

How do consumers create markets? The case of the minimoto

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Consumers have the power to do more than just respond to products that companies put on the market; they can actually change and develop new markets, according to a new study in the *Journal of Consumer Research*.

"Firm-centric models of market development view [consumers](#) as relatively passive, downstream actors, whose agency and ability to affect a market are limited to decision making in a realm of choices controlled by marketing institutions," write authors Diane M. Martin and John W. Schouten (both Aalto University). "Recently consumer culture scholars have explored the power of various kinds of consumer resistance to change markets or develop new ones."

The authors studied the emergence and growth of a new market within the motorcycle industry, the minimoto. The original minimoto is a child's minibike that has been modified significantly to be ridden and raced by adults. Minimoto aficionados are passionate about the bikes, and there is currently a thriving global market for parts to modify stock minibikes from major manufacturers such as Honda, Kawasaki, and Yamaha.

The mainstream motorcycle industry has always viewed minimotos as a niche product in a shrinking segment of dirt bikes. The authors explain the emergence of the minimoto market as a process in three stages: consumer innovation, where creative consumers mobilize available objects and other resources to overcome barriers; community formation, when creative consumers engage other people in the same activities,

leading to the development of products, practices, and infrastructures; and a final stage of market emergence.

"Such organic market emergence distributes the risk and the investment of [market](#) building broadly among consumers rather than concentrating it at the level of the firm," the authors write. "And it offers insight into the kinds of actors that have the power to shift markets in fundamental ways."

More information: Diane M. Martin and John W. Schouten. "Consumption-Driven Market Emergence." *Journal of Consumer Research*: February 2014.

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