

Proposal for a track at the 39th Annual Macromarketing Conference, Royal Holloway, University of London, School of Management

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Extending social imagination beyond the social: The role of natural service in marketing systems

Marketing systems are constitutive for macromarketing, and research on them is thriving in this field of study. This track will look at marketing systems as they benefit from nature and nature's service in particular. Although "service" is an expression that has got prominence in marketing and beyond with the development of the service-dominant logic it doesn't (yet) cover the service of nature (nonhumans). However the service of nature needs to be understood and integrated into a holistic understanding of resources and service flows between nonhumans and humans in marketing systems. The service humans get (or take) from bees for example has an estimated value of 265 billion US-dollars a year. But the bees are exploited. In parts of China for example bees have been extirpated and people have to do the pollination job. These examples show the importance of natural service and that we have to better understand how humans interact with nature in marketing systems.

The analysis of service-based processes has given rise to three categories of interactions until now, depending on the characterization of the respective parties to an exchange: nature (nonhumans) and humans: (1) interactions among nonhuman entities (example: a bird – called Oxpeckers, hanging out on the back of rhinos – is there for the food. Oxpeckers pick blood-sucking ticks and other parasites off the rhinos. Found only in Africa, these coffee-coloured birds also perch on the backs of zebras, buffalo, and giraffes; (2) among nonhuman and human entities (example: trees producing oxygen by photosynthesis); and (3) among human entities (no example needed).

A number of questions arise from these categories with respect to markets, marketing systems, and marketing: How do natural (nonhuman) and human service provider interact? What do they get from each other? What is the role of marketing and macromarketing in these interactions or types of service exchange, respectively? As marketing systems enable and support service exchange, how can natural service (i.e., the service provided by nonhumans) be integrated into the understanding of marketing systems? Are service exchanges limited to markets or are there other forms of exchange when nature is a "player"? In service-dominant logic and service science, "service" is defined more broadly comprising all categories of interactions listed above. There is also an emerging literature on service systems.

Even if scholarly approaches neglect natural service, they nevertheless rely on natural resources, and natural resources can be understood as a result of natural services (service processes). That notwithstanding, an extended understanding of human service integrating natural services is not yet in sight. Are there common denominators of human and natural service? What have natural and human services in common, what are the differences? How are these services exchanged (and is their exchange prepared) in marketing systems? How do they contribute to well-being of humans and nonhumans and how is responsibility integrated at different levels of analysis (micro, meso, macro)? Can humans serve nature to support biodiversity and with it contribute to the survival of important ecological systems?

This track opens the floor to look at and discuss important relationships between humans and nonhumans in marketing systems which neither can be neglected in the Anthropocene nor in macromarketing. Any kind of papers is welcome, conceptual, theoretical, empirical, qualitative, and quantitative. There are no limits for good thoughts.

For this track, we invite contributions that address the challenges mentioned above on the basis of original work or the re-addressing of available work. Optional topics are

- service as a structuring principle for marketing systems and their analysis
- human and nonhuman interaction in marketing systems
- sustainable marketing systems
- marketing for nonhumans/nature
- service and the limits of growth
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