

Special Issue on Marketing Ethics & Distributive Justice

Special Issue Editors:

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To the credit of marketing academics, there has been an increasingly steady flow of research and writing that addresses questions of *marketing ethics*. One recent report listed over 700 scholarly journal articles in the past two decades examining issues of “right and wrong” in marketing practice. However, the tendency of these works has been to focus on problems at the level of the individual firm (i.e., micro) and/or at the point of transaction (i.e., the buyer-seller exchange). There is a paucity of research that looks at the ethics of the marketing system itself, especially the effects upon stakeholders that may not be a direct party to the marketing exchange. The purpose of this special issue is to encourage researchers to begin to fill that knowledge gap, that is, to examine whether all stakeholders (including various market segments) are being ethically and fairly treated by the extant marketing system. In other words, this special issue will seek to examine issues related to *distributive justice*—the question of whether members of the broad social system are receiving a “just allocation” of economic resources and whether they have the necessary means to participate adequately in the economic marketplace.

Potential topical questions might be:

- Are members of the supply chain being exploited even as the final marketing transaction seems satisfactory to buyers and sellers? Examples such as the sweatshops that provide textiles to developed countries and the farm workers employed by agribusiness come to mind.
- Are marketing organizations treating their workers fairly as they outsource production to developing regions? Are consumers being treated equitably as marketers establish sales footholds in emerging markets? Are the ventures established globally by marketing firms transitory or sustainable?
- Are major *externalities* being accounted for in the production and marketing of certain products? The resource consumption and safety issues associated with large SUVs or the savings disincentives and addictions attributable to the gaming industry would be possible illustrations.
- Are consumers better off with the availability of vast amounts of buying information on the internet? Some experts have called current times “the golden age of the consumer” owing to consumer ability to seek out comparative price information on the Web. Yet are most customers better advantaged given that interlocking data bases and on-line tracking has increased marketer knowledge of individual consumer habits by tenfold or more?
- Are vulnerable markets, especially children, being adversely affected by [legal] “spillover” advertising that is directed at adult consumers? For instance, alcohol advertisements that stress the sociability benefits of the beverage or cosmetic ads underscoring a particular female stereotype, even when run on programs watched mostly by adults (e.g. major sporting events) also will be viewed by large numbers of children. What are the cultural effects of these arguably dysfunctional messages?
- How are the poorest of consumers being treated? The documented “digital divide” suggests that the most impoverished buyers do not have access to the price deals available over the Internet. Those without economic resources seem to pay the highest prices for certain products and services as demonstrated by the “payday loan” stores and rent-to-own retailers that populate the poorest parts of urban areas.

- Has the growth of stealth marketing techniques contributed to the erosion of consumer trust? For example, as marketers have striven to create “buzz” for their products and services without necessarily indicating that their word-of-mouth endorsements have been “paid for” or their product placements “bought”, are customers growing increasingly skeptical thereby adding to the transaction costs of all marketers?

As these questions imply, the possible lack of distributive justice in areas of the marketing system has the potential to depress consumer satisfaction, erode buyer trust, destabilize parts of the global supply chain and generally damage stakeholder well being domestically and globally. The editors encourage theoretical or empirical articles that address aspects of the above questions or any other dimensions related to the general notion of “fair outcomes” in the marketplace. Traditional investigative methods or innovative ones (either qualitative or quantitative) are welcome.

Please send completed manuscripts (labeled for the “special issue on marketing ethics and distributive justice”) to Editor, *Journal of Macromarketing*: jmm.abg@asu.edu. Manuscripts submitted should adhere to JMM format (see technical guidelines available at Journal website: <http://agb.east.asu.edu/jmm>). Questions concerning the appropriateness of particular papers can be directed to gene.laczniak@marquette.edu. Manuscripts must be received no later than March 31, 2007.