UNDERSTANDING MARKETS AS PLACES

An Introduction to Servicescapes

As the reader might well imagine upon digesting the title of the volume, this project has its origins in my longtime fascination with marketplaces and consumption sites, an interest shared in great measure with the colleagues whose efforts are collected between these covers. I have spent a large portion of my professional life, both here and abroad, immersed in such settings, observing the interactions of buyers and sellers with each other, with their surroundings, and with the goods, services, and experiences that are the focus of these environments. I have shopped, stocked, and shared with consumers, and strategized, shaped, and sold with marketers. I have talked at length with members of each of these groups about their lived experiences and probed them with projective tasks when my questions proved inarticulate in the face of their desire to express the ineffable. From settings whose structure and function range from primarily formal and economic to those whose are chiefly informal and festive (Sherry 1990, 16–17), I have haunted commercial precincts before and after actual marketing transactions have occurred. I have found myself drawn inexorably through these studies to the exploration of place, as designed by marketers and experienced by consumers, in the web of consumption. This anthology represents a playing out of this growing fascination, and a cocelebration of place with kindred spirits.

Let me illustrate the nature, scope, and tenor of our inquiry with a few personal observations on the placeways of markets:

For decades, I have observed parents, particularly mothers, perform an animated monologue that I call "cart-talk" as they and their children (who are often preverbal) wend their way around the aisles of a supermarket during shopping trips. Mothers provide a running account of individual family members' brand preferences, speculate aloud about price-quality relationships, employ packages as projective devices to divert and amuse their cart-bound charges, instruct their mobile children in search and selection principles, and generally socialize their fellow travelers into consumer culture during the course of the shopping trip. Indeed, cart-talk occurs even in the absence of shopping partners, yet the sight of solitary shoppers speaking aloud as they stock their carts is unremarkable to other consumers, although speaking to oneself in another context might be seen to push eccentricity into the realm of psychopathology.

What is it about supermarkets that promotes such disinhibition and encourages peripatetic discourse? While our literatures have occasionally probed the nature of grocery stores (Krugman 1967; Glaser 1985; Willis 1991), we actually know more about the placeways of submarines than we do about supermarkets (Gallagher 1993). Such disparity is remarkable, given the everyday nature of such shopping and the importance our discipline assigns to "place" in our comprehension of marketing. It is also suggestive of the range of everyday phenomena (infrastructural and superstructural) that escapes our disciplinary scrutiny. "Shopportunities" (Jukes 1990, 103) should become a focus of our inquiries.

Walking down North Michigan Avenue—Chicago's "Magnificent Mile"—one blustery fall evening, I find my wandering attention gradually begin to focus. In the gathering darkness, I watch images form directly on the building on the west side of the boulevard. I recognize them instantly as Absolut vodka ads and am captivated by the rippling effect created by their movement across the facades. As the physical landscape is transmuted to a symbolic one and back again, I find myself drawn along by the changing images, in tow with fellow pedestrians whose formerly purposive, directional strides have given way to a more leisurely ambling, as if we are all caught in some gentle, commercial tractor beam. I trace the traveling slide show to a pro-

jection machine mounted on the back of a flatbed truck. The truck is moving in the slow lane of rush hour traffic, allowing the projectionist plenty of time to play the images across the exteriors of upscale stores and galleries, to the amusement of commuters and passersby in the process of becoming conversational partners.

I am fascinated by the way the marketer has transformed *promotion*—in this case, yet again, as Absolut advertising has run the gamut from commissioned art (lowbrow through highbrow) to mobile museum exhibit to coffee-table book (Lewis 1996)—to *place* and has radically altered our immediate experience of the environment. For a moment, the product (and not only the experience it promises) is larger than life, a dominant form on the landscape, and, along with my fellow travelers, I am dwarfed by its presence. Meaning is *emplaced,* albeit transiently, and the ephemeral is made tangible. Conversely the physical marketplace suddenly becomes an imagistic one, then, just as suddenly, resolidifies.

During my stay in Thailand, I grew accustomed to seeing the traditional greeting of respect (*wai*)—palms pressed together, fingers steepled, head bowed—extended not only to people, but to things as well. For example, it was not unusual to see an individual *wai* a musical instrument before picking it up, in deference to spirits inhabiting the crafted artifact. In Thailand, the landscape is alive with spirits, the more prominent of whom (*phii ruan* and *phra phum,* spirits of the household and of the land, respectively) have been induced to live in spirit houses. Spirit houses resemble small temples, and these dwellings are frequently laden with offertory gifts from supplicants seeking favors and sealing vows. Marketplaces in general, and retail stores in particular, feature spirit houses as part of their overall composition.

As I stood one afternoon outside the Brahmin shrine San Phra Prom, near the Grand Hyatt Erawan in downtown Bangkok, observing the devout hiring dancers and musicians to perform prayers, draping marigold garland gifts on the pedestal, and buying lottery tickets from street vendors surrounding the site, my gaze wandered across the highway to the enormous modern building that houses the Zen Central marketplace. Zen Central had its own shrine, which I felt compelled to explore. Crossing the street, I quickly became absorbed in contemplation of the shrine. Noticing my fascination, a Thai consumer told me that the shrine had come to occupy its present site just recently. When the marketplace had failed to prosper, geomancers—ritual

practitioners of the local variant of *feng shui*—had been consulted, and the shrine relocated to a more auspicious space.

Thais recognize a numinous dimension in the landscape, and merchants feel obligated to propitiate the spirits of their market-places in order to ensure success. Their centuries-old recognition of cosmological marketing principles seems just dawning in West-ern retailing practices. My growing belief that Thai Buddhists are among the world's most avid materialists, and that they feel no particular doctrinal discomfort from this acquisitiveness, encour-ages me to continue rethinking our notions of materiality.

Considered as a whole, these "observations from the field" anticipate the issues raised throughout this book. Marketplaces have many extraeconomic facets. The consumer's experience of place is varied and often conditioned by role incumbency: the shopper's perspective differs from that of the flaneur. The negotiation of place is contingent upon the complicity of stakeholders. Place exhibits perception-shaping, behavior-inducing properties. The shape-shifting characteristics of place can be subtle or profound. Physical space embodies symbolic properties. Meaning is continually emplaced in consumers' experience. Place is by nature culture-, gender-, and class-bound in its manifestations. Each of this volume's authors undertakes the exploration of one or more of these aspects of the ambient environment of marketplaces.

On Method and Perspective

While some of the volume's contributors use conventional market-ing research methods, the methodological thrust of the enterprise is guided by the suggestions of servicescape researchers who have called for a diversification of our tool kit. Klaus (1985, 28–29) advises inquirers to adopt techniques from social psychology and anthropology—notably structured interviews, participant observa-tion, ethnography, photography, and videography—to apprehend the service encounter more comprehensively. Zimmer and Golden (1988, 266) contend that despite the volume of research into retail store image, "prevailing approaches to measurement" don't attempt

to capture the "gestalt" of that image; furthermore, such measure-ment is frequently incomplete and narrowly focused. Citing mod-els by some contributors to this volume, Bitner (1992, 68–69) advocates the use of direct observation methods and the probing of symbolic meaning in future investigations of service environments. Lee and Vryza (1994) have stressed the need for phenomenological research into retailing and service environments. These cutting-edge admonitions are honored in the present volume.

The approaches our contributors have employed range from game theory to introspection. While quantitative measures are rep-resented, qualitative ones predominate. Investigations unfold through the use of observation, interview, projective tasking, archival analy-sis, and photography. Most of the chapters are grounded in ethnog-raphy, and most have a phenomenological cast. Some of the findings have emerged through long-term field immersion and are presented in extended case study format. Other accounts are more introspec-tive and take the reader on a richly elaborated interior journey. The tenor of the chapters is largely sociocultural and semiotic; contrib-utors are concerned to explore the local experiences of consumers as they articulate with larger cultural themes.

Chapters range from conceptual through empirical to critical, with hybrid forms serving to remind the reader of the exploratory nature of this volume. Some chapters are more overtly managerial than others, though each of the authors is alive to the applications of disciplinary discoveries. Public and private consumption sites are investigated. Frontstage and backstage activity is explored in a num-ber of marketplaces as well. Through a diversity of methods, per-spectives, and foci, the volume seeks to capture the totality of the encounter that consumers have with servicescapes, by examining in detail the lived experience of consumers in the built environments that constitute contemporary marketplaces.

Orientation of the Fields

The history of ideas from which this volume emerges can be briefly sketched. Our chapters contribute to a research stream that begins

at the confluence of environmental psychology and cultural geography. This stream is being fed by a host of contiguous disciplines incorporating phenomenology into their conventional purviews. These disciplines examine the transformation of "space" to "place" and, in particular, explore the ways in which landscape functions as a major cultural product in our era (Zukin 1991). Still, Tuan's (1974, 246) observation that we are "largely ignorant of the quality and range of experience in different types of physical setting under different conditions" remains accurate today. Places of consumption are especially fertile fields for inquiring into the individual's sense of place, as these sites "interweave and alter elements of meaning, nature, social relations and agency," as well as perspectives (Sack 1992, 134). Marketers and consumer researchers are well positioned to combine the insights of phenomenological ecology broadly construed (Seamon 1993) with those of consumer-object relations (which examine the production of consumption) to disciplinary and managerial ends.

Places, as we experience them in everyday life, are "sensed in a chiaroscuro of setting, landscape, ritual, routine, other people, personal experiences, care and concern for home, and in the context of other places" (Relph 1976, 29). To account for our experience, Relph has distinguished between the geography of places, which is characterized by variety and meaning, and the geography of the placeless, which is characterized by a "labyrinth of endless similarities" (p. 141). He asserts that the latter is currently in ascendancy, resulting in the destruction and replacement of distinctive places, often with structures Augé (1995) has described as "nonplaces," and that the trend can be reversed through design practice attuned to the "lived-world" of significant places. Increasingly, marketers seek to transform the nonplaces that conventional marketplaces have threatened to become—the malling and chaining of America having contributed to a homogenized execution and lethargic reception of an all-too-familiar outlet—into the kind of differentiated places that Relph (1976, 43) believes "involve a concentration of our intentions, our attitudes, purposes and experiences." The strategies and sensory rhetorics driving such transformation are explored in this volume.

Our contributors draw heavily upon semiotics and phenomenology to help the reader reengage the market*place*. Semiotics is essentially concerned with the creation, investment, divestment, and transformation of meanings (Mick 1986; McCracken 1988; Sherry 1991). Phenomenology has been called "the scientific study of experience," insofar as it seeks to "describe consciousness in its lived immediacy" before that experience (in all its manifold modalities) is "subject to theoretical elaboration or conceptual theorizing" (Jackson 1996, 2). Phenomenology "suspends inquiry into the hidden determinants of belief in order to describe the implications, intentions and effects of what people say, do, and hold to be true" (p. 11). In tacking between semiotic and phenomenological viewpoints to capture the lifeworlds of the marketplaces they have studied, our contributors return us to the roots of marketing (Tucker 1967; Belk 1991). Sherry (1995, 439) describes the recent emergence of a "marketing and consumption–based research tradition" that he calls the "phenomenology of emplacement" as follows:

> On one level, this tradition is concerned with behavior on the ground and specifically addresses issues arising directly from institutions both formal and informal. On another more abstract level, this tradition is concerned with the kaleidoscopic individual "worlds" inhabited by stakeholders in the marketing transaction. The former aspect deals with the impact of the built environment on marketplace behavior; the latter deals with the individual elaboration of the environment as a projectable field for personal fantasy. Each aspect contributes to the experiential state we identify as "being-in-the-marketplace."

In this volume, as we focus on the psychocultural determinants of this experience, we are guided by Camus's (1955, 88) observation that "sense of place is not just something that people know and feel, it is something people do."

Given the centrality of ethnography and introspection to the depiction of marketplace lifeworlds in this volume, it is essential to recognize that anthropological interest in place (Hirsch and O'Hanlon 1995; Rodman 1992) is undergoing a shift in emphasis toward understanding native perceptions and experiences of

locality (Feld and Basso 1996). While ethnographers are increasingly attentive to "the gritty and obscure drama of everyday life" (Wilshire 1990, 190), those places where consumer–object relations and geomantic principles (Stokols 1991; Anderson 1991) interact have gone surprisingly unexplored. Thus, our contributors focus on the site of the consumer's encounter with market forces—the servicescape itself—to launch a voyage of discovery.

These disciplinary influences have already provided ripples in the literatures of marketing and consumer research; predictably, these ripples have widened over time. Martineau's (1958) notion of a retail outlet possessing a distinctive "personality" matured into Kotler's (1974) more comprehensive conception of ambient influence described as "atmospherics," which in turn evolved into a more holistic and interfunctional design-centered model of engagement called "pathetecture," which Sherry and McGrath (1989) have brokered into the literature. The ascendancy of "integrated marketing communication" (Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn 1994) as a unifying paradigm is itself a reflection of our gradual acknowledgment of the absolutely pervasive nature of the influence exerted upon consumers by the built environment of marketing. So also is our recent attention to servicescape dimensions and dynamics emblematic of this acknowledgment.

Bitner (1992, 57) coined the term *servicescape* in recognition of marketers' lack of "empirical research or theoretically based frameworks addressing the role of physical surroundings in consumption settings"; despite managers' willingness to manipulate store design, the impact of that manipulation upon consumers is rarely understood. In devising a typology of servicescapes that attempted to clarify relationships between users and environments, Bitner (p. 68) emphasizes the latitude still available to researchers for theory building, empirical testing, measure-and-method development, and application studies. While recognizing that all products have both tangible and intangible qualities, Bitner focuses on the relationship of physical complexity to action performance, and identifies three categories of tangible service evidence—people, process, and physical cues—that consumers experience in marketplaces (Bitner 1992, 1993). Accepting Bitner's challenge to extend

our horizons, our contributors refine, extend, and refute some of these observations.

Prior to the late 1980s, despite awareness that consumers were present and involved in the production of services, models of servicescape dynamics made no provision for atmospherics (Czepiel et al. 1985). While researchers were advised to begin their inquiries "at the level of the most elementary behaviors and experiences" exhibited by participants in a service encounter, this so-called bottom-up approach has only recently been put into practice (Klaus 1985, 28). Designers have been criticized for being "unconcerned" for and "largely ignorant" of the wayfinding needs and habits of consumers (Werner 1985). Some researchers have even advocated deleting the term *design* from our marketing vocabulary, in favor of the more holistic term *situation creation*, which would focus our attention on all key design features and details that contribute to consumers' experience of marketplaces (Upah and Fulton 1985, 256). These issues of fundamental units of experience, cocreation of experience, and the delivery of projectable fields are explored in depth in this volume.

As we continue to examine marketplaces as "sites of social centrality" (Shields 1992, 103), observe the blurring of the rational and the ludic as shoppers and "postshoppers" confound and extend designers' intentions (Shields 1989), and realize that multiple experiences of a single marketplace are not only common (Williamson 1992) but inevitable (Bass 1996, 55), the need for individual accounts of *being-in-the-marketplace* of the kind we present in extended case study fashion in this volume will grow more pressing, both for disciplinary and managerial reasons. Design has been consciously marketed as a commodity in the United States since the 1920s (Reekie 1992) and may be reaching its apogee in the festival markets, themed environments, and cyberscapes our contributors describe in these pages. The importance of listening to the voice of the designer (Nixon 1992) rivals that of hearing the voice of the customer, once we accept that design is itself spectacle, in an era where more and more often stores *are* the brand and shoppers are flaneurs bent upon the acquisition of experience as much as goods.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

Our treatment of the role of place in the consumer's encounter with the market is organized according to four principal issues. The first part of the book deals with the built environment and explores some of the elements that atmospherics comprise. The second part of the book examines servicescapes familiar to the reader and investigates that experiential condition that we have called *being-in-the-market-place*. The third part of the book probes some less familiar alternative placeways projected to become increasingly meaningful to consumers in the near future. Finally, the fourth part of the book identifies some critical concepts and issues that render the context of servicescapes more accessible to scholars and practitioners. In the following pages, I briefly describe these sections and anticipate the significance of some of the contributors' findings for the reader.

The Built Environment: Elements of Atmospherics

The contributors to Part I set the stage for the balance of the book by specifying some of the most significant parameters of the servicescape and by examining in detail some of the cognitive, material, cultural, and experiential dynamics that animate the built environment of the marketplace. Mark Gottdiener provides an initial overview of the volume's substance and tenor in his account of the semiotics of themed places. His chapter explores the rapidly escalating incidence of themed environments in the creation of consumer spaces. Using a sociosemiotic approach, he summarizes briefly the historical shift to reliance on themes in consumer spaces, examines major examples such as theme park malls, reviews recent extensions of the themed consumer space in the construction or renovation of restaurants, and charts the spectacular growth of themed gambling casinos. The sociosemiotic approach links recent changes in the political economy of late capitalism with the emergence of a symbol-dominated, media-culture environment as a way of explaining the rise of themed consumer spaces.

Employing a set of perspectives familiar to consumer researchers, Julie Baker assesses the informational value of store environments. While a number of studies have examined the affective influence of the store environment on consumer decision making, there is little consumer research that investigates the store environment from a cognitive perspective. Because store environments, like pricing and advertising, can provide critical information to consumers in the process of goods or services evaluation, it is important that a theoretical base be developed from which researchers can begin to study this important marketing variable. Her chapter examines several theories—information processing, categorization, inference making, semiotics, and information integration—to provide a basis for the development of research questions designed to stimulate thinking about the cognitive role of the store environment in consumer decision making. She also discusses the moderating influences of several situational and individual characteristics, before considering future research issues and managerial implications.

Mike Solomon focuses our attention on a particular aspect of servicescape negotiation, that of the "costume." Noting that servicescape design encompasses an array of sensory elements, ranging from signage to scents, he avers that the physical setting where the service is rendered is an important, yet largely ignored, dimension of the service encounter. From a dramaturgical perspective, the deployment of socially meaningful props, sets, and costumes instantiates the servicescape and creates a nexus of meaning for both customers and service providers. While some researchers have begun to examine the effects of architecture, signage, and other tangible environment cues, very little attention has been paid to the role of costume in the service experience. His chapter deals specifically with the functions of apparel and other aspects of employee appearance in the engineering of the servicescape.

In the concluding chapter of the section, John Sherry weaves a number of the preceding contributors' concerns together in his investigation of a particular site: the servicescape that is Nike Town Chicago. Tracing his own encounter with the built environment, he focuses on the design elements that contribute to consumers'

experience of being-in-the-marketplace. His account describes in detail the dynamics by which the Nike brandscape becomes emplaced for consumers and the particular placeways exhibited at a localized servicescape. In his meditation on design, he interprets both the cultural significance of the commoditization of sport and the ritual nature of retail theater.

Familiar Servicescapes:
Being-in-the-Marketplace

Part II presents a series of extended case studies. Our contributors range across time, culture, sector, and industry to provide meticulous, thick descriptions of servicescape placeways. These chapters capture something of the breadth of servicescape dynamics and illustrate both the generalizable and ineluctably local dimensions of marketplaces frequented by our readers. In their chapter on "Gorilla Marketing," Melanie Wallendorf, Joan Lindsey-Mullikin, and Ron Pimentel demonstrate how, rather than simply warehousing inventory for sale, retail stores are designed to provide particular kinds of consumer experiences to those who come into the store. As the regional context in which a store is embedded changes, so must the store environment change to respond to these population changes. The authors illustrate how relocation is a time when such adjustment in store environment may be made. The authors dwell on how physical features of a retail space serve as the basis for consumer animation, how changes in location and store design challenge retailers with a broadened market that may contest the previous bases of consumer animation and therefore store image; and how temporal shifts in store design and its accompanying forms of consumer animation are embedded in and constitutive both of patterns of regional development and global development of hypermarkets.

In her chapter on Japanese servicescapes, Millie Creighton takes an in-depth look at one major retailing store in Tokyo, Seibu SEED (designed by Japan's trendy and often avant-garde department store chain Seibu Saison Group) to analyze what has been designated *seibu-realism*. The store's architecture, design, layout, and art all

attempt to engage customers not just in shopping, but in an experience of personal development. Shoppers enter as "seedlings" at the first level, proceed through store levels as levels of consciousness, and emerge at the summit of their journeys as "sophisticated shoppers" and "creative human beings." The store is situated within the current cultural and historic conditions of contemporary Japan. Having emerged from its post–World War II destruction and poverty to realize the "economic miracle," with affluence, westernization, modernization, and the full flowering of the "consumer society," Japan and the Japanese are discovering disillusionment with these successes, nostalgia for the lost past and forgotten community, and a need to reestablish meaning in human life outside of consumerism or purely economic relations. Stores like SEED address these concerns by offering shoppers philosophic statements of ultimate meaning. Creighton's chapter reveals the extent to which Japan is now enmeshed in its self-identity as a consumer society, and explores the paradoxes involved in the ultimate consummation of this consumer orientation, as stores like SEED philosophically proclaim that consumerism provides the modern path *(michi)* that will allow Japanese to transcend material goods and regain touch with their essential humanity.

The bridal salon is the subject of Cele Otnes's inquiry, and her chapter explores the various roles that women expect the bridal salon to fulfill as they engage in wedding planning. Interviews and shopping trips undertaken by Otnes with brides engaged in selecting their wedding dresses reveal six such roles: the salon as clearinghouse, "one-stop" shop, school, storehouse, dressing chamber, and singularizer. Although salespeople are vital to the successful (or unsuccessful) expressions of these roles, physical aspects of the store such as lighting, dressing room size, music, and decor also are important in their successful articulation.

Annamma Joy pursues her inquiry into servicescapes by examining the role Canadian art galleries play in the circulation of art. The focus of her chapter—its title, "Framing Art," a play on the idea of the frame—is, at a broad level, on the space between the work of art and the viewer and, more specifically, on the role of commercial and parallel galleries as channels of art distribution.

While commercial art galleries promote and sell the artist and his or her works, parallel galleries are more concerned with exhibiting artworks, particularly those of a more experimental nature. The mandate of most parallel galleries is to diffuse and expose the artist. In this respect, parallel galleries are similar to museums. However, they cannot hope to parallel the seal of approval and value that museums bestow on the artists and their work. Nonetheless, parallel galleries perform an important service by providing space for unknown or up-and-coming artists to show their work. "Seeing" or "being seen" is the first step toward the recognition of the artist in the art world. But this is not enough—the objet d'art needs to be seen and exchanged several times before the artist's career is decisively launched. Every time the artist's work is sold, its importance is reinforced and its value rises. Each resale also contributes credibility to the artist's career and artistic complexity to the object via the currency that art critics and dealers offer for a given piece. Oral and written discourses and exchanges circulating with the object further entrench its value and bestow status (and wealth) on its owner(s). The longer this circulation process persists, the greater the depth/history and status that the object acquires. Joy demonstrates how the circulation of art and the long-term promotion and sale of the artist and his or her works are central to the functioning of commercial art galleries.

The concluding chapter of this section, by Ozlem Sandikci and Doug Holt, provides a semiotic appraisal of the shopping mall, grounded in an introspective, ethnographic account of a particular mall. The authors examine the relationships between the distinctive structural and atmospheric characteristics of the mall environment and the way in which the mall is experienced by shoppers. They analyze both the existing typologies of mall shopping behavior in the marketing literature and descriptions of the mall consumption experience in postmodern literature. Their chapter is a comprehensive analysis describing how the mall environment structures shopping experiences. They add empirical rigor to what has been an impressionistic postmodern literature on the mall, and also extend theoretically the empiricist marketing literature to include insights from theories of postmodernity.

Alternative Placeways:
Visiting the Undiscovered Country

In Part III, the contributors probe the geographic frontiers of our knowledge of servicescapes by exploring unconventional sites of marketplace activity of emerging interest. These sites are found in the ether, in the outdoors, in the home, and in consumers' imaginations. They mark the movement of marketing and consumption into important new venues. For example, Alladi Venkatesh adopts a critical posture to evaluate what he terms "cybermarketscapes" and consumer behaviors unfolding in cyberspace. The recent developments in computer, information, and telecommunication technologies, according to some, have begun to herald a new cultural order, known as cyberculture. Venkatesh believes we are witnessing a major development whose impact will be quite dramatic and far reaching. His chapter provides an overview of current developments, anticipated trends, and implications for the configuration of consumer spaces in the cyberculture. While his approach cannot help being somewhat speculative—for what is being developed here is a picture that has not emerged yet but is unfolding—it is grounded in his own ten-year research effort in the area of social impacts of information technologies with particular reference to individual consumers and households. His chapter gives rise to a number of intriguing questions. What new consumer spaces are being generated in this emerging electronic world? Given that the cyberculture is being described in terms of interactivity, virtual reality, hyper- and multimedia, how are these spaces configured and negotiated? What will be the nature of marketing–consumer transactions in the cyberculture? What will be the nature of service encounters in this electronic space? What kind of theorizing should we engage in to articulate consumer behavior in the cyberculture? He examines the technological imperative that requires marketing scholars and practitioners to take into account the new technologies.

In their chapter on "brandfests," Jim McAlexander and John Schouten present an ethnography of brand-centered festivals designed to cultivate brand loyalty and celebrate preference. They examine mechanisms and processes integral to building relationships

between owners and brands, as well as between consumers them-selves. Endowing the brand with a distinctive mystique and facili-tating consumers' achievement of optional experience are two functions of brandfests that the authors consider. They focus on brandfests that occur outdoors.

The American wilderness is the servicescape interpreted by Eric Arnould, Linda Price, and Patrick Tierney. Their ethnographic study of commercial white-water rafting explores the interplay between culture and nature occasioned by marketing. The authors tap multiple participants' perspectives on the peculiar tensions and ironies that surface during river trips. Service encounters in natural settings confront a primitive conflict between the near-biological human propensity to appropriate and exert control over a space and time (i.e., human territoriality) and a desire for a primal contact with the combined forces of nature. The typical managerial approach to the servicescape is to manage the features of the mar-keting environment to influence behavioral outcomes. Yet here there is an ironic tension, because what brings customers into the natural setting is a search for the mysterious and unforeseeable ele-ments often denied us by the controlled orderliness of rationalized marketing environments. Indeed, multiple ironies prevail. The authors describe how participants may seek an escape from spatial routinization, but may nonetheless look to the products of industrial civilization to aid their escape. Further, a central element of the drama of river rafting is that uncertainty about conditions and out-comes prevails. This provides a departure from scripted service delivery text and an opportunity for authorship in a way not avail-able through many leisure activities in such controlled marketing environments as theme parks. Yet commercial outfitters need to control uncertainty: the "religion" of commercial boating is the "smooth run." Finally, the authors illustrate how lack of control creates a social leveling effect on all participants, since no one is totally "in control," and how the fantasy of equality becomes an important aspect of the service encounter.

In her discussion of servicescape as an ideal type, Mary Ann McGrath employs a projective storytelling methodology to elicit consumers' fantasies of an ideal retail environment. She also probes the ideal level of service they desire. She finds that men and women converge upon a similar ideal that includes cornucopian abundance, an individualized phenomenology of a pleasant retail ambience, playful shopping, pleasurable self-indulgence, and specialized ser-vice that is invisible yet instantaneous. Perhaps ironically, she notes that price and value considerations are not articulated priorities in an ideal service venue.

Part III concludes with Kent Grayson's inquiry into commer-cial activity conducted in the home, which he envisions as a "pri-vate" servicescape. He observes that, since the home is not generally built for commerce, and may in many cases be hostile to commer-cial activity, those who wish to use the home as a marketing envi-ronment must strike a careful balance between pursuing selling goals and respecting the dwelling's central purpose and values. Network marketing (sometimes called multilevel marketing or pyramid sell-ing) has made particularly extensive use of the home as a selling space. Network marketing products are offered solely through neighborhood distributors, who are encouraged to run their busi-ness from their home. In fact, distributors are just as likely to give sales presentations in their own home as in the homes of others. Grayson's research, based on interviews with network marketing distributors in the United Kingdom, identifies several strategies used by network marketers as they ply their wares in their own homes.

Servicescape Context: Concepts and Issues

Part IV emphasizes the contextual essence of servicescapes from a kaleidoscopic variety of perspectives. Our contributors apply widely divergent methods in their inquiries and demonstrate the differen-tial accessibility to key concepts that particular approaches afford. Social class, ethnicity, gender, and personality are among the dimen-sions impinged upon by servicescapes. Privacy, dissatisfaction, and discrimination are among the conditions affected by servicescape design.

Perhaps the most provocative exploration of the interaction between consumer behavior and the servicescape to be found in

this book is Morris Holbrook's introspective account of his own passionate involvement with music. He presents a phenomenological account of the shopping experience stemming from service encounters associated with retailers in general and with record stores in particular. Toward that end, he adopts an approach referred to as subjective personal introspection, bolstered by a consideration of some recent literature on artistic performance (especially the theater) as a kind of service, and on service (especially retailing) as a kind of performance. His narrative begins with some historical background on his experiences as a jazz-oriented refugee from the football field seeking shelter in the piano studio and finding solace in the purchase of recordings. From there unfolds an account of his personal encounters with the retail environment in shopping for jazz records over the past forty years, focusing on how record stores have evolved and on the subjective meanings connected with these changes. Finally, some insights borrowed from the recent literature on theater as service and on retailing as theater suggest interpretations concerning the interpenetration of art and commerce in the potential communion between performers and their audiences.

Dawn Iacobucci returns us to the use of conventional consumer research tools in her treatment of a critical design flaw in the servicescape: the failed service encounter. She takes the theoretical perspectives of game theory, which is known to have clear prescriptives for enhancing the quality of social interactions, and applies it as a metaphor to the fairly pervasive problem of poor service interactions between a customer and a service provider. The purpose of her inquiry is not so much to assess the fit and applicability of this particular theory to this particular phenomenon. Rather her orientation is more managerial; lack of fit between the theory and properties of the phenomenon is diagnostic for the customer service manager. Given that it is known how to enhance socially beneficial behavior in the framework of game theory, she argues that one solution to poor customer service is to increase the extent to which the customer-service provider interaction resembles a game, because then the normative implications would be clear.

One of the most pervasive and pressing practical and ethical concerns confronting marketers—the consumer's right to privacy—is addressed in Cathy Goodwin's chapter. She suggests that the privacy construct offers a novel and interesting way to classify service experiences. Recent research has emphasized that consumers appear to evaluate experiences holistically rather than according to specific attributes. Retail environments represent an aspect of experience. Services, which are delivered in public places, force interactions among strangers, yet often address the customer's most private concerns. This potential for conflict derives from the historical development of services. Many commercial services were originally enacted in a home setting, and privacy represents a relatively recent phenomenon in social history. Desired privacy levels often come at a price (e.g., first-class air travel), yet services also offer anonymity and refuge in the urban setting. Goodwin provides directions for future research and practice as well.

An equally compelling issue is raised in the chapter by Eileen Fischer, Brenda Gainer, and Julia Bristor: the gendered nature of servicescapes. The authors begin their inquiry with an ambitious question: What makes a servicescape "gendered," and what are the implications of a servicescape being gendered? To explore these issues, they elicit responses to a series of scenarios describing people of one gender entering retail environments we might normally associate with the other gender. Their analysis of the responses reveals that very few tangible physical cues other than the gender of customers and service providers consistently denote a "male" versus a "female" environment; rather, stereotypes associated with the expected gender of people in the setting foster deep-seated beliefs about how a servicescape is gendered. Their analysis also suggests that changing assumptions regarding the gender of a servicescape would require direct confrontation of widespread stereotypes. Simple manipulation of cues in the physical design of space would probably be inadequate.

Our examination of contextual dimensions of the servicescape concludes with Elizabeth Chin's sobering description of the ways in which consumption itself is implicated in perpetuating social

inequality. By focusing relentlessly on the perspectives of minority consumers, and those of the stakeholders shaping the experience of these children, she allows us to hear the voice of the "other" over and beyond the literatures in which it is all too often muted. Blending insights from ethnography, history, and political economy, she embeds our understanding of the servicescape in the larger nexus of social institutions and reminds us that our inquiries are the poorer for their failure to explore the landscape of moral geography.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

This volume unfolds along the lines of an ambitious agenda. The contributors are committed to a discovery-oriented, theory-building program of research into servicescapes. They are motivated by a desire to get substance into play. By providing a range of empirically grounded, conceptually driven, extended case studies, the contributors offer future researchers the kind of critical mass of exemplary studies that will catalyze disciplinary progress. Through thick description and rich interpretation, they expand our current understanding of the minimal parameters of the servicescape in a way that will facilitate future measurement and theory testing. Those chapters tied more loosely to data—the thought-pieces by Baker, Venkatesh, and Iacobucci in particular—provoke exactly such frontier applications, bracketed as they are between studies of particular sites. The thorough documentation of placeways in these markets, and the exploration of these placeways as they ramify throughout consumers' experience, is a novel contribution to our literature. The authors are attuned to the phenomenological crosscurrents in contiguous disciplines that are diffusing gradually into consumer research (Thompson, Locander, and Pollio 1989, 1990; Thompson 1996) and channel this exciting line of inquiry into their quest to understand consumers' experience of place. Beyond their contribution to marketing and consumer research, the authors stand to influence the investigations into placeways afoot in these contiguous disciplines.

The contributors are also wedded to the notion that empirically rigorous and theoretically significant inquiry is indispensable to

managerial practice. As we move into the new millennium, it is apparent that "stronger conceptual links between the human sciences and environmental design" are desperately required (Perrin 1970, 107). So also is it apparent that traditional marketing research practices are ineffective in discerning and responding to unarticulated consumer needs (Hamel and Prahalad 1994; Leonard-Barton 1995). In the process of capturing and representing consumers' experiences in a variety of servicescapes, our contributors reveal a wealth of managerial implications and suggest a range of practical applications. Perhaps more importantly, by depicting the experiential dimensions of the servicescape so comprehensively and vividly, they have provided managers with a projectable field for imagining more effectively how particular, local servicescapes might be redesigned not only to enhance consumers' satisfaction but also to prompt delight.

We invite the reader to conduct a dialogue with the authors in the margins of these pages. We encourage the reader to tack between disciplinary and managerial perspectives and to transfer insights from one venue to another as each new servicescape is unpacked. As we celebrate the ingenuity (or lament the illegibility) of servicescape design and the variety of consumption experience, we hope this volume will serve as a stimulus for the reader to become a more introspective, multimodal apprehender of marketplace ambience. In aspiring to return a *sense* of place to the marketing mix, we emphasize that every servicescape is the cocreation of designer, marketer, and consumer.

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