



# ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

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## **Myth Market Collaboration: Transforming a Culturally Contaminated Area Into a Thriving Tourism Market**

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I examine the co-creative mythmaking practices involved in transforming a culturally contaminated area into a thriving tourism myth market that serves the interests of multiple stakeholders. Drawing upon assemblage theory, I develop a process model of myth market collaboration.

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# Expanding the Theoretical Understandings of the Place of Consumption in Market Formation and Transformation

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## **Paper #1: The Creation and Transformation of an Illegal Market: Kurdish Music in Turkey**

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## **Paper #2: Myth Market Collaboration: Transforming a Culturally Contaminated Area into a Thriving Tourism Market**

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## **Paper #3: Beyond the Social System: Understanding Markets as Consumers**

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## **Paper #4: Consumer Markets and Value Transformation in the Global Context**

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### **SESSION OVERVIEW**

The goal of this proposed session is to examine how markets are formed and transformed, and the ways in which markets constitute – and are constituted by – transformations in their environments. Embedded within dynamic social, cultural, legal, and historical environments (Giesler 2008; Ger and Karababa 2011), markets are constituted by – and constitutive of – internal and external actors, who have different roles in facilitating/hindering formation, legitimation (Humphreys 2010b), signification/valuation (Peñaloza and Mish 2011) and evolution (Giesler 2008) of the market. This session builds up on, and would like to push forward, an important stream of research on *markets*, and offers new perspectives by discussing multiple facets and transformative potentials of marketplace activities. Markets are conceptualized by the authors as actors attempting to create social change; mythmakers transforming contaminated space; signifying and value-creating enterprises; or consuming entities. What is common to these arguments is the potential of markets to transform norms, ideals, legislations, and socio-cultural dynamics. These discussions contribute to a further understanding of how market actors mobilize resources and discourses, engage in strategic alliances, create different types of values, and also shape academic discourse; in attempting to transforming and legitimating both themselves and their environments. We believe this session also provides valuable discussions for other research initiatives on the relationship(s) between consumers and markets.

The papers in this session extend, but also question and contest previous arguments on market creation, evolution and transformation; providing a diversity of perspectives on these important topics. The first two papers are perspectives on transformations of illicit/contaminated markets, with Kuruoğlu's paper exploring market creation and transformation in a restricted environment and questions whether legitimation is sufficient in explaining the processes of formation and transformation. Veresiu on the other hand draws upon assemblage theory to theorize the transformation of a previously "contaminated" space into a thriving market via mythmaking. Venkatesh et al. contribute with a conceptual piece which argues that transformation can be understood through the conceptualization of value co-production. Giesler, on the other hand, challenges existing conceptualizations of markets, arguing that markets are consumers, and that strategic "mythmakers" not only effectively reshape so-

cial realities, but also influence the way researchers conceptualize markets. For all four studies in our session, data collection (when relevant), and analyses are complete. The last 15 minutes of the session will be devoted to discussions guided by Güliz Ger.

## **The Creation and Transformation of an Illegal Market: Kurdish Music in Turkey**

### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

Market creation has been described as a process of legitimation wherein social networks, financial resources, territorial structures, and legitimating discourses are mobilized by multiple actors (Humphreys 2010a), including "firms, consumers, policymakers, and financial stakeholders" (Peñaloza and Mish 2011: 26). The social and cultural structure within which these actors are embedded shapes the processes through which a market is created, but in turn, this larger structure is also prone to change through strategic actions of "coalitions of actors" that propote or oppose its legitimation (Humphreys 2010a: 14; cf. Ger and Karababa 2011; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999).

Marketplace interactions have been the context for the negotiation of illegal, immoral, stigmatized, or transgressive practices (Ger and Karababa 2011; Giesler 2008; Goulding et al 2009; Humphreys 2010 a,b). Competing ideologies frame these practices in different lights (Giesler 2008) – drinking coffee at the Ottoman coffeehouse, for instance, was deemed an immoral practice by orthodox Sunni Islam, whereas the heterodox Sufi sect, saw coffee as carrying health and moral benefits. Coffeehouse owners and the public were complicit in tactical resistance, and collaborated in effecting changes in legislations (Ger and Karababa 2011). Humphreys (2010a, b) also shows how different actors – including the state – come together in bringing about change in public opinions as well as legislations with regards to gambling at casinos in the USA. This paper seeks to extend previous research on the creation of a market that is initially illegitimate; and focuses on the marketplace performances of multiple actors in striving to attain legitimacy and effect social change, through practices with regards to both use and exchange (Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2006).

The legitimacy of the market for Kurdish music has been rendered problematic (and to this day remains so) in connection to a longstanding history of ethnic tension and armed conflict, particularly between the Turkish state and the Kurdish terrorist organization PKK (Marcus 2007), as well as prohibitive state policies and practices of social exclusion. Broadcasting and publishing in Kurdish were prohibited by constitution in Turkey until 1991; owning and playing music recordings in Kurdish language at the time could lead to several years of imprisonment. An amendment in 1991 legalized Kurdish music production, but an informal market for music had long existed. Cassettes were smuggled across borders, and home-made recordings of the live performances were exchanged among social networks, and transported to other cities. This circulation of cassettes formed an informal marketplace, and was instrumental in the creation of an imagined community (Anderson 1983) characterized by Kurdish ethnicity. The experience of listening to the music was heightened by a fear of getting caught as well as the aura of enacting a resistive performance of ethnicity.

Post-1991, many companies started producing music albums in Kurdish, but strict state-imposed surveillance and censorship pre-

vailed in the market throughout the 1990s. The firms and other actors, including artists, politicians, publishing houses and broadcasters engaged both legitimating discourses, and also other resistive and discursive acts in trying to attain a less restricted environment for Kurdish music production – framing the music as cultural heritage or as a part of Turkey’s ethnic and cultural multiplicity; engaging in activities such as selling cassettes off the records, educating and engaging audience to join the Kurdish movement, drawing international attention to the legal restrictions, and joining illegal organizations (including the PKK). The 2000s have been characterized by a somewhat more relaxed atmosphere, with local and multinational companies producing many albums each year, but the legitimacy of the market for Kurdish music is still ambiguous, with celebratory accounts of music and performances coexisting with discriminatory practices such as lack of shelf space or opportunities for advertisement in mass media. Thus, despite having undergone a transformation from illegal and informal to a legal, institutionalized marketplace, with sophisticated production and distribution channels, the Kurdish music market has attained legitimacy only in the regulatory sense, but not in the normative or cultural-cognitive sense (Suchman 1995), when examined in the whole of Turkey.

This analysis is based on an ethnography of the market for Kurdish music in Turkey. Data that I gathered from interviews with producers, artists, cultural producers in other fields, and audience; participant observation at relevant events; as well as a survey of newspaper articles and other secondary texts have contributed to the emergent account I present here.

### **Myth Market Collaboration: Transforming a Culturally Contaminated Area into a Thriving Tourism Market**

#### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

How can culturally contaminated areas be transformed into successful tourism markets? A dominant research stream unpacking the relationship between market creation and culture is the literature on myth markets. This research commonly conceptualizes the formation of myth markets – the markets for goods, services, or experiences created from culturally resonant, and thus consumer identity-enhancing stories – as a process of ideological and cultural competition and conflict among multiple stakeholders (e.g., Arsel and Thompson 2011; Giesler 2008; Holt 2004; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Peñaloza 2001; Thompson 2004; Thompson and Tian 2008). Consequently, little theoretical attention has been devoted to the strategic alliances and symbiotic relationships that can form among stakeholders to shape a myth market’s cultural meanings and consumer identity value.

This paper examines the collaborative mythmaking practices involved in transforming a culturally contaminated area into a thriving tourism myth market. Drawing on assemblage theory in sociology (De Landa 2006), I describe myth markets as assemblages of actors and develop a process model of myth market collaboration. According to De Landa (2006, 4), “[a]ssemblages are wholes whose properties emerge from the interaction between parts.” In particular, De Landa (2006) characterizes assemblages along three dimensions: (1) defining the roles that an assemblage’s parts may play, (2) defining the processes in which these parts become involved and, (3) defining processes in which specialized expressive media (genetic or linguistic) intervene to provide the assemblage with more flexibility or rigidity. Building on these characteristics, I theorize that an assemblage of actors (e.g., business owners, governments, the media, celebrities, consumers, etc.) can strategically coordinate their myth-

making activities to confine the negative cultural meanings associated with an area and establish their desired definitions of a market.

To illustrate myth market collaboration, I conducted a two-year ethnographic and netnographic (Kozinets 2002) investigation of the ongoing transformation project of a place popularly dubbed “Hitler’s Hill” in the German Alps (Obersalzberg, Bavaria) that was historically associated with the Nazi Party. Since 2001, several actors including the Bavarian and German governments, the InterContinental hotel, the national media, historians, intellectuals, and celebrities, as well as local museums, restaurants, ski resorts, tourist promoters, and residents, have joined forces to establish a successful tourism market. I conducted up to three interviews with five international tourists, four InterContinental hotel staff, six local business owners, and three government officials, where we discussed topics ranging from the area’s origins, to Hitler’s domination, to current tourism business opportunities, challenges, and future directions. I analyzed the complete data-set, which includes 34 in-depth, semi-structured interviews ranging from 20 minutes to two hours in length, as well as 160 pages of online materials and historical data, using the established hermeneutical analysis mode of tacking back and forth between data and theory (Thompson 1997).

My findings reveal the decontamination strategies actors use to displace the negative cultural meanings associated with an area and to remythologize it as an idyllic touristic landscape. The collaborative mythmaking practices focus on creating and maintaining a clear distinction between the area’s violent past and peaceful present. This idea is aptly summarized by German historian Volker Dahm (2005), who argues, “the best way to demystify places associated with the Nazis is to allow normal life to go on there.” Thus, similar to assemblage theory, I find that each involved actor has specifically assigned roles and processes that stabilize the contemporary tourism myth market. As a few examples, two new touristic destinations (the InterContinental Hotel and the Documentation Centre) have been established on the very site where Hitler and his generals had their homes in order to create a strategic duality. The five-star hotel’s role is to represent the relaxing and luxurious Alpine touristic experience, while the area’s main museum is responsible for containing the only reminders of the past. Even the “Eagle’s Nest,” Hitler’s 50<sup>th</sup> birthday present by the Nazi Party, has been transformed into a restaurant highlighting local cuisine. The Bavarian government, which owns the majority of the land, has the watchdog role to ensure that all tourism business initiatives follow the overarching mythic storyline of class Alpine retreat with the past of an innocent mountain village.

Overall, these findings advance the growing research on myth markets, and the nascent literature on market system dynamics – the social processes involved in market creation and evolution (Giesler 2008; Humphreys 2010; Karababa and Ger 2011). Myth market collaboration can better help us understand the co-creative role of multiple evolving interests in shaping and transforming the cultural meanings and myths associated with tourism markets.

### **Beyond the Social System: Understanding Markets as Consumers**

#### **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

The worldwide soft drinks market consumes more than 1.4 trillion liters of fresh water to produce 392 billion liters of soft drinks per year (Chamberlain 2008). A rapidly growing global seafood market has led to an overexploitation of 25% of world fisheries to the point where their current biomass is less than the level that maximizes their sustainable yield (Grafton et al 2007). Each year, the global tourism market consumes nearly as much energy as Japan, produces the same amount

of solid waste as France, and consumes as much fresh water as is contained in Lake Superior (Krantz 2007).

Markets - not countries - are now the largest consumers of the world's energy, resources, and life. And yet surprisingly little theoretical attention has been devoted to understanding markets *as* consumers. Perhaps this oversight stems from the ways in which markets have been previously theorized. From within the marketing discipline, consumer researchers have referred to markets as "institutionalized arenas of conflict and compromise" (Giesler 2008), "performative stages" (Deighton 1992), or "concrete exchange structures" (Humphreys 2010).

The goal of this paper is to offer a theorization that conceptualizes markets as consumers. I argue that markets are successful to the extent to which they can mask their identity as consumers and instead position themselves at the center for the production of consensus, freedom, empowerment, creativity, and community.

In the first part of the analysis, I explore the relationship between consumer culture theory and a certain branch of economic thought referred to as neoliberalism to better understand the existing perspective on markets and consumers. I offer three methodological neoliberalisms that have prevented consumer researchers from approaching markets as consumers. First is the tendency to uncritically adopt rather than interrogate the traditional economic distinction between "consumer" and "market." Second is the tendency to understand markets as structural stage or spaces on/in which agents productively interact rather than as macro-actors who have the potential to reshape interests and identities. And third is the tendency to view the distribution of resources, their meanings (e.g., music, gambling, coffee), and their production and consumption as if they were naturally situated within the borders of individual market systems.

After that, I analyze the rhetorical masking practices involved in expanding what has been referred to as the "global market system" (Schiller 2000). To understand this market system, I conducted a multi-year ethnographic investigation of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. The WEF was founded in 1971 and includes the most prominent transnational corporations.

I conducted in-depth interviews with 14 WEF delegates to document how they tailored global, national, and regional, territories, resources, social and political problems, and the needs and wants of individuals in relation to their competitive and ideological consumption needs and to combat criticisms rendering the global market as an inequitable, volatile, ecologically wasteful, and all-consuming villain (George 2010; Klein 2009; Chomsky 2011; Vertovec 2009; Sassen 1998). To track changes in their evolving global market representations, each informant was interviewed up to four times between 2004 and 2011. To analyze the data, I used an iterative, part-to-whole process of hermeneutic analysis (Thompson 1997; Giesler 2008). To contextualize the interview data, I also collected WEF communiqués and annual competitive reports published between 1987 and 2010, as well as other cultural materials available through mass media channels and on the Internet.

This research makes two contributions. First, it contributes to prior studies on market system dynamics (Humphreys 2010; Giesler 2008). This stream of research has studied how concrete exchange structures between producers and consumers are established and evolve. My analysis complements and extends this body of research by theoretically explicating the agency markets mobilize to reshape social realities and subjectivities in relation to their ideological and competitive goals as well as the resistance against this marketization process.

Second, I demonstrate how the import of rhetorical conventions from marketing and economics, while lending legitimacy to earlier

CCT generations, also brought in a number of neoliberal biases. These manifest in the tendency to either concentrate on an autonomous, entrepreneurial consumer-subject or the creation of a marketplace structure instead of asking how the latter reshaped the former so that the former can sustain the latter. In doing so, some of the worst volatilities, contradictions, and excesses of contemporary market consumption are erased from the analytical radar. Theorizing markets as consumers - how they systematically tailor societies, territories, resources, and living beings in relation to their economic and ideological agendas - may help address some of these theoretical blind spots.

## Consumer Markets and Value Transformation in the Global Context

### EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Recently, there has been a growing interest among consumer and marketing researchers in examining the study of "markets" as our disciplinary focus especially in the current global context (Humphreys 2010, Venkatesh and Peñaloza 2006, Domegan et. al Forthcoming). As noted by Sandıkcı and Rice (2011), one main shortcoming of contemporary consumer/marketing theories is that they are very US centric and are applied to various contexts without examining differing cultural conditions. In this study, we propose to study more broadly *markets as value creating enterprises* and examine their transformational characteristics in terms of their value creation potential.

Our focus in this proposal is on the constitution of particular subject positions within "consumer markets" as the social and economic institutional arrangements within which value is created by and for various constituencies which include customers, stakeholders and other agents/participants, and the society at large. In the global context where markets transcend national boundaries, truly global markets extend beyond such boundaries (Ger 1999) and give us an opportunity as researchers to examine and develop a value system appropriate for such a study.

As noted by Peñaloza and Mish (2011), the concept of value in consumer marketing has been viewed in terms of the material, instrumental and psychological benefits (e.g. satisfaction) derived by the customer through engagement with the product or service.

Typically, the field of consumer marketing has focused primarily on Exchange Value and Use Value as its primary focus. We broaden this binary conceptualization of value framework in working through four distinct types of value: Exchange Value, Use Value, Sign/Cultural Value and Societal Value. It is the integration of different value systems that presages global transformational possibilities.

### Exchange Value

One fundamental notion of value discussed in our discipline is that there is a value producer and intended value recipient - the former creates value (i.e. confers value on an object or engages in an action that embodies value) and the recipient is the beneficiary (Bagozzi 1975). If the value recipient performs something in return, this is an example of exchange value.

### Use Value

The concept of use value stems from the notion that the offering that has been produced through exchange is *useful* (and usable) and is therefore put to use by the customer (Holbrook 1999). Use value refers to the direct usefulness of an object or service. It can also be called the functional value and is inextricably tied to the tangible or intangible property of the offering. A use-value can be both subject-

tive and objective. A major focus of the field of consumer research may be said to concentrate on use value.

### Sign/Cultural Value

Broadly speaking, the concept of sign refers to the symbolism and meanings within the signifiatory system in which the product is embedded (Levy 1981). The meanings attributed to physical objects, or broadly, company offerings, are well documented in cultural and anthropological studies (Lash and Urry 1994). For example, Ger (1999) provided symbolic notions of glocalization (1999) in marketing practices, Holt (2004) detailed the incorporation of social trends and group language by firms in advertisements for “iconic” brands. Scott (2004) elaborated the intricate interrelations between cultural and economic development in tracing feminist consumption sensibilities to the changing place of women in the workforce. Venkatesh (1995) proposed the notion of ethnoconsumerism as incorporating sign systems in the global/cultural contexts. The implications of this for sign value are that in the global economy, signs are created, transferred, controlled, expressed and consumed in relation to other sets of signs that encompass consumers’ identities in ways that negotiate their interests and relations with other constituencies.

### Societal Value

Here the simple question is, when does the market system through its product offerings and activities benefit a society and when does it compromise the latter? Of interest here are the pragmatic and societal questions that have become very central in the contemporary environmentally conscious world.

In looking at the market as a value-based economy, the above framework integrates the four systems of value: exchange value, use value, sign value and societal value into the market system.

### Summary and Conclusions

The goal of this proposed session is to examine the transformational potential of markets and market formations. In this study, we have proposed a framework that examines consumer markets as value creating enterprises in a dynamic global context. Our framework integrates four systems of values in markets – exchange value, use value, sign/cultural value and societal value, with implications for consumption practices and theories.

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