RACE IN CONSUMER RESEARCH: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

Race has been a market force in society for centuries. Still, the question of what constitutes focused and sustainable consumer research engagement with race remains opaque. We propose a guide for scholars and scholarship that extends the current canon of race in consumer research toward understanding race, racism, and related racial dynamics as foundational to global markets and central to consumer research efforts. We discuss the nature, relevance, and meaning of race for consumer research and offer a thematic framework that critically categorizes and synthesizes extant consumer research on race along the following dimensions: (1) racial structuring of consumption and consumer markets, (2) consumer navigation of racialized markets; and (3) consumer resistance and advocacy movements. We build on our discussion to guide future research that foregrounds racial dynamics in consumer research and offers impactful theoretical and practical contributions.

Keywords: Race; Racism; Racial Dynamics; Global Markets; Resistance: Advocacy

INTRODUCTION

The scholarship on race in the marketplace has a long history. Dating back to late 19th century Western social science, it emerged in no small part to oppose the vulgar race science of earlier epochs. For instance, significant portions of Du Bois' (1899) pioneering *Philadelphia Negro* investigate the link between market-based practices and racial segregation in the turn of the century United States. Despite this lengthy history, many have noted that the *Journal of Consumer Research* (JCR) has published relatively few studies on the topic over its first 50 years (Arsel, Crockett, and Scott 2022; Burton 2009; Davis 2018; Pittman Claytor 2019; Williams 1995). On this occasion of JCR's semi-centennial, we renew calls to revivify the study of race, racialization, and racism in consumer research and to situate it globally.

Race is a political, rather than zoological, categorization system that assigns physical and sociocultural traits to people and arranges them hierarchically based on those identifiers. Although racial categorization occurs around the world, it shows considerable variation across time and place. Consider that polling data from Pew Research suggests that people worldwide believe their country is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse (Poushter, Fetterolf, and Tamir 2019). Yet even as people perceive shifting demographics, their experience in national and local contexts differs fundamentally on many dimensions. Scholarship reflects how pernicious power dynamics that often take the form of anti-Blackness, antisemitism, Islamophobia, anti-Asian racism, and white supremacist ideology permeate race relations. Racialization is the work of assigning ethno-racial meanings to categories and drawing boundaries around them to incorporate some and expel others (Fanon 1961; Omi and Winant 2015; Thomas, Cross, and Harrisson. 2018). Finally, racism orders and systematizes the distribution of material and symbolic resources to ethno-racial groups. It legitimizes and promotes the withholding of such resources in cultural discourse, polity, civic life, and the political economy to those positioned at or towards the bottom of the hierarchy (Emirbayer and Desmond 2021). These dynamic social forces undergird and energize various social, political, and economic projects that

intersect with consumer behaviors and markets (Grier, Thomas, and Johnson 2019). Some of these projects foster genuinely inclusive consumer journeys. Others foster racially biased ones. And many if not most journeys are environmentally noxious, built on fossil fuel and exploited labor from the Global South. Thus, it behooves consumer researchers to consider race and its impact more fully on markets and in the journeys of the consumers that empower them. As an organizing feature of social life, race is central to the discipline of consumer research.

We, therefore, call for a renewed scholarly focus on the role of market institutions and consumer culture in reproducing racial group boundaries, (re-)articulating racialization logics, and challenging or exacerbating racism. This is in addition to traditional examinations of race's influence on marketplace experiences and approaches, racialized messaging, and offerings.

A CALL FOR RACE IN THE MARKETPLACE SCHOLARSHIP

We outline an inclusive vision for engaging race in consumer research by identifying important areas that dimensionalize prior and future research. However, we begin by offering some details about the authorial team that are relevant to that vision. In a spirit of reflexivity-aspraxis rather than confession, we note that each author identifies as Black, as middle-class, as North American or European, as cisgender, and as part of the Race in the Marketplace (RIM) research network, which is a multiracial and global network of scholars that examines race's role in markets and the market's role in race. Our purpose in this article is to introduce a broadened conceptualization of race in consumer research under the RIM moniker. To that end, we briefly discuss the nature, relevance, and meaning of race for consumer research and offer a thematic framework that critically categorizes and synthesizes prior consumer research on race along the following dimensions of meaning: (1) the racial structuring of consumption and consumer markets; (2) how consumers navigate racialized markets; and (3) the consumer resistance and advocacy movements. These dimensions are partially overlapping and variant across time and place, level of

analysis (micro, meso, and macro), and defining practice. Our discussion of these dimensions generates a guide for conducting impactful consumer research that fully integrates race.

What we label 'RIM scholarship' is a characterization of past and ongoing cross-disciplinary research organized around our identified themes. This labeling intends to underscore the framework's defining dimensions of meaning. It is not our contention that all consumer research on race corresponds to RIM scholarship. Finally, although the framework is appropriate for exploring racialized phenomena outside of consumer research, that is not our present focus.

DEMYSTIFYING RACE IN THE MARKETPLACE

Prior to elaborating on the features of the framework, we first address a set of prevailing myths that have contributed to the historical marginalization of consumer research on race. Myths are functionally stories with morals. Myths are powerful when their morals resonate, both animating action and justifying it after the fact. Some myths perpetuate harm, especially once embedded in sociocultural systems and institutions. Once there, they can endure despite their logical flaws and factual inaccuracies. Moreover, 'debunking' them, or drawing attention to those shortcomings, rarely dilutes their staying power (and ironically can facilitate resonance). Disempowering harmful myths requires direct confrontation, but for the purpose of demystifying rather than debunking them. We confront three prevalent myths about consumer research on race to first demystify them and to help advance competing myths that are more coherent, more resonant, and more perceptive.

Theoretical insufficiency

The most enduring (and pernicious) myth about consumer research on race is that the race construct is insufficient for theory development. The argument is that race is a categorical variable, useful as a demographic or market segment identifier but not otherwise beneficial for developing theory. Theory development is hallowed ground for scholars, and obviously at JCR. But this harmful myth poisons that ground by encouraging adherents to adopt an essentialized, check-the-box notion of

race that reduces it to a one-dimensional caricature rather than the unstable but legible product of various intersecting social and historical processes (Omi and Winant 2015). It is not surprising then that myth adherents might struggle to see the construct's theoretical utility. Unfortunately, an impoverished understanding of race is too often misattributed to the construct itself rather than to a narrow conceptualization in the discipline, even relative to other academic disciplines. It is even more unfortunate that when this myth animates action it poisons the ground right where theory takes root. It does so in doctoral programs, in the form of well-intentioned advice to interested students to avoid or re-frame race-related topics of inquiry. It does so when early-career scholars internalize the myth in ways that shape their scholarship. And it does so in myriad ways throughout the publication process after manuscripts are submitted. This kind of harm contributes to the marginalization of scholarship on race in consumer research, which has negative consequences for theoretical development.

Like most 20th-century social science, RIM scholarship is premised on the notion that race is socially constructed, with no immutable essence, biological or otherwise. This fundamental ontological instability is an obvious problem for static accounts of race. Yet RIM-based inquiry treats such instability as a matter to be theorized rather than problematized. In the current era of neoliberal globalization, and in the preceding historical eras, markets and consumption have evolved in ways that situate race as a central axis of social power but with ethno-racial group boundaries and meanings that are locally contested and unstable (Crockett 2022). Race is of course one of numerous axes of power that have evolved across different historical eras. We see no benefit—only loss—in pitting them against one another, as any are suitable grounds for developing theory. We posit that each warrants sustained, critical inquiry on its own terms to generate important theoretical insights independently and at their intersections.

Me-search is not research

A related harmful myth contends that marketing and consumer research on race is self-focused "me-search", whose insights do not generalize beyond a focal racial group. This myth likewise poisons the ground for developing theory in at least two ways. First, the me-search myth presumes that race-focused inquiry constitutes politics, which moves the discipline away from an ideal of objective, dispassionate scholarship. Racially minoritized scholars who do race-focused research are effectively framed as incapable of embodying this ideal and/or find their research delegitimized when it actively attempts to unsettle this ideal. A related way it poisons the ground is by situating Western notions of middle-class whiteness as a status quo that generalizes unproblematically to other people and settings. Those others must then explain and validate their position vis a vis the status quo (Williams 1995). This effectively stigmatizes research that centers the agency and experiences of people of color.

Enacting the me-search myth presupposes the wisdom of avoiding a focus on race. That renders it invisible, especially in spaces where the focal racial group is marked as White. But in the marketplace—a quintessentially social space—race is operating even if it is rarely theorized. Apart from RIM scholarship, it is uncommon for consumer researchers to report the ethno-racial composition of samples, a necessary condition for understanding even the simplest categorical effects of race. Few systematic efforts are underway to change this status quo (Turner and Uduehi 2021). RIM scholars then find themselves in a catch-22. Conduct research that is perceived as self-serving (and thus devalued in the academic marketplace) or limit their investigations to conceptual frameworks and methods that greatly limit the explication of meaningful insights. We posit that the more fruitful ground for theory development is the one rich with explorations of race as a global social force with local particularities rather than the one that leaves it untheorized. The RIM research network exemplifies the impressive potential of discovery-oriented scholarly exploration that centers race to operate across paradigmatic and methodological divides around the globe (Johnson et al 2019).

Race is an "American" problem

A third harmful myth is that RIM scholarship provides a race-only analysis that centers U.S. racial categories (especially Black and White) and politics that are not analogous to other national contexts. This criticism may reflect the U.S. origins of consumer research on race rather than its actual scope of practice. RIM scholars have written compellingly about race as a global phenomenon shaped under complex local conditions in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. Nevertheless, they have avoided an "exceptionalism trap" that would fix race, racialization, and racism to any specific national boundaries or deny their operation therein. They have challenged the discursive and material power of various national myths about racial "universalism" (e.g., France), "colorblindness" (e.g., U.S.), and "racial democracy" (e.g., Brazil) that would poison the ground by rendering persistent racialized inequities invisible (e.g., Johnson, et al. 2017; Rocha, et al. 2020).

RIM scholarship challenges these myths where they appear in consumer research in part by moving away from a tidy-but-false dichotomy of "race" as phenotype and lineage and "ethnicity" as socio-cultural. Although race and ethnicity are analytically distinct and draw from different intellectual traditions, in practice they can prevail on the same social, historical, and political content. Ultimately, to avoid enacting this myth and poisoning the ground for theory development, RIM researchers must account for the relevant socio-cultural, historical, and political features of a specific context that actors mobilize into a race-making project. Next, we expound on the RIM thematic framework and what it offers to a broad array of scholarly, managerial, and public policy stakeholders.

WHAT IS RIM CONSUMER RESEARCH?

We offer a concise thematic overview that critically synthesizes prior consumer research on race along three broad dimensions: (1) the racial structuring of consumption and consumer markets, (2) consumer navigation of racialized markets; and (3) consumer resistance and advocacy movements. These three dimensions are not mutually exclusive, as scholarship can and does encompass more than

one, and potentially all three dimensions.

Racial structuring of consumption and consumer markets.

RIM scholarship on this dimension explains how, why, and where racialization and racial inequity take place in markets. Commonly but not exclusively operating at the macro-level of conceptualization, these studies aim to destabilize dominant conceptualizations of markets. Meaning, they reimagine markets as sites that are constituted by racism rather than sites where racialization and racial inequities merely take place sometimes. The key implication of this reimagining is that it reconceptualizes marketplace racialization and racial inequity as at least as likely to be pervasive, conspicuous, or routine as to be episodic, inconspicuous, or aberrational. The research on this dimension draws on multidisciplinary theoretics such as racial formation theory (Omi and Winant 2015), racial capitalism (Robinson 1985), intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), critical race theory (Bell 1995), and whiteness theory (Roediger 1991) to demonstrate how racism is pervasive and routine in markets and directs their functioning. For instance, Crockett (2022) and Jamerson (2019) each draw on racial formation theory to explore the ways market systems reify racial inequities in contrast to Burton (2009) and Rosa-Sala (2019), who incorporate whiteness theory to demonstrate the ways scholarly and practice-oriented research has historically constructed the "consumer" and the "mass (general) market" as white. Although studies on this dimension are predominantly conceptual, some utilize approaches like empirical modeling (e.g., Jeager and Sleegers 2022) and mystery shopping field experiments (e.g., Scott et al. 2023) to examine racial dynamics in the marketplace. Research on this dimension also explores racialization and inequity in specific market domains, including advertising (e.g., Crockett 2008), alcohol and food (e.g., Barnhill, et al. 2023; Gaytán 2014), finance (e.g., Friedline and Chen 2021), gentrification (e.g., Grier and Perry 2018), and online markets (e.g., Rhue 2019). For instance, Dhillon-Jamerson (2019) focuses on matrimonial ads in India to demonstrate how colorism intersects with social class and caste to impact the lives of women during the process of matchmaking.

Navigating racialized markets.

RIM scholarship on this dimension assesses the effects of racialized markets on consumers and the myriad ways they attempt to construct lifestyles while living within such constraints. Researchers ask: how does the racial structuring of consumption and consumer markets impact consumer choices; how do consumers make meaning from such a structuring; and how is that meaning supported or contested by other market actors? Scholars typically broach these questions by employing micro-level methodological approaches such as one-on-one in-depth interviews (Crockett 2017) and quasi-experiments (e.g., Brumbaugh, 2002). It is common practice in this research to pair micro-level methodologies with macro-level conceptualizations when analyzing data. RIM scholarship that addresses navigating racialized markets represents the largest of the three dimensions discussed here and operates across a broad array of consumptive and geographic contexts. These include explorations of marketplace experiences among people in specific racialized groups, such as Black, Latinx, Asian, and Indigenous populations in the U.S., as well as racially minoritized people worldwide (e.g., Bogastu 2002; Crockett, 2017; Rocha et al. 2020; Veresiu and Giesler 2018). For instance, Alkayyali (2019) examines the individual coping strategies implemented by "veiled" Muslim women living in France in response to their racialized marketplace experiences. In contrast, only a few studies examine the experiences of consumers racialized as white expressly on that basis (e.g., Johnson et al. 2017; Luedicke 2015; Peñaloza and Banhart 2011). Collectively, research on navigating racialized markets explores and demonstrates the ways in which a variety of fluid coping strategies are deployed by consumers as they navigate an ever-evolving marketplace.

Consumer resistance and advocacy.

RIM scholarship on this dimension centers on consumers' collective actions to advance their race-related political agenda. Often using mesolevel conceptual frameworks and/or historical approaches, this research considers consumer collectives and markets as sites of political expression

and resistance. The core question driving this scholarship is about how consumers engage in cooperation and conflict to challenge or support the racialization of markets. Studies examine diverse consumer movements involving protests, boycotts, buycotts, and/or the establishment of self-organization. For instance, research on boycotts investigates consumer movements that oppose products and services connected to slavery (e.g., Page 2017), segregation (e.g., Brown 2017) and (neo)colonialism (e.g., Parnell-Berry and Michel 2020). It also examines racist collective projects like consumer boycotts against Jewish populations in pre-Nazi Germany (see Stolle and Huissoud 2019) and far-right extremist organizations mobilizing white consumer movements (e.g., Miller-Idriss 2018). Researchers also explore "buycotts" and self-organized consumer groups and segments (Branchik and Davis 2009). Drawing on notions such sovereignty, solidarity, and agency, these studies investigate self-organizing in domains as diverse as recreation (e.g., Harrison 2013), access to food (e.g., Reese 2018), and personal finance (e.g., Krige 2014). Exploring "financialization from below" in an all-male savings club" in Soweto (South Africa), Krige (2014) shows how participants viewed self-organizing as a means to move away from apartheid's racial capitalism and embrace the political and economic promises of the 'New' South Africa. Overall, research on consumer resistance and advocacy demonstrates how consumer collectives emerge, develop, and collapse as they challenge or sustain the marketplace's racialized allocation of resources.

Table 1 summarizes each RIM consumer research dimension, its distinguishing characteristics, and opportunities for research.

Table 1. RIM Consumer Research Dimensions

Dimension	Primary Purpose	Typical Conceptualization	Theoretical and Practical Contributions	Primary Methods	Examples
Racial Structuring of Consumption and Consumer Markets	Destabilize dominant market constructs	Macro-level	Examine ways in which market-based racism is pervasive and routine and the effects	Conceptualization, Field experiments, Econometrics	Barnhill et al. 2023; Burton 2009; Crockett 2022; Dhillon-Jamerson 2019; Gaytán 2014; Jaeger and Sleegers 2022; Poole et al. 2021; Rosa-Salas and Sobande 2022; Scott et al. 2023.
Navigating Racialized Markets	Identify consumptive coping strategies	Micro-level	Interrogate consumer coping strategies that are wide-ranging and fluid	In-depth interviews, Lab and field experiments, Critical discourse analysis	Bogatsu 2002; Brumbaugh 2002; Crockett 2017; Davis et al. 2022; Johnson et al. 2017; Luedicke 2015; Rocha et al. 2020; Sobande et al 2020; Veresiu and Giesler 2018.
Consumer Resistance & Advocacy	Understand collective consumer actions	Meso-level	Consider how consumer groups challenge or sustain the marketplace's racialized allocation of resources	Ethnography, Historical approaches, Action research	Bakan and Abu-Laban 2009; Branchik and Davis 2009; Brown 2017; Krige 2014; Miller-Idriss 2018; Parnell-Berry and Michel 2020; Reese 2018.

GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING RACE-RELEVANT RESEARCH

Leveraging the thematic organization of prior research, we now provide broad guidance on how consumer researchers could engage race and racial dynamics in a manner that yields important theoretical and practical contributions.

Crafting a solid foundation

Whether a new investigator or a seasoned researcher, the basic aspects of research merit self (and research team) reflexivity. Across a multitude of design choices throughout the research process (e.g., questions, methods, sample,), each warrants consideration of race. Researchers can reflect on how their backgrounds, beliefs, and motivations challenge efforts at neutrality and filter approaches to conducting research. Additionally, taking an intersectional approach to contemplate the interconnected

nature of different forms of oppression in the research endeavor will better capture institutionalized modes of gendered, racialized, and economic oppression at the core of any consumer research project (Poole et al. 2021). Deliberate and systematic attention to race and intersecting power dynamics in the conceptualization, design, and implementation of research studies is more likely to generate theoretical knowledge with real practical impact.

Adopting theories, frameworks, and constructs.

Consumer researchers adopt theories that influence how they conceive of race and related constructs, as well as shape study design and ascertained knowledge. Seemingly "universal" theories, frameworks, and constructs carry ontological assumptions that structure or constrain ideas and understanding. Many are empirically calibrated on homogeneous, primarily white, middle-class samples and have not been tested with other populations. The late Jerome D. Williams (1995, 240) lamented the discipline's reliance on theories and approaches developed with populations that are "vastly different from today." The use of race-focused theoretical approaches that incorporate history and sociopolitical concerns can help broaden rather than limit disciplinary knowledge. The dynamic nature of racialization reinforces the need for attention to how category boundaries are defined. Scholars should define what "race" means in their study—identify how it is embedded in the consumer ideologies and/or practices under study, and where relevant, influenced by sociopolitical forces. This involves reflecting on constructs explicitly about race (e.g., racial identity and racial socialization). But it may also involve reconceptualizing presumably race-neutral constructs (e.g., self-efficacy and deservingness) to include racially influenced perspectives that may be unaccounted for yet still operating. Intentional use of both types of constructs can enhance research protocols.

Echoing recent calls in management studies (Philipps et al. 2022), RIM researchers should explore constructs that mark advantage (e.g., privilege, trust) as well as disadvantage (e.g., prejudice, stigma, stereotyping). Indeed, framing inequity solely as disadvantage shapes beliefs about inequity

and its causes and impacts (Philipps et al. 2022; Thomas 2017). For example, a focus on disadvantaging constructs (e.g., reducing prejudice) in retail discrimination may diminish racial inequity without eradicating it in part because advantaging mechanisms (e.g., helping) that fuel discrimination have not been addressed. Scholars can strategically and creatively use common constructs (e.g., trust and satisfaction) to support theoretical understandings of race-related phenomena. We suggest consumer researchers shift their orientation from stigma-centric to one focused on privilege and related power-dynamics to fully grasp the persistence of racial inequality in markets and envision possible alternatives.

Innovative methods.

An enhanced engagement with race in consumer research could benefit from developing and using multiple, innovative methods. Research methods utilizing artistic processes such as photography, video, poetry, drawings, or a creative combination of thereof (e.g. Harrison 2019; Sobande et al. 2021; Wilson, 2020) can creatively reflect the theoretical articulation of socio-political forces that influence consumer markets. While a full accounting of these approaches is beyond the scope of this commentary, a key point is that innovative methods that identify specific ways to connect the individual to systems of power and the environment will best support future research efforts in this area.

EVOLVING AN UNDERSTANDING OF RACE IN CONSUMER RESEARCH

Global pandemics, economic turmoil, military conflict, and climate crisis, each of which intersects with consumption, imperils human survival on this planet. These ongoing threats simultaneously shape contemporary consumer markets and disproportionately impact those at the bottom of the global racial hierarchy who do not have equal access to harm-mitigating resources. Consumption of mass-produced products, especially those reliant on fossil fuels, encompasses issues of environmental justice and social sustainability, and all consumer research, including RIM research,

must be situated in this macro-social context.

The thematic framework presented above provides a springboard to examine a vast array of groups, dynamics, and innovative consumer research topics around the world, anchored in various ways to race. Scholars may center directly on race as a topic, examine race-related domains, or infuse their current investigations with a better and deeper understanding of the role race may be playing. For those with an interest but less certainty about where to focus, we add to recent scholarship on race and racism that highlights future consumer research paths (Grier, Johnson, and Scott 2022; Thomas, Johnson, and Grier 2023; Wooten and Rank-Christian 2022).

Category construction and racialization

Given the dynamic nature and instability of racial categories in our globalized marketplaces, attention to how category boundaries are defined by the self and others, and how this relates to consumption remains an important issue. For example, additional focus on consumers labeled "mixed race" and how they navigate markets based on affinity-based (e.g., how they identify) and ascribed identities (e.g., how they "look") could offer rich insight into category construction and boundaries (Harrison, Thomas, and Cross 2015). Similarly, the U.S. pan-ethnic category of "Asian American", which includes individuals from many different national origins, highlights the complications of omnibus racial categories, particularly where disaggregation may yield very different insights. Consumer researchers should explore people's strategic use of a diverse array of identity-related categories as a marketplace resource, such as when they identify as Asian, Asian-American, or Filipino.

Furthermore, consumer research lacks many studies that focus on consumption and whiteness—explicitly at least. Given that consumers described as White are the dominant economic, social, and numeric group in many countries, examination of the relationship between whiteness and consumption in diverse geographies can further enrich our understanding of category construction and

racialization. For example, White self-racialization has a long history related to economic and social dynamics that heighten perceptions of threat or replacement (Roediger 1991). Understanding when and how White consumers leverage whiteness both individually and collectively to distinguish themselves from other groups in the service of consumption could yield important insights. In addition, scholars could expand upon research that examines the relationship between colorism (Mitchell 2020), skin tone discrimination (which is related to whiteness in some contexts and not at all in others), and racialization processes across diverse groups, geographies, and market domains. Finally, echoing the field's recent emphasis on socio-spatial marketplace dynamics, research could be enriched by investigations of how and under what conditions consumer spaces contribute to racialization (of the self and others) and how these constructions impact consumer perceptions and experiences.

Health, genetics, and consumer well-being

Although health has been studied in a multitude of ways in consumer research, racial dynamics have received relatively minimal attention. Racial health disparities provide an opportunity to question systemic processes related to consumer well-being beyond the individual consumer behavior approach. For example, Trujillo-Torres and DeBerry-Spence (2023) explore the link between race, high-risk consumption, and high-risk environments among persons afflicted with sickle cell disease, many of whom do not adopt potentially life-saving innovative therapies. Studies can interrogate the relationship between race, consumption, and important dimensions of health across diverse market domains to both enrich our understanding of consumer well-being and support marketplace equity. The role of genetics marketing in identity construction, racialization, and consumer health is an important future research path as recent marketing efforts in the DNA and fertility industries (Mimoun, Trujillo-Torres, and Sobande, 2022) have reinforced biological notions of race which potentially reifies race and rationalizes discrimination based on "inherent" genetic differences.

Market-based (anti-)racist efforts

RIM researchers should continue to examine the narratives and counternarratives racially

minoritized consumers develop to disrupt, reinforce, or enliven marketplace racial hierarchies. This

includes understanding what (and how) consumers sacrifice psychologically and materially to navigate

racialized markets through individual coping strategies and innovative collective actions. Mady et al.

(2023), in a rarely utilized comparative cross-national study of India, Egypt, and Ghana, examine the

extent to which women embrace or challenge perceptions of whiteness as a beauty standard. The

dynamics associated with whiteness (or any racially majoritized identity) in consumer movements and

other consumer collectives that support, or challenge racialized markets remain underexamined. For

example, research on #AboriginalLivesMatter highlights tensions that arise when integrating allies into

race-focused social justice activism (Dejmanee et al. 2022).

Broadly, RIM researchers should be critically evaluating the avowed dedication to racial equity

in markets made by organizations worldwide in the aftermath of the 2020 global racial justice protests.

Governments, universities, and businesses are claiming to review practices through an anti-racist lens

to combat structural racism.   This activity has reconfigured anti-racism as a conceptual tool usable for

supporting marketplace equity and generated related research. Inevitably, some efforts will reflect

authentic attempts to change structural conditions that foster inequity while others will reflect so-called

"woke washing". Indeed, at the time of writing, just three years after the reckoning, there has been a

retrenchment of many organizational commitments to racial equity (Robinson 2023). Examining how

consumers give meaning to evolving market practice and race-related brand activism across diverse

geographies can deepen our understanding of market-based and consumption-oriented responses to

injustice and enhance the practical impact of consumer research on marketplace equity.

Technology and Democracy.

The onslaught of big data, artificial intelligence, and machine learning has reinvigorated traditional

concerns related to consumer privacy and raised new social justice concerns related to race (Poole et al. 2021)[1]. As digital technologies increasingly regulate ideas of racial difference, they have transformed them into information (and other valuable commodities) and weaponized them to deepen racial resentment and conflict for political and economic gain worldwide (Jamerson 2019). Facebook's algorithms intensified the spread of hateful anti-Rohingya content in Myanmar before the 2017 genocide. A public relations firm orchestrated a massive social media campaign to stoke racial tensions in South Africa using fake Twitter accounts and websites. RIM-oriented big data analysis could examine the network of persuasions employed by these misinformation strategies, and experimental analysis could assess the conditions under which consumers are aware of or persuaded by racialized misinformation to support the design of marketing interventions.

CONCLUSION

In closing, as we have implied throughout and reinforced here, consumption occurs within a global racialized market system that affects everyday routines of practice, meaning-making, and social relations. Its racialized features (e.g., ideologies, norms, and practices), which are embedded in societal structures, institutions, and related policies across time and space, have direct implications for consumption that too often go undertheorized. RIM research exists to investigate racialized consumers' experiences to mark their variety, because this is worth knowing, and to make plain the ways that power shapes those experiences.

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[1] See also the Technology Race and Prejudice Lab (T.R.A.P. LAB). https://www.jointhetrap.com/.

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