Roundtable    Markets and Cultures

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ROUNDTABLE
Markets and Cultures

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Following economy’s central role and influence in human
lives that lasted many scores, culture is beginning to take the center
stage alongside the economy. There is also a growing awareness
that the economy is a part and a construct of human culture. Thus,
the market that has been the medium through which modern
society’s economic relations were practiced, especially in capitalist
western societies, is being subject to cultural scrutiny.

With this awareness, an increasing number of scholars across
many social science and humanities disciplines, as well as in
consumer research, have begun to study the interconnections be-
tween markets and cultures. Several insights have been developed
based on these studies. One is that in the contemporary global order
what has been known as consumer culture has become primarily a
market culture. This market culture seems to be transcending
national cultures within which it has historically flourished. In
effect, this cultural collective seems to thrive on incorporating all
marketable elements of all cultures, and, today, forms the basis of
globalization. A second insight indicates that the market culture
also contributes to either the marginalization of traditional cultural
systems that cannot adapt to commercial, marketable elements or
coopts them into the market culture. Thirdly, observations indicate
that many countercultural theaters are arising that propose and
promote non-market alternatives to human relations, or alternatives
that try to utilize the market as one of a multiple means of human
relations. Finally, there are many studies that have investigated the
local-global interactions and implications of globalization discov-
ering a multiplicity of consequences, including creolization, hy-
bridization, and fragmentation. A selected bibliography of these
works is provided below.

These are the debates that are currently directed toward an
understanding of phenomena that are in the process of develop-
ment. They all point to different perspectives and perceptions and
would greatly benefit from a sincere, open discussion among
consumer scholars. This is the major underlying motivation for this
roundtable: to bring researchers who have invested in these differ-
ent perspectives together and exchange ideas and set agendas
pertaining to this very important topic.