



Why broadened marketing has enriched marketing

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Abstract

The marketing discipline, which emerged in the early 1900s, spent its first 70 years focused on describing and evaluating how for-profit organizations conduct their commercial operations with products and services. Starting in the 1970s, marketing scholars – Philip Kotler, Sidney Levy, Gerald Zaltman, and Richard Bagozzi – wrote a series of articles showing that marketing activities go on in the non-profit sector as well. They proposed that the marketing discipline would be enriched by working with the “marketing” problems of non-profit and public organizations—not just the marketing problems of commercial organizations. This subsequently came to be known as the “broadening of marketing.” A few years later, some marketers challenged the broadening idea as not belonging in the discipline of marketing. The broadening scholars suggested carrying out a referendum with marketing professors. The subsequent vote proved to be overwhelmingly in favor of the broadening movement. More recently, Adel El-Ansary and co-authors (El-Ansary et al. *AMS Review*; 2018) raised the question of whether the broadening work is part of a larger paradigm that might lead to a general theory of marketing.

Keywords Broadening of marketing · Social marketing · Demarketing · Museum marketing · A general theory of marketing · Philip Kotler · Sidney Levy · Gerald Zaltman · Richard Bagozzi

I am delighted to see our marketing profession raising fundamental questions about the role and scope of marketing theory and practice.

I welcome the division of the marketing discipline’s history into four periods. The first period consisted of pioneers talking about marketing functions, institutions, and commodity types (Beckman 1967). The second was marked by work done by Wroe Alderson and others to define marketing both from a management point of view and a social science point of view (Alderson 1957). The third occurred when Kotler and his associates at Northwestern University proposed a broadened concept of marketing to include nonprofit organizations and all exchange activities (Kotler 1972; Kotler and Levy 1969; Levy and Kotler 1969; Kotler and Zaltman 1971). The fourth describes management and marketing systems as interlocking systems of transactions and transvections (Alderson 1965).

Apparently the third period departed from the conventional view of buyer-seller marketing and broadened marketing in a way that made it difficult to know the

boundaries of marketing. It produced anomalies and an “identity crisis” in marketing circles.

I confess that my colleagues Sidney Levy and Jerry Zaltman, along with our student Richard Bagozzi were eager to expand the role and scope of marketing. I had the personal experience of being asked by heads of nonprofit organizations about how marketing could help them find more clients and raise more money. I had the personal experience of individual artists and musicians asking how marketing could help them find and develop a larger audience for their work and attract sponsors. I received requests from museums, performing arts organizations, churches, and others to help them attract more visitors, members, supporters, and donors.

I could have said, that we are academic marketers and couldn’t help them. I could have said, that marketing is mainly for for-profit companies acting as sellers seeking buyers who would purchase their products and services. I could have added, that these organizations on their own would be fine without me if they developed excellent services, priced them right, distributed them in the right channels, and promoted them effectively. I could have told them to go to social science professors in psychology and sociology to get help and answers to their questions.

This type of answer might still puzzle a museum director. The director would tell me that his or her museum competed with other museums and an even broader range of competitors

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including zoos, movies, theaters and other places to spend leisure time. The director would have persisted and said he needed help in deciding (1) how to attract more visitors to the museum, (2) how to price admission, (3) how to find more donors and increase donations, and (4) how to compete better in attracting more works of art. All this means that museums have selling problems. It seemed to me that marketing theory and practice could help them “sell” better.

Is the issue about whether the organization is a for-profit or non-profit organization? It shouldn't be. A non-profit organization is also after “profit” but it defines it in a broader way. The nonprofit organization must cover its costs and produce a surplus that might be used for expansion, attracting more and better staff, and other uses. We don't expect a not-for-profit organization to just balance its cost and revenue. It needs to develop surplus funds to advance its goals. A not-for-profit organization has to think about how much “profit” or surplus to make each year for improving its performance.

Is the issue about how to build a general theory of marketing when marketing techniques are used by so many types of organizations and individuals? I wonder where we got the notion that we need to develop a general theory of marketing. Is there a general theory of physics given that physicists haven't decided whether light is a wave or particles or how to account for quantum mechanics? And is a general theory of marketing likely to be useful for specific producers, distributors or consumers in solving their specific marketing problems?

Is the issue that marketers who work in broadened marketing should have spent their time in developing better theories of buyer-seller-transactions for commercial profit making organizations? I agree that we need to find better answers to how to measure the ROI of using print ads versus digital media or how to improve our use of neural marketing, and other questions. There are those marketers who are excited about conventional marketing problems and don't care about broadened marketing applications. And there are marketers who prefer to work in broadened areas of marketing. In the latter case, they might even discover things that shed new light on conventional marketing. Those who study museum marketing, theater marketing or political marketing may find new tools and ideas that can be applied to commercial marketing.

There are other issues. Marketing has always been viewed as having the task of increasing the level of demand. But we are living in a world where some resources are scarce, such as water. We are not able to increase the supply of water but we could reduce the demand. We could use marketing to convince different consumer markets to consume less water or use water more efficiently. We have described this process of reducing demand as “demarketing” (Kotler and Levy 1971). A general theory of marketing must incorporate “demarketing” as well as “marketing.”

Consumers engage in many activities that are not in their long run interest. They smoke, drink too much alcohol, and

take hard drugs. One might say they are “predictably irrational.” Marketers have to study this behavior. Conventional marketers have had little interest in judging how beneficial a product might be. Some of us would like to help consumers who want to change their behavior. We invented the field of “social marketing” to be a worthwhile sub-division of marketing. Over 4000 professionals in the world are now engaged in social marketing. Conventional marketing thinking would not have normally led to social marketing. Nor would conventional marketing have led to “place marketing,” “person marketing,” or “idea marketing.”

In the 1991 issue of the *Harvard Business Review*, Regis McKenna published his article “Marketing is Everything” (McKenna 1991). It is worth reading. I share his belief that marketing is a broad human activity. Academic marketers need to study marketing behavior as social scientists. They should study the marketing behavior of producers, distributors, and consumers. I would go even further—I wish every citizen would know something about marketing, how to use it to pursue their own objectives, and how to be aware of how they are being marketed to by so many for-profit and not-for-profit organizations.

One possible resolution is to consider the development of two general theories of marketing if general theories are being sought. One group can build a general theory of conventional buyer-seller marketing in the for-profit world. Let them start with Alderson's theories and push them further, or start with a new idea such as “marketing systems.” I would be very happy to see marketers build market systems theory (the fourth evolution).

Another group can work on building a general theory of broadened marketing. They can work with the other groups or separately. I would welcome this.

I work in areas of conventional marketing and broadened marketing. My general textbooks basically describe the latest ideas in conventional marketing. My writings on place marketing, person marketing, religion marketing, arts marketing and idea marketing are done in the broadened marketing area.

I have felt no “identity crisis.” I will go further—I doubt that most academic marketers and professional marketers are living with an “identity crisis.” If they are, we should help them. Or is it just an identity crisis for a small group that saw marketing stretch out from its narrow moorings? I doubt that there is a widespread identity crisis preventing the marketing discipline from advancing.

Marketing today is undergoing rapid change with the digital revolution, the Internet, smart phones, social media, content marketing, customer journey maps, native advertising, brand storytelling, brand equity and resonance, brand association maps, marketing automation, predictive analytics, neural marketing, buyer experience design, insight labs, virtual reality, and omni channel marketing. There is no shortage of intriguing new ideas in marketing to keep us busy for a long time.

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