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The Politics of Macromarketing delivered as part of the Plenary Roundtable on Macromarketing and Politics

Alan Bradshaw  
Royal Holloway College, University of London

Detlev Zwick  
York University

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The New World:
Macromarketing Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Program Chair and Editor:
William Redmond, Indiana State University

Arrangement Co-Chairs:
Don Rahtz
College of William and Mary
Anusorn Singhapakdi
Old Dominion University
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Monday June 6

8:30-10:00

Session 1  Revolutions, Revelations and Realpolitik
Session Chair: Clifford Shultz II

Revolutions, Revelations and Realpolitik ................................................................. Clifford Shultz II
Counterfeit Brands in Developing Markets ............................................................ Don Rahtz
The Marketing, Money, Power, Policy, Intrigue, Hysteria and Impact of the FIFA World Cup .......... Clifford Shultz II and Steven Burgess
Ambivalent Transition .............................................................................................. Clifford Shultz II
Diaspora Entrepreneurs as Institutional Change Agents ......................................... Liesl Riddle

10:30-12:00

Session 2a  Special Session: Research Advice for Doctoral Students and Emerging Scholars .............. 13
Session Chairs: Scott Radford and David Hunt
Panelists: John Mittelstaedt, Stacey Baker, Jim Gentry, Eugene Laczniak, Clifford Shultz, Terrence Witkowski and Ben Wooliscroft

Session 2b  Social and Cultural Dimensions
Session Chair: Ann-Marie Kennedy

The Use of Positive and Negative Emotional Appeals in Health-Related Social Marketing .......... 15
Beatriz Casais and Joao Proenca

Resources, Tragedy, and Comedy in Marketplace Marketing Systems .......................... 41
Sanford Grossbart and Susie Pryor

Perceptions of “Organic” Food .................................................................................. 55
Julie Stanton, Deirdre Guion and Russell Casey
1:30-3:00

Session 3a  Quality of Life
Session Chair: Alexandra Ganglmair-Wooliscroft

Because it’s There--- New Zealand (National) Parks, Their Perceived benefits and Links to Subjective Wellbeing ................................................................. 59
Alexandra Ganglmair-Wooliscroft

A Pilot Study of Mature Australians’ Volunteering and Quality of Life .................................................. 69
Mehdi Taghian, Clare D’Souza and Michael Polonsky

Dealing with QOL Problems from the Marketing Perspective ................................................................. 87
Anja Meindl, Anna Niedermeier and Silke Bartsch

A Qualitative Evaluation of Antecedents and Consequences of Quality-of-Life Marketing ......................... 93
Anna Niedermeier and Silke Bartsch

Session 3b  Methods and Measures
Session Chair: Jim Gentry

Measuring Assortment in Marketing Systems .......................................................................................... 109
Roger Layton and Zhirong Duan

The Effect of Coaching Succession in Australian Rules Football ............................................................ 141
Lucas Lin, Anthony Pecotich and Kenneth Yap

How WEIRD Is Marketing? And Why Should Macromarketing Care? .................................................. 169
Ben Wooliscroft

3:30-5:00

Session 4  Perspectives on Vulnerability and Resilience ........................................................................... 175
Session Chair: Stacey Baker

Tuesday June 7

8:30-10:00

Session 5  Special Session: Deeper Looks at Marketing and the Recent Financial Crisis .......................... 181
Session Chair: William Wilkie
Panelists: Eugene Laczniak, Mark Peterson and William Wilkie

10:30-12:00

Session 6a  Ethics, Equity and Justice
Session Chair: Terri Rittenburg

Indigenous Intellectual Property rights: Ethical Insights ............................................................................ 183
Ann-Marie Kennedy and Gene Laczniak
Improving Corporate Social Responsibility through Deliberative Methods .............................................. 193
Canan Corus and Julie Ozanne

Macroenvironmental Factors Affecting Ethical Behavior .............................................................................. 195
Ahmet Ekici and Sule Onsel

Session 6b  Under–Researched Stakeholders
Session Chair: Aubrey Fowler

The Hidden Rise of Motel Families ........................................................................................................ 203
Carol Kauffman-Scarborough

The Holiday Version of the Sacred and the Profane ............................................................................... 217
James Gentry and Robert Harrison

Making Home Away from Home ........................................................................................................ 227
Benedetta Cappellini and Dorothy Aiwan Yen

Session 6c  Perspectives on Germany
Session Chair: Michaela Haase

The Evolving German Marketing System .................................................................................................. 241
Clifford Shultz II and Alexander Nill

The Hanse: Marketing and Development in Medieval Northern Europe .................................................. 243
Brigit Noodt

The Male Breadwinner Paradigm ............................................................................................................. 245
Alexander Nill and Clifford Shultz II

Living with PAUL: Utilization Processes and the Making of Markets for AAL ..................................... 247
Michaela Haase and Annette Spellerberg

1:30-3:00

Session 7  Sustainability
Session Chair: Terry Witkowski

Services-Based Business Models for Sustainable resource Use ............................................................. 251
Michael Ehret and Michaela Haase

Understanding Consumers’ Attitudes towards Renewable Energies ..................................................... 255
Marius Claudy and Mark Peterson

Consumer Perceptions of Sustainability ............................................................................................... 267
Bonnie Simpson and Scott Radford

Sustainable Energy Initiatives as Innovations ......................................................................................... 281
Robert Mittelstaedt and John Mittelstaedt
Wednesday June 8

8:30-10:00

Session 8  Roundtable on Macromarketing and Politics ................................................................. 283
Session Chairs: Alan Bradshaw and Detlev Zwick
Panelists: Raymond Benton, Alan Bradshaw, Janice Denegri-Knott, Sanford Grossbart, Pia Polsa, Ben Wooliscroft and Detlev Zwick

10:30-12:00

Session 9a  Mental States
Session Chair: Bettina Cornwell

Research among Vulnerable groups of Society ................................................................. 285
Pia Polsa and Sara Lindeman

Congratulations, You’re Pre-Approved .................................................................................... 289
Paul Harrison and Marta Massi

Sports Fans’ Ownership of Teams ......................................................................................... 307
Ken Sumida and Ben Wooliscroft

Session 9b  Global Perspectives
Session Chair: Ahmet Ekici

Global Advertising Positioning: Does It Take Advantage of the Vulnerable? ......................... 329
Sunkyu Jun, James Gentry, Yong Hyun and Yoojeong Jeong

The Influence of Faith and National Pride on Developing Country Consumers’ Perceptions of Global Brands and Overall Life Satisfaction ......................................................... 349
Ahmet Ekici, Mark Peterson and Ozlem Sandikci

The Disconnectedness of Globalization .................................................................................. 357
Suraj Commuri

International Entrepreneurship: The from the Bottom-up Essence of Globalization .............. 361
Coskun Samli

Session 9c  Views of the Radical
Session Chair: Joseph Sirgy

Exarcheia is Everywhere ........................................................................................................ 373
Andreas Chatzidakis, Pauline Maclaran and Alan Bradshaw

Demarketing Radical Islam ...................................................................................................... 377
Joseph Sirgy, Charles Skuba, Jean-Charles Chebat and Barry Babin
1:30-3:00

Session 10a  Perspectives on China
Session Chair: Michaella Haase

Macromarketing Issues in China
Mary Ann McGrath ................................................................. 379

Market Transition and Food Consumption Patterns
Ann Veeck .............................................................................. 381

From Mao to Materialism
Pia Polsa .................................................................................. 383

The Impact of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games
Keith Lambrecht ........................................................................ 385

The Development of IMC in China
Mary Ann McGrath .................................................................... 387

Session 10b  Art and Culture
Session Chair: Alan Bradshaw

“Cause We Are Living in a Material World”
Gretchen Larsen and Rob Lawson ........................................ 389

Cleaning up the City with Artist
Detlev Zwick and Yesim Ozalp .............................................. 393

The Work of Michael Landy
Finola Kerrigan and Chloe Preece ......................................... 399

Session 10c  Marketing Education
Session Chair: David Hunt

Marketeando—Domesticating Marketing Education the “Peruvian Way”
Janice Denegri-Knott, Terrence Witkowski and Gina Pipoli .... 403

Author Index.............................................................................. 407
Roundtable Session on Macromarketing and Politics

Alan Bradshaw, Royal Holloway College, University of London, UK
Detlev Zwick, York University, Canada

The purpose of this roundtable is to generate a critical debate about the politics of macromarketing. Looking at the various track options to which one can submit a paper at this conference, we recognize the broad range of interests of macromarketing scholars. Macromarketing is, indeed, an inclusive discipline and, as the landmark essay by Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne, and Mittelstaedt (2006) on macromarketing as *agorology* plainly illustrates, it is also one that cannot but recognize the political economy of marketing practice. How else can we understand the correct observation that the choices of agora participants have consequences far beyond themselves? As the authors state, the Agora – used as a metaphor for what macromarketing is and does – cannot be reduced to the notion of the market. The agora was also the center of (city) life *tout court*, which is to say the birth place of rules and regulations of determining what living together means; in short, of politics. The agora was the place for *Parrhesia*, which Foucault (2001) describes as a mode of discourse in which one speaks fearlessly, boldly, and truthfully about one's opinions and ideas without the use of rhetoric, manipulation, or generalization. Parrhesia, hence, was a fundamental component of the democracy of Classical Athens and it was performed in the agora (and elsewhere). So, to say that macromarketing is about politics is to take seriously Mittelstaedt, Kilbourne, and Mittelstaedt.

Yet, while many tracks clearly allow for papers that make political statements, we do not have a track that explicitly invites political analyses of macromarketing. We wonder why not? Is macromarketing afraid of parrhesia? We don’t think so because fearless speech about marketing’s systemic, heterogeneous, social, cultural and political effects is exactly what makes this discipline different from its hegemonic brethrens (mainly micro-marketing and economics). Indeed, we would argue that politics is at the heart of macromarketing and that being a macromarketer and doing macromarketing are fundamentally political enterprises. In particular as the subject area addresses issues of development and where the market and forms of marketing are used as a the lens with which to analyze issues relating to justice, quality of life and beyond, it is vital that critiques of neo-liberalism, financialization and beyond are incorporated into the field otherwise there is a risk of a naturalized idea of how states, consumers and corporations should function. We propose this roundtable to explore the future role of political discourse in macromarketing – if in fact there is one – and the role of “us” as macromarketing scholars and as a field of thought and practice to deal with the political nature of our discipline.

Participants

Ray Benton, Loyola University Chicago, USA
Alan Bradshaw, Royal Holloway College – University of London, UK
References
