

Academic Council Special Session 1.2 Ethical Issues and Distributive Justice in Macromarketing: Present and Future

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Why does today's research need a broader focus? According to the well-versed panel of discussants at this Academic Council special session, modern world issues including pandemics and the ever-increasing unrest in the global political climate require a macromarketing imperative now more than ever before. This more systemic focus should inspire meaningful research contributions that will not only address humanity's most pressing challenges, but also have meaningful impact on policies and marketing practices to affect distributive justice and societal well being around the world.

In this spirit, current thought in distributive justice, or justice that is concerned with fairness of the ends achieved, is moving towards stakeholder orientation, which companies can implement much like market orientation. In this idea, companies that have formerly focused on customers and competitors should now consider neglected or under-served employees and the community in their business plans.

Next, the discussion shifted to the perceived prevalence of "anti-marketing" thought in the academic community, defined as a fundamental hostility towards marketing itself, and particularly the activities conventionally referred to as "marketing management." This prevalence of pessimistic attitudes in the educational community was demonstrated in the high number of published studies on the negative consequences of marketing on society, contrasted with the paucity of articles on the positive consequences. The audience was asked to ponder whether anti-marketing attitudes actually exist and, if so, how they have manifested themselves in academic publishing – especially in the review process. Session participants were also encouraged to consider marketing as a moral positive - a provisioning technology to improve society - and to think of ways to encourage this thought in their teaching and research projects.

Additionally, this session included a discussion on consumption constraints and how they contribute to a state of consumer vulnerability, which can occur when consumers lack choice, access or resources to do the things they want to accomplish. Current research focuses on the customer-firm relationship and the ethical impact of firm responses to consumer needs, which firms should design around the benefits people seek as well as reducing both internal and external consumer constraints.

Finally, a more general discussion of marketing ethics ensued, leaving the audience to consider the growth of marketing ethics, and the need for more researchers to join the cause so that marketing can truly create positive change in the world.