



New paths for marketing relevance: a review of marketing and humanity

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One need not look far within marketing scholarship to find diagnosis, prognosis, and advice surrounding the need to make marketing scholarship relevant (as a brief list of diverse perspectives and voices on this matter, see: Kumar (2018), Lutz (2011), Jaworski (2011), Reibstein et al. (2009), Anderson et al. (2013)). For those who acknowledge the importance of generating relevant marketing scholarship but also seek to pursue relevant marketing research in a manner that is most likely to serve broader societal needs, the needs of minimalized or marginalized communities, or those most vulnerable to extant, pervasive environmental forces, *Marketing and Humanity* is a flashlight, illuminating a variety of spaces where the marketing academy may be able to serve the needs of humanity.

The scope and promise of *Marketing and Humanity* is ambitious with respect to the breadth of issues and topics it covers. While this breadth, naturally, creates some necessity for individual topic areas to be considered less thoroughly, it largely succeeds in its aims as laid out by editors, Anjala S. Krishen and Orié Berezan: “This book is about expanding the field of consumer behavior to discuss and understand the real world, i.e., underserved and underexplored populations, modern-day social issues, and power and agency...,” (p.2).

Marketing and Humanity pursues this goal of discussing and investigating underrepresented topics in the marketing field by calling upon a highly diverse cast of thinkers within and without the marketing field. Krishen and Berezan’s mindful pursuit of bringing together diverse academics across numerous dimensions is an illustrative example of how such diversity can be part of the structure that builds marketing scholarship toward a place where it can facilitate the betterment and empowerment of all marketplace participants.

The book’s 15 chapters are organized into four distinct sections, all of which connect to the broader definition of “humanity” used by Krishen and Berezan: *compassionate, sympathetic, or generous behavior or disposition, the quality or state of being humane*. The sections (1) “Mindful, Happy, and Social”; (2) “Information Seekers”; (3) “Intersectional, Diverse, and Inclusive”; and (4) “Social Change Agents” are thematically linked by their focus on the agency of consumers, that is, *Marketing and Humanity* is intensely focused on consumers who actively create, engage, and participate in the marketing process.

In the first section, “Mindful, Happy, and Social section,” scholars Bahl, Milne, Ross, and Swani (Chapter 2) study the popular but understudied (in marketing) concept of mindfulness as a practice to remedy how consumers deal with ongoing stress and maladaptive marketplace behaviors. In doing so, the authors cast light onto a potentially powerful but oft-overlooked mechanism to positively affect consumer welfare. In the same spirit of identifying mechanisms to improve the quality of consumer welfare, Raghunathan (Chapter 3) provides a thorough review of research on how consumers might attempt to maximize their happiness while balancing goals that have both hedonic and functional goals. The chapter illuminates that many consumer choices have both hedonic and functional aspects and that the interplay of pursuing goals with both attributes can often lead to suboptimal decision making. It concludes by mapping a clear set of propositions for future scholars to integrate into research, particularly with respect to maximizing global consumer happiness. On the other end of the emotional well-being continuum, Berezan, Krishen, and Jenveja (Chapter 4) closely examine the relationship between social media usage and consumer loneliness. Leveraging self-determination theory, the results of those authors’ study suggests a much more nuanced interplay between social media use and loneliness than the one oft espoused in popular media. In total, the Mindful, Happy, and Social section of *Marketing and Humanity* provides multiple perspectives on how marketing

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may facilitate and engage with consumer agency to improve welfare.

In the second section, “Intersectional, Diverse, and Inclusive,” *Marketing and Humanity*’s goal of investigating and providing a voice for the underrepresented and historically marginalized populations is brought to the forefront. In Chapter 5, Kachen and LaTour take a historical perspective and examine the evolution of American advertising alongside feminist paradigms. In doing so, the authors provide much needed and helpful clarity to marketing scholars so that they may escape reductive gender binaries by incorporating shifts in sex and gender theory. Krishen, Robleto, Meza, and Santana (Chapter 6) provide a thorough framework that explains how the actual knowledge creation process can introduce intersectionality, diversity, and inclusion to overcome institutional biases and common knowledge effects. In many ways, Krishen et al. provide a roadmap that illuminates how the goals illustrated within *Marketing and Humanity* could be effectively implemented, with resulting benefits, within the marketing academy. Wong and Krishen (Chapter 7) investigate the issue of colorism within the historical and modern marketing context of skin lightening products. Investigating the drivers of skin lightening choices among diverse populations (including non-US populations and spaces where Caucasians are largely absent) reveals the complex and challenging issues surrounding this growing cosmetic market. While not claiming to provide a definitive answer on the topic, the authors successfully illustrate how cultural agency is a useful paradigm to structure how public and private factors influence such choices.

The third section, “Intersectional, Diverse, and Inclusive,” focuses on consumer agency with respect to their pursuit of information. Bui and Namin (Chapter 8) kick off the section by showing how technological disruptions in the healthcare sector both bolster and threaten patient empowerment. The authors stake out the myriad of ways both individual consumers and institutions can implement and leverage digital technology as a means to empower consumers through the use of contemporary technology. Mann and Raschke (Chapter 9) further the understanding of information seeking behavior by consumers by extending the power responsibility equilibrium framework (PRE) and introducing Indirect Power Holders (such as Equifax) who act as information gatekeepers between institutions and consumers. The authors illuminate how these powerful data broker institutions are often oblique to consumers, yet play increasingly salient roles in their informational well-being. Hu and Krishen (Chapter 10) provide a helpful overview of the practical difficulties consumers face as information seekers, outlining the myriad ways in which consumers experience and cope with information overload in their everyday lives. In the spirit of the *Marketing and Humanity* book, this chapter provides a set of intriguing opportunities for how

both individual consumers and institutional interventions may help improve consumer welfare in navigating informational overload.

In the final section, “Social Change agents,” *Marketing and Humanity* stakes out a series of cases, examples, frameworks, and roadmaps for how organizations may advance the needs of humanity through marketing practice. Mendini and Peter (Chapter 11) synthesize current understanding and practice of social marketing and cause-related marketing (CM) through defining *marketing for social change*. The authors point out the intersections and differences between social marketing, where positive social change is the central endeavor of the marketing effort, and CM, where a for-profit firm links its core activities with a social cause. A litany of helpful case studies throughout the chapter provides a colorful tapestry to illustrate their key points. Pharr and Lough (Chapter 12) further build upon social marketing, laying out key essential differences between commercial marketing and social marketing, then outlining the strategic considerations a marketer pursuing social marketing must consider. The authors illustrate the use of social cognitive theory (SCT) as a lynchpin for social marketing campaign construction, providing an illustrative example with the NFL’s Play 60 campaign. Mukherjee (Chapter 13) then furthers the practical implications of how marketers can succeed in their prosocial efforts by mapping the state of literature with respect to the drivers of charitable behaviors. Petrescu and Kachen (Chapter 14) endeavor to push the potentiality for social marketing to its extremes in their discussion of how marketing practice can be used to counter extremism and terrorism. The authors provide a useful translation to marketers, demonstrating how current practices to counter extremism are directly amenable to a marketing paradigm, while simultaneously suggesting that thinking about terrorism and extremism specifically as a marketing problem suggests new opportunities for intervention. Finally, Bagozzi and Xie (Chapter 15) appropriately conclude the section by surveying the frameworks that have been used to understand corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices. The authors thoroughly discuss the cognitive and emotional approaches to studying CSR, ultimately advocating for the need to integrate both cognitive and emotional perspectives to understand CSR. Bagozzi’s and Xie’s final chapter and conclusions are quite apropos to the *Marketing and Humanity* text, as the need to integrate both the “mind” and “heart” into marketing research about humanity is a constant undercurrent throughout the book’s chapters.

As discussed so far, each individual section and chapter of *Marketing and Humanity* advances conceptual, theoretical, and/or empirical research in some way that provides clear value for academics pursuing their own research within the domain. This is, however, not to say that the appeal of *Marketing and Humanity* is simply an additive model based on each individual chapter’s values; rather, the value

of *Marketing and Humanity* can be understood more completely when the positive interactions between the diverse chapters are considered by the reader.

Marketing and Humanity is not an integrated text in the sense that it endeavors to be the final treatise on a single, narrowly defined topic. *Marketing and Humanity* is structured in a manner that is distinct from how marketing texts targeting academic audiences are typically structured. While such books are usually more narrowly defined in their scope and aims, with each chapter being distinct but plainly connecting with other chapters in the texts, the narrative threads that hold *Marketing and Humanity* together are more abstracted and meta-textual. In this reader's opinion, this is a feature, not a flaw, in *Marketing and Humanity*, given the aims of the text.

For example, while reading the distinct chapters, I often found myself pondering how the ideas and scholarship of the sets of authors would intersect in future research, building upon the work of authors from other chapters. For example, how might intersectional feminism, as discussed by Kachen and LaTour (Chapter 5) in the context of advertising campaigns, provide a useful lens through which to examine issues of patient (dis)empowerment with the advent of disruptive health care technologies (Bui and Namin, Chapter 8)? How might Mendini and Peter (Chapter 11), in advancing insights about the forces driving institutions to engage in marketing for social change, speak to the complex historical, cultural, and psychological factors that influence the institutions facilitating and fighting against the practice of skin lightening (Wong and Krishen, Chapter 7)?

In this way, much of what makes individual chapters of *Marketing and Humanity* compelling—weaving and intersecting diverse theory and paradigms—also makes the text as a whole compelling; it tantalizes the reader to overlay insights from one part of the book to other parts of the book. A natural consequence of this feature—generating a well-spring of new and intriguing thought—more than offsets any limitation for the would-be reader who wishes *Marketing and Humanity* to be a conclusive, definitive, tome.

Marketing and Humanity also includes other compelling features. First, there is refreshing diversity in the methodological toolkits deployed by the different authors who conducted empirical research. For example, Chapter 2 (mindfulness and well-being on college campuses) uses more traditional survey-based methods with validated psychometric scales; Chapter 3 (loneliness and social media) used a mixed-methods study, blending qualitative and quantitative analysis in an iterative procedure; Chapter 5 presents a qualitative case study of 10 advertising campaigns across eras; Chapter 7 (skin lightening) uses a netnographic analysis, numerous other chapters use a series of integrative case studies deploying an array of qualitative methods

to structure their analysis. This diversity of methodological approaches echoes the broader themes of diversity and inclusion throughout the book and plainly demonstrates to scholars that there is a “big tent” for methodological toolkits that can be deployed in this arena.

Each chapter also has a series of discussion question prompts listed at its end. Given that *Marketing and Humanity* is quite valuable when it thoughtfully prompts individuals to consider how they themselves might use agency to take up their own academic inquiry, this reader found the discussion questions to be a helpful bridge connecting the authors' thinking and his own musings.

Taken as a whole, *Marketing and Humanity* offers a great deal of value to those both inside and outside the marketing academy.

For the veteran marketing scholar pondering what paradigms of thought and theory may afford new ways to connect their extant research to social advancement, *Marketing and Humanity* serves as diverse collection of theory and research that is sure to inspire.

For those still early in their research careers and determined to find a way to make their marketing scholarship empowering and relevant for consumer welfare, *Marketing and Humanity* serves as a handy means to quickly learn essential background context about an array of compelling theory and identify areas where marketing scholarship is well suited, but still nascent in serving consumer well-being.

For those outside of marketing scholarship skeptically questioning if the marketing academy can be a positive agent for humanity, *Marketing and Humanity* responds with a thoughtful, intriguing, diverse, and enthusiastic YES!

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