

# HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF SOCIAL CONTROLS SHAPING MARKETING PRACTICE

George Fisk  
Emory University

## ABSTRACT

This analysis traces changes in social controls shaping marketing practice over three epochs: the preindustrial era, the industrial era and the information age. Demands for social control emerge whenever people experience unwanted and unintended as well as the desired effects of marketing. In the preindustrial era, power to organize and regulate markets was exercised primarily by religious and governmental authorities backed by coercive military power. Their purpose was to assure fair dealing and continuous supply. Although guilds had emerged prior to the industrial epoch, their regulatory power was shared with an emerging entrepreneurial class that also exercised economic power by controlling supply and price. As the information age emerged, a multiplying number of publics began to use political power through boycotts, selective patronage and customer participation in the design of marketing programs. These new expressions added to earlier forms of power used to attain socially desired ends.

Despite changes in the groups exercising social control and the multiplying varieties of sanction power they exerted, the behavior sequence, by means of which social controls are exercised, has remained constant over the historical periods for which evidence is available. For this reason, understanding how to design social controls for shaping marketing practice in the future warrants close study of the historical evolution of social controls shaping marketing practices in the past.