Rock On, Macromarketing!

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Four years ago in January 2016, I began my first three-year term as editor of the Journal of Macromarketing. I accepted another three-year term that began in January 2019. However, because my wife Cindy received a diagnosis of brain cancer at the end of May 2019, I informed the Editorial Policy Board in June 2019, that I must end my time as editor at the end of 2019 in order to serve my wife more effectively as her primary caregiver. Making this move reduces the risk that the macromarketing community would be subject to a chaotic transition in the event my duties to Cindy suddenly intensified. I am glad to report: “So far, so good for Cindy.” You can follow her journey at https://www.caringbridge.org/visit/cindy-peterson

Joe Sirgy of Virginia Tech will become the new editor of the journal beginning January 1, 2020. I am very pleased Joe has agreed to be the editor and I am very enthusiastic about the prospects for the journal under Joe’s leadership. He has contributed to the journal as an associate editor for many years in the past. Joe founded the journal Applied Research in Quality of Life and served as its first editor. Google Scholar reports that Joe’s publications have been cited more than 30,000 times. Such citations give him an h-index of 81 which means he has had 81 articles cited at least 81 times. He has supervised the dissertations of numerous doctoral students, such as Babson College’s Dhruv Grewal. In sum, the macromarketing community has a very capable scholar and leader as its new editor.

I will miss serving macromarketers as editor of the journal. There were a few tears in my eyes as I made the phone call in July to inform SAGE Publications’ Senior Editor for Social Science Journals Allison Leung informing her of my decision to leave the editor’s position two years early in my second term.

Allison is a real pro and someone I appreciate much. And I can’t say enough about the effective work of my team of associate editors and how much I have enjoyed working with them, as well as the special-issue editors over the past four years. My thanks also go to the leaders of the University of Wyoming’s College of Business who have supported me as an editor by granting a course reduction each year that I have served as editor.

The “Queenship” of Macromarketing

Perhaps, as a result of their contrarian ways, a group of independent-minded scholars formed the Journal of Macromarketing in 1981 to encourage further research focused on how marketing and society influence each other. Coming now into its 40th year, the Journal of Macromarketing adopted an eclectic style that more than anything else offered thinking about marketing set in context. The elements of such context and important questions macromarketing scholars have pursued since then include:

- **Quality of Life**: How does marketing affect material conditions of life, as well as happiness of individuals?
- **Ethics**: Why do marketers behave the way they do? Are the outcomes of marketing just and fair for all in society?
- **Environment**: What role does marketing have in transnational phenomena, such as environmental degradation, financial crises, water and food shortages, and health problems?
- **Systems Thinking**: What happens in society when firms compete? What is fair competition?
- **History of Marketing**: What phenomena have influenced marketing over the years? How does the past influence the marketing done in the present?
- **Poor Countries**: What does marketing mean for the current and future of country development?

The traditional dimensions of macromarketing are recast as the acrostic “QUEENSHIP” in Figure 1. This acrostic suggests the versatility and ability to project power that the queen chess-piece carries on the chess board. In military strategy, the infantry carries a similar designation as “the queen of battle.” By seeking to understand the interplay of marketing and society, more sustainable approaches to conducting business come into view for the 21st century business.

When reviewing the contextual dimensions listed, these are increasingly influential matters for leaders of firms today. Times have changed from when scholars and policy makers were the only ones who concerned themselves with the context of business. In my view, now and in the future, firms seeking success in the marketplace must go beyond a micro focus of the firm to a focus on both the firm and the macro dimensions. Globalization, a networked world, risk in financial markets, planetary limits, and the imperative of firms to increase profits by marketing to the poorest consumers of the world make it critical for today’s marketers

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and business leaders to understand macromarketing and the criticisms leveled at business and marketing by critical marketers.

Musical Metaphors for Macromarketing

Over the past four years of representing macromarketers at about ten conferences each year, it occurred to me that with six sub-domains of macromarketing, our field was akin to jazz which also had its own six sub-genres and associated legends, such as 1) Dixieland-trumpeter Louis Armstrong, 2) Big Band-singer Sarah Vaughn, 3) Bop-sax player John Coltrane, 4) Hard Bop-drummer Art Blakey, 5) West Coast Jazz-pianist Dave Brubeck, and 6) Fusion-Miles Davis. I asked one of marketing scholarship’s own renowned jazz aficionados and macromarketer Morris Holbrook, if he liked this comparison. Morris enthusiastically agreed.

After success presenting this concept of “Macromarketing Swings like Jazz”, I reflected further. Rock and Roll has its own sub-genres, too. Rock artists and groups, such as Ireland’s U2, the US’ Bruce Springsteen, and Jamaica’s Bob Marley shifted their focus in songs from the micro (the romantic dyad—not the buyer-seller dyad) to the macro (societal issues).

While in the home of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame for the Macromarketing Society Conference in June 2019, many macromarketers proudly wore navy-blue ball caps with “Macro Rocks!” stitched into the front of these caps. (At the opening reception, Babson College’s Vicky Crittenden made sure everyone had a red hat—the symbol my family had chosen as a symbol of support and encouragement for my wife Cindy in her fight against cancer. I was so touched by this surprise.)

The Beatles’ *Yellow Submarine* offers another metaphor for macromarketing. *Yellow Submarine* proved to be a micro-marketing (commercial) success for the Beatles becoming a chart-topping song upon its release in 1966 (Rolling Stone 2019). Yet, at a macro-level of social commentary, one music journalist has asserted that the child-like song became a “Rorschach test for radical minds” (Doggett 2009, p. 107). At The Beatles Story museum in Liverpool, UK, The Yellow Submarine is prominently featured, as can be seen in Figure 2.

The story behind the song, the book, and the musical-fantasy film concerns the music-loving inhabitants of a land beneath the sea (Pepperland) that finds itself suddenly in an environmental crisis because the music-hating Blue Meanies have removed all colors (except for blue) and eliminated the music that use to fill the air (The Beatles 2018). The Lord Mayor of Pepperland sends veteran sailor Old Fred out of Pepperland in a yellow submarine to obtain help. Old Fred winds up docking in Liverpool, England where he soon meets Ringo Starr of the Beatles. The Yellow Submarine returns with the Beatles to Pepperland where the joyful music of the Beatles fills the air and all the colors return as the Beatles sing their songs. Environmental crisis ends.

Macromarketing began at a summer seminar in 1976 convened in Boulder, Colorado by Charles C. Slater—then teaching at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Many of these first macromarketers sought a new focus for marketing scholarship that would address marketing’s role in the burgeoning environmental crisis unfolding across countries of the world. Since my first Macromarketing Society Conference in 1999 in Nebraska, I have observed that many macromarketers readily acknowledge that they see their research as part of an effort to “save the world.” In this way, the macromarketing movement becomes like the Yellow Submarine sent out to find a solution to woeful conditions that reduce quality of life in the homeland. If you board the Yellow Submarine, like the Beatles did, you just might bring the needed sound and color of macro-level research to a monochrome world dominated by micro-level research of buyer-and-seller interaction. Rock on, Macromarketing!

References

