

Editorial and introduction to the Journal and this themed issue

Welcome to Volume 1 Issue 1 of the Journal of Consumer Ethics.

As we can see from the articles in this issue, the ideas of consumer ethics, consumption ethics and ethical consumers are contested and sometimes even controversial. Nevertheless, at the same time, we can see that they are also both popular and important.

Our editorial board liked the idea of beginning the Journal of Consumer Ethics with a reflection on some 'classic texts' in the field, and we asked the authors to consider whether and how their views on the subject had changed since their work was first published.

Popular...

One common theme that emerged is the extent to which the authors were surprised by the response to their work. Newholm and Shaw, for example, comment on the more than 400 citations that their work has received, and Micheletti notes how unexpected the magnitude of the global response to her book was for both her and her editor.

These ideas are popular because, in the modern world, almost all of us are consumers, and most of us like to think of ourselves as, in some sense of the word, ethical. Many of us are producers too – and might have been affected by ethical market interventions by competitors or campaigners or both. As a consequence, the subject is also of immediate practical interest outside academia – from environmentalists to chief executives.

This wide aspect to ethical consumption ideas is also reflected in the range of academic disciplines now beginning to focus on the subject. In this issue we focus on the 'early adopters' in geography, business studies, politics and marketing. But in one of the two recent book reviewed here we also find texts from historians, anthropologists, psychologists, ethicists and urban planners. And in the news section we look at work from educationalists, farmers and hair dressers!

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The breadth of the subject, and our desire to attract a wider audience, means that in this Journal we are asking contributors to write slightly shorter pieces than is usual for academic journal articles. We are also asking authors to try to avoid over technical language.

....and Important

Consumer ethics are also important because their emergence in the last decades of the 20th century can, in many cases, be identified as attempts to solve some of the social and environmental problems thrown up by unregulated globalising markets. Micheletti in her reflection for example describes it as "concerned citizens trying to use their shopping choices to fill a political responsibility vacuum left by government".

But consumer ethics are specially important because these problems are 'non-trivial'. Dan Welch picks up on some of this in his review of 'the Problem with Consumerism' but the unsustainability of consumer society itself is a theme which we expect to run throughout the future issues of this journal. It is probably not contentious to suggest that there will be a link between its popularity and its importance as a tool to address – albeit imperfectly – the serious social and environmental problems that humans, as a species, now face.

In this issue...

Launching this academic journal by revisiting some of the 'classic' texts seemed an obvious choice. We thank the authors of these works for their contribution to the development of the research community. Our selection for this issue was necessarily subjective and limited by time and resources. You might be surprised that we have missed your discipline entirely or the key paper that fired your enthusiasm; so we welcome further suggestions. The five we have reproduced here are in alphabetical order by author.

We do hope they will also be a useful collection for students including those in the early stages of doctoral studies. Most of the authors touch on where they think the subject might be headed, but Barnett, Clarke and Cloke specifically lists four areas which they think are worthy of future research. In short these include 'responsibilisation', collectivisation of consumer action, cultural capital and legitimacy.

Our plan is for each issue to have themed and non-themed content as well as book reviews, news and reports of conferences and meetings both historical and forthcoming. So, as well as the classic texts in this issue, we also have some other material which we hope serves as an example

of what we are looking for. If you see anything we might like, do email us at journal@ethicalconsumer.org

Most of the contributions to this first issue are European in focus. This is very much more by accident than design. We know from our research that consumer ethics can be observed across many varying cultures and time periods. We hope in future that the contributions we reproduce will reflect this more fully.

...and in the future

Our next issue, themed around gender and ethical consumption, and due for publication in October 2017, already has a large number of themed contributors lined up. But do contact us if you have an article outside the theme or some other content such as book reviews or news we may be interested in.

Volume 2 Issue 1, due for publication in March 2018 will be themed around clothing and consumer ethics – our first attempt to theme an issue around a commodity rather than a concept. From there we plan to move to three issues a year – so do sign up to our mailing list for calls to papers.

Our goal is to keep the journal free and open access to both readers and contributors and to fund it through sponsorship and donations. Ethical Consumer Research Association is planning to support it through its first pilot year, but do visit the subscriptions/support area of the website if you think you might be able to help. Subscribing to Ethical Consumer Research Association means that you can access the journal as a single PDF as well as signing up as a founding supporter of this most exciting new project!

Rob Harrison

Editor