

A century of marketing¹

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For more than a decade a growing number of academics have questioned the basis and value of many core marketing principles and have brought into question the credibility of the dominant historical account of the development of marketing (Fitchett 2005). Despite this criticism, and the growing disdain heaped upon marketers, change is notoriously slow in marketing education. This paper traces the history of marketing during the twentieth century to see if any lessons or indeed patterns can be distinguished for the new millennium marketers. While there is always a danger that much of what we each perceive as history is post-hoc rationalisation, there is value in looking back at how and what we have achieved, the perceived expectations along the way and (crucially) whether these have changed. The paper seeks to explore the apparent links between each generation of marketing thought in an attempt to understand, clarify current developments and raise possible research issues. It concludes that marketing thinking is dominated by its time and place and that the fruitless quest for the next new paradigm is more paralysing than stimulating in the marketing debate.

Keywords Marketing history, Marketing theory

Introduction

Although we see marketing as a twentieth century phenomena much of what we would today recognise as marketing practice existed long before its formal beginnings as a field of study. From the time of the ancient Greeks through the great economists of the 1700s and 1800s (including Smith, Malthus, Jevons, Ricardo, Mill, and Marshall), concepts such as markets, marginal analysis, value, production, humans as social and economic entities, competition, and the role of governments had already been raised and extensively debated (Wilkie and Moore 2003). In the nearer term, it is also possible to track marketing's direct economic origins back through to the 'Physiocrats' of the eighteenth century and the 'Austrian School of Economies' at the end of the nineteenth century (Broeckelmann 2004) and its mercantile origins to eighteenth-century English entrepreneurs such as

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Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795). Marketing, therefore, is as old as commerce and has been practiced for centuries. What the twentieth century brought that was new was an independent discipline and, what might be called, the specialist marketer (Ambler 2004).

One undisputed fact about the birth of modern marketing and its formative years is that it was largely North America-dominated. Unlike its precursor economics, which was largely of European origin and was to retain its internationalism, modern marketing began, developed and flourished in the USA. Not that recognisable concepts did not exist internationally but it was in the USA that marketing was recognised early on as a subject worthy of academic endeavour. In America, this young discipline benefited from that country's powerful sense of individualism and entrepreneurship, its exuberance and fierce competition (Witowski 2005). That the USA was to subsequently become the world's largest economy, strengthened and consolidated its position. This heritage is the reason why, even in the current global commercial and academic marketplace, American Marketing Journals, and indeed American academics, still, rightly or wrongly, dominate the discipline.

The early days

'Modern marketing' in the eyes of many observers (e.g. Bartels 1976) began at the turn of the twentieth century, when more structured academic attention started to be given to the area of market distribution, a topic that was evolving and assuming great prominence in the marketplace (Wilkie and Moore 2003). Although it is acknowledged that marketing grew out of the field of economics, modern marketing owed much of its independence to its challenge of accepted economic tenets. Economic theorists had long held the view that value was created by production. Say's Law (Jean-Baptiste Say 1767-1832) stated that there could be no demand without supply and that no sooner was a product produced than it afforded a market for other products to the full extent of its value (Say 1803). Mass production capabilities required mass consumption which in turn required more complex and varied distribution systems and a more sophisticated understanding of tools to influence mass consumer demand (Wilkie and Moore 2003). By 1900 marketers were proposing that demand consisted of more than just the ability to purchase and that it also required desire on the part of the consumer. The suggestion was that desire could be increased and manipulated by factors (e.g. distribution, advertising, etc.) other than the mere existence of supply (Bartels 1976) and value added beyond that of production (Wilkie and Moore 1999).

Earliest writings on marketing concentrated on the agricultural industry where the added-value of the distribution process was evident. Other discussions were in the field of advertising covering such subjects as advertising copy, layout, campaigns, principles and practice, economics and psychology (Bartels 1976) and in 1908 Scott wrote *The Theory of Advertising*. Concepts such as elasticity of demand (developed by Alfred Marshall 1842-1924) were being used by marketing writers as a theoretical basis for developments in selling, advertising and promotions as well as marketing in general. Value

theory was another area of economic (and philosophical) thought built upon by early marketers. Value theorists investigated how people value things (positively or negatively), the reasons why they make such evaluations and use consumer choice as evidence of intrinsic value. By 1910 literature relating to marketing research began to appear. The emergence of marketing research was itself the result of growing pressure to produce and apply accurate knowledge to the field and to bring the methods of science to the field of marketing (Bartels 1976).

In the decade between 1910 and 1920 marketing authors built upon distribution theory to develop their understanding of marketing. Weld (1916:6) wrote "*(a)t each step an increment of value is added by those who handle or transform the product*" emphasising further that value was no longer regarded as wholly created in the production process. It was also around this time that the term 'marketing' itself was added to the commercial lexicon. Until this time what is now defined as marketing had always been referred to as "trade," "distribution," or "commerce". Among highly influential writers of the period Ralph Starr Butler and Arch W. Shaw are considered important to the development of the new marketing discipline. Ralph Starr Butler (1882-1971), believed marketing was all about co-ordination, planning and the management of complex relationships. Shaw (1876 - 1962) distinguished three basic business operations; production, distribution and facilitating functions or administration. Given the changing forms involved between production and distribution, the latter conceived marketing as "*matter in motion*" (Bartels 1976). It was Shaw (1912:708) who also first proposed the centrality of the customer when he wrote that "*the more progressive business man is searching out the unconscious needs of the consumer, and is then producing the goods to gratify them.*" It was also in this period that concepts later to become known as the commodity approach (focusing on all marketing actions involved in a particular product category), the institutional approach (focusing on describing the operations of a specialised type of marketing agency, such as a wholesaler or a broker), and the functional approach (focusing on the purposes served by various marketing activities) developed (Wilkie and Moore 2003). The functional approach in particular was to gain wide acceptance among marketing thinkers and was valued as a means of defining and rationalising the field of marketing and its numerous activities and for its usefulness in analysing marketing problems (Fullbrook 1940). The marketing field also began to take on its own distinct academic identity when a number of US universities independently began to develop new courses to examine various aspects of the marketing system. Academic programmes including "*distributive and regulative industries*", "*the marketing of products*", "*methods of marketing farm products*", and "*mercantile institutions*" were early examples (Bartels 1951a, 1988, Wilkie and Moore 2003).

By the third decade of the twentieth century ideas were starting to coalesce around a number of tentative generalisations. In 1923 Fred Emerson Clark (1890-1948) produced *Principles of Marketing* (Clark 1923) in which he defined marketing as "*those efforts which effect transfer in the ownership of goods*". Paul Dulaney Converse (1889 - 1968) in his book *Marketing Methods and Policies* (Converse 1922) distinguished between the functions of middlemen and the marketing functions. Cherington (1920)

added an important basis for future thought by asking whether marketing performance and societal welfare might be enhanced by focusing on the underlying functions of marketing; probably the first mention of social marketing. The ubiquitous AIDA (attention, interest, desire, action) model appeared in a publication by Strong (1925), albeit based on an idea of St Elmo Lewis writing towards the end of the previous century. The first doubts about the dangers of consumerism were also being discussed at this time largely in terms of moral degeneration (Fitchett 2005). There was debate too about whether non-essential services could be eliminated and whether there were too many middlemen adding to costs (Wilkie and Moore 2003). Advertising was particularly singled out for criticism regarding its "economic value" (e.g. Moriarity 1923; Vaughan 1928) and whether it essentially caused prices to rise. There were also certain 'unorthodox' studies going on that were to become the bases for the further evolution of marketing such as White's (1927) very managerial proposal of a 'scientific marketing management', offering guidance to the companies who wish to understand marketing (Skalen et al. 2005).

The period 1930-1940 was characterised more by the development of existing concepts rather than the production of new ideas. Exceptions included Charles F. Phillips whose book *Marketing* (Phillips 1938) was published toward the end of the decade. His text showed an interest in the consumer that went well beyond the study of buying motives to consider consumers as the driving force of the economy. There were also developments in theory designed to embrace what was called oligopolistic competition (Chamberlain 1933; Sheth et al. 1988; Waterschoot and Van Den Bulte 1992). In an oligopoly firms operate under imperfect conditions and with a kinked demand curve. Following the fierce price competitiveness created by the sticky (i.e. inelastic) demand curve firms utilise non-price competition in order to achieve greater revenue and market share. This theoretical insight later led marketing theoreticians (e.g. McGarry 1950; McKitterick 1957; Alderson, 1957) to create 'lists' of marketing variables deduced from econometric, profit optimising equations. In 1936, *the Journal of Marketing* was launched and began to attract articles that had previously found limited favour in economic journals. Interest in marketing was also starting to develop in Europe albeit tentatively. In September 1931, the magazine *'Marketing'* first appeared in the UK but it took another 37 years for that magazine's publisher, the *Incorporated Sales Managers Association*, to change its name to the *Institute of Marketing*, the predecessor of today's *Chartered Institute of Marketing*.

In the 1940s, an increasing number of different approaches were being considered. New emphasis was given to the management of marketing and more attention paid to the consumer viewpoint. Whereas early marketing had frequently centred on rural agriculture (e.g. Weld 1916) after 1945 topics such as the growth of the mass market, employment, consumer savings, and industrial development (e.g. Hahn 1946; Grether 1948; Vance 1947) started to be discussed. The field of modern demographics developed around the explosion of births and migration patterns following World War II. William Lloyd Warner, an anthropologist, for example, researched American Society and its class system. He divided social classes by three distinct groups which he labelled, lower, middle, and upper with each class sub-divided further into

two parts. This was to become the basis of demographic profiling. The role of marketing theory as a science began to be seriously discussed. Leading articles such as Converse's (1945) "The Development of the Science of Marketing", Alderson and Cox's (1948) "Towards a Theory of Marketing", and slightly later Bartels¹ (1951b) "Can Marketing Be a Science?" exemplified the call from scholars for more theoretical frameworks and began to explore new parameters for this body of thought (Wilkie and Moore 2003). An important economic distinction should be made between what was happening in the US and Europe at this time. While US consumerism was buoyant Europeans were still suffering from shortages that would last into the 1950s. In the UK, for example, rationing did not end until July 3rd 1954. European marketing at this time was less directed at stimulating wants than restricting needs.

Modern marketing

The 1950s represented a watershed for marketing thought as the mainstream debate became steeped in science. This science-led revolution reflected a conscious movement in US business thinking. In the early 1950s the *Ford Foundation* started an initiative to infuse scientific theory into US business systems and marketers were quick to get involved. US Business Schools responded by raising admission standards and including more mathematics, statistics, economics and other sciences to the curriculum (Mentzer and Schumann 2006). Not everyone agreed that this was the right way forward however. Hutchinson (1952:290) noted that the forebears of marketers were merchants not scientists and that it was a "travesty to relate the scientist's search for knowledge to the market research man's seeking after customers". Marketing textbooks continued to disseminate new ideas. In *Theory in Marketing*, Cox and Alderson (1950) contributed ideas such as heterogeneous markets, the uniqueness of organisational positioning and competition based on differential advantage. In the early 1950s, Borden (1964) introduced the concept of the marketing mix, a list of 12 variables (product, price, branding, distribution, personal selling, advertising, promotions, packaging, display, servicing, physical handling, fact finding and analysis) from which the marketer could blend the ingredients or variables of the mix into an integrated marketing program.

From the mid-1950s, interest in the topic of Marketing Management grew rapidly, effectively replacing the Functionalist School of thought. From the Marketing Management perspective, marketers were viewing the field from the standpoint of marketing practitioners in order to help them develop successful marketing programmes. Relative to what had gone before, Marketing Management theory suggested that it was less important to study and explain how marketing as a practice functions than rather how marketing should function (Skålén et al. 2005). The theory implied the integration of marketing activities and the downward delegation of authority. The literature at the time particularly emphasised problem solving and decision making. This move towards marketing management was, incidentally, to further increase the professional and vocational appeal of university marketing programmes (Wilkie and Moore 2003).

In a seminal work, McCarthy (1960) presented the "marketing mix",

reconstructing Borden's original 12 variables into the '4Ps' model (Price, Product, Promotion and Place). Although this concept retained many of the key elements of the Functional School it did shift the perspective firmly toward the Marketing Management approach. Ironically, McCarthy specifically denied that his list of variables were intended as a definition of the scope of marketing (Payne 1995; Duncan and Moriarty 1998) rather he presented the 4Ps as an aid to instruction and a starting point from which to construct a marketing strategy (Gronroos 1994 a,b). The 'mix' was not the only 'list' model proposed during this period, however, its inherent simplicity ensured the rise and rise of the model and its attendant marketing management theory.

In addition to the 4Ps/marketing mix a number of concepts still prominent today were developed at this time including market segmentation (Smith 1956) and brand image (Gardner and Levy 1955). In time these were to become the basis of what would later be called 'modern' Transactional Marketing (Takala and Uusitalo 1996; Kotler 1992; Aijo 1996). Kotler (1967) summed up how the thinking of the period was applied when he characterised marketing as a decision-making activity designed to satisfy the customer, at a profit, by targeting and making optimal decisions on the various elements of the mix.

Economic conditions in the 1950s and 1960s were to conspire to reinforce the perceived superiority of the marketing mix paradigm. Infrastructure development aided distribution, there was a decided shift to urban living and television was to offer opportunities to advertise to vast audiences. In the large, rapidly expanding (76 million new consumers were born 1946-1965), domestic, post-WWII US consumer market of relatively homogenous and insatiable customers there were rapid increases in the demand for standardised consumer goods. Despite this demand the prevailing economic thinking was to ensure that consumption kept up with output (Packard 1957). Marketing was seen as a way of achieving this and they were guaranteed a receptive audience. As a result there was a perceived need to formalise marketing such that was guaranteed to work every time (O'Malley and Patterson 1998). The simplicity and communicability of the marketing mix paradigm, in combination with its apparent success, combined to turn marketing into "a highly effective impact machine" (Gronroos 1996:16). In this time (and place) of high consumer trust, effective mass marketing, growing prosperity, homogenous demand and dominant manufacturers (O'Driscoll and Murray 1998), modern transactional marketing theory appeared to be working very effectively indeed.

The 1960s saw the emergence of new conceptual and methodological perspectives on managerial decision-making, social and behavioural patterns, qualitative analysis, systems structure and behaviour, environmental constraints, comparative analysis, international markets and physical distribution (Bartels 1976). A major external factor that was to have an immense affect on marketing was the rapid development of computer technology. This tool enabled researchers to undertake sophisticated modelling of complex marketing problems. Reflecting this development Bass et al. (1961) published *Mathematical Models and Methods in Marketing* which was quickly followed by other texts on this subject matter (e.g. Frank et al. 1962; Buzzell 1964; Kotler 1971). The scientific analysis approach to marketing was greatly advanced by Professor Paul Green, who developed conjoint analysis in the

late 1960s. This measurement tool allowed companies to analyse consumer preferences and buying intentions, as well as measure how they may react to changes in existing products/services or product introductions. Computing power was also to have an effect on the practice of marketing from a sales perspective. Marketing theorist, Lester Wunderman is regarded as the first to have coined the term "direct marketing" in the 1960s, an industry that was to develop rapidly in the latter part of the century.

The topic of consumer behaviour was developing during this period and there were texts by Zaltman (1965); Engel et al.(1968) and Howard and Sheth (1969) devoted to this area of research. However, not all of this consumer behaviour research necessarily fitted comfortably with the now dominant managerial approach (Wilkie and Moore 2003). The FMCG consumer markets, where relatively low-valued products were sold to mass markets using mass media, still dominated marketing thinking. In the late sixties Kotler (1967) was to publish *Marketing Management: Analysis, Planning, and Control*. This text was to influence many young academics and researchers and went some way to directing future research by explicitly incorporating the quantitative and behavioural sciences as part of the thrust in marketing thought (Wilkie and Moore 2003).

As the leading marketing author of the 1970s, Kotler (1972) further entrenched the existing paradigm when he determined the mantra underlying thinking during this period. This was that Marketing Management sought to adapt the settings of the company's marketing decision variables such that they maximised company objectives in the light of the expected behaviour of non-controllable demand variables (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Two schools of thought became influential during the period. The Macromarketing School examined the impact of marketing practices on society and society on marketing whereas the Strategic Planning School explored the relationship between environmental change and change within the organisation. The 1970s also saw debate concerning the breadth of marketing thought as marketing thinking was applied to ideas, places and people in addition to products and services. Not-for-profit and societal marketing came to the fore although marketing boundaries continued to expand and so apparently did the gap between academics and practitioners. In 1977 the *American Marketing Association* and the *Marketing Science Institute* convened a Commission to evaluate the effect of research on marketing practice (Mentzer and Schumann 2006). The conclusion of the Commission was that academic marketing had very little impact on improving marketing management practice (Myers et al.1980). The academic/practitioner divide debate was to continue into the next decade with very little evidence of a satisfactory outcome (see Brennan and Ankers 2004).

Despite the apparent supremacy of marketing in the period, doubts were starting to be raised about the all-embracing nature of the traditional marketing paradigm. In particular questions were being asked by those operating within businesses and socio-political environments very different from those of the United States, notably Europe, (Hammarkvist et al. 1982; Elg and Johansson 1996) and from marketers working within the industrial (business-to-business) and service sectors. Marketing had always had an uncomfortable relationship with those sectors which operated outside of mainstream consumer goods. Some attempts were made to accommodate

the evident anomalies. However, rather than start again by challenging the conceptual basis of Transactional Marketing, the quickest and most convenient 'solution' to the problem was to paper over the cracks. The standard method of 'overcoming' deficiencies in the 4P "tablet of faith" (Gronroos 1994b) was to expand on the same approach - abstracting the market relationship into a list of decision making variables (Brodie et al. 1997; Gronroos 1994b).

The perceived orthodoxy did not, however, go wholly unchallenged. The Fall 1983 edition of the *Journal of Marketing* provided a platform with articles by Arndt (1983); Day and Wensley (1983); Deshpande (1983); Howard (1983) and Hunt (1983), much of which suggested that the traditional micro-economic view of marketing was increasingly inadequate (Ambler 2004). The issue contained several articles which attacked the perception of marketing as a science and raised concerns about marketing's reliance on the logical positivism/empiricism perspective that now dominated research. Criticisms of Transactional Marketing were also generated based on the difficulties in applying it outside its original context.

Many weaknesses of the transactional paradigm were initially hidden in the context of a buoyant post-WWII US economy. These defects were revealed as the competitive environment in which firms operated evolved beyond recognition in the 1980s (Turnbull and Wilson 1989; Blattberg and Deighton 1991; Aijo 1996). In the USA intra-market competition intensified considerably as the number of firms - both local and foreign - increased (Jackson 1985; Gummesson 1987). This spread to most developed consumer goods markets changing them from growth to mature markets (Hammarkvist et al. 1982).

New frames of reference not directly associated with the marketing mix did start to appear. Sheth et al. (1988) saw what they called a paradigm shift in the development of strategic marketing theory. The objective here was competitive advantage and market share became its primary indicator of performance (Ambler 2004). Porter (1979, 1985) warned against being 'stuck in the middle' between price competitiveness and distinctiveness and to establish competitive advantage through five-forces analysis (Porter 1979). PIMS research in Cambridge sought to link market share to profitability as did the Boston Consulting Group matrix and other 'big is beautiful' models of the period. Despite these developments, however, most research topics published in the period still relied heavily on the 4Ps model (Gundlach and Wilkie 1990).

The contribution of industrial (or business-to-business) research was particularly important during the period. Industrial relationship research was largely fostered by the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) group of researchers in the 1970s, 1980s and in to the 1990s (see, for example, Ford 1984, Ford, Håkansson and Johanson 1986, Håkansson and Snehota 1989). Their work led to the recognition that relationships are important to the facilitation of interorganisational exchange (O'Malley and Tynan 2003) and that marketing in the industrial sector was not primarily concerned with the manipulation of the 4Ps but in seeking to "reach a critical mass of relations with customers, distributors, suppliers, public institutions, individuals, etc." (Gummesson 1987:12).

Services also began to slowly emerge as new sub-discipline reflecting the changes in western economies. In her seminal article "Breaking Free from

Product Marketing" Shostack (1977) put the case for the development of services research whilst Thomas (1978) argued that strategies designed for products were inappropriate for services and that new thinking had to be developed. In the early "crawling out stage" of service research academics struggled to publish their research which culminated in a fierce debate about whether "service marketing is different" (Fisk et al. 1993:63). What initially appeared to be separate lines of thought developed from this service marketing research into areas such as relationship marketing, quality management, market orientation, supply chain management, resource management and networks (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Of these it was the concept of Relationship Marketing that began fully to take shape and become a major marketing stream of research in the late 1980s and 1990s. Other research strands that developed from services research included service design (e.g. Shostack 1984), service quality (e.g. Gronroos 1982; Parasuraman et al. 1985, 1988, Berry and Parasuraman 1991), customer satisfaction (e.g. Oliver 1980, Bitner 1990), service failure (e.g. Berry and Parasuraman 1991), service guarantees (e.g. Hart 1988) and service encounters (e.g. Czepiel 1990) each of which was to find its way into the general services and relationship marketing literature.

Relationship marketing research continued to develop a wide range of concepts and theories in a number of business sectors and disciplines. Concepts such as retention, loyalty, commitment, trust, mutuality, reciprocity, structural bonds and attraction were central to understanding relationships (O'Malley and Tynan 2003). To this might be added risk-reduction (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995), saliency (Uncles 1994), closeness (Barnes 1997), relationship dissolution (Dwyer et al. 1987), critical incidents (Stewart 1998), episodes (Bitner et al. 1990; Storbacka et al. 1994) and customer satisfaction (Westbrook 1980; Oliver 1981, 1997; Bearden and Teel 1983; Storbacka et al. 1994; Jones and Sasser 1995; Buttle 1997; Gummesson 1999; Andreassen 2000) all of which were to enrich the relationship marketing debate in the 1990s.

Despite the enormous level of hype surrounding the emergence of RM as a "new marketing paradigm" (e.g. Kotler 1992; Gronroos 1994a) or as a paradigm shift (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1993; Gronroos 1994a; Morgan and Hunt 1994; Gummesson 1987; Buttle 1997), widespread calls for detailed research on relational strategy implementation had not generally been followed up (Saren and Tzokas 1998). By the new millennium, therefore, RM did not appear to have led to any significant change in marketing practice (Fichett and McDonagh 2000). During the early part of the twenty-first century other concepts seemingly related to relationship marketing were appearing in the literature. These included customer relationship management, data-driven marketing, micromarketing, one-to-one marketing, loyalty (or loyalty-based) marketing, 'segment-of-one' marketing, wraparound marketing, customer partnering, symbiotic marketing, individual marketing, relevance marketing, frequency marketing, integrated marketing, dialogue marketing, permission marketing and interactive marketing. Most noticeable of all was the rise of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) as a distinct, albeit ill-defined, concept. Many saw CRM as the means by which relationship marketing could be practically applied. Proponents described this "philosophically related offspring of RM" (Zablah et al. 2003:116) as "technology-enabled" (Little

and Marandi 2003: 197) or "information-enabled" Relationship Marketing (Ryals and Payne 2001: 3), and as an appropriate response to changes in the marketplace (Lindgreen 2004).

Although CRM was said to have apparent theoretical connections with RM, the term itself emerged from the Information Technology (IT) vendor community in the mid-1990s (Payne and Frow 2005) and was used to refer to data collection and those activities surrounding the management of the customer-firm interface (Boulding et al. 2005). Although the original discussion regarding CRM was in the database, data-mining and decision-support literature (Wetsch 2003), the debate quickly spread to marketing publications. In the period 2000-2002, 191 CRM articles were published in marketing journals with the most popular topics being software tools, data mining systems and technologically controlled knowledge management (Ngai 2005).

Contemporary marketing thought

Marketing reached the new millennium battered and, perhaps, showing its age. It is difficult to establish in which precise direction it is going, not so much because of a 'mid-life crisis' but because many 'concepts-in-use' need time either to develop or work their way out of the system before their true effect may be known. In addition new business practices are proliferating on the internet which, some would say, has been the single greatest test of marketing since the industrial revolution. When a company such as 'MySpace', largely co-created by its consumers, can go from anonymity to virtually 100% awareness in less than one year this calls for a dramatic rethink and raises the question whether existing marketing theories are sufficient for describing and understanding marketplace behaviour (Zinkhan 2005).

Contemporary marketing theory is, according to O'Driscoll (2004:7) "a current robust conceptualisation of marketing that reflects and codifies existing and emergent 'best practice' in the marketplace" although it might be argued that few concepts in the social sciences can really be described so clinically. Some old debates linger on in the contemporary marketing field. The academic-practitioner divide arguments are "old, recurring and endless" (Levy 2002:299). To many the academic-practitioner divide cannot be beneficial if the discipline is to go forward (e.g. Hunt 2002; Tapp 2004; McCole 2004) and that marketing's current malaise is but a symptom of its disconnectiveness from the real world (McDonald 2003). The notion of law, medical or even accountancy academics being isolated from their profession would seem outrageous, so why is it acceptable to marketers? There is indeed considerable empirical evidence to suggest that marketing practitioners regard most academic research as irrelevant (see Brennan 2004; Brennan and Ankers 2004; Brennan 2007). Some say it is because academic research is too scholarly, abstract and difficult to follow (McKensie et al. 2002) or as Kent (2005:1010) puts it, marketing research is "a veritable Tower of Babel. We, it seems, babble and are ignored". As Hutchinson (1952) noted over fifty years ago, the forebears of marketers were merchants not scientists. Today's practitioners are merchants concerned more with making the right decisions at a particular point in time than the managerial implications of scientifically-

derived and manipulated research. 'Managerial implications', as any review of the *Journal of Marketing* and other distinguished journals show, can be naive in the extreme. The counterpoint to this position is that the pursuit of marketing theory is an endeavour that is valuable in its own terms irrespective of its practical usefulness (Cornellisen 2002). Indeed Ho brook (1986) argued for the complete abstention of all practitioner intervention and mediation in academe including applied research and consultancy.

In the equally long-running 'science versus art' debate, this has more recently become associated with differences in the approaches to research. Modernism, philosophically, mainly relates to logical empiricism, which has its foundation in positivism and in support given to scientific research (Addis and Podestà 2005:397). In one contemporary interpretation, the use of the scientific method is attacked for its inability to enrich research and extend knowledge. Postmodern interpretivism, a major movement across a wide range of subject areas, has itself entered the sphere of Marketing championed primarily by Stephen Brown. Brown (2006) has been clear in pointing out that "*PoMo marketing*" is not itself a concept but a critique. It does not provide an alternative to existing marketing but seeks to point out that something is wrong with established ideas and understanding. Postmodernists see their responsibility as upsetting the status quo and challenging marketing's cosy, self defined lives (Thomas 2006). Postmodern marketing challenges the "*certainties, uniformities and ambiguities of the modern era*" (Brown 2006:212). In a similar vein but perhaps without the philosophical baggage "*critical marketing*" as conceived by Hastings and Saren (2003) questions the processes and outcomes of marketing. This is directly associated with an increased interest in 'social marketing' with its roots in the 1920s and a significant revival in the 1970s with such associated themes as 'de-marketing'. Social marketing advocates the application of marketing to enhance social as well as commercial ends and frequently deals with behaviours which require a long-term effort to change (e.g. diets, smoking, drugs, etc.). Where postmodern marketing is disparaging of the doctrine of modernity yet another, hypermodernity, asserts that key aspects of modernism remain valid especially in relation to science and the scientific discourse (Arnould and Tissier-Desbordes 2005).

One school of thought that has developed during the past few years researches under the banner of 'Contemporary Marketing Practice' (CMP) and is said to involve a core group of researchers from around the world including New Zealand, Canada, USA, UK and Argentina with associates in Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Russia, Thailand and Malaysia (Pels et al. 2004). The CMP group are said to be guided by a philosophy that accepts the plurality of both theoretical marketing (transactional and relational) and research (qualitative and quantitative) paradigms (Pels et al. 2004). They see 'shifts in power and control within marketing systems' (Lindgreen et al. 2004:5) where managers, "*based on their world-view, enact their environment, and thus each cluster would represent a different enactment or dominant logic*" (Pels et al. 2004:10). The second guiding philosophy of the CMP researchers, the plurality of paradigms, perhaps reflects the growing interest in the more 'qualitative' methodologies within marketing as a way of breaking down the barriers to new theory creation.

Another claim to the contemporary practice mantle is what Vargo and

Lusch (2004) call the "new dominant logic" (NDL). In a celebrated *Journal of Marketing* article these authors suggested the integration of goods with services to provide a richer foundation for the development of marketing thought and practice. Much as Relationship Marketing a decade before, this concept grew out of reservations about the validity and usefulness of the 4Ps and the traditional marketing paradigm. Indeed much of the literature supporting Vargo and Lusch's arguments would appear to originate in the non-American Relationship Marketing literature. The NDL wishes to see marketing from a service-centred viewpoint and one that integrates goods and services providing a "richer foundation for the development of marketing thought and practice" (Pg. 2). The authors claim that the service-centred dominant logic implies that value is defined by and co-created with the consumer rather than embedded in output. This perspective reignites the function versus philosophy debate when it challenges marketing to become the predominant organisational philosophy and take the lead in initiating and coordinating the market-driven competences of the organisation.

Function versus philosophy continues to excite debate in the general marketing literature. What Brownlie and Saren (1992) called the Achilles' heel of marketing is still proving problematical a decade and a half after this was written. Research amongst senior managers suggests that making "the link between...the philosophical level and the tactical level of outputs appears to be where the confusion sets in" (Baker and Holt 2004:560). The vision of marketing as an organisational philosophy (as promoted by RM and NDL scholars) is in conflict with the view that marketing should be viewed from a functional perspective (associated with CRM) and both schools claim the high ground. The distinction between philosophy and function is further blurred when a claim is made for the need to develop a "strategic role for marketing...if the marketing function is to withstand **marginalisation** forces in organisations, and if control over the role of marketing expertise is not to be forfeited" (Katsikeas et al. 2004:574).

Conclusion

The century-long hunt for marketing excellence has thrown up many theories, ideas, concepts and perspectives. The notion that progress is made with each decade and that we stand on the shoulders of those marketing giants before us seems a lame argument in the first decade of the twenty-first century when some feel marketing's day has gone and that we should give it "the dignified burial it deserves" (Holbrook and Hulbert 2002:726). It could be argued that early marketing was designed to cope with a particular situation in a particular marketplace. Marketing grew as a discipline in North America because it was required to satisfy the ambitions of mass producers and the needs/desires of an increasingly affluent audience. It did not grow up in the same way in Europe, because the economic conditions and commercial imperatives were not the same. When European markets began to resemble US markets, interest grew and marketing ideas were imported from the USA. There was, however, never the homogeneous marketplace that Levitt (1983) predicted and so when markets began to diverge it caused strains within marketing's traditional paradigm.

As the years go on, it seems academic marketing reflects not so much what is happening in this marketplace but concentrates instead on models that could be retrospectively fitted to support marketing's dominant paradigm. Unlike theories in the physical sciences areas, however, those in social sciences tend to be self-fulfilling as, if they gain sufficient currency, they are adopted by academics, consultants and managers who then acted according to, and in support of, these theories (Ghoshal 2005). Thus the 4Ps and, to a certain extent, Relationship Marketing (despite the academic divide) were two such approaches that moved from practical observation to marketing mantras with hardly a pause in between. Mass marketing fulfilled a need of a post-WWII US consumer market of relatively homogenous and insatiable customers. There were rapid increases in the demand for standardised consumer goods a situation not unlike that of China and India today. The comparison with these rapidly emerging markets is not an idle one. Should the theories that worked under similar circumstances in the past be dusted down and considered as applicable for these economies? Relationship Marketing (and the New Dominant Logic) grew from the evident domination of services in western societies and perhaps questions should be asked as to its relevance in Far Eastern markets where the production of consumer goods still predominate. These markets may develop their own paradigms. Fichett (2005) asks us to acknowledge that not only will the most revolutionary aspects of this century's consumer society take place outside of the developed world but that the concepts, theories, and models that will be applied to understand these changes may evolve elsewhere as well. Marketing, as with all 'social facts' takes a specific form from the interpretive framework of the viewer (Lowe et al. 2005:99) and views differ with time and geography.

It is also apparent that U-turns in marketing theory-as-practiced are being considered as markets fragment and reform in different ways. An obvious example is the airline industry. In the 1990s *British Airways*, *American Airlines*, *Air France*, and the vast majority of national and international airlines were leaders in promoting relational strategies. The cut-priced air travel of the new century led initially to confusion and then to a strategy rethink. Whereas many still want to develop close ties with first- and business-class travellers, the majority of passengers are treated in straightforward exchange marketing terms reminiscent of the traditional paradigm. The exemplar of this return to the winner's enclosure of transactional marketing is *Ryanair*. According to an on-line poll, it is regarded as the World's most disliked airline (Ritson 2006) yet in the same year it posted record half-year profits of €329 million for the six months to the end of September, a 39 per cent increase year-on-year (*Business Weekly* 6th November 2006). Some say *Ryanair* cannot last with such strategies but they certainly can until such time as the marketplace changes (again). In the meantime they are obviously doing something right!

There is also a reasonable argument that marketers have over-complicated the discipline with notions of science but there is little hope of mainstream marketing redressing the balance. In the US, the dependence on citations appears to ensure that the same ideas, derived from the same methodologies, in the same top-flight journals, circulating around a largely heterogeneous fraternity keep innovation (and overseas authors) largely at bay. In the UK, problems lie with the much-criticised (but still actively supported) Research

Assessment Exercise (RAE). The peer-review system that supports it still emphasises methodological soundness that may add plenty to reliability and validity but, arguably, little to understanding (McDonald 2003). As Baker (2006), for many years editor and publisher of the *Journal of Marketing Management*, has observed there is an argument that established journals are likely to overlook or reject work that challenges accepted orthodoxies.

There is a good argument for the adoption of a new dominant perception for marketing; one that accepts the plurality of both theoretical marketing (transactional and relational) and research (qualitative and quantitative) paradigms. Marketing judgement is directed by common-sense, moderated by education and experience and tinged with pragmatism. Theories should be thought-provoking but never allowed to dominate thinking. *Vive la difference*.

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