

## **IJRM Call for Papers**

Special Issue on:

### **Rethinking Marketing for a More-Than-Human World: an invitation for a post-anthropocentric paradigm shift**

Editors:

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Submission Deadline: May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026

We are pleased to announce a special issue of the International Journal of Research in Marketing (IJRM) on Rethinking Marketing for a More-Than-Human World.

From dogs appropriating their masters' furniture and bed bugs inducing panic in the hotel industry, to gut bacteria shaping human moods and wild plants overtaking carefully cultivated flower gardens, non-human species undeniably play an active role in human societies, often in unexpected ways. As a result, core marketing activities – such as advertising, product development, services and consumption – are inextricably interwoven with multiple types of species beyond the human.

Yet while marketing research already metaphorically views markets as ecosystems, its focus typically remains on markets' human participants, ignoring the complex multi-species interactions underlying and shaping the marketplace. Anthropocentrism, the view that places humans as the centre of consideration and treats the natural world as a resource for achieving human interests (Adelman, 2018), thus dominates. By defaulting to the human as the primary unit of analysis and often the only entity that is afforded agency, marketing and consumer research plays a key role in (re)producing anthropocentric approaches to the world (Arnould & Helkkula, 2024).

One alarming outcome of this latent anthropocentrism is that marketing research and practice remains focused on human-centered sustainability, concerned with ensuring future *human* generations' well-being while treating the well-being of the planet and other species as mere means to maintain human existence (Cielemęcka & Daigle, 2019; Kopnina, 2021; Kotzé & French, 2018; Sadler-Smith & Akstinaite, 2022). A telling illustration of such anthropocentrism in public discourse is the framing of declines in the bee populations due to fertilizer use. Rather than recognizing it as an ecosystemic catastrophe, it is typically portrayed as a threat to future food and wine production, with human interests prevailing over concern for other species or long-term eco-system health. Similarly, studies on ethical and sustainable consumption abound (Brough et al., 2016; Dixon & Mikolon, 2021; Elmor et al., 2024; Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Lembregts & Cadario, 2024; Lloveras et al., 2022; Niva et al., 2014; Panzone et al., 2021; Prothero et al., 2011; van der Wal et al., 2016, 2018; Yan & Murray, 2023), but rarely challenge anthropocentric definitions of sustainability (Borland & Lindgreen, 2013). Critical discussions of anthropocentrism in marketing thus remain limited despite calls for less environmentally and socially harmful approaches to dominant market and consumption configurations (Arnould & Helkkula, 2024; Kilbourne, 2016; Löbler, 2017; Marchais et al., 2024; Norton, 2007; Purser et al., 1995).

This special issue invites marketing to move away from anthropocentrism both theoretically and practically. It does so by redirecting our attention onto markets as not only figurative but literal ecosystems, bringing into focus the missing masses (Latour, 1992) of marketing, namely the multiple types of living beings which shape markets, marketing and consumption processes. We build this

invitation on a decidedly interdisciplinary theoretical stream of research in broader social and humanist science and beyond, which enables such a re-thinking on an ontological as well as epistemological level. Part of a broader trend of relational approaches to societal interactions, multispecies studies (Chao, 2021; Gillespie, 2022; Kovacic, 2024; Parathian et al., 2018; Pettitt, 2023; Thomsen et al., 2023), alternately referred to as more-than-human approaches, constitute a growing stream of academic work with focus on the relationships between species and beings (Beacham, 2018; Brown et al., 2019; Franklin, 2017; Hawkins, 2009; Irvine & Cilia, 2017; O’Gorman & Gaynor, 2020; Seymour & Connelly, 2022; Whitehouse, 2017). From this perspective, the world, and even humans themselves in their biological and social make-up, are constituted of multiple life-forms without which a body or ecosystem cannot exist (Irvine & Cilia, 2017; O’Gorman & Gaynor, 2020). Human beings as well as some of the products they consume (e.g. cheese, as in Eriksson & Bull, 2017) are thus complex more-than-human entities made up of multiple species, including microbiomes and bacteria. They not only evolve in but are constitutive of interdependent parts of a more-than-human world. To capture these interspecies underpinnings of humans and human societies, one of the foundational authors of multispecies studies, Donna Haraway, leverages the concept of NatureCulture, questioning the dichotomies such as nature-culture, subject-object or human-nonhuman that have dominated Western philosophical traditions (Haraway, 2008, 2016a, 2016b). NatureCulture highlights that “nature” and “culture” are mutually dependent and constitutive rather than mutually exclusive and can thus not be addressed separately from each other.

Inspired by such perspectives, we invite a broader adoption of more-than-human, multispecies, or other relational approaches in the marketing discipline, to lift marketing research – and, accordantly, its theories, concepts, and methods – beyond a solely anthropocentric approach. The comparably sparse existing adoptions of such a perspective in marketing and consumer research offer powerful inspiration for what can be gained by doing so (Bettany & Daly, 2008; Bettany & Kerrane, 2018; Downey & Ellis, 2008; Grant et al., 2024; Holbrook & Woodside, 2008; Kirk, 2019; Linné, 2016; Stevens et al., 2013), but have stopped short of rethinking marketing's central role in the practices and systems contributing to multispecies exploitation (Arnould, 2022; Tsing, 2015). With the exception of Olsen (2022), they have also tended to focus on (domesticated) animals, only scratching the complexity and diversity of the living world. As a consequence, we suggest that multispecies and more-than-human sensitivities can enhance marketing thought on three levels:

Firstly, a more-than-human approach to marketing in industries and practices that involve complex multispecies relations holds the potential for developing advertising, product development, customer relationship management or service(s) strategies that redirect attention to ecosystemic rather than human wellbeing. Studies about how alternative sources of animal protein (insects, jellyfish) revolutionize definitions of food in those places where these protein sources are not (yet) culturally established can inspire better strategies and policies to widen adoption of these proteins. More-than-human approaches can offer cues for resolving the ethical puzzle that vegan dog and cat nutrition generates about ethical animal care and broader species wellbeing. They can help adjusting marketing and consumption of cleaning products to better balance the dilemma between controlling harmful bacteria while maintaining beneficial human-bacteria interactions in place. The tourism industry can find novel ways to address the conflicting human-animal interactions underlying it by redirecting focus to ecosystemic balance rather than to animals’ benefits or disruptiveness towards human tourist experiences (Valtonen et al., 2020). Likewise, spaces perceived as human-owned, such as houses, gardens or cities, teem with plants and animals sharing – and shaping – human experiences of these spaces, whether songbirds enlivening a picnic or so-called pests destroying (human) food or clothing. A focus on multispecies, ecosystem-level wellbeing may help marketers and policymakers to promote ecologically beneficial consumption practices in these spaces.

Secondly, a multispecies orientation can improve the explanatory power of marketing theories. For instance, findings in biology indicate that the micro-organisms constituting the gut biome influence the host body's food choices (Trevelline & Kohl, 2022), raising questions about humans' agency in (rational or "irrational") consumer choice processes. When taking into account the needs of plants, fungi and animals, the concept of value might be broadened to generate new valorization or pricing processes, where the benefit for the human consumer is brought into perspective by the benefits for other beings. A growing marketization of human intestinal flora or fecal matter raises the question of what delimits an (individual) consumer when their bodies are not only aggregates of multiple species, but also of multiple humans' personal biological components. Shifting attention to other species also adds to the relational turn in marketing research (Canniford & Bajde, 2015), which has provided rich insights into the role of objects and technologies in marketing phenomena but has yet to fully address the role of other-than-human *living* beings. The meaning and processes of marketing and consumption should likely be rethought when assemblages of humans and those other-than-human beings - whether horses, orchids or rats - shape consumption priorities, experiences and practices.

Thirdly, drawing on multispecies studies to reimagine business and marketing may offer pathways for broader systemic market change (Arnould, 2022). Anna Tsing's (2015) foundational study of the matsutake mushroom, a species of fungus which grows in human-disturbed forests, can serve as inspiration for this purpose, as it details how societal and market changes are intertwined with ecological processes. Tsing (2015) details how capitalism thrives in the extraction of value from ruined landscapes and disadvantaged communities, which in her view, is not an unfortunate consequence, but necessary condition of capitalism. Yet she also highlights the subversive potential of economic diversity and human creativity in interactions with these mushrooms and other species, offering inspiration and hope for human societies beyond the Anthropocene. On this basis, how could marketing draw on inspiration from more-than-human studies such as Tsing's to revitalize itself as a force for constructive systemic change in the marketplace? How can a multispecies perspective in marketing boost the adoption of more circular approaches to business, where resources are not extracted and depleted but circulate within an ecosystem?

**Based on these reflections, we invite especially the following topics for this special issue:**

- **Rethinking the Consumer:** Questioning what makes a consumer, when humans are ever-changing assemblages or arrangements of more-than-human beings, whose co-constituted agency/agencies shape consumption in unexpected ways. Investigating whether and when other species can be considered consumers and how this might alter our understanding of "human" consumers. Addressing how natural sciences' continuously expanding list of beings (animals and plants alike) possessing consciousness impacts the ethics of consumption.
- **Rethinking Core Marketing Concepts:** Reconsidering fundamental marketing concepts—such as product, service, value, consumer satisfaction, relationships, consumption collectives, choice, and decision-making—from a multispecies perspective, along with identifying how marketing theory should be modified in a more-than-human approach. Beyond intrinsic theorization benefits crucial for the marketing discipline, such a rethinking can bring forth a truly ecosystemic focus on marketing practices' sustainability.
- **Rethinking Market(ing) Systems:** Exploring how market and marketing practices can be restructured to prioritize more-than-human well-being. How can theoretical approaches such as doughnut economics (Raworth, 2017) or regenerative approaches to business (Hahn & Tampe, 2020; Konietzko et al., 2023) reframe marketing systems into systems benefiting multispecies instead of only human wellbeing? How can inspiration from multispecies ecosystems inspire new

forms of market interactions, where multiple more-than-human priorities are valued and valorised?

- **Methodological Innovations:** Identifying and developing methods necessary for conducting rigorous multispecies research in marketing. How might qualitative but also quantitative research methods take into account more-than-human actions, experiences and agencies, in light of our human limitations in perceiving the world from other species' perspectives? How do measurements, assessments, variables transform when human agency is dethroned?

We welcome contributions that employ diverse theoretical frameworks and methodologies, including qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. Interdisciplinary research that bridges marketing with ecology, biology, anthropology, sociology, psychology and other fields is also encouraged.

### **Paper development workshop**

In order to support the development of high-quality publications, we will organize a two-day paper development workshop in Odense, Denmark, where interested authors can further develop their article in collaboration with their peers as well as more-than-human research experts from the field of marketing and beyond. Please note that participation in the paper development workshop is not a requirement for submitting a paper to the special issue.

Those interested in presenting at the workshop are invited to send an extended abstract of up to 500 words to Mikkel Nøjgaard at [mikk@sam.sdu.dk](mailto:mikk@sam.sdu.dk). The abstract should highlight how the project fits within the theme of post-anthropocentric approaches to marketing. Abstracts may also include conceptual frameworks, methodology, findings, and potential contributions, depending on the project's stage of development.

A maximum of 30 papers will be selected for presentation. If submissions exceed this limit, papers will be evaluated based on the quality of the proposed idea and its relevance to the special issue theme.

Deadline for applying to paper development workshop: April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Paper development workshop: September 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> 2025

### **Submissions**

The call for papers is open to anyone, regardless of whether they participated in the paper development workshop.

Papers targeting the special issue should be submitted through the IJRM submission system (<http://www.editorialmanager.com/ijrm>) and will undergo a similar review process as regularly submitted papers.

Important: when submitting your paper, please select as Article Type "**SI: More Than Human**". We strongly encourage authors to submit before the deadline. If all authors submit on the same date, the competition for competent and constructive reviewers will naturally be more intense.

All manuscripts must strictly follow the guidelines of the International Journal of Research in Marketing (see [tps://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/international-journal-of-research-in-marketing/publish/guide-for-authors](https://www.sciencedirect.com/journal/international-journal-of-research-in-marketing/publish/guide-for-authors)).

Submission deadline: **May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026**. We will start processing papers for the special issue from February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026.

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