

Think Globally, Research Locally

Craig J. Thompson
University of Wisconsin- Madison

2004 Association for Consumer Research
5th Annual Doctoral Symposium

Who Studies Globalization, Really?

- Globalization is not a “special” case, only relevant to cross-cultural research
- Constructs of flow, scapes, hybridity call for entirely different ways of thinking about “culture” and the cultural contexts in which consumers live and act.

Culture without Containers

- A distributed view of cultural meaning (Hannerz 1992)
 - “Culture” conceptualized as an overlapping field of discourses and practices having discernible historical legacies.
 - Neither random, nor essential in nature
 - Dynamic and contextually contingent

Complex problems have simple, easy to understand, wrong answers.

-- H.L. Mencken

- A comparative study between consumer attitudes in an individualistic and a collectivist culture

(versus)

Under what cultural conditions do collectivist orientations become more dominant than individualistic ones and vice versa?; how are collectivist and individualistic orientations manifested under different cultural conditions?

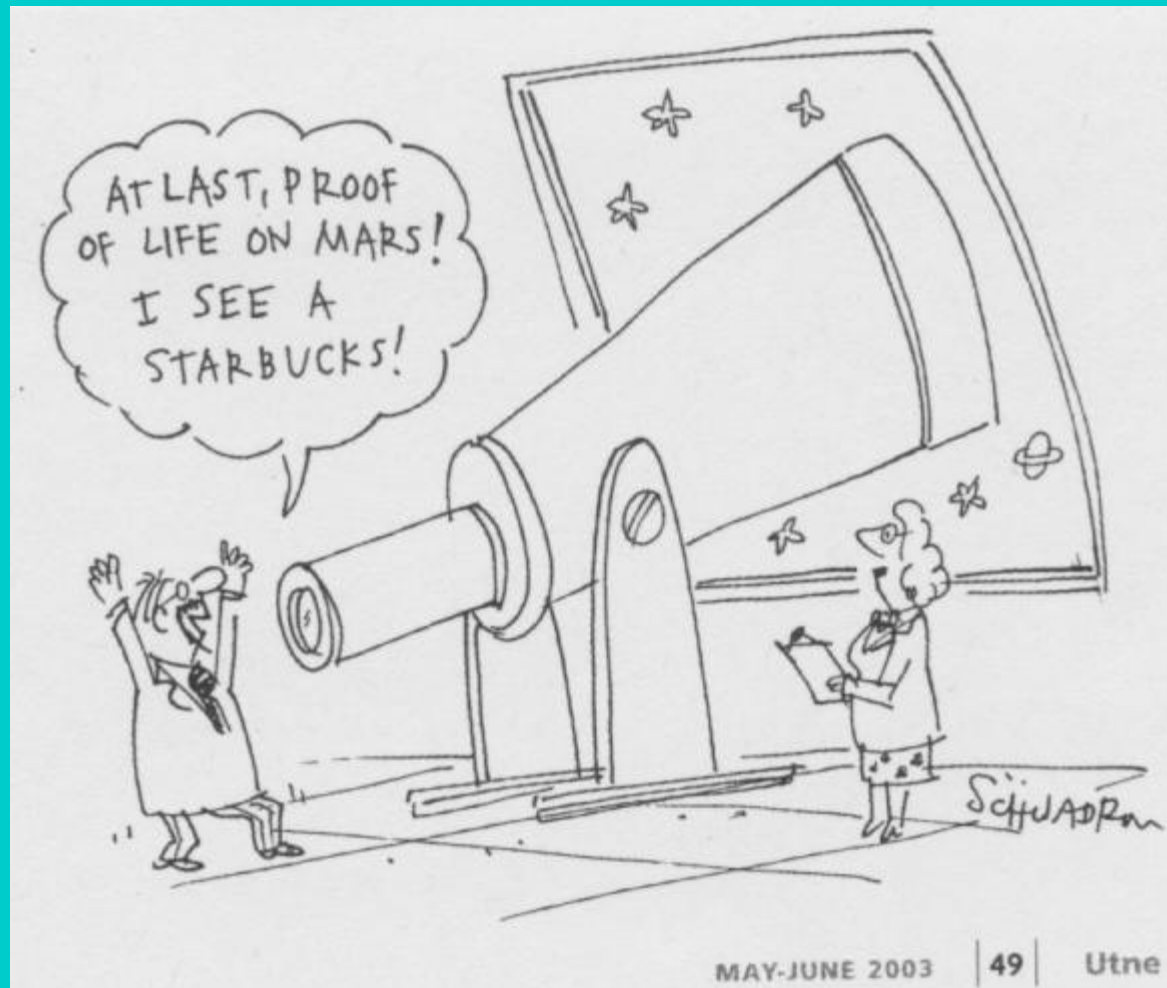
Globalization in Everyday Consumption

- How does consumers' *reflexive awareness of globalization* influence their consumption practices, lifestyles, and their orientations toward the marketplace and brands.
- Reflexive Awareness of Globalization
 - Often expressed as a nexus of concerns over cultural homogeneity; loss of authenticity at the hands of touristic and commercial interests; and the political and economic power wielded by transnational corporations.

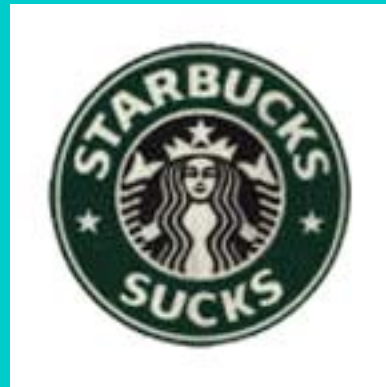
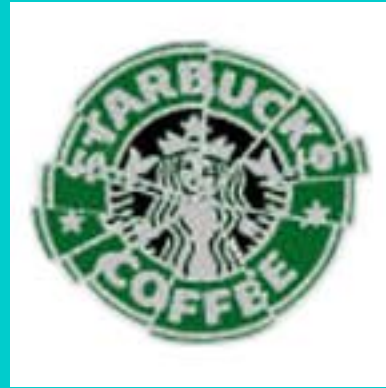
Illustrative Studies

- “Trying to Be Cosmopolitan” (1999), Thompson and Tambyah, *JCR* December.
 - Expats seeking to live outside the touristic bubble to experience authentic local culture
- “The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers’ (Anti-Corporate) Experiences of Glocalization,” Thompson and Arsel (2004) *JCR*, December.
 - Experiences and identity usages of local coffee patrons framed by perceptions of Starbucks

Reflexive Awareness of Globalization as Social Satire



Culture Jamming Versions of the Starbucks Logo



Consumers & Globalization

- Consumers Travel
 - Mundane Cosmopolitanism
 - Tastes for novelty & authenticity
- Cultures Travel
 - Immigration, Diasporas, Arts and Entertainment, Media, Tourism matrix, Transnational marketing
- Consumer Behavior Unfolds in a Mobilized and Glocalized World