

Marketplace Sentiments

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From outrage at corporations to excitement about innovations, marketplace sentiments are powerful forces in consumer culture that transform markets. This article develops a preliminary theory of marketplace sentiments. Defined as collectively shared emotional dispositions, sentiments can be grouped into three function-based categories: contempt for villains, concern for victims, and celebration of heroes. Marketplace actors such as activists, brands, and consumers have a variety of motives and methods for producing and reproducing sentiments. Activists plant, amplify, and hyper-perform sentiments to recruit consumers and discipline institutions. Brands carefully select, calibrate, and broadcast sentiments to entertain consumers and promote products. Consumers learn, experience, and communicate sentiments to commune and individuate in society. The emergent theory of marketplace sentiments (1) advances a sociocultural perspective on consumer emotion, (2) elevates the theoretical significance of emotional observations in cultural studies, (3) offers a sentiment-based understanding of the power of ideology, (4) indicates how activist sentiments can paradoxically benefit from brand co-optation, and (5) calls for human input in big data sentiment analysis. More broadly, the article proposes that cultures are systems of discourses, sentiments, and practices wherein discourses legitimize sentiments and practices, sentiments energize discourses and practices, and practices materialize discourses and sentiments.

Marketplace sentiments are collectively shared emotional dispositions toward marketplace elements. From public outrage at corporate malfeasance to consumer excitement about radical innovations, marketplace sentiments are frequently mentioned in consumer research, but the concept remains untheorized. This oversight is unfortunate because historical research suggests that sentiments help transform markets (Giesler 2012), industries (Humphreys 2010), and economies (Zhao and Belk 2008). Although sentiments are theoretically latent in consumer research, they are empirically unmistakable forces in activism (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), branding (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003), and consumer identity work (Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler

2010). Simply put, marketplace sentiments are critical to understanding how consumer culture works.

This article illuminates the significance of marketplace sentiments in five sections. The first section reviews prior research on consumer emotion to delineate the theoretical motivations and research questions of the current study. The second section describes the research context of ethical consumerism and the primary and secondary research procedures. The third section introduces the concept of marketplace sentiments, identifies the sentiments of ethical consumerism, and investigates the multi-actor production of sentiments in the context of ethical consumerism. The fourth section synthesizes the findings into a preliminary theory of marketplace sentiments. The fifth section discusses the theory's implications for consumer research.

PRIOR RESEARCH ON CONSUMER EMOTION

This section reviews prior research on consumer emotion to delineate the theoretical motivations and research questions of the current study.

Multidisciplinary Treatments of Consumer Emotion

Consumer Psychology. Since Holbrook and Hirschman's (1982) landmark call for greater attention to "the

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Laura Peracchio served as editor and Kent Grayson served as associate editor for this article.

Electronically published August 6, 2014

experiential aspects of consumption” (132), consumer psychology has amply documented the ways in which affect valence (positive vs. negative) and affect arousal (high vs. low) influence cognitive processes from initial need recognition to postpurchase evaluation (for reviews, see Cohen, Pham, and Andrade 2008; Johar, Maheswaran, and Peracchio 2006; Loken 2006). More recently, consumer psychology has begun to investigate the impact of discrete emotions (e.g., contentment, fear, pride) on cognitive processes (Williams 2014).

Consumer Culture Theory. By contrast, consumer culture theory (CCT) ought to focus on the sociocultural dimensions of consumer emotions. However, CCT research on consumer emotion is rather fragmented. A careful reading of CCT research suggests that there are at least four distinct treatments of consumer emotion.

- *Holistic Treatments.* Since the 1980s, classic ethnographic studies (e.g., Arnould and Price 1993; Kozinets 2002; Tumbat and Belk 2011) tend to describe the holistic experience of consumer collectives in evocative terms, such as *communitas*, *escape*, and *harmony*. While these terms have distinct emotional tenors, these studies generally stop short of identifying discrete emotions.
- *Phenomenological Treatments.* Since the 1990s, some phenomenological studies do recognize discrete emotions in consumer phenomena, such as ambivalence and anxiety in technology consumption (Mick and Fournier 1998), guilt and shame in compulsive consumption (Hirschman 1992), and happiness and sadness in asset disposition (Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000). While these studies often link consumer emotions to consumer cognitions, they do not link consumer emotions to sociocultural factors such as community ties and political ideologies.
- *Hybrid Phenomenological-Psychological Treatments.* Since the 2000s, hybrid phenomenological-psychological studies use interpretive methods to identify the cognitive antecedents and consequences of discrete consumer emotions, such as brand love (Batra, Ahuvia, and Bagozzi 2012), gift-giving anxiety (Wooten 2000), and material possession love (Lastovicka and Sirianni 2011). While these studies make significant contributions to consumer psychology, they neglect sociocultural concerns such as the market shaping of consumer emotions.
- *Sociocultural Treatments.* Only recently have a few CCT studies begun to examine consumer emotions from truly sociocultural perspectives (e.g., Bonsu, Darmody, and Parmentier 2010; Celsi, Rose, and Leigh 1993; Sandlin and Callahan 2009; Thompson 2005; Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007b). Except for this final category, CCT studies have neglected to examine collectively shared emotional dispositions.

Sociocultural Treatments of Consumer Emotion

Sociocultural studies of consumer emotion tend to foreground collective (vs. individual), enduring (vs. momentary), and proactive (vs. reactive) aspects of emotional experiences. In a pioneering sociocultural study, Celsi et al. (1993) trace how emotional experiences shift from “thrill” to “pleasure” to “flow” (14) as consumers acculturate into a skydiving community. In contrast to the predominant psychological view of affective states as individual reactions to (dis)pleasing stimuli, this sociocultural study features consumers who proactively internalize emotional experiences from social learning in marketplace cultures.

To frame a socially learned emotional pattern, Thompson (2005) employs Williams’s (1977) concept of a “structure of feeling”—an emotionally charged ideological conviction that is continually reinforced by members of a culture. Thompson (2005) reveals that couples develop “reflexive doubt” (238) about the medical birth model as they acculturate into a natural birth community. This feeling of doubt persists despite life-threatening experiences of natural birth, suggesting that emotional convictions are unusually resistant to change. Similarly, Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007b) show that consumers endure the inconveniences of community-supported agriculture (CSA) because of “enchantment” (278). CSA discourses reframe the lack of home delivery and the lack of predictable produce as adventures and mysteries, cultivating feelings of enchantment. In line with Williams’s ideas, Thompson’s studies focus on only one structure of feeling per marketplace culture. For example, Thompson’s (2005) study only theorizes feelings of “reflexive doubt” about the medical birth model, even though consumer excerpts amply evidence distinguishable feelings of anger, disgust, and fear as well (239–46). Unfortunately, when discrete emotions are bundled together or just overlooked, their unique practical functions are also overlooked.

Three studies document large-scale efforts to direct consumer emotions. Bonsu et al. (2010) argue that vapid fictional dramas on commercial television so continually arouse feelings of anger, fear, and sadness that consumers are numbed to the real human suffering around the world. Sandlin and Callahan (2009) observe that consumer activists try to unsettle consumer contentment by depicting the falsity of advertising but that consumers often resist and ridicule the activism instead of the advertising. Kozinets and Handelman (2004) do not investigate emotions per se, but their analysis of consumer activism arrives at a similar conclusion, that mainstream consumers reject the righteous evangelism of activism. Although these studies recognize the difficulties of changing mainstream consumer sentiments, they overlook how activism does occasionally succeed at cultivating countercultural sentiments.

Theoretical Oversights and Research Questions

While the studies reviewed here are keen on sentiment, a broader reading of CCT leaves one with the lingering feeling that most cultural scholars do not consider sentiment

a worthy subject. Expressions of sentiment in data excerpts are often ignored or reframed into other concepts, such as commitment, engagement, and involvement (see also Illouz 2009). Even when sentiments are noted in CCT, they are often treated as epiphenomenal elements of culture, “without any attempt to adequately situate those emotional states within a psycho-social context” (Rafferty 2011, 241). Finally, unlike perennial concerns such as identity and community, ideology and mythology, and discourses and practices, sentiments are rarely a theoretical concern in a CCT study.

The neglect of sentiments in CCT is unfortunate because sentiments are as important to culture as are discourses and practices. Sentiments are critical but unrecognized tools in the political, economic, and social machinations of marketplace actors, including how activists recruit consumers (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), how brands entertain consumers (Brown et al. 2003), and how consumers perform identity (Luedicke et al. 2010). Moreover, historical research indicates that sentiments fuel market dynamics (Giesler 2012), institutional changes (Humphreys 2010), and economic transformations (Zhao and Belk 2008). For example, sentiments of national pride can fuel support for domestic brands, anti-immigration policies, and closed economies, while desires for first-world lifestyles can generate support for foreign brands, globalization, and international business (Dong and Tian 2009; Luedicke et al. 2010; Zhao and Belk 2008).

Beyond the field of CCT, the wider discipline of consumer research also needs a theory of sentiments to expand the scope of emotion research beyond phenomenological insights into the lived experience of consumer behavior and psychological hypotheses about the impact of affect on cognition. While these aspects of consumer emotion are certainly important, a theory of sentiments can highlight collective, enduring, and proactive aspects of consumer emotion that have been largely neglected by both consumer psychology and CCT. To redress the oversight of marketplace sentiments in consumer research, this article tackles some basic questions: What exactly are marketplace sentiments? By whom, why, and how are sentiments produced in a marketplace?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This section describes the research context of ethical consumerism and the primary and secondary research procedures.

Research Context

A Brief History of Ethical Consumerism. Although various forms of ethical, moral, and political consumption have existed for centuries, the contemporary marketplace culture known as “ethical consumerism” crystallized in Western societies in the 1980s (Cowe and Williams 2001). On the one hand, the 1980s were characterized by excessive consumption and corporate greed, exemplified by Madonna’s “Material Girl” in 1984 and the film *Wall Street*’s “Gordon

Gekko” in 1987. On the other hand, the discovery of the ozone hole in 1988, the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, and the mainstreaming of countercultural brands such as Benetton, Patagonia, and The Body Shop began drawing strong links between everyday consumption and social issues. The popularization of the term “ethical consumer” is generally attributed to an eponymous UK magazine (1989–present) that publishes marketplace news, company ratings, and product guides.

Ethical Consumerism as a Multifaceted Phenomenon.

Ethical consumerism is a fertile context in which to study the multi-actor production of marketplace sentiments because ethical consumerism is at once a movement shaped by activist interests (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), a marketplace shaped by business interests (Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007a), and an identity project shaped by consumer interests (Dobscha and Ozanne 2001). What unites these varied interests, at least partially, is the ideology of ethical consumerism that businesses and consumers should take into consideration not only the functional and monetary implications of their choices but also the environmental and social implications. Advocates of ethical consumerism pressure businesses and consumers to consider the hidden victims of market capitalism, including animals (e.g., PETA 2013d), ecosystems (e.g., Rainforest Action Network 2013), laborers (e.g., Fair Trade USA 2013), local communities (e.g., Klein 2000), and future generations (e.g., *Story of Stuff* 2011).

Research Procedures

Emotion-Focused Training. To learn about the sentiments of ethical consumerism, I collected and analyzed a diverse range of primary and secondary data. However, at the outset of this research, I first participated in a 4-week workshop on understanding emotions and consulted five therapists for advice on interviewing people about their feelings. I learned to ask questions using an informant’s own constructs, invite emotional details using projective questions, and hear emotionally charged narratives with empathy and without evaluation. I also became better able to discern the full spectrum of human emotions from conversations, readings, and videos.

Informant Demographics. Ten consumers who participate in ethical consumerism were recruited for this research via mutual acquaintances in three politically liberal North American cities. Five informants (Cathy, Jill, Sing, Suri, and Tina) are female, and the rest (Carl, Dave, Jake, Roy, and Seth) are male. Eight identify as white, one as Chinese and white, and one as Indian. Five informants are married, four with children. The informants identify their families of origin as lower-middle class to upper-middle class. Three informants identify as moderately religious, three as not especially religious, and four as atheists. Prior research suggests that ethical consumers tend to be highly educated (Auger, Devinney, and Louviere 2007), and so are these informants. All 10 in-

formants have college degrees, and some also have graduate degrees. The informants work in diverse sectors, including business, education, government, hospitality, law, medicine, and social work. Born in the late 1960s and 1970s, the informants belong to the historical cluster known as Generation X. As a collective, Xers tend to be more distrustful of political, economic, and social institutions than prior generations (Howe and Strauss 2007).

Primary Data Collection. Depth interviews with informants were spaced out over two or three visits, each visit ranging from 2 to 5 hours. Interviews focused on everyday provisioning, consuming, and disposing choices and their emotional undercurrents. Empathetic listening in research interviews enables informants to express what they feel in verbal and nonverbal ways. Nonetheless, I also used projective techniques and member checks to triangulate my findings. Interviews generally commenced in informants' living rooms. During breaks, most informants offered me snacks in their kitchen. Such breaks often prompted voluntary stories about visible household items, such as appliances and furniture. However, tours of less visible items, such as the interior contents of cabinets and composting bins, were distinct events upon my request.

Secondary Data Collection. I also asked informants where they learned about ethical consumerism. They cited activist groups (e.g., Greenpeace), blogs (e.g., TreeHugger), books (e.g., No Logo), brand websites (e.g., Seventh Generation), company websites (e.g., Patagonia), documentaries (e.g., The Corporation), recorded talks by prominent activists (e.g., TED talks), and short videos (e.g., the *Story of Stuff* series). These sources collectively formed a massive secondary data set. The sources that are cited in the article are organized into two categories: activist data and brand data (see app. A). Many of these data are interconnected. For example, Annie Leonard, a consumer activist, narrates *Story of Stuff* videos and writes a guest column for Patagonia, an eco-friendly brand of athletic apparel. This study does not examine what individual activists and marketing practitioners privately feel because what matters to the marketplace is what they publicly express in organizational communications.

Qualitative Data Analysis. To interpret the primary and secondary data, I followed stock protocols for qualitative data analysis (Spiggle 1994), including several rounds of coding and mapping relationships among emergent codes. The analysis concluded when theoretical saturation occurred, that is, new sources of data and new rounds of analysis did not change emergent interpretations. A number of interview excerpts that were selected for publication in this article contained redundant and tangential clauses. These excerpts have been abbreviated and edited, but care has been taken to retain their original meaning and emotional tenor.

A MULTI-ACTOR PRODUCTION OF MARKETPLACE SENTIMENTS

This section introduces the concept of marketplace sentiments, identifies the sentiments of ethical consumerism, and investigates the multi-actor production of sentiments in the context of ethical consumerism in three subsections: activist expressions, brand expressions, and consumer expressions (see fig. 1).

The Concept of Marketplace Sentiments

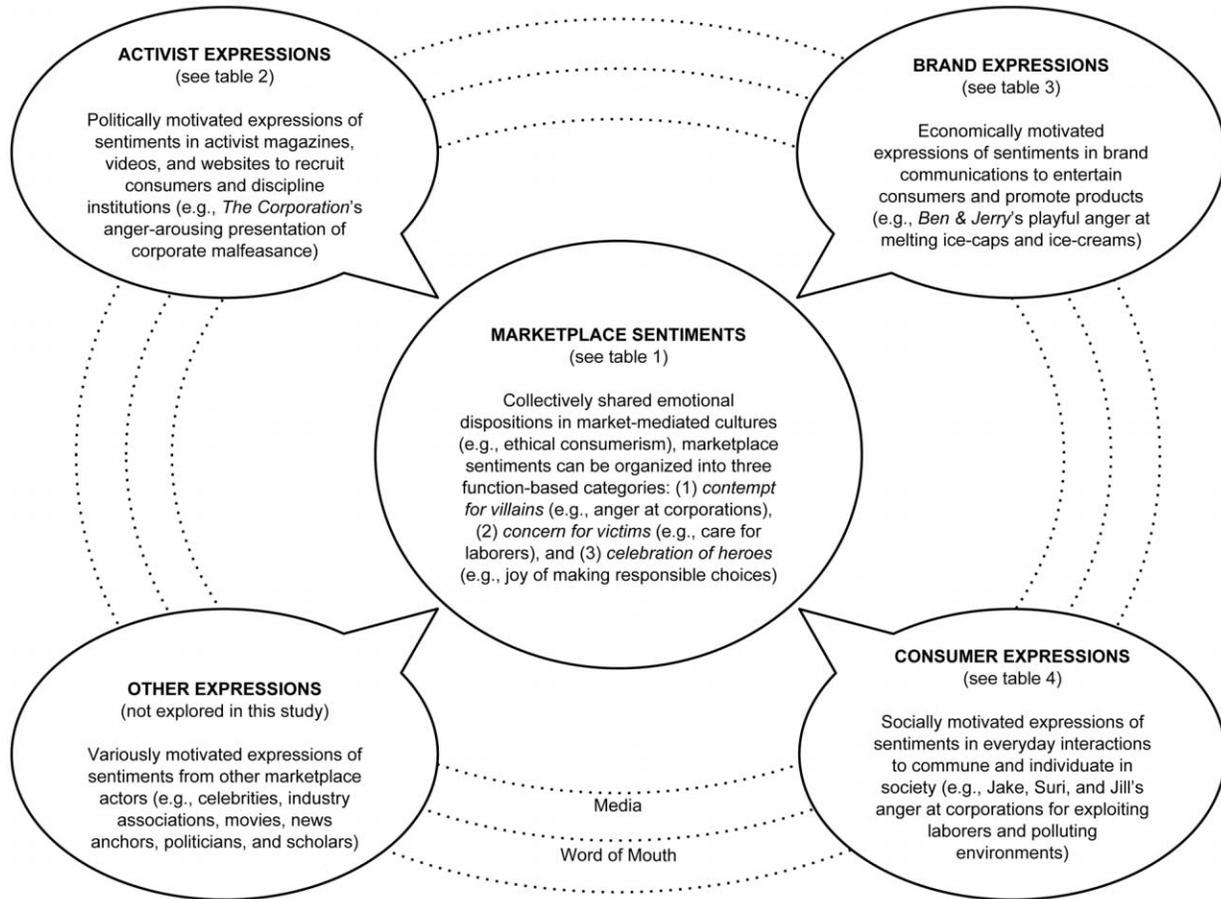
Marketplace cultures are frequently conceptualized as market-mediated systems of mutually reinforcing “discourses and practices” (e.g., Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Kozinets 2002; Thompson 2005, 238). Adding sentiments to the cultural mix, this article conceptualizes ethical consumerism as a system of discourses, sentiments, and practices (see table 1). Simply put, if *discourses* are cultural patterns of thinking and speaking and *practices* are cultural patterns of behaving and relating, *sentiments* are cultural patterns of feeling and emoting. As core components of marketplace cultures, discourses, sentiments, and practices have a number of characteristics in common. They are produced and reproduced by a sizable group of people. They are cultural scripts for individual thought, feeling, or action. They can be learned, modified, and abandoned by individuals, but owing to their shared nature, they tend to live on in the collective consciousness until they are collectively abandoned or radically transformed. In everyday life, discourses, sentiments, and practices are generally routinized, taken-for-granted, and automatic ways of conducting oneself.

For the purposes of this research, *marketplace sentiments* are defined as collectively shared emotional dispositions toward marketplace elements. This definition ascribes three conceptual components to a marketplace sentiment: (1) an emotion (e.g., anger, care, or joy), (2) a marketplace element at which the emotion is targeted (e.g., an industrial process, a product category, or a consumer behavior), and (3) a group of actors that shares the emotional disposition toward the marketplace element (e.g., members of an activist organization, a brand community, or a political party). Emotions have practical functions that are largely overlooked in prior cultural studies. For example, anger urges one to attack and destroy one's enemies and obstacles (Plutchik 1980). Sentiments link emotions to marketplace elements to put such urges to practical use. For example, in the context of ethical consumerism, anger at corporations energizes consumers to engage in boycotting, protesting, and reducing practices.

The Sentiments of Ethical Consumerism

Seven sentiments emerged from the ethical consumerism data (see table 1). These sentiments can be grouped into three categories based on their functional similarities. In the “contempt for villains” category are (1) anger at corporations, governments, and mainstream consumers and (2) disgust at capitalism, pollution, and unhealthy products (see

FIGURE 1
A VISUAL OUTLINE OF THE STUDY'S FINDINGS



also Dobscha and Ozanne 2001; Kozinets and Handelman 2004). In the “concern for victims” category are (3) care for all living things and future generations, (4) anxiety about industrial processes and harmful products, and (5) guilt about regressions to mainstream consumption (see also Klein, Smith, and John 2004; Mostafa 2007; Steenhaut and Van Kenhove 2006). In the “celebration of heroes” category are (6) joy of making responsible choices and (7) hope in the power of discrete and individual choices (see also Peter and Honea 2012; Soper 2007).

For marketplace sentiments to exist across space and time, numerous marketplace actors must produce and reproduce them. In the context of ethical consumerism, three groups of marketplace actors actively participate in the production of sentiments (see fig. 1): activists (see table 2), brands (see table 3), and consumers (see table 4). Each group of marketplace actors has a distinct set of motives and methods for participating in the production of sentiments (see table 5).

Activist Expressions of Sentiments in Ethical Consumerism

In the ethical consumerism movement, activists champion production, consumption, and disposal practices that protect animals, ecosystems, laborers, local communities, vulnerable consumers, and future generations. Informants in this study frequently mention prominent activist groups such as Adbusters, Fair Trade USA, Greenpeace, the International Labor Rights Forum, and the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and celebrated individual activists such as Annie Leonard and Naomi Klein. These activists present their sentiments to consumers via documentaries (e.g., *The Corporation*), magazines (e.g., *Mother Jones*), public displays (e.g., flash mobs), short web-mediated videos (e.g., *The Story of Stuff*), speeches (e.g., Klein’s [2011] TED talk “Addicted to Risk”), and most importantly, their websites, which curate all of the above.

Most activist groups are nonprofit organizations funded

TABLE 1
THE DISCOURSES, SENTIMENTS, AND PRACTICES OF ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Discourses	Sentiments	Practices
Composed of ideas, ideals, metaphors, and myths, <i>discourses</i> are cultural patterns of thinking and speaking	Composed of emotions and targets, <i>sentiments</i> are cultural patterns of feeling and emoting	Composed of objects and doings, <i>practices</i> are cultural patterns of behaving and relating
Contempt for Villains		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporations are “bullies,” “colonizers,” and “psychopaths” that exploit laborers and pollute ecosystems to maximize profits • Mainstream products are “junk,” “poison,” and “shit” that can make people sick • Planned obsolescence, greedy consumption, and mindless disposal are creating massive landfills • Governments are ineffective; corrupt politicians serve corporate interests • Mainstream consumers are apathetic, immoral, and self-centered degenerates—“they just don’t care” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Anger</i> at corporations, governments, and mainstream consumers (<i>anger</i> urges one to attack and destroy one’s enemies and obstacles) • <i>Disgust</i> at capitalism, pollution, and unhealthy products (<i>disgust</i> urges one to reject and avoid threats to one’s health and hygiene) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boycotting irresponsible companies • Reducing consumption of offending products • Negative word-of-mouth and scathing online critiques for bad brands • Publicly protesting corporate abuses
Concern for Victims		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All living things—animals, ecosystems, laborers, consumers, and even future generations—are literally and spiritually connected, but vulnerable to “evil capitalist exploitation” • Consumers must take responsibility to educate themselves and make wise choices to protect themselves and other victims • Enabling human exploitation or environmental pollution is criminal and inexcusable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Care</i> for all living things and future generations (<i>care</i> urges one to approach and help vulnerable people) • <i>Anxiety</i> about industrial processes and harmful products (<i>anxiety</i> urges one to dwell and worry about uncertain futures) • <i>Guilt</i> about regressions to mainstream consumption (<i>anticipated guilt</i> keeps obligations visceral while <i>post-transgression guilt</i> pulls one back to resume obligations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning more about the plight of victims from documentaries, magazines, and websites • Donating money to protect endangered ecosystems, mistreated animals, and people vulnerable to corporate abuses • Recycling household waste to reduce pollution
Celebration of Heroes		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical consumers, brands, and activists are noble crusaders who persist despite severe challenges • Discrete acts can accumulate into significant impact, and individual efforts can collectively make a difference—“every purchase counts” • Consuming ethically is “doing the right thing”—aligning one’s actions with one’s values 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Joy</i> of making responsible choices (<i>joy</i> conditions one to repeat pleasing activities) • <i>Hope</i> in the cumulative power of discrete and individual choices (<i>hope</i> enables one to persevere toward their goals in spite of numerous hurdles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Boycotting” responsible companies and ethical alternatives to mainstream products • Positive word-of-mouth for good brands • Reusing old and second-hand items, instead of purchasing new ones • Persevering toward ideals despite apathy of mainstream producers and consumers

by community members, government grants, and sympathetic benefactors, but funding is often scarce (Frumkin 2005). The financial costs of challenging highly profitable corporate giants in the political, legal, and cultural sphere are prohibitive. Activist groups are generally unable to afford airtime on broadcast media to communicate their message to consumers. As a result, the most successful activist groups are prone to delivering provocative, emotionally charged, and even polarizing rhetoric, imagery, and protests whenever they can seize moments of media coverage and consumer attention. For example, PETA has sprayed fake blood at fur fashion shows, and celebrity endorsers have posed nude with the caption “I’d rather go naked than wear fur.” Such efforts often invite ridicule (Sandlin and Callahan

2009), but provocative tactics also seem to spark controversy, generate buzz, and gradually cultivate seeds of doubt about the status quo. While PETA has been criticized by various stakeholders, including other animal rights groups, it has continued its polarizing brand of emotional messaging because it works.

Unlike our opposition, which is mostly composed of wealthy industries and corporations, PETA must rely largely on free “advertising” through media coverage. We will do extraordinary things to get the word out about animal cruelty because we have learned from experience that the media, sadly, do not consider the terrible facts about animal suffering alone interesting enough to cover. . . . Thus, we try to make our

TABLE 2

ACTIVIST EXPRESSIONS OF SENTIMENTS IN ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Sentiments	Activist Expressions
Contempt for Villains	
Anger at corporations, governments, and mainstream consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Products are often shipped . . . to your house by very demoralized workers operating in very depressing conditions . . . Every one of Amazon’s millions of customers should write them a really angry letter demanding change. Except we won’t. Because then our shipping wouldn’t be free” (<i>Mother Jones</i> 2011). • “Corporate money is flooding our political system and drowning out the voices of everyday Americans” (Radford [Greenpeace] 2013). • “It’s time to tell Cargill, the leading supplier of palm oil in the U.S., that we will not stand for child and slave labor in our food” (Rainforest Action Network 2013).
Disgust at capitalism, pollution, and unhealthy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “These big polluters claim to be a part of our community, but it’s clear that they don’t care about their neighbors when they continue to dump toxic pollution near our homes and schools . . . making our children sick. Power plants and refineries will do whatever they can to avoid cleaning up their act” (Anderson [Sierra Club] 2013). • “To test cosmetics, household cleaners, and other consumer products, hundreds of thousands of animals are poisoned, blinded, and killed every year by cruel corporations. Mice and rats are forced to inhale toxic fumes, dogs are force-fed pesticides, and rabbits have corrosive chemicals rubbed onto their skin and eyes” (PETA 2013a).
Concern for Victims	
Care for all living things and future generations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PETA ad depicts an adorable baby tiger imploring you: “Will you fight for me?” (PETA 2013b). • “Today, humanity faces a stark choice: save the planet and ditch capitalism, or save capitalism and ditch the planet” (Ibrahim 2012). • “Workers’ rights need to be enforced just as stringently as investors’ rights . . . Corporations [must] adopt more humane labor practices and be held accountable for sweatshop conditions in their factories and farms” (International Labor Rights Forum 2013).
Anxiety about industrial processes and harmful products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Only when the last fish is gone, the last river poisoned, the last tree cut down . . . will mankind realize they cannot eat money” (Greenpeace 2013). • “We’re in this together and we can’t solve it alone. We breathe the same air, eat the same food and drink the same water on this one planet we share. There’s no eco-utopia to hide in—we rise or fall together here” (Leonard [prominent activist] 2013). • A spoof ad depicts Marlboro mascot Joe Camel as Joe Chemo, a camel suffering from lung cancer and undergoing chemotherapy (Adbusters 2011b).
Guilt about regressions to mainstream consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The average American produces about 4.4 pounds of garbage a day. That’s 29 pounds per week or 1,600 pounds a year” (<i>Story of Stuff</i> 2013). • An image of an endearing young boy is paired with the slogan “every purchase matters” to indicate that first-world consumer choices impact the lives of third-world children (Fair Trade USA 2013). • A spoof ad equates a UPC bar code to prison cell bars, implying that consumption is enslavement (Adbusters 2011a).
Celebration of Heroes	
Joy of making responsible choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Activist expressions of this sentiment are rare and faint.</i> “Thank you for all you do to help build a better world. Remember, we’re all in this together” (<i>Story of Stuff</i> 2011).
Hope in the power of discrete and individual choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Everyone can make a difference. Although you are just one person, your voice counts” (Born Free USA 2013). • “The journey towards a sane sustainable future begins with a single step. It could all start with a personal challenge. . . . You just might have an unexpected, emancipatory epiphany!” (Adbusters 2012).

TABLE 3

BRAND EXPRESSIONS OF SENTIMENTS IN ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Sentiments	Brand Expressions
Contempt for Villains	
Anger at corporations, governments, and mainstream consumers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brand expressions of this sentiment are much lighter in tone than activist expressions.</i> • “Because we are an independent, family-owned business we are able to do things unthinkable in a large, corporate environment. . . . Sometimes this means doing things the “hard way,” but we are OK with that. . . . Our goal is to please our customers, not Wall Street” (Turtle Island Foods 2013a). • “We’re not scientists, but we figure that ice caps, like ice cream, are best kept frozen. . . . If it’s melted, it’s ruined” (Ben & Jerry’s 2013).
Disgust at capitalism, pollution, and unhealthy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brand expressions of this sentiment are rare.</i>
Concern for Victims	
Care for all living things and future generations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Every time you use a Seventh Generation product you are making a difference by saving natural resources, reducing pollution, and making the world a better place for this and the next seven generations” (Seventh Generation 2011). • “We’re passionate about people and the planet and believe both deserve our respect and care. That’s the driving force behind changing [our] package. . . . a commitment to reducing the plastic in our packages” (Earthbound Farm 2013a). • “At Turtle Island Foods . . . we have worked to create delicious, nutritious, convenient, and affordable vegetarian foods that make a difference in people’s lives and have a minimal impact on our environment” (Turtle Island Foods 2013b). • “We’re in the business to help change lives” (TOMS 2013).
Anxiety about industrial processes and harmful products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Far stronger measures must be taken to protect organic farmers from unintended GMO contamination. With current practices, farmers that plant GMOs take absolutely no responsibility for any GMO drift that may occur onto their neighboring organic farmers’ fields. While no harm befalls the GMO farmer, this drift could be disastrous for the organic farmer” (Annie’s 2012). • “Things are changing rapidly in the Arctic . . . perhaps most alarming, climate change and rising temperatures bring potential for a whole range of negative effects, from the extinction of species like the polar bear to global temperature and sea level changes” (Patagonia 2013). • “We must have sustainable energy . . . or we will face massive economic collapse” (Musk, CEO of Tesla, 2012).
Guilt about regressions to mainstream consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Brand expressions of this sentiment are rare.</i>
Celebration of Heroes	
Joy of making responsible choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Happy Family lovingly devotes a mother’s care to crafting premium organic meals & snacks that nourish the most important parts of our lives. From babies to grownups and community to environment, we take great joy putting a healthy smile on all that we touch” (Happy Family 2013). • Website imagery links fair-trade chocolate, coffees, and crafts to happy laborers and their families (Green & Black’s 2013; Ten Thousand Villages 2013; Green Mountain Coffee 2013). • “I realized quality coffee improves quality of life. . . . I realized good coffee is good for the soul. . . . I realized how wonderful life is” (Green Mountain Coffee 2013).
Hope in the power of discrete and individual choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Today, research confirms the environmental and nutritional benefits of organic food, and our passion for making a difference endures in our farming practices and in the issues we care about. We hope you’ll care about these issues, too, and make your opinions heard in the grocery store, in your community and at the ballot box” (Earthbound Farm 2013b). • “We make thousands of tiny decisions that make a whole lot of good” (Annie’s 2013).

TABLE 4

CONSUMER EXPRESSIONS OF SENTIMENTS IN ETHICAL CONSUMERISM

Sentiments	Consumer Expressions
Contempt for Villains	
Anger at corporations, governments, and mainstream consumers	<p><i>Suri:</i> The meat industry is horribly bad, a poor use of land, and very exploitative toward immigrants. Shoes, too, are made in horrible conditions. . . . How can you find it acceptable that women in Burma are being held at gun point to sew blazers!?</p> <p><i>Jill:</i> The seas are apparently more and more coated with plastic molecules, which prevent them from evaporating into clouds, and this is part of the whole climate change thing. For fucking plastic bags! I just feel, "How hard is it to bring in biodegradable bags?" Why can't the government just say, "You have a year to transform your factories and after that, plastic bags are illegal." I get angry that our government doesn't do that.</p>
Disgust at capitalism, pollution, and unhealthy products	<p><i>Tina:</i> We just recently visited some relatives, they are so consume, consume, consume. It's just stuff, stuff, stuff. . . . A massive house [needs] a lot of energy to heat and cool it. For two people, it's just such a waste, I have very little respect for people who waste resources. I know plenty of people that don't recycle anything, and it drives me up a wall!</p> <p><i>Jill:</i> As we were going into the [Sahara], it was just horrifying, it was just littered with plastic bags. They were stuck up against the sand dunes and caught in the trees. It was really shocking to me. So I really do try to either reuse or recycle them.</p>
Concern for Victims	
Care for all living things and future generations	<p><i>Caty:</i> I've been trying to steer clear of eggs, mainly because of the way chickens are treated in factory-farms.</p> <p><i>Jake:</i> Supporting fair-trade coffee and non-sweatshop shoes is important for the people who are making it, and it also comes back to you because we live in a global world.</p> <p><i>Sing:</i> School, that's probably when I became more environmentally conscious, it was about my love for nature.</p>
Anxiety about industrial processes and harmful products	<p><i>Carl:</i> I know landfills basically poison well water. So, any landfill that's near you basically poisons the water that you drink, which makes no sense. Why would I contribute toward that if it means I'm going to be drinking the very same water the next day or the next coming months?</p> <p><i>Suri:</i> If Whole Foods were closer to us, I would shop there because of certain health factors. Our son is 4 years old, and I always have anxiety about produce and pesticides.</p> <p><i>Tina:</i> Kid-based products are manufactured with such low-quality ingredients, and they have so little nutritional value. I try to avoid anything with high-fructose corn syrup in it. . . . That's a lot of products.</p>
Guilt about regressions to mainstream consumption	<p><i>Carl:</i> I feel guilty when I don't wash out a container and recycle it. Because I know it's just going into a landfill, and I know there's 30 trucks driving daily to put our garbage somewhere in the salt mines underneath Metro Detroit.</p> <p><i>Caty:</i> I bought the cute little red shoes because they were so beautiful. [But] I knew the chances were good, given that there was no label, that they were made in China, by people who were working under harsh working conditions, not being paid much. So I ended up returning them.</p>
Celebration of Heroes	
Joy of making responsible choices	<p><i>Tina:</i> The fact that I compost and recycle, that I buy a certain brand of clothing and food, those are all connected in this sort of good, simple, wholesome, back-to-basics life. I feel like all of that is part of who I am. I'm happy about it. Like, "Hey, I'm doing something good here," and it feels good. I feel part of this greater good.</p> <p><i>Jill:</i> Consuming responsibly is not fun really, but it's satisfying. . . . It made me happy when we got take-out recently, and they gave us the food in these compostable containers rather than Styrofoam.</p> <p><i>Roy:</i> I took pleasure in the rituals we developed. We would wash out the cans, take off the label, [then] recycle. We had a big compost in the back. It was a real act of love . . . very intentional.</p>
Hope in the power of discrete and individual choices	<p><i>Suri:</i> I think I decided that, overall, each little thing that you do, it makes a difference.</p> <p><i>Carl:</i> I think my consumption choices do more for the planet than my job [as a government worker].</p> <p><i>Seth:</i> Like what Jamie Oliver is doing in England . . . going to public schools and getting kids, teachers, and families more aware of the kind of food they put in their mouths. It gives me a great deal of hope.</p>

TABLE 5
WHY AND HOW ACTIVISTS, BRANDS, AND CONSUMERS PARTICIPATE IN THE
MULTI-ACTOR PRODUCTION OF MARKETPLACE SENTIMENTS

	Activists	Brands	Consumers
Why:			
Primary goal	To recruit consumers and discipline institutions	To entertain consumers and promote products	To commune and individuate in society
Primary challenge	Limited access to mainstream media and limited funding to promote their messages	Risk of public backlash and mockery if message does not resonate with consumers	Social ridicule for appearing too emotional, foolish, or inauthentic
How:			
Forms of participation	Activists plant, amplify, and hyper-perform sentiments	Brands carefully select, calibrate, and broadcast sentiments	Consumers learn, experience, and communicate sentiments
Calibration of sentiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High contempt for villains • High concern for victims • Low celebration of heroes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low contempt for villains • Moderate concern for victims • Moderate celebration of heroes 	Varies depending on consumer acculturation; in the context of ethical consumerism, more (less) acculturated consumers tend to mirror activist (brand) expressions

actions colorful and controversial, thereby grabbing headlines around the world and spreading the message of kindness to animals to thousands—sometimes millions—of people. This approach has proved amazingly successful. In the 3 decades since PETA was founded, it has grown into the largest animal rights group in the country, with more than 3 million members and supporters worldwide. (PETA 2013d)

Successful activist groups recognize that their communications must be “extraordinary” to capture consumer attention. While PETA uses “grotesque” sexual and violent imagery to be extraordinary (Phillips and McQuarrie 2010, 368), Adbusters promotes subversive campaigns such as Buy Nothing Day, Occupy Wall Street, and TV Turnoff Week. On a lighter note, Adbusters also produces witty spoofs of mega brands. For example, one spoof features Tiger Woods with a smile shaped like a Nike Swoosh, while another spoof features a shriveled bottle of Absolut Vodka with the tagline “Absolut Impotence.”

Activists cultivate new sentiments by metaphorically transferring emotions from a source element to a target element. To cultivate emotion e at target element t , a discourse must metaphorically equate target element t with source element s at which consumers already feel emotion e . For example, an anti-corporate documentary entitled *The Corporation* (Achbar and Abbott 2003) cultivates anger (e) toward corporations by promoting the metaphor of corporations (t) as psychopaths (s).

Narrator: The corporation is legally bound to put its bottom line ahead of everything else, even the public good.

Michael Moore (documentarian): Most of these companies are run by rich white men. . . . They are out of touch with what the majority of the world is.

Ray Anderson (CEO of Interface): The day must come when this is illegal, when plundering is not allowed. It must come.

Robert Hare (psychopathy expert): It may not be that dif-

ficult to actually draw the transition between psychopathy in the individual to psychopathy in the corporation. We could go through the characteristics that define this disorder, one by one . . . and, in fact, in many respects, the corporation . . . is the [epitome] of a psychopath.

To buttress the metaphor of corporations as psychopaths, *The Corporation* reviews several cases of anger, disgust, and anxiety-inducing corporate malpractices, including the privatization of the municipal water supply in Bolivia, IBM’s alleged participation in the Holocaust, and Monsanto’s suppression of research on a genetically engineered growth hormone called rBGH and a highly toxic defoliant called Agent Orange. Posters for the documentary depict the institution of the corporation as a confident executive with a devil’s tail—as Satan in a suit. Canadian activist Naomi Klein (2000) promotes a similar metaphor in her bestseller *No Logo*. In that book, she famously reframes global megabrands such as Disney, Starbucks, and Walmart as “bullies” in opposition to the hegemonic framing of brands as “buddies” (Fournier 1998, 363; Gobé 2001; Roberts 2004).

As table 2 shows, activists vividly express sentiments in the “contempt for villains” and “care for victims” categories. However, activists seem to make fewer efforts to cultivate sentiments in the “celebration of heroes” category. In particular, the joy of making responsible choices is less salient in activist expressions, especially in contrast to brand expressions, which are discussed next.

Brand Expressions of Sentiments in Ethical Consumerism

The study’s informants are critical of brands in general, but they are partial to ethically positioned brands such as Ben & Jerry’s ice cream, Green & Black’s chocolate, No Sweat shoes, Patagonia apparel, and Seventh Generation

cleaning products, albeit to varying degrees. These brands frequently use activist-generated sentiments in their marketing communications to engage and entertain consumers and ultimately to sell goods and services. Brand communication budgets are not limited like activist communication budgets, but marketers are nonetheless pressed to stretch their budgets as far as they can to increase sales. Thus, marketers endeavor to craft potent marketing communications that deeply resonate with consumers and eliminate the competition (Belch et al. 2008). Marketing gurus argue that emotional branding creates identity value, cultivates consumer-brand bonds, and sells more products (Gobé 2001), but in a real-world multi-actor context, emotional branding also invites greater public scrutiny and brand image mockery from activists, consumers, and the media (Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006). Thus, when channeling activist-generated sentiments, marketers must walk a fine line between cultivating emotional bonds on the one hand and avoiding mockery on the other. Marketers seem to accomplish this balancing act in two ways.

First, marketers are selective about which sentiments they promote. As table 3 shows, marketers tend to cultivate sentiments in the “concern for victims” category to encourage consumers to purchase ethical products. However, marketers rarely belabor the plight of victims, lest their consumers feel uncomfortably guilty about the privileges of first-world society. For example, brand images for Green & Black’s, Starbucks, and Ten Thousand Villages will depict the bright side of ethically sourced goods with smiling farmers, but not the dark side of non-fair-trade goods with suffering faces as activists might. Branded short films (e.g., Chipotle’s *Back to the Start*) are relentlessly optimistic—ethical consumerism saves people and the planet. There’s no place for dire suffering or extended despair in brand expressions of ethical consumerism. Marketers also tend to cultivate sentiments in the “celebration of heroes” category to support ethical consumer identity projects. Brands give consumers frequent and positive kudos for making responsible choices, but brands cannot explicitly celebrate themselves as heroes of ethical consumerism because doing so would invite mockery. However, brands can accomplish the same objective by celebrating their suppliers and buyers instead. These rhetorical maneuvers tacitly validate the brands as well.

We love our producers, suppliers, and vendors, and we think most of them have some pretty interesting stories behind their products too. (Whole Foods Market 2013)

With our customers and Giving Partners, we’re transforming everyday purchases into a force for good around the world. (TOMS 2013)

By complimenting their suppliers and buyers, Whole Foods and TOMS tacitly pat themselves on the back without seeming self-righteous. Finally, marketers tend not to cultivate sentiments in the “contempt for villains” category. Inciting anger and disgust at consumerism is likely to backfire on brands.

Second, marketers tone down the intensity of activist-

generated sentiments. For example, in the following excerpts, Whole Foods relays concern for animals in the soothing vocabulary of corporate responsibility, while PETA employs guilt-tripping rhetoric that firmly tugs at one’s heart strings.

We believe the humane treatment of animals should be guided by an attitude of care, responsibility, and respect. We seek out partnerships with like-minded farmers and ranchers concerned with animal welfare. (Whole Foods Market 2013)

Animals surely deserve to live their lives free from suffering. . . . All animals have the ability to suffer in the same way and to the same degree that humans do. They feel pain, pleasure, fear, frustration, loneliness, and motherly love. . . . Only prejudice allows us to deny others the rights that we expect to have for ourselves. (PETA 2013c)

While marketers may tone down activist-generated sentiments, marketers are able to broadcast those sentiments to a far greater audience than activists ever can. For example, even though Starbucks and Whole Foods are commonly criticized for green-washing their services (e.g., Johnston 2008), these ubiquitous brands disseminate the sentiments of ethical consumerism to vast numbers of mainstream consumers that Fair Trade USA and Greenpeace could not. One might say that brands weaken the provocative sentiments of social movements but widen their reach. This finding parallels the cultural branding thesis that brands are “parasites” and “proselytizers” of potent cultural trends (Holt 2006).

Consumer Expressions of Sentiments in Ethical Consumerism

Informants internalize the sentiments of ethical consumerism from a wide range of activist and brand communications, which are frequently repeated in news media. Informants, in turn, reproduce sentiments in interpersonal interactions, communal events, and social media. In everyday conversation, consumers express sentiments in a variety of verbal and nonverbal ways. Consider the following excerpt from a conversation with Jill:

There are hard calls to make around environmental and fair-trade stuff. For example, I am very fond of chocolates. Several years ago, a friend was telling me in detail about a film she’d seen. It was about how young people in central African countries are lured away with the promise of jobs, and taken a long way away, so they can’t walk home, and are forced to work on cocoa plantations in slave-like conditions. I was like “Fuck!” I was irritated. Since then, I make a point to buy fair-trade chocolate. . . . I feel angry because consumer choices are impacting everybody in the world. Those poor people on the Micronesian islands that are simply going to disappear. . . . The choices made by big industrial nations. . . . Sometimes I wish the U.S. was facing what Micronesia is facing. That might help the U.S. make more responsible choices. [Micronesian] leaders have been begging the U.N.

to do stuff, but it is not as important as . . . Anyway, don't get me going!

Like other informants, Jill conveys her feelings through an extemporaneous combination of direct reports (e.g., "I feel angry"), emotion justifications (e.g., "[workers] are forced to work in slave-like conditions"), facial expressions (e.g., furrowed brows), tonal changes (e.g., sarcasm), gestures (e.g., rejecting motions), and even self-effacing humor about her own emotionality (e.g., "Don't get me going!").

Consumers participate in the production of marketplace sentiments for the same reasons they participate in marketplace discourses and practices—to advance their own identity projects (Arnould and Thompson 2005). Consumers use sentiments, like other identity markers, to align themselves with certain groups and distance themselves from others. In the following excerpt, Tina expresses guilt about making irresponsible consumer choices as an identity marker to establish her ethical consumer identity and distinguish herself from mainstream consumers who are more apathetic.

I feel that anything that does come into my life, it's my responsibility to use it wisely and dispose of it properly. My life would be much more organized if I didn't worry so much about how I handled and got rid of things. I am very conscious of how I dispose of something. If something is still useful and I no longer need it, I want it to go to somebody else who can use it. A lot of people would just throw it in the trash. It's a hassle to find someone who needs an old and used item that isn't valuable, but still has life in it. And a lot of people can't be bothered, they just get rid of it. I can't do that. I just can't do that. I really have a hard time with that. Because I think, "Well that just ends up in an incinerator or it ends up being buried somewhere and it doesn't go away." Other people think, "If I throw it away, it goes away." To me, it hasn't gone away. It's still in my conscience that I had to throw that thing away. . . . Yeah, that's definitely a downfall of mine, that I feel so responsible for things once they're in my possession. Because of that, I found avenues for finding homes for things. . . . I use Freecycle, but you can also do it through Craigslist or friends.

People embody sentiments not only to distinguish themselves from others but also to connect and commiserate with others around shared goals (Muniz and Schau 2005) and political struggles (Gould 2009). Feeling emotions together is a fundamental aspect of interpersonal relationships (Epp and Price 2008) and communal experiences (Goulding et al. 2009). Informants coproduce feelings with other members of their household during rather mundane activities such as eating or shopping together.

Jill: [My housemates] and I would get jointly angry and upset. We would say, "Do we want to be getting this upset? Perhaps we should stop reading the news if it is making us this upset." I can't even wrap my head around how people can look at what's happening to the weather and say that climate change doesn't exist. It's because they don't want industrial caps that will affect their profits. And by not doing

that, they are—and I don't think I am exaggerating—jeopardizing life on the planet. That makes me feel very angry.

Jake: Me and [my wife], we talk about [ethical consumerism] a lot. When we go shopping it comes up all the time. . . . Just because we [are] strapped for cash, I don't want to let go of my morals. I try to tell people to do that . . . support fair trade coffee and non-sweatshop shoes, it's important for the people who are making it, and it also comes back to you because we live in a global world. . . . If you are letting people destroy the environment, it's going to come back to you in the place where you live.

As these excerpts suggest, households can be echo chambers of meanings and feelings when household members subscribe to the same ideology (see also Thompson 2005). Sentiments are often gradually introduced by one member of a household, debated or echoed by other members, and eventually taken for granted in everyday conversation.

Activist groups and brand managers seem to have systematic patterns of encouraging certain sentiments over others, but consumers are harder to generalize. As table 4 shows, all categories of sentiments are clearly evidenced in consumer data, but expressions vary across informants depending on their level of acculturation in ethical consumerism. Less acculturated consumers tend to express the emotional profile that marketers design for consumers (low contempt for villains, moderate concern for victims, and moderate celebration of heroes), while more acculturated consumers tend to express the emotional profile of activists (high contempt for villains, high concern for victims, and low celebration of heroes). For example, Suri is deeply acculturated in ethical consumerism and thus overcome with guilt when she considers non-fair-trade coffee. By contrast, Seth is less acculturated in ethical consumerism and only beginning to experience some guilt about mainstream consumer choices.

Suri: I could have spent \$1.99 for a can of Maxwell House, or Folgers, or whatever . . . or \$8.99 for a much smaller amount of fair-trade coffee. I stood in the grocery store for probably 10 minutes debating in my head whether or not I could do it, and I couldn't! I ended up buying the [ethically sourced] coffee because I had these horrible images in my head of pesticides being sprayed on the children working in the coffee fields. I couldn't do that.

Seth: I think there are certain people that would try to alleviate their guilt by buying fair-trade. I don't think it impacts me. Well, maybe slightly. I read this article that influenced me to ask, "Do you have a fair-trade coffee that would be comparable to this?" The article probably had to do with kids being used in some South American country. . . . I think it's tragic that there are child laborers being used to pick coffee beans that somehow end up in these ritzy coffee places in North America where we sit and drink \$4 lattes. So in terms of my purchasing habits, I think guilt plays a little factor.

The sentiments of ethical consumerism, such as guilt

about regressions to mainstream consumption, are powerful drivers of everyday behavior. Before and after transgressions, the motivational force of guilt compels Seth to consider fair-trade coffee, Suri to purchase fair-trade coffee, Carl to recycle plastic containers, and Caty to return “cute little red shoes” that might be made in “harsh working conditions” (see table 4).

A PRELIMINARY THEORY OF MARKETPLACE SENTIMENTS

Drawing on prior research on consumer emotion and the current research on ethical consumerism, this section develops a number of axioms to answer the research questions: What exactly are marketplace sentiments? By whom, why, and how are sentiments produced in a marketplace?

The Nature of Sentiments

Marketplace sentiments are collectively shared emotional dispositions toward marketplace elements. Each marketplace sentiment has at least three components: (1) an emotion, (2) a marketplace element at which the emotion is targeted, and (3) a group of actors that shares the emotional disposition toward the marketplace element. In linking emotions to marketplace elements, sentiments can harness the power of emotions to practical use. For example, anger and disgust can fuel actions against villains, while care, anxiety, and guilt can motivate the safekeeping of victims, and joy and hope can sustain commitments to social ideals. For sentiments to pervade a social context, numerous actors must produce and reproduce them. In the context of ethical consumerism, sentiments are produced and reproduced by activists, brands, and consumers. Each marketplace actor has a distinct set of motives and methods for participating in the production of sentiments (for a summary, see table 5).

The Role of Activists

Activists generate sentiments to recruit consumers and discipline corporations, governments, and other institutions (Sandlin and Callahan 2009). However, activists have limited access to mainstream media and limited funding to promote their messages. To accomplish their goals, activists plant, amplify, and hyper-perform sentiments. Activist expressions of marketplace sentiments tend to rank high on contempt for villains and concern for victims but relatively low on celebration of heroes (see table 2).

The Role of Brands

Brands employ sentiments in emotional branding campaigns to entertain consumers and promote products (Gobé 2001). However, brands risk backlash and mockery if their messages miss the right notes (Thompson et al. 2006). To balance the risks and rewards of emotional branding, brands carefully select, calibrate, and broadcast sentiments. Brand expressions of marketplace sentiments tend to rank low on

contempt for villains but moderately high on concern for victims and celebration of heroes (see table 3).

The Role of Consumers

Consumers perform sentiments, like discourses and practices, to commune and individuate in society. However, consumers are afraid of appearing too emotional, foolish, or inauthentic, so they tend to express their sentiments cautiously, especially when talking to strangers. Consumers tend to learn, experience, and communicate sentiments in interpersonal interactions with community members (Celsi et al. 1993), online interactions with activists and brands (Sandlin and Callahan 2009), and everyday conversations with friends and family (Epp and Price 2008). Consumer expressions of marketplace sentiments tend to vary depending on the extent to which the consumer is acculturated in the community (Celsi et al. 1993). As consumers acculturate in a community, sentiment expressions become more reflexive and immune to change (Thompson 2005). Once internalized, sentiments tend to quicken consumer interpretations, bolster consumer convictions, and direct consumer energies in similar ways across diverse product categories (see table 4).

DISCUSSION

The emergent theory of marketplace sentiments (1) advances a sociocultural perspective on consumer emotion, (2) elevates the theoretical significance of emotional observations in cultural studies, (3) offers a sentiment-based understanding of the power of ideology, (4) indicates how activist sentiments can paradoxically benefit from brand co-optation, and (5) calls for human input in big data sentiment analysis. This section discusses these implications for consumer research and concludes with opportunities for future research.

A Sociocultural Perspective on Consumer Emotion

The emergent sociocultural perspective on consumer emotion offsets disciplinary limitations of the established psychological perspective in consumer research. While a psychological perspective focuses on the role of affect in decision making (Cohen et al. 2008; Johar et al. 2006; Loken 2006), a sociocultural perspective focuses on the role of sentiment in market dynamics (Giesler 2012; Humphreys 2010; Zhao and Belk 2008). More specifically, a psychological perspective illuminates how affect and cognition interactively produce behavioral intentions inside consumer minds. At a higher level of analysis, a sociocultural perspective illuminates how political, economic, and social forces interactively produce collectively shared emotional dispositions in marketplace cultures.

To be clear, the emergent sociocultural perspective and the established psychological perspective are complementary not competing perspectives on consumer emotion. By and large,

psychological and sociocultural perspectives highlight non-overlapping dimensions of consumer emotion. Consider, for example, a contemporary American consumer's disgust at secondhand cigarette smoke. Psychological interpretations might frame such disgust in behaviorist terms, as conditioned responses to filthy stimuli (i.e., secondhand smoke), or in cognitivist terms, as affective manifestations of antismoking attitudes (e.g., "smoke is disgusting"). In turn, sociocultural interpretations might frame consumer disgust at cigarette smoke in emergent terms, as consumer expressions of marketplace sentiments. The sentiment of disgust at cigarette smoke has been deliberately cultivated in America across the latter half of the twentieth century by antismoking activists, mandatory cigarette-box warnings, and smoking-cessation services (Brandt 2007). Consumer expressions of disgust at cigarette smoke are markers of membership in the new antismoking and smoker-shaming culture.

Sentiments differ from psychological concepts of emotion in noteworthy ways. While *affective states* are typically individual, momentary, and reactive emotional episodes in consumer minds, *sentiments* are collective, enduring, and proactive emotional dispositions in the collective consciousness (i.e., news media, marketing communications, social media, etc.). In psychological research, enduring ways of thinking and feeling about something are called *attitudes*. Accordingly, future cross-disciplinary research could construe *sentiments* as socially constructed attitudes in popular culture or *attitudes* as cognitively stored sentiments in individual minds (see also app. B).

A New Tool for Cultural Studies

Although CCT frequently lays claim to the experiential aspects of consumption (Arnould and Thompson 2005), thick interpretations of emotional dispositions are rare. Cultural studies tend to conflate discrete sentiments, reframe them into something else (e.g., commitment, engagement, or involvement), or just overlook sentiments altogether. By contrast, the current study showcases the theoretical benefits of carefully distinguishing among sentiments in a marketplace culture. Just as discourses and practices are designed to advance institutional agendas (Thompson 2004), so too are sentiments. Far from epiphenomenal aspects of culture, sentiments are strategic tools for activism, branding, and consumer identity work. Moreover, different sentiments have different functions. One sentiment can fuel competition among opponents, another can motivate the caretaking of victims in the cross-fire, and yet another can sustain heroic deeds in the face of adversity.

If the cultural mix is to be expanded from "discourses and practices" (e.g., Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Kozinets 2002; Thompson 2005, 238) to discourses, sentiments, and practices, the relationships among these core components of culture must also be recognized. (1) Discourses assign meanings and motives to sentiments and practices (Vaisey 2009). (2) Sentiments, once internalized by human actors, predispose feelings that urge, amplify, and sustain consumer engagement in discourses and practices (for examples, see

table 1). (3) Practices physically actualize the otherwise virtual goals of discourses and sentiments (Sewell 1992). In essence, discourses *legitimize* sentiments and practices, sentiments *energize* discourses and practices, and practices *materialize* discourses and sentiments (see fig. 2). Each of these three components—discourses, sentiments, and practices—is indispensable to theoretical models of marketplace cultures.

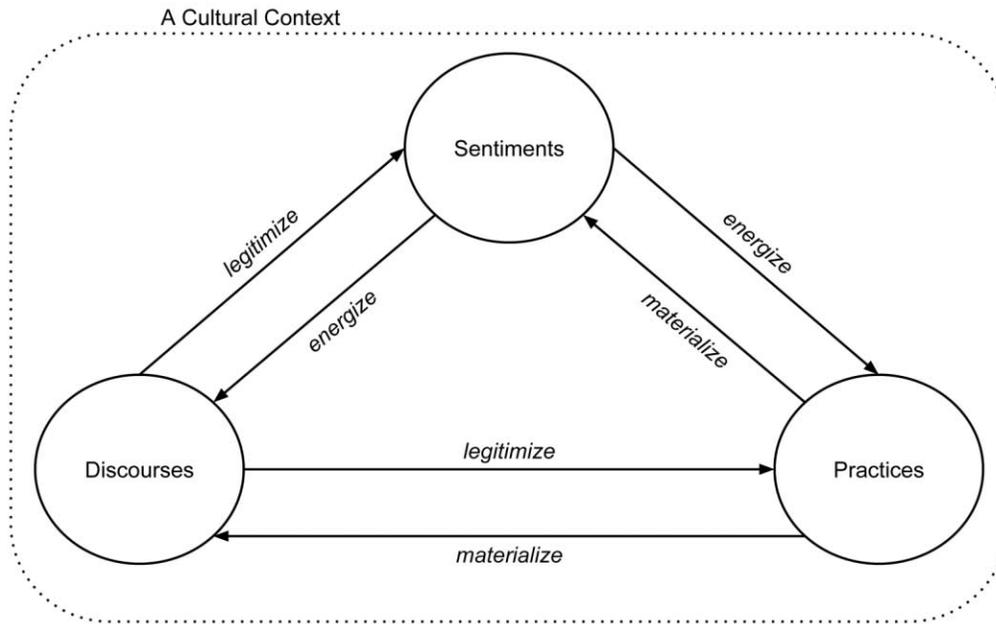
To understand how sentiments can strengthen cultural studies, consider Izberk-Bilgin's (2012) ground-breaking study of discourses and practices in Islamist consumer culture. Her otherwise exemplary ethnography rarely considers the role of emotions. Here is an exceptional sentence: "There is *anger* and *sorrow* in [an Islamist informant's] tone as she reluctantly acknowledges [the use of global brands in Muslim communities]" (emphasis added; 669). Like other empathetic ethnographers, Izberk-Bilgin notes her informant's emotions to emphasize the significance of the conversation topic. Unfortunately, these emotions are never mentioned again. The ultimate theoretical model of "the Islamist construction of infidel brands" (678) primarily focuses on an interaction of meanings (i.e., meanings from the religion of Islam, the myth of the Golden Age, and the ideology of Islamism).

In light of the emergent theory of marketplace sentiments, new research on Islamist consumerism could give emotional observations more theoretical significance. For example, one can infer from Izberk-Bilgin's (2012) analysis that Islamists and their followers frame global brands as "tyrants," "rapists," "killers," and "the real infidels" (673–76) to generate anger and disgust at global brands. Such powerful negative emotions energize people to reject and ridicule their targets (Rozin et al. 1999). Accordingly, one could surmise that these sentiments are key motivational forces underlying the "consumer jihad" against global brands (Izberk-Bilgin's 2012, 676). The purpose of this example is not to reproach prior research for overlooking sentiments but to encourage future research to (1) make richer emotional observations, (2) identify recurring emotional dispositions (i.e., sentiments), and (3) retain sentiments in theoretical models of consumer phenomena. Of course, sentiments are just one of several possible concepts for interpreting emotional patterns. The sociology of emotions (Turner and Stets 2006) offers researchers a vast toolkit of theoretical concepts that are ripe for adoption in CCT (e.g., feeling rules, emotion work, collective effervescence).

A Sentiment-Based Understanding of the Power of Ideology

Cultural theorists assert that marketplace ideologies such as ethical consumerism are powerful forces shaping consumer behavior (e.g., Crockett and Wallendorf 2004). They often describe ideologies as compelling consumers to action (e.g., Dong and Tian 2009; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Varman and Belk 2009). While explicit theorizations of the power of ideology are rare, a close reading of cultural research reveals several assumptions. Ideologies are powerful because they

FIGURE 2
RELATIONSHIPS AMONG DISCOURSES, SENTIMENTS, AND PRACTICES



- carry identity value (e.g., Luedicke et al. 2010);
- echo religious motifs (e.g., Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose 2005);
- promise utopian futures (e.g., Kozinets 2008);
- resolve tensions between conflicting values (e.g., Thompson 2004); or
- simplify complex social issues (e.g., Thompson and Coskuner-Balli 2007a).

While all of these explanations are valuable, they are exclusively based on the potency of meanings embedded in discourses, neglecting the role of sentiments. Even elaborate theories of ideology (e.g., Balkin 1998; Eagleton 1991; Van Dijk 1998) seem to exclusively focus on meanings in discourses.

To adequately explain the visceral power of ideologies, researchers must also consider the role of sentiments (Dember 1991). This study shows that ideologies cultivate not only potent meanings (e.g., clean/dirty, good/bad, possible/impossible) but also powerful sentiments (e.g., disgust/desire, joy/sadness, hope/despair). While meanings can influence which goals consumers pursue (Fischer, Otnes, and Tuncay 2007), sentiments can energize consumers to do the mundane work required to achieve those goals. For example, in the context of ethical consumerism, anger and disgust can impel boycott participation, while care, anxiety, and guilt can motivate charitable giving, and joy and hope can sustain recycling efforts. Without sentiments, consumers

might not have the motivational energy they need to perform countercultural practices.

A RealPolitik Perspective on Marketplace Activism

Prior research on marketplace activism emphasizes the difficulty—futility, even—of promoting countercultural sentiments (Bonsu et al. 2010; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Sandlin and Callahan 2009). On the one hand, the media industrial complex uses emotionally charged dramas, fantasies, and “reality” programs to disassociate first-world citizens from acute human suffering elsewhere (Bonsu et al. 2010). On the other hand, activists are so evangelical, hypercritical, and self-righteous that they alienate the very mainstream consumers they need to recruit into marketplace movements (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Activists may also be inadvertent victims of their own culture jamming efforts: “Positive emotional energy being created internally for the activists . . . can at the same time create negative emotional energy for the audience members” (Sandlin and Callahan 2009, 109). Collectively, these studies suggest that activists are generally unable to transform mainstream consumer sentiments in mature consumer societies.

This study demonstrates that activists can succeed at promoting countercultural sentiments when activist and brand interests align in a marketplace. In this research project, activist-brand alignments arise from mutual self-interest, not

contractual partnerships. Activist-generated sentiments give brand campaigns countercultural character and consumer identity value (see also Heath and Potter 2006). In return, brand campaigns broadcast and popularize activist-generated sentiments (see also Holt 2006). Although hard-core ethical consumers might deny being educated by brands, these consumers are regularly reminded about consumer ethics by ubiquitous brand communications in their local environments and shopping aisles.

Marketing critics argue that cause-related emotional branding is disingenuous because brands dilute the messages of activism (Johnston and Taylor 2008) and rarely act in accordance with their professed values (Einstein 2012). However, that criticism overlooks the benefits of emotional branding to activists. Regardless of their disingenuousness, brands can promote activist-generated sentiments to the masses at a scale that activists simply cannot afford. Accordingly, this research suggests that consumer activists ought to find informal or formal brand partners when they can. To write off all brands as bullies (Klein 2000) is a realpolitik mistake in consumer societies. Brands can be buddies, not only to consumers (Fournier 1998) but also to activists. While activists and brands are indeed strange bedfellows, activists may have more impact on society when they creatively utilize rather than resist the hegemonic power of corporations and their brands.

A Hybrid Approach to Sentiment Analysis

Consumer sentiments are important to businesses because current sentiments predict future behavior (Asur and Huberman 2010; Bollen, Mao, and Zeng 2011; O'Connor et al. 2010). Sentiment analysis has become especially important in the new age of big data because social media give marketers an unprecedented opportunity to regularly monitor consumer sentiments. Current sentiment analysis software interprets marketplace sentiments about target elements as simply positive, negative, or neutral (e.g., Kim and Hovy 2004). By contrast, the current analysis of ethical consumerism demonstrates that there are meaningful differences among different positive sentiments and different negative sentiments (see also Aaker and Williams 1998; Griskevicius, Shiota, and Nowlis 2010; Lerner and Keltner 2000). For example, among the positive sentiments in table 1, "care for all living things and future generations" motivates learning about the plight of victims, donating money to protect victims, and recycling household waste to reduce pollution, while the "joy of making responsible choices" motivates "boycotting" responsible companies, positive word-of-mouth, and repeating ethical consumer practices over time. In other words, each sentiment is managerially relevant because each sentiment is functionally unique.

Current sentiment analysis software is inadequate because (1) big data are increasingly multimodal, including very short texts, photos, and videos; (2) software misreads valence, generating false positives and false negatives; (3) software cannot easily distinguish among positive sentiments (e.g., joy vs. hope) or among negative sentiments (e.g., anger vs. disgust); (4) software does not recognize linguistic var-

iance (e.g., the use of slang: "This song is sick") or cultural references (e.g., references to celebrities: "That's so gaga"); and (5) software misses humor, irony, and sarcasm. Consider the following tweet: "If I break/lose my iPhone 4S, I'm seriously going to commit suicide." While human analysts easily interpret the consumer's sentiment toward his iPhone as positive, a computer analysis misinterprets the sentiment as negative (Mullich 2012).

There are at least two ways to overcome the limitations of current sentiment analysis software. One way is to keep improving software applications (e.g., Morency, Mihalcea, and Doshi 2011). Another way is to complement computerized analysis with human analysis. This article demonstrates that a human analyst can discern discrete sentiments from multimodal data and connect sentiments to discourses and practices to identify cultural levers of changing sentiments (see table 1). Like software, human analysts can also have difficulty interpreting the valence of a sentiment from a short text (e.g., Kim and Hovy 2004). However, unlike software, human analysts can easily absorb multimodal data, distinguish among similarly valenced but discrete sentiments, recognize linguistic variance and cultural references, and catch humor, irony, and sarcasm. Big data conglomerates (e.g., Facebook, Google, Twitter, Omnicom, WPP) may want to hire graduates from clinical psychology and cultural anthropology programs to complement computer scientists and statisticians. A hybrid market research team could transcend the tension between large-scale but thin computer analysis and small-scale but thick human analysis to produce reliable, holistic, and actionable reports of marketplace sentiments.

Limitations and Opportunities

This research examines a multi-actor production of sentiments in a single marketplace culture. The limitations of this research present opportunities for future research.

Beyond activists, brands, and consumers, who else participates in the production of marketplace sentiments—why and how? Like activists, brands, and consumers (see fig. 1), other actors (e.g., celebrities, industry associations, movies, news anchors, politicians, and even scholars) are also likely to have distinct sets of motives and methods for producing marketplace sentiments.

What is the relative calibration of contempt for villains, concern for victims, and celebration of heroes across different marketplace actors? Future research is needed to ascertain whether the relative calibration of marketplace sentiments across activists, brands, and consumers in the current context (see table 5) is generalizable to other marketplace cultures. Are activist expressions of marketplace sentiments always high on contempt for villains and concern for victims but low on celebration of heroes? Are brand expressions of marketplace sentiments always low on contempt for villains and moderately high on concern for victims and celebration of heroes?

What are the conflicting sentiments underlying the major social issues of our time? This study focuses on the largely

unanimous sentiments of activists, brands, and consumers in a single marketplace culture and overlooks counteracting sentiments. Accordingly, future research could explore conflicting sentiments, for example, those underlying pro-choice and pro-life activism, feminism and patriarchy, pro-LGBT and anti-LGBT movements, free-market and state-welfare capitalism, or pro-immigration and anti-immigration policies. While discourses change minds, sentiments change hearts, deepen commitments, and move bodies. Cultural studies may want to investigate discourses and sentiments to fully explain social change.

Under what conditions do consumer feelings and expressions of emotion diverge? Most research interviews are empathetic, nonjudgmental, and validating conversations that permit consumers to express their feelings. However, unlike research interviews, some marketplace situations require consumers to hide their true feelings. For example, savvy consumers downplay their excitement about purchasing new cars when they are negotiating with car salespeople. An interesting avenue for future research is exploring marketplace situations that give rise to systematic differences between feelings and expressions of emotion.

Finally, how are collective and individual levels of consumer emotion interrelated? One approach to bridging collective and individual levels of analysis is developing a bi-level framework of consumer culture wherein marketplace-level discourses, sentiments, and practices enable and constrain consumer-level thoughts, feelings, and actions. Such a framework can help consumer researchers discern structure-agency tensions with greater accuracy than exclusively discursive approaches allow.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The author conducted the primary and secondary data collection and analysis in Boston, Philadelphia, and Toronto from 2006 to 2012. Professional transcribers and research assistants transcribed the interview recordings. Research assistants helped organize the secondary data and prepare the data tables.

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

GLOSSARY

For the purposes of this interdisciplinary article, I employ the following definitions of emotion-related concepts.

Affect: A concept in psychology to denote the experience or feeling of emotion. Affect is generally conceptualized in terms of valence (positive vs. negative), motivational direction (approach vs. withdrawal), and arousal (high vs. low).

Attitude: A concept in psychology to denote a stable way of thinking and feeling about something.

Emotion: In emotion science, an emotion is a discrete, instinctive, and multiplex physiological process that activates specific pleasing or distressing feelings, specific bodily, facial, and vocal expressions, and specific approach or withdrawal action tendencies. However, different disciplines study different aspects of emotion at different levels of analysis. For example, the life sciences tend to study the evolutionary origins, biological structures, and survival functions of *basic emotions* (i.e., evolutionarily hard-wired emotions shared by all humans and mammals). The psychological sciences tend to study the cognitive antecedents and behavioral consequences of basic emotions as well as *nonbasic emotions* (i.e., socially conditioned composites of archetypal cognitions and basic emotions). The social sciences tend to study the socially constructed triggers, expressions, and functions of individual, relational, and collective emotional experiences.

Emotional disposition: A pattern of feeling and emoting about something (e.g., emotion *e* at target *t*).

Feeling and expression: Feelings are internal sensory aspects of emotion. Expressions are external signaling aspects of emotion. Individual human actors (e.g., consumers) feel and express sentiments. Nonsentient marketplace actors (e.g., brands) cannot feel sentiments, but they can express sentiments in marketing communications.

Marketplace sentiment: A collectively shared emotional disposition toward a marketplace element. The emergent concept of *marketplace sentiment* subsumes two similarly named industry concepts. *Consumer sentiment* refers to consumer confidence or willingness to spend and is usually described as "up" or "down." *Market sentiment* refers to

investor confidence or willingness to invest and is usually described as "bullish" or "bearish."

Sentiment: A collectively shared emotional disposition or a cultural pattern of feeling and emoting about something. A sentiment is to feeling and expression what a discourse is to thought and speech – a cultural pattern that molds the experience of individual actors.

Sentiment analysis: The automated interpretation of emotional dispositions in big data. Most current sentiment analysis software can only interpret the affective valence of textual data. Future sentiment analysis software will likely be able to interpret discrete emotions in multimodal data.

Structure of feeling: A concept in cultural studies to denote a predominant way of thinking and feeling in a social context.

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