

Special issue introduction: consumer ethics in the Asia Pacific Region

A big thank-you to all the authors who submitted their work to this special issue of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*. We also give very special thanks to our many wonderful reviewers who diligently drove the authors crazy with their detailed comments and many asks for better writing, clearer analyses and theory expansion. Altogether we received 22 papers for review, but only chose eight which made it through a rigorous review process to put in this special issue (a 27.5 percent acceptance). The end result represents a deep thought provoking edition for the journal.

The original call for papers suggested to focus on the relationship between religion and marketing in the Asia Pacific Region and how this might affect the interpretation and expectation of behavior and cultural norms. Much of the extant research has focused on Western consumers, with relatively less attention being paid to Asian markets. Consumer ethics holds particular importance in the Asia Pacific region, and hence for *APJML*. In this special issue, we sought to publish cutting edge information on topics relating to consumer ethics in the Asia Pacific. While market expansion in this era of globalization holds great promise, it is also rooted in differences in culture and consumer ethics. The different array of articles chosen by our reviewers represents an interesting learning experience for the reader.

One of the first papers "Pawnbroking in Pre-1949 China" by Yan and Hyman (2019) gives us a historical view of commerce in China and suggests how soft marketing strategies can be used for positive image building. Using qualitative data and historical documents, the paper gives an excellent insight to the business of being a pawn broker in China and how that business suffered from negative consumer images. Related to how people are perceived through their personality and behavior is the article by Chang and Lu (2019), "Consumers' Perceptions Regarding Questionable Consumption Practices." This paper gives us insight to the links among religion and love of money, to how behavior is affected by this love. These perceptual links between buyers and sellers are discussed in a cultural context. They posit that the "love of money" in Chinese culture leads to more recycling, a link not found in the Western culture.

Keeping on the recycling issue, we go to "Ethically Minded Consumer Behaviour in Vietnam: An Analyses of cultural values, personal values, attitudinal factors and demographics" by Le and Kieu (2019). They report finding older, higher income individuals are more ethically oriented in their consumption behavior and that consumers, in general, are not that familiar with the concept of recycling in Vietnam, which is an emerging Asian market. We are reminded how long it might take to bring a culture into thinking about ethics in consumer consumption, when the market is still rather undeveloped commercially.

The paper "Understanding Consumer Ethics in China's Demographic Shift and Social reforms," by Chen *et al.* (2019), looks at the change in ethics through change in social status or position in society. They find political power, or even travel abroad to different cultures, can affect what is perceived as ethical consumption behavior.

One of the accepted papers was very close to the special editors' hearts and minds, "Analyses of the Moral Mechanism to Purchase Counterfeit Luxury Goods: Evidence from China" by Jiang *et al.* (2019). While many papers have been published dealing with counterfeits and China, this is the first to investigate the different cultural morality associated with such a purchase. The authors posit that when consumers are in an ethical counterfeit purchase predicament, they will use moral thinking procedures to legitimize the counterfeit purchase. For the Chinese culture particularly, the recommended avenue to detract from a counterfeit purchase "loss of face" or "shame" rather than guilt.



The latest trend of consumer ethics research connected consumer ethics with business ethics by, for example, linking consumer ethics to corporate social responsibility, or even consumer social responsibility (Vitell, 2015). We have two papers which deal with this broad managerial level. The paper "Relation between Chinese Consumers' Ethical Perceptions and Purchase Intentions: A perspective on Ethical Company/brand Management Strategies" by Javed *et al.* (2019) looked at broad demographic factors and their link to ethics, trust and purchase intentions. Their findings emphasize the importance of real ethical behavior being enacted by companies and making sure their customers are actively engaged in the communication process.

We see that these findings cannot always be transferred to a different culture when we examine the paper about Corporate Social Responsibility in Saudi Arabia. Ajina *et al.* (2019) looked at the "The Importance of CSR Initiative in Building Customer Support and Loyalty: Evidence from Saudi Arabia" and found that business needs to do a lot more to educated their customers about CSR and its value to them personally. Consumers in that country hold very different beliefs than those in China.

The last paper of our eight papers we mention is "Extrinsic cues, perceived quality, and purchase intention for private labels: Evidence from the Chinese Market" by Yan *et al.* (2019). The reviewers liked this paper from the start, but asked the authors for four or even five revisions. The context and take away from their paper was that product complexity has a positive impact on perceived product quality. This has great implications for the retailer's purchase and sourcing of manufacturers and the technology used to produce goods.

In conclusion, we hope you enjoy reading these diverse and relevant topics to understanding the process and growth of ethical consumption in Asia. While many previous studies focus on Western culture, the reader might see how important development of commerce is to consumption attitudes and norms.

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