

JOURNAL OF MARKETING TRENDS

CALL FOR PAPERS SPECIAL ISSUE

Rethinking International Markets, Brands and Consumption in times of ethical volatility

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Background and Rationale

Periods of cultural and economic change increasingly challenge the assumptions that have long guided international marketing and business practice. For decades, Marketing theory has attributed steady progress toward ethical consumption, inclusion, societal achievements, and consumer-brand alignment. However, today's global marketplace reveals a more volatile and uneven landscape in which consumers and brands have recalibrated their expectations between the "old" and the "new" market value systems.

These differences, where once-dominant narratives around corporate responsibility, DEI policies, and societal-based leadership no longer generate consensus. Practices such as brand activism, purpose-driven marketing, and socially responsible advertising are increasingly met with ambivalence, resistance, or selective endorsement across global business environments. Such dynamics call for renewed theoretical attention to explore the conditions under which these practices gain, lose, or transform meaning.

Beyond necessary discussions about truth, fairness, and honesty, brands face growing uncertainty about how to interpret and respond to the new order. Strategic choices concerning engagement, neutrality, recalibration, or withdrawal from moral and social positions no longer play a dogmatic role but rather a context-specific one. Marketing theory should discuss how organizations can balance consistency, credibility, and responsiveness across culturally fragmented markets while maintaining ethical and economic viability.

Scope and Objectives

This Special Issue seeks to advance marketing scholarship toward a deeper understanding of how global consumption contexts shape and are shaped by ethical volatility and brand legitimacy amid moral instability and cross-cultural fragmentation.

We welcome research that:

1. Conceptualizes ethical volatility as a driver of innovation and constraint in international brand strategy, positioning, and value creation.
2. Analyzes market trends reflecting deeper transformations in global ethical consumption, especially those that challenge the conventional brand-society understanding.
3. Examines how multinational firms negotiate ethical inconsistencies across markets through local adaptation, selective alignment, or strategic neutrality.
4. Explains consumer consequences on brands and society. From active consumer resistance and backlash to normalization effects, consumer ethical fatigue, disengagement, and cancel culture narratives.
5. Discusses how brands reinterpret DEI commitments through strategic silence, attenuation, or disappearance, and analyzes the tradeoffs of firms' rollback of previously challenged exclusionary norms.
6. Examines how regional market dynamics, institutional asymmetries, and geopolitical tensions influence brand identity formation. Specifically, the cross-national reappearance of older ideologies and the re-legitimization of previously disregarded market discourses.

Indicative Research Themes and Questions

We invite empirical, conceptual, and methodological work that addresses, but is not limited to, questions such as:

Shifting international market trends in ethical consumption

- How can international marketing theory account for divergent ethical standards and moral expectations across markets?
- How can ethical consumption be reconceptualized beyond linear models of cumulative cultural progress?
- How does ethical volatility affect segmentation, market entry, and adaptation strategies for multinational corporations?

Consumer Interpretation and Cultural Adaptation: Resistance, Fatigue, and Normalization

- How do consumers in different cultural contexts interpret and respond to brands' moral or political signaling?
- How do consumer resistance, backlash, and normalization evolve over time?
- How do consumer ethical fatigue, selective disengagement, or indifference toward brands differ across consumer cultures, and how do global firms adapt communication to manage it?

Brand Reinterpretation and Withdrawals of DEI Commitments

- How do global brands reinterpret DEI commitments through strategic silence, attenuation, or withdrawal?
- What trade-offs do firms face between strategic neutrality and the retrenchment of exclusionary norms?

Geocultural Distance and the Transformation of Global Brand Identities

- How do international policy measures, trade disputes, or reputational crises influence brands' ethical positioning and international competitiveness (e.g., reputation of American brands)?
- Why do older or previously marginalized market discourses re-emerge and gain legitimacy across countries?
- What role does cultural proximity or distance play in the formation of ethical decisions?

Submission Guidelines

Submissions are welcome from scholars using quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, conceptual, or critical approaches. All manuscripts must demonstrate clear relevance to marketing theory, marketing strategy, or marketing decision-making, and situate their contributions in existing literature.

Submissions should follow the Journal of Marketing Trends guidelines :

<https://www.marketing-trends-congress.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Submission-Guidelines-JMT-v-05-12-2024.pdf>

Article proposals are expected to be sent to the invited co-editors: Prof. Dr. Robert Wilken (rwilken@escp.eu) and Pr. Dr. Javier Flores Zamora (javier.flores@icn-artem.com), with copy to : info@team-imtc.com

- **Deadline for submission:** *September 30, 2026*
- **First decisions:** *December 15, 2026*
- **Expected Publication:** *July, 2027*