

# Call for Papers Marketing Theory

## Special Issue: Care for and within Marketing Theory

### Guest Editors:

Per Skålén, Karlstad University, Service Research Center, Sweden, and University of Vaasa, Finland, per.skalen@kau.se.

Andreas Chatzidakis, Royal Holloway University of London, UK, andreas.chatzidakis@rhul.ac.uk.

Catharina von Koskull, University of Vaasa, Finland, catharina.von.koskull@uvasa.fi.

Cristina Mele, University of Naples Federico II, Italy, crimele@unina.it.

## Theme and Motivation

Across contemporary societies, escalating ecological breakdown, widening inequalities, geopolitical instability, and the erosion of social cohesion signal what many scholars describe as a profound crisis of care: a crisis at once social, relational, ecological, and institutional (Fraser, 2016; Dowling, 2021). The social and ecological arrangements that enable human and more-than-human flourishing are increasingly strained; thinned out by austerity, fragmented by privatization, or reorganized around competitive rather than cooperative principles. With the rise of neoliberal regimes from the 1980's and onwards (Brown, 2019; Harvey, 2004), market-oriented logics seeped into state, civic, and domestic domains historically grounded in reciprocity, mutuality, and collective wellbeing (Gherardi & Rodeschini, 2016; Lynch, 2021; The Care Collective, 2020). While it is important not to romanticize pre-neoliberal arrangements, the marketization of care has reshaped how responsibilities are distributed, how vulnerabilities are managed, and how interdependence is interpreted—often reframing relational obligations in terms of efficiency, individual choice, and calculative rationality.

Within this broader context, the civil economy tradition offers a conceptually distinct and analytically generative perspective. Rather than treating care as confined to the private sphere or as a compensatory function of welfare institutions, the civil economy conceptualizes care as a structural condition of economic and social reproduction (Williams, 2011). Market relations themselves are understood as embedded in networks of reciprocity, trust, and relational commitment. From this standpoint, care is not an ancillary moral supplement to otherwise self-interested exchange; it constitutes a precondition for sustainable coordination, cooperation, and value creation over time. This perspective enables a reframing of economic action as intrinsically relational and institutionally embedded, foregrounding the role of reciprocity, mutual recognition, and relational norms in shaping market dynamics (Becchetti and Cermelli, 2018).

Against this backdrop, it is striking that marketing scholarship has only marginally engaged with care as a complex socio-ecological and relational phenomenon (Tronto, 1993). When care does appear, it is typically approached in instrumental terms, often limited to relationship management, service recovery, or customer experience optimization, rather than recognized as a foundational social and ethical condition underpinning marketing practices. Recent bibliometric and conceptual analyses of care in marketing and service research illustrate both the promise and the limits of existing approaches, noting the dominance of narrow task- or

emotion-based framings and the absence of deeper sociomaterial and practice-oriented accounts (Mele et al., 2025).

Emerging work points toward a more ambitious agenda. Scholars document the cumulative effects of marketized care, showing how markets reshape subjectivities, redistribute responsibilities, and reorganize caring relations over time (Chatzidakis, Eckhardt, & Husemann, 2024). Practice-theoretical contributions reframe marketing as a caring practice, illustrating how private and public value coconstitute one another and how misdirected care can simultaneously undermine societal flourishing (Skålén, 2026; Skålén and Trischler, 2025). Ethnographic work in Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) and Service Research (TSR) shows how residential care can challenge agency and wellbeing among older adults, thereby exposing tensions inherent in the care institution's core mandate (Anderson et al., 2025). Service research has begun articulating a "caring turn," positioning care as an onto-epistemological and practical lens through which engagement, experience, and value creation might be reimagined at human and more-than-human scales (Mele, 2025).

This Special Issue invites marketing scholars to place care at the center of marketing theory, as a conceptual, moral, political, and practical concern, and to explore care's generative potential for rethinking marketing's foundational assumptions and societal responsibilities.

## Care and Marketing Theory: Why Now?

Marketing theory has long been shaped by imaginaries of choice, exchange, value maximization, and managerial rationality. These imaginaries have structured markets and organizations while directly or indirectly contributing to care deficits, responsabilization, and the erosion of non-marketized caring infrastructures (Chatzidakis et al., 2024). Care, as both condition and orientation, opens alternative imaginaries capable of unsettling foundational assumptions and expanding the conceptual repertoire of marketing theory.

Care reveals hidden dependencies between humans and nonhumans, consumers and workers, markets and ecosystems. It challenges neoliberal conceptions of agency by foregrounding relationality, vulnerability, and interdependence (Tronto, 1993; 2013). It highlights practices as central units of analysis (Mol 2008), aligning with practice theory's emphasis on shared routines, embodied action, frameworks of intelligibility, and sociomaterial arrangements (Nicolini, 2012). It bridges private and public value by expanding value theory beyond calculative benefit toward societal flourishing (Skålén and Trischler, 2025). Care also reorients marketing ethics by shifting attention toward sustaining shared worlds and their conditions of livability (The Care Collective, 2020). Relational public policy perspectives similarly frame care as a relational accomplishment that arises within webs of interdependence rather than from isolated actors (Lejano, 2021).

Technological innovations—especially social and service robots—are increasingly embedded in care practices. Rather than merely extending human capabilities, they participate in relational, affective, and regulatory dimensions of care, becoming co-actors that shape how care is enacted and experienced (Čaić et al., 2018; Huang & Rust, 2024; Kipnis et al., 2022; Mele et al., 2025). Their integration into marketing theory raises questions about how care is distributed across human and non-human participants, how value emerges from sociomaterial configurations, and how technological mediation reconfigures the ethical and political

contours of care. This view invites marketing scholars to consider how care is co-constructed across heterogeneous assemblages of people, technologies, and institutions.

This Special Issue explores how marketing theory can contribute to developing a richer, more reflexive, and more caring understanding of markets, consumption, and society, and how care may re-anchor or transform the discipline's conceptual foundations.

## **Possible Topics and Contributions**

We welcome conceptual, empirical, and methodological contributions. Submissions may draw from (but are not limited to) practice theory, critical marketing, transformative consumer and service research, macromarketing, consumer culture theory, feminist theory, care ethics, relational theory, science and technology studies, political philosophy, ecological humanities, and service research.

Illustrative themes include:

### **1. Care as a Foundation for Marketing Theory**

- Practice-theoretical understandings of care (e.g., Schatzki's bundles of practices; Tronto's phases of care; Heideggerian care as ontological condition; Gherardi's situated caring).
- Care, value, and public value: expanding value theory beyond private benefit, including practice-theoretical integrations of private and public value.
- Care-informed reimaginations of core marketing constructs (e.g., markets, brands, value creation, segmentation, consumer agency).
- Organic theory of marketing based on care: positioning marketing as an emergent, interdependent socioecological process in which care governs how relationships, value, and market formations grow, evolve, and sustain themselves.

### **2. Marketing, Marketization, and the Care Crisis**

- The effects of marketized care on subjectivities, relationships, and supply chains.
- The corporatization and financialization of care.
- Market responsibility versus consumer responsabilization in responding to ecological and social care deficits.
- The reallocation of care from public institutions to individuals, households, and digital platforms.
- Automation and standardization of care and implications for consumer subjectivities and relationships.
- The role of capitalist social relations, markets and corporations in contributing to the care crisis.

### **3. Care Within and Across Marketing Practices**

- Marketing as a caring practice; caring within and for marketing practices.
- Practices of misdirected care and care sabotage: how care may be distorted, exploited, withheld, or redirected in ways that undermine collective wellbeing.

- How marketers, consumers, activists, and nonhumans sustain or struggle to sustain shared practices.
- Part-time marketers, distributed agency, and the politics of care in marketing ecosystems.
- Caring infrastructures: sociomaterial, algorithmic, and organizational.

#### **4. Technology, AI, Robotics, and the Mediation of Care**

- Social, assistive, or companion robots in caring practices.
- How robotcare practices reconfigure understandings, procedures, affective engagements, and material infrastructures of care.
- Technological mediation of relationality: how robots and digital interfaces reshape the emotional, symbolic, and regulatory dimensions of care.
- Phygital care: the hybridization of physical and digital modalities in caring practices, where embodied presence and algorithmic mediation interweave to produce new forms of relationality, coordination, and experience.
- Ethical and political implications of delegating care tasks or relational presence to technological systems.

#### **5. Care, Sustainability, and Alternative Market Imaginaries**

- Care-oriented imaginaries that enable more livable, just, and sustainable markets.
- Collective, community, and more-than-human care within and beyond markets.
- Post-growth, commons-based, cooperative, and degrowth-aligned forms of market organization rooted in care.

#### **6. Methodological Contributions**

- Methods for studying care in marketing practices: ethnography, practice-based approaches, sociomaterial methods, critical discourse analysis, participatory/action research.
- Methodological innovations that foreground different facets of care: embodiment, relationality, affect, and ethical entanglement.

#### **7. Scholarly Practice and Societal/Social Impact**

- The role of care in knowledge generation, dissemination and engagement with stakeholders.
- Research work and researcher wellbeing; institutional expectations and pressure, mental health, diversity in research communities, the role of the researcher and research experience in complex and challenging contexts.

#### **8. Critical, Political, and Ethical Horizons**

- Care ethics and marketing ethics; relational responsibility; power, vulnerability, and dependency.
- Political theories of care and the politics of marketing.
- Care, public value, and the democratic governance of markets.
- Marketing's role in intensifying or alleviating social and ecological injustices.

## 9. Sustainability, Gender, and Intersectionality in Caring Markets

- How sustainability transitions reshape care relations in markets, including intergenerational and ecological care practices.
- Gendered divisions of care labor in marketing systems and their implications for value creation, vulnerability, and social reproduction.
- Intersectional analyses of how race, class, gender, age, ability, and migration status shape experiences of care and neglect within markets.
- The role of marketing in reinforcing or challenging structural inequalities embedded in care infrastructures.

## 10. Global South, Coloniality, and the Geopolitics of Care in Marketing

- Decentering Euro-American marketing theory: foregrounding scholarship, lived realities, and epistemologies from the Global South in theorizing care and markets.
- Colonial and neo-colonial continuities in global marketing systems: financialization, debt regimes, development infrastructures, digital platforms, and data colonialism as drivers of care deficits.
- Global care chains, migration, and transnational labor: how colonial histories and contemporary geopolitical asymmetries structure the redistribution of care work across borders.
- South–South solidarities, informal economies, commons-based organizing, and community-led infrastructures of care beyond Western market logics.

## Submission Information

**Deadline for submissions:** February 1<sup>st</sup> 2027

**Submission portal:** <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/mtq>.

**Article types:** Conceptual only papers, quantitative and qualitative empirical studies with strong theoretical contributions, and methodological innovations are welcome.

All submissions will undergo double-blind peer review in accordance with Marketing Theory standards. Papers accepted are expected to be online by 2028. Authors are encouraged to refer to the Marketing Theory [website](#) for instructions on submitting a paper and for more information about the journal. Please contact the Guest Editor team on [careforandwithinmarketingtheory@yahoo.com](mailto:careforandwithinmarketingtheory@yahoo.com) with questions about the suitability of a manuscript for the special issue.

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