

## PSYCHOLOGY & MARKETING

*Call for Papers for a Special Issue*

### **The Psychology Underlying Consumer Subversion: How and Why Consumers Subvert Marketing Strategies**

The marketing literature identifies a wide variety of contexts in which consumers work to subvert marketers to further their own goals. While in some cases consumer subversion can benefit firms, in other cases it can be damaging. For instance, research on consumer subversion includes examples of creative consumers using products in ways unintended by marketers (e.g., Berthon et al., 2007; Berthon et al., 2012), generating their own – often damaging – ads about products or brands (e.g., Berthon, Pitt, & Campbell, 2008; Berthon, Pitt, & DesAutels, 2011; Campbell et al., 2011; Ertimur & Gilly, 2012; Muniz & Schau, 2007), turning promotions against firms (e.g., Campbell & Schau, 2019; Sela, Simonson, & Kivetz, 2013), finding subversive meaning in ads (e.g., Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005), subverting marketers' attempts to either overtly (e.g., consumers use bugmenot.com to avoid forced website sign-ups) or covertly (e.g., ad and cookie blockers) collect consumer data (e.g., Plangger & Watson, 2015; Plangger & Montecchi, 2020), or subverting consumption itself through the promotion of anticonsumption movements (e.g., Duke, 2003; Makri et al., 2020). Consumer subversion can potentially lead to an adversarial relationship with consumers, expose trade secrets, spread negative word of mouth, reduce revenues, and damage brand equity. As new technologies such as deepfakes (e.g., Kietzmann et al., 2020) and 3D printing continue to emerge, it is likely they too will be used as tools for continued subversion of marketing strategies (Berthon, Hulbert, & Pitt, 2005; Mick & Fournier, 1998). For instance, consumers may be on the cusp of being able to use deepfakes to create their own versions of ads that look indistinguishable from brand-created content. With 3D printers, consumers can create counterfeit goods that impinge upon brands' intellectual property rights. Given this, research is needed to ideate such possibilities as well as strengthen our conceptual and theoretical understanding of consumer subversion. Future forms of subversion are likely to be extrapolations of existing effects. Consequently, building an understanding now of how, why, and when consumers are prone to work against – or at least contrary to – marketers' efforts, will better prepare us for the future.

The Special Issue Editors invite relevant submissions that may draw on diverse theoretical domains, methodological approaches, and data sources. We value plurality and interdisciplinary collaboration to arrive at a rich understanding of alternative perspectives on consumer subversion and its implications for marketing strategy. Submissions that identify positive, meaningful, and implementable solutions are actively encouraged, whether they are conceptual or empirical in nature. Potential research might investigate how brands can reduce consumer subversion or champion it. Suggested research topics include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Identifying incidents of, or opportunities for, consumer subversion and methods of strategic response that create or reinforce customer relationships
- Outlining the ways consumer subversion incidents both positively and negatively affect key consumer evaluative and behavioral outcomes

- Examining the role of corporate responsibility strategies in encouraging or discouraging consumer subversion behaviors
- Theorizing contextual factors (e.g., medium types, culture, relationship factors) that activate consumers' privacy concerns and motivate them to use subversion strategies
- Mapping strategies customers employ to subvert overt or covert collection of their personal data
- Designing service response strategies for brand baiting incidents that both positively and negatively mention the brand on social media to get discounts, information access, or other special treatments
- Conceptualizing the motivations and other causes of consumer subversion
- Exploring how consumers use marketing tools against brands for both personal and social gain
- Championing the subversive creativity (e.g., consumer generated content, alternative product uses) of consumers to further strategic outcomes, through either overt or secretive methods
- Engaging digital influencers as brand ambassadors to inoculate brands against negative consumer subversion

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