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Critical Insights into Global Diversity of Markets and Consumptionscapes: Special Issue Editorial

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Markets, Globalization & Development Review



Critical Insights into Global Diversity of Markets and Consumptionscapes: Special Issue Editorial

Introduction

This special issue is to honor the founding and continuing current editors of *Markets, Globalization & Development Review (MGDR)*, Drs. Nikhilesh Dholakia and Deniz Atik, who have done a stellar job of launching the journal and bringing it to the attention of a global audience, such that the journal has a very impressive number of readers and downloads. We were given the privilege of editing this special issue, which grew out of the idea of the board of directors of the *International Society of Markets and Development (ISMD)*, the society that *MGDR* is a child of, to honor Nikhilesh and Deniz, our esteemed colleagues and valued scholars of our field (see Dholakia 2016 for a brief history of ISMD).

In this issue, we lead with two articles, coming out of interviews that the first guest editor of this issue, Annamma Joy, did with Nikhilesh and Deniz, and written by Beatriz DeQuero-Navarro and Annamma Joy, acknowledging the contributions of these two important marketing scholars who took on the challenge of being the initial co-editors of *MGDR*. These two articles highlight their relentless work to maintain a critical stance with regard to traditional marketing wisdom. Being in the minority does not trouble either of these scholars as they continue to challenge the status quo. By highlighting such thinking, these articles throw into relief how the unquestioned assumptions of capitalism — with its emphasis on unfettered growth and ideas of neoliberal progress — inform knowledge creation in the field of marketing. They emphasize why it is so important to question this impact and to consider alternate paths to understanding the mechanics of marketing (e.g., Nikhilesh and Ruby Dholakia's (1985) study of consumer sovereignty and Zeynep Ozdamar-Ertekin, Deniz Atik, and Jeff Murray's (2020) study on the conflicting logics of commerce, sustainability, and art).

This issue also includes two commentaries engaging with some of the articles that appeared earlier in *MGDR*: one by Tracy Hardwood on the dynamics of the local and global, and the second by Delphine Godefroit-Winkel on the representations of minorities in mediascapes and the dynamics of the local and the global. Both articles seize on the idea of culture in social transformation, which was originally highlighted by Fuat Firat in his 2016 article, "The dynamics of the local and the global: Implications for marketing and development" (Firat 2016).

Articles

The biographical sketches of Nikhilesh Dholakia and Deniz Atik serve to contextualize their individual contributions and highlight their passion for opposing the status quo and taking a critical stance towards received knowledge. For both scholars, this interest was stimulated early on in family contexts and has served them well in their careers. Both authors champion the idea of giving voice to non-western views, cherish alternate and minority perspectives, and promote the use of multiple methodologies that help to highlight the positions of the oppressed and exploited. Thanks to their untiring efforts, the journal *MGDR* accomplishes its goal of offering an alternate forum for expressing such views. Through the work it publishes, the journal helps to question the theoretical foundations of what we in the developed world have taken for granted as central concepts in the field of marketing and consumer behavior. Dholakia and Atik are adamant in their support of diverse, inclusive, sustainability-focused, and feminist/minority ideologies, all of which are crucial in a globalized, postmodern world but, as they note, are often overlooked because of the unequal distribution of power. Both authors are committed to uncovering the roles that marketing plays in minimizing and erasing the vulnerability of people who live under precarious conditions, often through vicious market dynamics. As co-editors of *MGDR*, they encourage a critical mindset that embraces interdisciplinarity and theoretical openness, “all in service to the goal of emancipatory and transformational futures,” as Dholakia (2012:22) notes. Re-imagining futures becomes possible when scholars are open to new perspectives.

Commentaries

The first commentary is written by Tracy Hardwood, who makes a critical comparison of some of the shared views between Firat’s (2016) article “The dynamics of the local and the global: Implications for marketing and development” and Gonen’s (2019) review of Tim Brown’s book in “Tim Brown, change by design: How design thinking transforms organizations and inspires innovation (2009).”

Hardwood compares and contrasts the perspectives of both authors, with great attention paid to the complexities of the worlds that each of the authors try to summarize for their audiences without flattening the arguments. She particularly focuses on the importance of “trans-disciplinarity” that she sees as central to solving the difficult but pressing problems facing the world. She makes a case for incorporating diverse scholarly perspectives on solutions to those problems and including design

thinking as a methodological approach (Gonen's 2019 review), as well as preserving cultural identity despite the way our current reality often reduces life to an economic perspective, in which the market prevails (Firat's (2016) perspective). Hardwood also suggests the United Nations' identification of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) underscores the importance of protecting human diversity and facilitating equality and inclusion. To fully understand whether or how these goals are being met, we must continue to unravel the intricate ties between the global and the local. Design thinking in its broadest terms is indispensable to addressing global challenges (Gonen 2019) that will affect how we conceive both the local and the global.

The second commentary is by Delphine Godefroit-Winkel, who reflects on the local and global in terms of movies and comic strips. The discussion of comic strips is particularly interesting since the author compares and contrasts the production of such pop cultural products in Belgium. The first is the well-known cartoon strip *The Adventures of Tintin*, in which Hervé provides insights into the local cultures that Tintin visits. In order to capture the imagination of readers, he chooses to flatten the understanding of culture by highlighting certain elements and discarding all others. For instance, in India, Tintin is shown riding on an elephant, which reduces the complexity of Indian culture by highlighting the market value of a single aspect. Delphine Godefroit-Winkel refers to Firat's (2016) article on the local and the global to spotlight the reductive process that occurs when one is marketing 'the culture'. This technique works well in reaching a larger audience because more readers will engage with the product created in this fashion. On the other hand, the Belgian-Flemish cartoon *de Kiekeboes* has tried to preserve its complex local references but has failed to attract an audience outside of Flanders. It seems that the authors must consider their audience when deciding on the level of local specificities to include. In other words, if they wanted a more global French-speaking audience to appreciate this cartoon, they would have to downplay some of the complexity of Flemish culture while still referring to it. The nuances are critical.

Globally successful movies and cartoons often share a common feature of cultural erosion, which is demonstrated in feature films such as *Crazy Rich Asians*. As the author notes, globalization allows us "to navigate a rich range of weakened, flattened, yet colorful and intriguing facades of culture." It is up to us as individuals to seek a deeper understanding by delving further into — and indeed, going beyond — the smorgasbord of clichés and caricatures to more fully appreciate the rich cultures on which they are based.

We find it interesting and significant how the two commentators on some of the previous publications in *MGDR* provide readings that produce different insights from the papers. The important role of the reader along with the author and the text in constructing meaning is well demonstrated by the commentaries. It may be that we emphasize too often the 'correct' or 'consistent with the author's intention' reading of texts. In effect, texts have a richer life and promise richer potentials for a sublime understanding of the human condition when the readers are an integral part of meaning (de)construction.

It has been a delight and a privilege to have been given a part to play in honoring our colleagues Nikhilesh Dholakia and Deniz Atik, and we rejoice in the success and the attention that *MGDR* has received across a worldwide audience thanks to their diligent work in making *MGDR* a key source to go to for insightful observations of the human condition.

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