

“Global Consumer Culture,” in *Encyclopedia of International Marketing*, Jagdish Sheth and Naresh Maholtra, eds., Eric J. Arnould

## Consumer Culture

Consumer culture can be defined as a “social arrangement in which the relations between the [lived cultural experience of everyday life] and social resources, between meaningful [valued] ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend, is mediated through markets.” Consumer culture is a system in which consumption, a set of behaviors found in all times and places, is dominated by the consumption of commercial products. It is also a system in which the transmission of existing cultural values, norms and customary ways of doing things from generation to generation “is largely understood to be carried out through the exercise of free personal choice in the private sphere of everyday life.” Furthermore, consumer culture is also bound up with the idea of modernity, that is, a world “no longer governed by tradition but rather by flux,” and in which “social actors who are deemed to be individually free and rational” holds sway (Slater 2000, 8-9). And finally, consumer culture denote an economy in which value has been divorced from the material satisfaction of wants and the sign value of goods takes precedence (Baudrillard 1996/1968; 1998/1970).

In consumer culture predispositions toward social emulation, matching, and imitation expressed through marketplace choices are accompanied by a penchant for differentiation, individuality, and distinction also expressed through marketplace choices. Together these motives drive the characteristically rapid turn-over in goods and services. These dynamics are often thought to have been triggered by the purposeful social engineering of marketers, advertisers and retailers (Packard 1957; Ewen 1976; Williams 1982), and to have spread from roots in the fashion industry into all parts of social life (Simmel 1997/1904; Featherstone 1991, 115).

Four more crucial aspects of consumer culture include:

1. The pervasive and rapid circulation of commercial products, that is, things produced for exchange within a capitalist market, takes priority over and above things redistributed by governmental through the welfare state or exchanged among social groups through gift giving.
2. The relative independence of consumption activities from those related to production and the growing power and authority this gives to some consumers over market dynamics.
3. Changes in the relationships between different systems of production and valuation in society such that these are all increasingly interlinked and mediated by market values; i.e., How much does it cost? How much will someone pay?
4. The special importance given to the use of consumer goods in the allocation of individual status, prestige, perceived well-being and quality of life (Lury 1996, 4).

Consumer culture is produced by agents who work directly in the market economy as managers, marketers, and advertising “creatives;” by independent “brokers” who analyze and criticize consumer products; by cultural intermediaries such as media figures (e.g., movie and television stars, celebrity chefs, religious broadcasters, public intellectuals, politicians, etc) who

model and disseminate attractive models for consumption behavior; and by dissidents who initiate alternative responses to the mass consumption system, responses that are typically re-appropriated into the market system as differentiated, niche products ( ).

This broad definitional framework allows us to consider consumption as an institutional field, i.e., a set of interconnected economic and cultural institutions complicit in the global production of commodities for individual demand with enormous scope for local elaboration and differentiation (Zukin and McGuire 2004, 175).

## Global Consumers

The consolidation of scientific economic and of modern market institutions took place in the eighteenth century, when also the social role of the consumer, combining traits of hedonism and rationality was distinguished from the wasteful irrational elites of the ancient regime (Campbell 1987; Sassatelli 2007, 37). Whereas the early 20<sup>th</sup> century consumer was a mass-market consumer, today's consumer is characterized by a general emphasis on individual style, paralleling the customization and niche marketing that has overtaken the economy (Sassatelli 2007, 48). The tendency within consumer culture today is to view lifestyles as no longer requiring inner coherence; marketers and cultural intermediaries (fashion; entertainment) cater for and expand the range of styles and lifestyles available to global audiences and consumers with little regard to authenticity or tradition (Featherstone 1991, 26).

And just as the consumer was theorized into existence by the economic philosophers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and turned into the linchpin of 20<sup>th</sup> century economies by economic policy makers (Garon 2007; Kroen 2007) and Madison Avenue advertisers (Packard 1957; Ewen 1976), so the consumer continues to be created on the global stage.

For example, research by Lamont and Molnar (2001) show that marketing professionals actively shape the meanings of the category of 'the black consumer'; promote normative models of collective identity that equate social membership with conspicuous consumption; believe that African-Americans use consumption to defy racism and share collective identities valued in American society (e.g. middle-class membership); and simultaneously enact a positive vision of their cultural distinctiveness through consumption.

Similarly Dávila (2001) carefully traces the evolution of Spanish language media in the United States, as well as advertising specifically designed for Latinos. The dynamics of these initiatives prior to the 1980s often involved promotions aimed at Latin American countries that were then adapted and transplanted to the United States. Cuban advertising entrepreneurs and cultural capital and networking links generated by the Cuban American ethnic economy proved were central to the development of Latino media. She demonstrates that an emphasis on stereotypical "traditional" family values is at the crux of Hispanic marketing strategies, and the constitution of the Hispanic consumer, or *Latinidad*, more generally by these media. She notes how important uniting Latinos across difference of nationality, class, color and political ideology has been in the building an image of the Latino market for corporate clients.

Further, Cayla and Eckhardt (2008) investigate how Asian brand managers forge new webs of interconnectedness through the construction of a transnational, imagined Asian world. Some brand managers are creating regional brands that emphasize a putatively common

experience of globalization, evoke a generic, hyper-urban, and multicultural Asian experience, and contribute to the creation of an imagined Asia as urban, modern, and multicultural.

Finally, Mazzarella (2003) has documented in greater detail how Indian marketing professionals marshaled ideas about Indian cultural distinctiveness along with stereotypical local notions of tradition and modernity to create a differentiated image of the Indian consumer to market to multinational corporations.

In other contexts, as in Cross' (2006) discussion of Jamaica or Hiwasaka's (2000) discussion of the Ainu population of Hokkaido, Japan, marketing and pedagogical tools are used to shape local ethnic groups as consumable touristic entities rather than consuming segments.

## Global Consumer Culture

Global consumer culture is driven by the extension of businesses organized around market principles into every corner of the planet. Global consumer culture is "at one and the same time, ideology and social process, as something continuously made and remade through constantly shifting relations, practices, and technologies" of market mediation (Mazzarella 2004, 355).

More specifically the spread of global consumer culture is conditioned by the global flow of distinctive cultural resources including what Appadurai (1990) refers to as financescapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes, and mediascapes. Financescapes refers to global flows not only of capital and currency but of various financial instruments that make markets run. The derivatives market, the remittances business, and the micro-finance revolution are all examples. Remittance businesses have facilitated both the global movement of workers and also the transfer of consumption resources to the global south. The micro-finance revolution has also driven market models of finance and consumption into the hands of the global poor.

Technoscapes refers to global flows of informational and mechanical technologies of both simple and complex varieties across borders. The global cell phone revolution is a case in point. Global consumer culture also depends upon global media to create a sense of global identity and memory without which any cultural identity is incomplete (Smith 1991). Thus, televised global consumption spectacles such as the millennial celebrations, the quadrennial World Cup, or Olympic festivals are implicated in the spread of consumer culture.

In the global mediascape privatized commercial media empires (e.g., NewsCorp) now coexist with decentralized and fragmented small media diverse in economic and social organization such as the cassette music cultures that have become ubiquitous in the global south (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin 2002, 3; White 2000). Media of many forms play crucial roles both in shaping national imaginaries including national consumer prototypes such as the prototypical Indian, "Asian," or Chinese consumer (Dávila 2002; Cayla and Eckhart 2008; Dong and Tian forthcoming; Mazzarella 2003; Yang 2002) mentioned above.

Ideoscaping refers to the ideologies of states and other movements that contend for popular legitimacy and authority. Globalization and standardization of modern consumer culture around the world have in turn stimulated localization and heterogeneity of demand as well as contestation and resistance to global companies and brands (Featherstone 1991). Ideoscapes then include such things as models of consumer culture carried by global media;

and various reactions such as the anti-consumer No Logo movement (Klein 2002), the rejectionist stream of Islamic fundamentalism that views film, music, fashion, and other trappings of consumer culture as anathema; and, more reformist movements like the local food and Slow Food movements.

Globalization also means that cultural encounters proliferate through these earthscaping processes, which has led to an increasing interest in identity-constructive processes, not least through consumption (Friedman 1994; Askegaard, Kjeldgaard and Arnould 2009). Thus, global consumer culture involves the globalization of desires; of the responsibility to seek an individual sense of self through material symbols, the need to conform; the attraction of a market-mediated material world; of homogenized images of the good life; (Clammer 1997, 14); and an experience of fragmentation of social life on the receiving end of globalization that fuels idealist and rejectionist reactions (Hetata 2004).

## Structures of Common Difference

Globalization is accompanied by a heightened sense of disjuncture and disorder (Beck 2006), as rapid earthscaping has upset and displaced relationships between the economic center and periphery of the global economy, and between cultural forms and cultural contents. These earthscaping processes and the novel technologies, media, ideologies, goods, and relations carried in their wake “nevertheless often remain closely tied to professional, political, and economic interests that have important stakes in mobilizing and regulating global markets.” These interests, “even as they capitalize on the proliferation of ‘cultural difference,’ also demand that such cultural difference be rendered manageable as content within globally reproducible (and thus marketable) forms and genres” (Mazzarella 2004, 351). This has led to the identification of what have been called “global structures of common difference” in global consumer culture.

Viewed from another angle, the creolization of consumption patterns within global consumer culture is ubiquitous. This is the diffusion of “structures of common difference” (Wilk 1995) refers to consumption patterns that combine elements of local and foreign consumption traditions through globalized insitutional forms. Ritzer (2004) pointed out that global fast food chains reproduce an institutional formula across cultural locations. McDonald's is present in most local markets, but often undergoes significant alteration in what is offered and how (Watson 1997). Thanks to local modifications of the McDonald's formula, the Jolibee fast food chain at one time enjoyed a 59 percent market share in the Philippine fast-food market. Similarly, traditional Turkish fast food called kebab, or shish kebab, has experienced a revival as Western-style fast-food outlets have penetrated the Turkish market. And Turkish entrepreneurs in Germany offer “McDoner Kebab”—Turkish shish kebab in a McDonald's-like setting (Caglar 1995). These choices allow Philippine, Turkish and Turko-German consumers to express varying degrees of cultural conformity and cultural difference through their fast-food choices.

Similarly, the beauty pageant has become a popular consumer global celebration. In Belize in Central America, some pageants judge contestants according to Euro-American ideals of beauty; others celebrate Caribbean values of respectability and reputation and express tensions between different ethnic groups that hold different value orientations (Cohen, Wilk and Stoeje

1995). Soap operas, comic books, and musical forms provide other examples of global structures of common difference. The HongKong, Hollywood and Bollywood industries provide three intertwined global institutionalized forms (Stearns 2006, 150). And scholars have pointed out that Christmas has become the first global consumer holiday, a structure of common difference that accommodates dramatic differences in cultural content within a shared seasonal and aestheticized institutional format (Miller 1993).

## Brands

Brands have become a ubiquitous structure of common difference in global consumer culture: the Coca-Cola logo and Nike swoosh are brand symbols that trigger myriad responses; their cognitive salience and ability to arouse passion are undeniable (Foster 2008). When people demonstrate against the inequities of globalization, they use brands such as Coke or McDonald's as symbols of corporate power (see Holt 2002; Klein 1999). Brands have become cultural forms; they encapsulate ideas about the way people should live, look, and think. Branding is a specific form of communication that tells stories in the context of products and services, addresses people as consumers, and promises to fulfill unmet desires and needs. In other words, branding is a specific symbolic form, a particular way of talking about and seeing the world (Askegaard, Kjeldgaard and Arnould 2009).

"The rise of a global culture doesn't mean that consumers share the same tastes or values. Rather, people in different nations, often with conflicting viewpoints, participate in a shared conversation, drawing upon shared symbols. One of the key symbols in that conversation is the global brand" (Holt, Quelch and Taylor 2004, 70). Global brands are most often associated with a quality signal that is important for many consumers world-wide; global brands set a standard. Hence, global companies are advised to compete aggressively on quality signals while addressing consumers' skepticism about them. Global brands create openings for local brands that convey enduring local meanings (Cayla and Arnould 2008). Second, global brands also convey a myth of global cosmopolitanism to which many consumers world-wide aspire (Strizhacova, Coulter and Price 2008). Therefore, global companies are advised to associate global myths of individual independence, modernity, and self-actualization with their brands. Finally, global brands and global companies "wield extraordinary influence, both positive and negative, on society's well-being. Many consumers expect firms to address social problems linked to what they sell" and how they produce and distribute their products and services (Holt, Quelch and Taylor 2004, 71-72). Thus, to improve their global image, firms are advised to invest in initiatives that clearly benefit stakeholder communities.

## Regional Manifestations of Global Consumer Culture

### The OECD Countries

The OECD countries represent the most developed market economies in the world, primarily Euro-American nations. In these countries there is a steady multiplication of purchase

opportunities and the extension of consumer orientations into areas of activity that used to be considered outside of the consumer domain such as politics, higher education, art, place, and even relationships. The center of the culture of consumption is marked by an over-supply of goods of all sorts including symbolic goods leading towards a tendency toward cultural disorder and de-classification (Featherstone 1991, 13), and the emergence of post-consumer social categories such as the rejectionist, the prosumer and the co-creator of value. Individuals are encouraged to adopt a non-utilitarian attitude towards commercial goods and services and to carefully choose, arrange, adapt, and display goods to make stylistic statements that express the individual, presumably authentic identity of the owner (Featherstone 1991, 114).

Four other trends can be noted. First, OECD countries are moving toward a dematerialized service economy. Of the 1,000 largest corporations in the world today, almost 200 of them are service firms, and many of these are involved in extending service delivery into cyber space. Second, the role of shopping and purchasing has taken on dramatic new meaning in these countries. Ever since the invention of the department store in nineteenth-century France (Williams 1982), trends toward recreational and luxury shopping have grown. Third, while elite consumers in other cultures have swelled the ranks of world tourism in recent years; North America and Europe have traditionally constituted large tourist markets. The motives that inspire tourist consumption are diverse, ranging from nostalgic visits to historic towns and villages, to escapist entertainment at Mardi Gras, to romance at a Club Med or a cruise, to extraordinary adventures through African safaris, Himalayan trekking, or Outward Bound trips.

Fourth, historically, business has not given great thought to where its raw materials come from, nor to where its products go after they have been purchased. Now this changing with the advent of sustainability concerns in consumer behavior that take into account environmental concerns, i.e., waste and resource depletion; social concerns, i.e., “ethical” consumption, boycotts and boycotts, progressive human resources policies; and the efficiency and efficacy of firm operations themselves (Arnould, Price, and Zinkhan 2004). Negative (resistance) and positive (ethical buying) forms of political consumerism now seem to concern a wide sector of the population (Micheletti 2003). Recent survey data on Europe for example, show that over 30 percent of the population of Denmark, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Norway and Portugal are boycotting products for political reasons, choosing specific items because of their ethical or environmental qualities, or participating in the activities of consumer-oriented associations (Sassatelli 2006, 221). Ethical consumerism is being reframed as a positive consumer freedom and duty.

Consumer culture in Japan, the BRIC countries, in Russia and the former Soviet bloc, and in Africa has been “heavily foreign, a clear import, even as it appealed to both new and traditional interests. Foreignness, in turn generates three reactions. The first involves the appeal of the strange and...the modern...second, foreignness prompts resistance, in the name of customary but also newer national identities. ..Third...consumerism is appropriated, becoming as ‘natural’ as it was in the West” (Stearns 2006, 81).

## Japan and the Asian “Tigers”

As one of the wealthiest nations in the world, Japan represents a huge market, changing quickly toward a culture of consumption (Tobin 1992). The direction of Japan's economic progress since World War II foreshadowed the changes we now see expanding in other countries of the Pacific Rim, the "tigers." Japan shares many historical values with other East Asian countries. Finance-, media-, techno- and ideoscapes originating in Japan have been instrumental in fueling the expansion of consumer culture in this region.

A characteristic of Japanese consumers is that they are highly informed and aesthetically sophisticated. They are actively engaged in creating their sense of identity in terms of gender, age, and lifestyle (Clammer 1997, 12). Further, there is less Puritanism [i.e., Protestant asceticism) and no moral condemnation attached to acquiring material goods in Japanese culture (Clammer 1997, 14). Two interesting features of consumer culture in Japan are first, the association of high quality and price, hence a desire for brand-name goods, and the following of expensive fads; and second, the very high rate of discard and replacement. This reflects the fact that variety or originality are devalued in Japanese consumer culture relative to newness or up-to-date-ness (Clammer 1997, 24).

Japanese household budgets show interesting characteristics. Proportions spend on necessities, furniture and household goods have declined, while amounts spend on leisure and luxuries have increased although there is still a high level of savings reflecting Japan's particular adoption of consumer culture historically (Garon 2007), and such things as the high costs of housing and education. Gender differences are also significant with rapid increases in women's discretionary expenditures. *Depāto*-department stores-which have gone a long way in commercializing Japanese cultural values, and domesticating foreign consumer tastes (Creighton 1992) are also among the biggest promoters of "traditional" Japanese gift giving, a large, distinctive, and socially important category of consumer expenditures in Japan (Clammer 1997, 18). Japanese gift giving is a commercialized form of modern intimacy, a form that creates bonds without much moral substance, by contrast with China where commensalism is an important basis of social bonding (Clammer 1997, 19).

## BRIC Countries

BRIC literally refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China, but may include a number of countries with rapid economic development and growth in consumer culture, thus including countries like Turkey or South Africa. In all of these countries the emergence of powerful local brands such as the Murat, Mahindra, and Tata automobile brands in Turkey and India, respectively, and large local consumer markets is a big part of the story of global consumer culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Another important part of the story is the persistence of large numbers of consumers at the base of the economic pyramid, that is, subsistence consumers who live on at best a few dollars a day and whose needs and aspirations have finally begun to register on global marketers.

In China, the spread of consumer culture has been fostered by the existence of strong consumer interest before the 19<sup>th</sup> century as part of an urban culture and a secular outlook (Stearns 2006). The appeal of “an almost fantasy-like modernity” that promises some release from “customary hierarchies and constraints” (Stearns 2006, 109) has also fostered the dramatic expansion of consumer culture. Finally, economic reforms post-1979 have diminished state power dramatically and freed many consumers from political strictures on consumption.

The World Bank estimates that 250 million to 300 million people have climbed out of poverty since China adopted economic reforms. One big story is the growth of a consumer middle class in China. In 2005, at least 4.5 million had a disposable income in excess of US\$30,000 (Latham 2006, 9). Characteristic of the effects of consumer culture everywhere, scholars note how consumer culture is fuelling the emergence of new “disjunctures and differences” in Chinese consumption practices (Latham 2006, 3), new space for Chinese citizens, especially women, to express their personal taste, ideals and values as against older collective forms (Gillette 2000), as well as the re-emergence of older popular ritual practices in new consumer guise (Erbaugh 2000; Yang 2000).

As in other places, distinctive characteristics of consumer culture are emergent in China. Among these are the idea of consumption as a palliative to continued tight state control of political freedom and the media; the articulation of various local understandings of Chinese history and character in its branding practices, and the role of consumer goods in vitalizing China’s gift economy and in particular the web of interpersonal relationships often referred to as *guanxi* (Dong and Tian forthcoming; Latham 2006). Others have commented on the interaction between China’s one child policy and the special role of children in creating the more hedonically oriented Chinese consumer of today. The speed of development and the success of a one-child family policy has “plunged children and parents from all social strata into a consumer revolution. As a result, the proportional claims of Chinese children on their family’s financial resources are both larger and more uniform across economic strata than for children in earlier cases” of consumer culture (Davis and Sensenbrenner 2000; 56; Watson 2006).

Much continuity persists in Chinese consumer culture; one example has to do with the place of food in society. As Mintz (2007) evocatively writes,

It is at table that children learn to become adults; at table that babies meet their grandparents; at table that people display their civilization and communicate it. To watch the giver of a restaurant banquet — some paterfamilias welcoming the family of a son's fiancée, celebrating a grandchild's birth, or just treating friends — is to get a sober lesson in etiquette, self discipline, and joy. The etiquette is also often self discipline.



In India, the growth of a middle class estimate to represent 30% of the population, or 250 million people is the big story of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Still, it is likely that no more than 100 million or so of this middle-class represents a consumerist segment. As in China, participation in consumer culture is associated with cosmopolitan values like modernity, democracy, and even liberation. Nonetheless, the majority of the larger group remains committed to a savings orientation; Indians tend to save 25% of their incomes and place their savings in cash accounts rather than consume financial instruments. Across the population about half of all discretionary expenditures are for important family ceremonial activities (Srinivas 2008) rather than for the satisfaction of individual desires, indicative of the enduring role of family in structuring consumption practices in India. On the other, hand there is a huge aspiring class, perhaps as many as 260 million, striving to attain middle class status, with maybe 15 million joining the middle classes each year (Srinivas 2008, 11) who may engage in bouts of conspicuous spending. The Indian middle class is also divided along the fault lines of geography, especially the north-south divide, education, profession, especially differences between the private and public sector, class, and caste.

Researchers have found that the vast masses at the base of the Indian economic pyramid are also affected by the spread of consumer culture. "Increasing desires to consume branded goods that are advertised through television is ...a consistent and recurring theme." Moreover, "intertwined cultural processes of conspicuous consumption, normative change [imposing a link between consumer goods and morality], and [interpersonal] competition" mark narratives of low caste Indian consumers. They reflect an increasingly consumerist content of Indian media that depicts the mythic lifestyles of the rich and famous (Varman and Belk 2008, 236; 237).

## Russia and the Former Soviet Bloc

In Russia and other former Soviet bloc countries, the introduction of consumer culture has been inflected by the "debate about whether West should be model or pariah" (Stearns 2006, 86). "Hesitations" rooted in the Soviet experience and Eastern Orthodox religious traditions persist (Stearns 2006, 91). In all these states there is a legacy of an effort to build an alternative to Western consumerism in which workers vacations, uniforms, New Year's gift giving and workers rights rather than consumer service were accentuated. Further, there was a tradition of elite consumption that was both unacknowledged and secretive, a tradition that has re-emerged in the spectacular nouveaux riche consumption behavior of the "new Russians," who profited from the Soviet unions transition to market capitalism.

## Latin America

In Latin America, a widespread class of wealthy landowners and a few merchants and mine owners provided a spur to consumerism in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and a model of European and

secondarily North American imitation that continues to color consumption particularly in countries like Argentina. Another characteristic of Latin America is the influence of American chain stores, first Sears Roebuck in the 1920s and later Wal-mart and some European chains in the 1980s and 1990s that extend Euro-American models of consumption to middle class buyers. The middle classes that have aspired to Euro-American consumption standards have grown dramatically if erratically in Brazil and other Latin American countries since the Second World War. Of course, Latin America also encompasses dramatic cultural diversity that colors consumer preferences; in indigenous communities, sometimes new consumer opportunities fuel cultural ideals that are a legacy of reciprocal social relations and new status hierarchies simultaneously (Colloredo-Mansfeld 1999). Latin America's centuries' long legacy of economic reliance on raw materials exports has produced a huge underclass of subsistence consumers, many of indigenous backgrounds, who struggle to enjoy basic consumer goods. These consumers are increasingly targeted by multi-nationals with custom-tailored products, creating new sustainability challenges. Finally, Latin America has also become an important source of exported consumer culture through such things as food (especially Mexican and more recently Argentinean culinary styles), music and dance styles (Mambo, Tango, Meringue, Samba, etc), and traditions of ecstatic, sumptuary seasonal consumption associated with Carnival and other traditions (Stearns 2006, 112-114).

## Africa

Africa has a long tradition of commerce and consumption, even if the consumption of luxuries was confined to elite groups for many centuries. In Africa, commodification, a process driven by the imperatives of capital and the "civilizing" projects of state and mission, ..has been determined by consumers differential access to power and cultural resources (Burke 1996, 167). During the past fifty years "three intertwined stories" concern Africa's engagement with consumer culture. First, African engagement with consumer culture has intensified, with the use of exotic consumer goods from the metropolitan countries to convey status and prestige figuring prominently in this regard. Cars (see the "mama Benz" of Togo or the wa-Benzi of East Africa), clothing and buildings have been important indicators of status as the latter have been traditionally (Allman 2004; Friedman 1994; Heath 1992). African's have even enthusiastically embraced the beauty pageant. This engagement has been fuelled by the diffusion of more sophisticated market apparatus, transportation, and communications, and the flow of migrants between Africa and Europe.

Second, longstanding pre-colonial consumption practices typically remain strongly rooted in all walks of life, even as contemporary practices associated with the colonial and post-colonial experiences are layered over them (Burke 1996, 172). A continuing tension between modern consumerism and older loyalties, especially those to the kin group, and to religion is

played out through consumption (Arnould 1989). Thus, for many the motivation driving consumption is achieving increased family solidarity, not individual consumer utopia (Bonsu and Belk 2003). In immediate sub-Saharan Africa, Islamic dress has become de rigueur for many political and commercial elites. A third issue is the complicated relationship between consumerism and white racial attitudes and African reactions, especially in East and South Africa where marketing campaigns tended to incorporate white racist attitudes.

Everywhere, consumerism and modernism have been confounded by elites in former colonies often taking on elements of metropolitan consumer behavior. Taking charge of consumerism becomes an important theme in African consumer experience, hence a recent explosion of interest in neo-traditional cloth and clothing.

## The Islamic Middle East

The interaction between Islam and consumer culture represents an interplay between powerful, ongoing spiritual and nationalist values and the new lures of public displays of materialism. This occurs against a backdrop of public debate over Western secularism represented by countries like Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco, and Egypt, and Islamic religious nationalism represented by countries like Saudi Arabia and the Sudan. A strong rural-urban, rich-poor divide, and between those who have benefited from oil revenues and those who have not, colors attitudes towards consumption (Stearns 2006).

Huge numbers of internal migrants from rural villages to urban slums also find their consumption choices suspended between the expression of secular and religious values. Thus, poor consumers illustrate three modes of acculturation: in some case, migrants reconstitute their village culture in the city, shutting out the consumerist ideoscape; or they collectively pursue the consumerist ideoscape as a myth through ritualized consumption; or they give up on both pursuits, resulting in anomic results for identity (Üstüner and Holt 2007). Meanwhile, elite consumers in the Islamic Middle East are avid consumers of Western luxuries and middle class consumers are often avid consumers of Western fashion and media. Among middle class Islamists, Islamic fashions in dress, gender segregated options in shopping and luxury vacations have grown dramatically in the past 20 years (Sandikci and Ger 2001; 2002).

## Resistance

Critique of and resistance to the spread of consumer culture is as old as the emergence of consumer culture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Systematic critique of the institutional bases of consumer culture have been offered by social theorists that highlight the alienating dehumanizing effects of materialism (Horkheimer and Adorno 1998/1944), while others have commented on the envy, possessiveness and non-generosity commitment to consumer culture sometimes entails (Belk 1985). Some classic expressions of resistance to consumerism have declined in recent years in the OECD countries although the critique of “irrational” lower class

consumption or women's alleged frivolity persist in newer consumer cultures. Global consumer culture has nonetheless fostered a virulent backlash. Religious, environmentalist, nationalist, and anti-corporate critiques have emerged with considerable vigor. Many of these forms of resistance appear to be motivated by a global sense of anxiety about the risk to life and happiness provoked by the globalization of consumer culture itself (Beck 2006; Spence 2006). In one global study of global brands, the authors found "Thirteen percent of consumers are skeptical that transnational companies deliver higher quality goods. They dislike brands that preach American values and don't trust global companies to behave responsibly. Their brand preferences indicate that they try to avoid doing business with transnational firms (Holt, Qulech and Taylor 2004, 74).

Anti-globalization activism is a diverse movement with some groups promoting various anti-corporate or anti-consumption positions (Klein 2002; Schor 1998). Some call for de-consumption; others dispute specific elements of global value chains such as the use of GMOs and sweatshop labor; still others promote alternative fair-trade brands (see Witkowski 2005 for a review of these positions); and still others promote local or regional brands such as Mecca Cola (Egypt) and Qibla Cola (Peru), ideologically positioned as explicit competitors to their multinational counterparts. Anti-globalization takes many forms, not all of which are truly resistant to consumer culture.

One difficulty of resistance for anti-globalization activists lies in the tendency for oppositional forces whether political or cultural to be co-opted not least by the global mediascape, which increasingly mediates between grass roots popular cultural manifestations and mainstream corporate consumer culture. For example, Starbucks, the nation of Ethiopia, and the NGO OXFAM waged a recent battle over the right to trademark regional coffee varietal names such as Yirgacheffe, Harrar and Sidamo. The struggle concerned the right to extract a greater share of the retail value of these regionally branded coffees either for Ethiopian producers or for Starbucks. A vicious court and public relations battle eventuated in a victory for OXFAM activists and the Ethiopian coffee industry, which may now retain the branding rights (Arnould, Plastina and Ball forthcoming). Similarly, in the United States, local coffee houses and regional chains are able to position their brands as anti-Starbucks brands, and incorporate various local, fair-trade, organic, bohemian, and other associations into their brand images that Starbucks cannot claim. Still these "doppelganger" brands (Thompson, Rindfleisch and Arsel 2006) and are just as much a part of global consumer culture as the global brands they critique.

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