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Journal of Macromarketing
Special Issue on Futurology and Macromarketing
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When asked about ‘the future’, many optimists may contemplate a Jetsons-type world of flying cars and robot maids or a StarTrek-type world of warp-capable starships with holodecks and transporters. In contrast, many pessimists may contemplate dystopian nightmares like those depicted in popular media (e.g., Black Mirror, Blade Runner, RoboCop, Westworld, Hunger Games).

Futurists, whose field of inquiry is ‘future studies’ or futurology, explicitly and systematically examine and evaluate possible, probable, and desirable futures, inform societal expectations about the future, and promote efforts to shape the future (Bell, 2003). In response to forecasts portending exponential change (Kurzweil, 2005), scholars and science popularizers have advocated ‘futurizing’ technology and the sciences (including social) by incorporating futurology principles into their weltanschauung, theories, teaching, and research (J. Bell, 2003; Cowen, 2013; Schor, 2010). We concur, and thus urge macromarketers to “adopt a mindset of professional futurists....[and] embrace whole-system change” (Eckersley, 2001, p.22).

New technologies will continue to emerge so rapidly that anticipating all their intended, unintended, and synergistic effects will be impossible. Human intuitions honed for eons by an environment that rewarded accurate linear projections (e.g., hunters succeeded by aiming their spears at a fleeing animal’s future location) cannot fully envision the societal consequences of exponential advancements in genetics, artificial intelligence and robotics, information technology, and nanotechnology (Eckersley, 2001; Garreau, 2005; Kurzweil, 2005). However, such technological advances will likely permanently transform post-industrial society (Bell, 2003; Joy, 2000; McKibbin, 2004).

Although our world is verging on dramatic structural, technological, economic, and social shifts, business in general—and marketing in particular—seems unprepared for them. Futurology scholarship in macromarketing takes a long-term perspective. It evaluates the sources of societal change and foresees, delineates, and rates alternative possible, probable, and preferable futures. Macromarketers must recognize, support, and advocate for marketing’s role in creating a desirable future to avoid future business environments shaped by self-interested bad actors. Macromarketing futurology is ponderable from either of the following perspectives: (1) What is technically possible? and (2) What is in Personkind’s best interest?

Macromarketers can develop capabilities “to invent the future, to learn the future faster, and to deliver the future earlier” (Pattinson and Sood, 2010, p.417). Our goal for this special issue is not to warn against an impending apocalypse caused by global warming, hostile artificial intelligence, massive macroeconomic disruptions, errant asteroids, plagues, or other potential disaster inducers of our current economic trajectory (Bostrom, 2009, 2014; Bostrom and Cirkovic, 2008). Nor is it to laud technological breakthroughs that will usher in humanity’s Golden Age. Instead, our goal is to suggest a perspective from which macromarketers may (1) identify and ponder alternative futures and their consequences, and (2) effectuate a desirable future for all stakeholders (i.e., circumscribed by a fair distribution of costs and benefits). In essence, marketing futurology should inform decisions that create a future reflective of humanity’s sustainable preferences. Given its synergies with other social sciences and tech-related disciplines, macromarketing is the ideal field of scholarship to investigate humanity’s future.

Researchable Questions

Marketing in general and macromarketing in particular are ideally suited to helping humanity manifest a desirable rather than undesirable world. Hence, this special issue will present marketing-related approaches to encouraging the former and discouraging the latter. Although the challenges to mitigating societal harm are profound, marketing-savvy policymakers are well-positioned to promote positive outcomes that can follow from social disruptions and discontinuities. To explore these challenges, this special issue of the *Journal of Macromarketing* will address topics that include, but are not limited to, the following:

Policymakers and Regulatory Bodies

- What are the economic and ethical implications of macromarketing efforts meant to 'nudge' societies toward policymakers' health, social, and economic directives?
- How can state and local governments enhance technological and societal change's short- and long-term economic effects?
- For regulatory bodies overseeing the marketing communications of for-profit entities, what challenges do disruptive societal changes pose?
- How could marketing-related public policy help private healthcare firms better prepare for future health crises?
- When should public policy temporarily discourage 'creative economic destruction'?
- How should marketing-related public policy assist organizations in industries damaged extensively by technological displacement?
- Should public policy discourage anti-consumerism and sustainable consumption?
- How might emerging technologies like AI and GPT redefine social responsibility and ethical behavior?

Organizations

- How can marketers ensure that technological and societal changes do not disadvantage the most vulnerable in society, such as the BAME community, the elderly, the physically disabled, and the mentally ill?
- How can marketing practitioners and university faculty enhance Isaiah Berlin's 'freedom from' and 'freedom to' liberties (Yan and Hyman, 2023)?
- What are the risks and mitigation strategies associated with using emerging technologies like AI, big data analytics, and blockchain in ESG-focused macromarketing for a sustainable future, and how can these technologies be leveraged ethically?
- How can organizations use large language models, such as GPT, to anticipate market trends, identify emerging consumer needs, and develop proactive macromarketing strategies that align with a sustainable and desirable future?

Consumers

- Which consumers' attitudes and beliefs are crucial to encouraging pro-social behavior that promotes a more equitable distribution of future societal benefits?
- What messaging best encourages the changes to public behavior needed to mitigate social harms caused by technological change?
- What macromarketing approach and messaging around future-centered issues excels in generating a sense of agency among targeted audiences?

- What are AI's ethical and economic consequences in shaping consumer choice, and how might macromarketing address these implications?
- How can AI-driven marketing protect and empower vulnerable populations in future consumer landscapes?
- How can AI shape consumer decision-making that aligns with Personkind's best interest and equitable future?

Methodology

- What role do systems thinking and other relevant approaches play in improving marketing and public policy efforts to address technological and societal change?
- Which foresight methodologies in marketing research (e.g., technology assessment, scenario-based research, Delphi technique) are most suitable for the rapidly changing market environments?
- If scenario planning is a process that creates possible credible yet uncertain futures (Keough and Shanahan, 2008) rather than predicts the future and works toward it (Hodgkinson & Wright 2002), when is qualitative, quantitative, or fuzzy scenario planning (Amer, Jetter, and Daim, 2011) most appropriate?
- Which consumer research techniques best enable assessments of consumers' anticipated future (e.g., Haryanto et al., 2017)?
- What metrics can macromarketers develop to promote transparency and accountability in environment-related marketing initiatives?

For this special issue, we welcome all types of investigations related to conceptualizing problems and solutions, behavioral insights, mapping and testing studies, and big data. All submissions must focus on marketing issues (broadly defined), and they must directly deal with marketing-related policy within a firm, an industry, a nonprofit organization, or a government agency.

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