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# Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the Meanings of *Star Trek*'s Culture of Consumption

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## Abstract

In this article, I examine the cultural and subcultural construction of consumption meanings and practices as they are negotiated from mass

media images and objects. Field notes and artifacts from 20 months of fieldwork at *Star Trek* fan clubs, at conventions, and in Internet groups, and 67 interviews with *Star Trek* fans are used as data. *Star Trek*'s subculture of consumption is found to be constructed as a powerful utopian refuge. Stigma, social situation, and the need for legitimacy shape the diverse subcultures' consumption meanings and practices. Legitimizing articulations of *Star Trek* as a religion or myth underscore fans' heavy investment of self in the text. These sacralizing articulations are used to distance the text from its superficial status as a commercial product. The findings emphasize and describe how consumption often fulfills the contemporary hunger for a conceptual space in which to construct a sense of self and what matters in life. They also reveal broader cultural tensions between the affective investments people make in consumption objects and the encroachment of commercialization.

**Keywords:** [Cultural Theories and Analysis](#), [Group/Interpersonal Influences](#), [Leisure and Recreation](#), [Ethnography](#)

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