



Call for Paper Abstracts and Proposals

Middle Class Phenomenon in Emerging Markets:

Multi-disciplinary and Multi-country Perspectives -

Consumers, Citizens and Media

An International Conference

Organized and Hosted by Georgia State University

Atlanta, GA

26-28 September 2013

Conference Organizer

GSU-CIBER

Center for International Business Education and Research

Conference Chairs:

S. Tamer Cavusgil, Hongmei Li, Leslie L. Marsh and Ilke Kardes

Co-Sponsors

A large number of academic, business, and media organizations have agreed to co-sponsor this event.



Nature and Scope of Conference:

The ascension of the middle class (MC) in rapidly transforming economies of East Asia, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East is one of the most remarkable phenomena of recent decades. Given the magnitude of the changes felt by vast numbers of households across the globe as well as the importance the issue holds in the realms of society, politics, business, economics and culture, examining the middle classes in emerging markets (EMs) will be a topic of investigation for years to come in multiple areas of academic inquiry.

While a consensus definition may not exist, the middle class generally refers to growing number of households in EMs who have access to a substantial disposable income that they can now direct towards discretionary purchases. One benchmark is having at least 30 percent of total household income available for discretionary consumption. The business community is not alone in studying the MC phenomenon. Scholars from such disciplines as film, media, communication, sociology, anthropology, political science, literature, education, history, art, urban studies, geography, and architecture are also actively examining this topic. A special interest of some scholars is to contrast the contemporary developments in EMs with those already experienced by mature, post-industrial economies. Some also approach the middle class as a social phenomenon that derives meaning from social and cultural practices, while others treat it as political power with the capacity to shape a country's social, political, economic and cultural landscape.

By design, this conference will bring together scholars from *multiple disciplines and countries* to examine the middle class in emerging markets from at least three key themes: consumers, citizens and the media.

Specific Objectives:

- Capture what we already know about, and generate a holistic understanding, of the middle class phenomenon in emerging markets
- Formulate and advance a multi-disciplinary research agenda
- Facilitate the formation of collaborative research networks among scholars
- Prepare and disseminate an edited book, featuring select papers presented at the Conference (additional publications may include a reader on middle class in emerging economies)

Potential Sessions:

- Defining and measuring the new middle class in EMs: representations in media (old and new), consumer practices, and framing the new middle classes
- Rising income inequality, the middle class and issues of political governance
- Business strategies – presentations by business executives about company strategies for catering to MC consumers in EMs
- Engaging the middle class: marketing practices, new communication technologies and social media
- Relationship to transformation of urban landscapes
- Middle class youth cultures and trendsetting
- The emerging middle class and new discourses of rights (human, labor, environmental, political, education)
- Emerging middle classes and reconfigurations of gender, race/ethnicity, caste
- Similarities and differences in the evolution of MC in mature vs. emerging economies, and
- Future directions for studying the middle class

Sample Topics to be addressed by Speakers:

- What are the drivers, correlates, and consequences of middle class in EMs?
- Why examine the middle class in EMs? Why now? How do we understand the middle class in these nations in relation to the widely accepted neoliberal economy in the context of globalization?
- Who belongs to the middle class? Multiplicity of criteria generally used to characterize middle class: income, educational attainment, occupation, social class, self-identification, etc.
- How is the rising middle class shaping the social, cultural and political life in these nations?

- How do media (old and new) in EMs represent the middle-class identity and lifestyles, including consumption practices, caste and/or class behavior, gender and sexuality, political agency, religious beliefs and so forth? What strategies do the corporate community and the media employ in capturing the consumption potential of EM households?
- How does the new MC in EMs influence the discourses of citizenship and the development of civil and human rights practices – both locally and globally?
- What are the media and product consumption behaviors of the middle class?
- How do we understand the youth as drivers of middle class consumption and trendsetting?
- What are some of the key challenges in developing the MC consumer base, including but not limited to sustainable development, labor rights, and environmental protection?
- How do the new communication technologies and social media provide opportunities for businesses to target the MC, and for the middle class to engage in and resist consumer culture?
- Feminist theory has long asserted that categories such as social class, gender, and race derive meaning from social and cultural practices. How have notions of race and gender changed vis-à-vis shifting understandings of social class in EMs?
- How can we best understand current and future relationships between “old” and “new” middle classes? How will the new EMs and their developing middle classes negotiate new patterns of immigration by members from the former “old” middle class? Conversely, what are the experiences of returning emigrants who once left their then-faltering but now-successful economies?
- What is the relationship between the MC and the development of human capital in EMs?
- What implications does the rise of MC have for the contemporary entrepreneurial activity in EMs?

Conference Timeline:

Proposal Submission: The organizing committee welcomes a broad range of empirical and conceptual contributions. The deadline for proposal submission is **15 February 2013**. If interested, please submit a 2 to 3 page, double-spaced abstract to: dawnfoster@gsu.edu. Make sure to include a biographical sketch, related work in this area, and your contact information.

Notification of Acceptance: **15 March 2013**

Deadline for Submission of Full Papers: **30 August 2013**

Conference: The event will open with a reception on Thursday evening, 26 September. Two full days of sessions are scheduled for Friday & Saturday, 27-28 September 2013. The venue is Atlanta, Georgia -- a major urban city which also serves as a major business, cultural, and transportation hub.

Edited Book: Select papers presented at the Conference are invited for inclusion in the edited book: **30 November 2013**

For More Information:

Conference website: <http://robinson.gsu.edu/ciber/events.html>

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