewing consumers as part of a complex system that includes firms, media, regulators and policy makers (Giesler and Fischer 2017). With the introduction of new analytical tools (such as institutional theory, actor-network theory, and assemblage theory), the view of the market has expanded from a mediating resource to a dynamic construction through which discourses, relationships and practices are formed and negotiated. This turn suggests a greater potential for convergence between the CCT and macromarketing perspectives.

We acknowledge that neither CCT nor macromarketing are unified and monolithic

disciplinary fields. Each entail a wide range of theoretical and methodological perspectives, priorities and agendas. Nevertheless, in their origin, they share a common interest in going beyond the managerially-driven focus on consumer behaviour and marketing.

In their own ways, CCT and macromarketing develop the disciplinary imagination beyond the concern for profit and expand the ontological premises of consumer and marketing research. We also believe that the ways these fields have evolved over the years bring new synergistic possibilities. While CCT can benefit from paying more attention to the effects of markets and consumption on people, communities and societies, macromarketing can adopt a more critical and reflexive perspective on cultural contacts and clashes in the marketplace. Hence, the rationale behind this special issue is to further develop the dialogue between CCT and macromarketing perspectives and contribute to the critically-oriented analyses of the interactions between markets, marketing, and society.

Articles in this Issue

In this special issue, we present six articles that take up the task of rethinking and studying ‘macro’ in macromarketing from a consumer-culture-theoretical perspective. Drawing from research in macromarketing and CCT, these studies offer new ways to explore the dynamics of interactions in the global economy that involve markets, marketing and society.

Bige Saatcioglu and Canan Corus, in their article ‘Towards a Macromarketing and Consumer Culture Theory Intersection: Participatory and Deliberative Methodologies,’ propose an innovative and inclusive approach to research design and data collection that combines the strengths of the CCT and macromarketing traditions. Specifically, they present action research methods as effective and inspirational tools that can enrich the depth of cultural understandings while illuminating underlying social, structural, historical, and institutional forces. According to the authors, these methodological approaches move social

inquiry from a purely cultural/theoretical (as in CCT) or structural/policy-oriented (as in macromarketing) perspective to a collective, inclusive, and reflexive framework that motivates capacity building and social change.

In ‘A Gift Economy Perspective on the Cycle of Financial Vulnerability,’ Rafaela Cordeiro, Nancy Wong and Mateus Ponchio explore how culture mediates consumer financial vulnerability. In particular, the authors examine the common cultural practices of borrowing-lending among family and friends in Brazil to show that counterintuitive—even ruinous—financial decisions make sense when interpersonal relationships are the focus. The authors consider aspects of financial decisions through the critical lens of gift-giving theory and argue that the logic of a moral economy often guides consumer participation in the market economy. Indeed, they find that at times, consumers choose to access the market economy of credit in order to maintain the moral economy of credit (lending to others, themselves). Thus, by tracing a moral interpersonal dimension in a cycle of financial decisions, the authors illuminate a complex and intricate socio-cultural fabric of financial vulnerability.

In their article ‘Vagabonds at the Margins: Acculturation, Subalterns, and Competing Worth’ Hari Sreekumar and Rohit Varman focus on the cultural experiences of subaltern migrants or vagabonds. Drawing from research on consumer acculturation, globalization and convention theory, the authors argue that vagabonds use competing notions of worth and justification to carve out a space for themselves and resist dominant consumer acculturation. As Sreekumar and Varman point out, consumption by vagabonds remain understudied and less understood in both the macromarketing and CCT traditions because both tend to emphasize consumption experiences of ‘permanent’ migrants. However, displacements caused by globalization render temporary migrants a socially, culturally and economically-important phenomenon. Overall, the study draws attention to the experiences of marginalized

consumers enmeshed in global flows that create different circuits of privileges and subordination. The study also offers a perspective that is attentive to both structural dynamics and everyday practices.

Sofia Ulver, in her contribution 'From Mundane to Socially Significant Consumption: An Analysis of how Foodie Identity Work Spurs Market Formation' investigates how a mundane and everyday consumption-practice evolves to be something socially significant. As she points out, macromarketing research has traditionally examined the shaping and formation of markets from a marketing-systems perspective. However, in recent years there has been some recognition of consumers and their role in marketing system transformation. By treating the marketing system as a cultural process, Ulver analyses how consumers, through their identity work, unintentionally transform a market by negotiating its symbolic boundaries and expanding its borders in relation to their social surroundings. Through a rich ethnographic study of the 'foodie culture' the author shows how CCT and macromarketing traditions can be effectively combined to develop a more culturally-oriented understanding of marketing-system transformation.

Diane Martin, Anu Harju, Emma Salminen and Bianca Koroschetz's article 'More Than One Way to Float Your Boat: Product Use and Sustainability Impacts' investigates the environmental impact of consumer behaviour by focusing on a product's use throughout a product lifecycle. The authors adopt the practice-theory approach to document materials, meanings, and competences in maintenance practices of leisure boats in three European countries in the Baltic Sea region. In detailing various aspects of practices, the authors unpack the links therein to institutional elements (in a form of infrastructure, regulation and market resources), which either enable or hinder sustainability in consumer product use. Tacking back and forth between specific consumption issues (including consumer education and responsibility) and country-level institutional factors, the authors flesh out cultural

variations in the practices. These authors also discuss the ways the differences influence sustainability outcomes. Overall, this article sheds light on how the interplay of environmental policies and the meanings of product-use practices result in a greater or lesser level of sustainability.

Andrea Lucarelli and Massimo Giovanardi's article 'Investigating Relational Ontologies in Macromarketing: Toward a Relational Approach and Research Agenda' inquires about the potential of relational ontologies in the realm of micromarketing. Relational ontologies, as the authors emphasize, imply a worldview in which relations are considered central and have primacy over entities. This perspective contrast to objectivist and substantivist ontologies in which entities have primacy. Drawing from the applications of relational ontologies in the CCT domain, Lucarelli and Giovanardi propose a critical, reflexive, and politically-sensitive research approach that can be applied in micromarketing studies. The authors illustrate the merits of a relational framework through a relational-inspired macromarketing study on the reputational capital of places.

The special issue closes with commentary by Eileen Fischer of York University. Fischer offers perspective on the importance of the convergence of CCT and macromarketing. She offers the compelling example of social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, and how these developed themselves for years as bringing only benefits to society—free speech for society in a digital age. However, now it appears that the algorithms used for presenting news and ads to readers on these platforms leads to reinforcing insularity for consumers in an age of increased tribalism. Additionally, ideological extremists have used these social media platforms for their own purposes—which work against inclusion in society. In this example, Fischer highlights how more research is needed on the topic of consumer agency and social media. Fischer believes that CCT and macromarketing approaches would be very valuable in this regard. Such an example clearly underlines the

potential for researchers in the future employing CCT and macromarketing approaches for a variety of topics with societal importance.

Moving Forward

As the articles in this special issue show, conversations between and across domains help bridge differences and open up new ways of thinking about market related phenomena.

Macromarketing's explicit focus on the societal implications of marketing seems to be less prevalent in CCT, which tends to prioritize theoretical development. CCT's engagement with social theory, on the other hand, carries the danger of generating a sanitized discourse that fails to adequately address social issues. However, there is no better time to develop a more inclusive approach (which is not only theoretically-informed and societally-engaged), but also critically oriented. The debates within social sciences on issues such as national populism, corporate criminality, structures of neo-colonialism, and inequalities of globalization highlight the significance of market-society-capitalism interaction. A critical conversation between the societal orientation of macromarketing and rich theorization of CCT can generate a more progressive and engaging discourse for the field of marketing.

In conclusion, we hope that the special issue contributes to cross-fertilizations between different subdomains of marketing scholarship and advances a more inclusive research agenda (in terms of geography, history and theories), as well as a critical one. We would like to thank the authors of the papers outlined above and Eileen Fischer who has generously provided her commentary for this special issue. We also thank the numerous reviewers who provided informed critique and comment on submissions.

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