Journal of Economics Bibliography
econsciences.com
Volume 12 June 2025 Issue 2

Tracing the emergence of broadening marketing proposition: A thorny path

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Abstract. The broadening marketing concept was introduced in 1969 and was initially well-received by marketing scholars. However, during the subsequent four decades, the concept has been increasingly questioned and has divided marketing scholars in to two opposing camps. This paper traces the evolution of the broadening marketing proposition and critically examines the arguments put forward against the broadening proposition..
Keywords. Mega marketing; Broadening proposition; Non profit marketing.
JEL. L30; L31; L33; M30, V31.

1. Introduction

Marketing is derived from the term market, and a market is characterized by a voluntary agreement of the terms of a sale between buyers and sellers. The terms of sale offer a *quid pro quo* that is supported by two functions—communications and exchange. In an open market place both buyers and sellers communicate and search for the best sale-purchase terms they can find and voluntarily exchange property rights on goods and services, using money to facilitate the exchange.

Voluntary exchange (market transaction) occurs in a competitive environment that is comprised of many sellers (organizations) where each seek a competitive advantage in order to maximize their assets. Almost all competing organizations have two alternative strategies for responding to competitive forces: (1) an organization can seek to alter so it fits its offering; or (2) the organization can adjust its offerings to meet authentic customer needs. The former strategy is known as a selling orientation while the latter is known as the marketing concept. Although both strategies are guided by the desire to generate high levels of sales and profit, most marketers believe that a marketing orientation strategy is likely to be more successful in the long term for maximizing profit. A marketing orientation, or simply marketing, was defined initially as:

> The process of discovery and translating customer wants into product and service specifications, and then in turn helping to make it possible for more and more consumers to enjoy more and more these products and services. (Hansen, 1957, p. 2)

Monieson (1988) noted that almost everyone in the marketing field accepted this definition until the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Kotler & Levy (1969a) suggested that the marketing philosophy and marketing tools could be applied with equal effectiveness to the public and nonprofit sector contexts. The purpose of this article is to trace the evolution of the broadening marketing concept and consider the pros and cons.

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2. The Emergence of Broadened Marketing Proposition

Kotler & Levy (1969a) argued that public and nonprofit organizations such as police departments, museums, public schools, and the like, performed "marketing-like activities whether or not they are recognized as such" (p. 11). Kotler & Levy attempted to redefine traditional notions of commercial marketing and to formulate generic definitions of product, target groups, and the other functions of marketing so these concepts could be applicable to the public and nonprofit sectors. Their main thesis suggested that all organizations faced similar marketing problems, were involved in marketing processes, and that business marketing provide a useful set of concepts for solving these problems.

In a rejoinder to Luck's (1969) critical comments on their article, Kotler & Levy (1969b) proclaimed that the concept of a market transaction with its underlying mission of generating profit for businesses was not the defining characteristic of modem marketing. Rather, the ultimate goal of marketing was the satisfaction of consumer needs and the continual adjustment of product offerings to meet these needs. They argued that this process was universal and was found in primitive, socialist, and capitalist societies. They perceived the process to be based on the neutral and "general idea of exchange" which included commercial market transactions and noncommercial services delivered in return for the payment of taxes.

Inspired by the general idea of exchange emanating from the provocative theory of social exchange (Homans 1969), Kotler and his associates modified existing political communication and public advertising theories to formulate the marketing approach comprised of the "4 Ps" model, voluntary exchange, and the marketing philosophy of meeting customers' needs (Bonoma & Zaltman 1978; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Zaltman, Kotler, & Kaufman, 1972). This explanation of the notion of marketing resulted in the term "social marketing" which was defined as:

> The design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research. (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971, p. 5).

In 1972, Kotler formulated his broadened, generic, and axiomatic concept of marketing that was conceptualized as being universal for any type of product or organization (Kotler, 1972). The generic marketing paradigm stated that there were three levels of marketing "consciousness." Consciousness 1 was business marketing concerned with market transactions. This was the traditional notion of marketing from its beginning until the early 1970s. Consciousness 2 was a broadened notion of marketing concerned with nonmarket transactions that do not require explicit payments. Consciousness 3 was those marketing activities that were directed to publics other than customers' markets in an organization's environment. All three levels of marketing consciousness shared the same core concept, the notion of transaction. Kotler (1972) asserted:

> The core concept of marketing is *the transaction. A transaction is the exchange of values between two parties.* The things-of-value need not be limited to goods, services, and money; they include other resources such as time, energy, and feelings. Transactions occur not only between buyers and sellers, and organizations, and clients, but also *between any two parties.* ... Marketing is specifically concerned with how transactions

are created, stimulated, facilitated, and valued, *(p. 49, emphasis original).*

While some marketing educators agreed with the broadening marketing proposition (Nickels, 1974), some did not (Bartels, 1974; Bell & Emory, 1971; Carman, 1973; Luck, 1969; 1974; Tucker, 1974). In response to the emerging criticism, Bagozzi (1975) attempted to modify the generic concept of marketing further, by proposing three types of marketing exchange (restricted, generalized, and complex) and that they could exhibit three classes of meanings (utilitarian, symbolic, and mixed). Bagozzi (1975) saw the essence of nonbusiness marketing as being the concept of complex exchange, which he defined as "a system of mutual relationships between at least three parties [where] each social actor is involved in at least one direct exchange, while the entire system is organized by an interconnecting web of relationships" (Bagozzi, 1975, p. 33). This definition built upon the earlier work of Shapiro (1973) who argued that in contrast to a business concern, the nonbusiness organization had to work with a minimum of two constituencies: the public from whom it received funds and the public to whom it provided services. Bagozzi (1975, p. 39) believed that social marketing was "a subset of the generic concept of marketing" and the generic concept of marketing was a "general function of universal applicability."

The impact of Kotler and his associates and their broadening proposition on the marketing field was impressive. In 1975 alone, Kotler and his colleagues from Northwestern University broadened the theory of consumer behavior (Zaltman & Stemthal, 1975), introduced concepts of political candidate marketing (Kotler, 1975b); developed the concept of nonprofit marketing (Kotler, 1975a); reinforced the generic concept of marketing by introducing concepts from sociological and anthropological studies (Bagozzi, 1975); identified similarities between public and profit sector management (Murray, 1975); and introduced nonprofit marketing into the public administration literature (Kotler & Murray, 1975). In 201I Kotler coined the term “megamarketing” and suggested to broaden the concept of marketing “still further” (Kotler, 2011).

3. Discussion

The controversy was initiated by "apologists" who were concerned with the conceptual identity of the marketing discipline, its proper boundaries, and its classical and traditional interpretation (Arnold & Fisher, 1996). Luck (1969; 1974) was the first apologist to attack Kotler and his associates (Kotler & Levy, 1969b; Kotler & Roberto 1989; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Kotler, 1972; 1973; 1979; Levy, 1959; Levy & Kotler 1969; Levy & Zaltman, 1975). Luck argued that in the public sector there are no freely established terms of sale, and parties (e.g. churches, donors, voters, political parties, and so on) are not given any specific quid pro quo in their transactions. He believed that marketing should be limited to buying-and-selling interactions, and that applying this criterion to nonmarket situations leads to "confusion compounded" (Luck, 1974).

The Kotler-Luck discussion of the scope of marketing stimulated substantial additional debate. Dawson (1969; 1971; 1979), Fisher-Winkelman & Rock (1977), Laczniak & Michie (1979), Lazer & Kelley (1973), and Spratlen (1979) advocated that the central value of marketing should revolve around social responsibility and humanistic concerns, instead of its traditional pragmatic and materialistic orientation and preoccupation with profit. Bell & Emory (1971), Bell (1976), and Etgar & Ratchford (1975) stated that Kotler’s

broadened conceptualization of marketing undermined the classical interpretation of marketing. Arndt (1978) argued that the marketing field should exclude churches, welfare agencies, and cultural organizations from its domain. He insisted that the conceptual foundations for public sector marketing should emanate from the political science and public administration areas. Bartels (1974) pointed out that if marketing is to be regarded as being sufficiently broad to include both public and for-profit organizations then it will, perhaps, reappear as a higher order discipline and under another name. Some have suggested alternative titles for this higher order discipline. The suggestions included "physical redistribution" (Bartels, 1974); "transactional sociology, persuasion, attitude change, social engineering, public relations, or government" (Tucker, 1974); "relationics," "exchangedogy" (Arndt, 1978); and "redistributive justice" (Monieson, 1988).

Bagozzi's (1974; 1975) extension of Kotler's generic marketing conceptualization, which incorporated adaptations of social exchange theory and anthropological approaches, also came under attack. Critical commentators argued that Bagozzi's adaptation of social exchange theory from sociology was inadequate, that he ignored critiques of exchange theory found in the social sciences; and that he annexed almost all of social science, especially social psychology, and claimed it as part of the marketing discipline (Blair, 1977; Ferell & Zey-Ferell, 1977; Ferell & Perachione, 1980; Robin, 1978).

In spite of the debates, Kotler's notion of applying marketing logic to contexts beyond those of business situations was widely accepted by marketing educators (Hunt, 2010; Nickels, 1974; 1978), Bagozzi's (1975) articulation of a formal theory of marketing exchanges won an award as the most outstanding paper at the American Marketing Association's (AMA) First Semi-Annual Theory Conference, and controversy over the issue was declared to be over (Hunt, 1976; Lovelock & Weinberg, 1978). The next decade, however, showed this declaration to be premature, as further constructive criticism was published by Capon (1981); Capon & Mauser (1982), Dixon (1978), Houston & Gasseneimer (1987), Nine (1994); Octen (1983), Pandya & Dholakya (1992), and Rados (1981).

For example, Dixon (1978) argued that Kotler's broadened conceptualization of marketing, and especially social marketing concept, assumed that management of a public or social organization could act independently from elected government representatives, and that organizations were able to determine equity standards of resource allocation relatively independently. According to Dixon (1978), such a conceptualization was as misleading as the Ptolemaic view of the universe that suggested the Sun revolves around the Earth. Dixon (1978) contended that an organization (the Earth) is subordinate to governmental policy (the Sun) established by elected officials, and that it is government who determines equitable allocation of resources in a society.

Rados (1981) elaborated upon Arndt's (1978) argument that "not all exchange is marketing" and took issue with Kotler and Bagozzi arguing that "not all marketing is exchange." Rados (1981) did not accept either Kotler's (1975) or Bagozzi's (1975) conceptualization of public and nonprofit sectors marketing. He challenged it from two perspectives. First, Rados recognized that the economic idea of voluntary exchange is appropriate for describing commercial transactions characterized by bilateral transfers of tangible or intangible resources between any two parties. He agreed with Kotler that the

absence of any control over an individual who had a right to choose, and the inability of a firm to proscribe its products to customers, were the main characteristics of marketing behavior in any democratic society. However, Rados pointed out that in the same democratic society, the most popular method practiced by government to pay for delivered services through the action of its legislative or executive branches was force. This was exemplified by forbidding choices; making selected behavior or purchases illegal and limiting choices through bureaucratic decision rules that restricted the available options. For example, the US federal and state governments require car drivers to use seat belts and drive at a restricted speed; college students to take a prescribed number of courses and follow academic guidelines; and taxpayers to pay their taxes by a certain date. Failure to conform to such rules or laws leads to sanctions and punishments. It is difficult to argue these actions are implemented with a free will so "... the notion of voluntary exchange begins to go off the track" (p. 19).

The second concern expressed by Rados (1981) referred to what was being exchanged for what in noncommercial situations. Mercantile transactions are voluntary bilateral transfers of tangible and intangible resources such as money, goods and services between any two parties. What is being exchanged in such transactions is "rights, the property rights, specifically the exclusive right to [own] ... and the right to transfer that right to someone else" (p. 19). Rados contended, however, that nothing was being exchanged in noncommercial situations. The National Safety Council urges motorists to drive within the speed limit, not to consume alcohol, and to wear seat belts. However, "the driver gives nothing to the council, and the council gives nothing to the driver ... nor does the council seek command over resources as a result of its effort" (p. 20). Similarly, when donors contribute to the art museum or a charity they do not receive in return a "feeling of well-being" as Kotler (1975) postulated. Rados argued that feelings are self-generating, cannot be stored and sent off upon receipt of a donation, and may not emanate from the act of donating to an art museum or charity organization.

Rados excluded force, legislative activity, therapy, wartime propaganda, and inability to refuse to pay taxes and the like from the marketing domain. Echoing the earlier critique of Arndt (1978), Rados concluded that "some marketing is exchange, but not all of it; [and] some exchange is marketing but not all of it" (p. 18). In contrast to Kotler, Rados interpreted marketing as a managerial technology for changing behavior. Marketing seeks to influence mass behavior. To achieve this goal, marketing uses two major methods: persuasive communication and adaptation to existing patterns of behavior. Using these methods "[marketer] A tries to get [customer] B to do his will, where B has freedom to act as he chooses" (p. 17).

It should be noted that Rados' interpretation of nonprofit marketing incorporated some contradictions. While dissenting with Kotler's postulations of exchange relationships in nonprofit organizations and rejecting the notion that feelings constitute exchangeable resources, Rados included Kotler's notion of exchange flows in nonprofit organizations where services and money are exchanged for "thanks" (pp. 12-13). It seems that Rados' work was directed towards finding a compromise with Kotler's position.

Reviewing and comparing Rados' (1981) and Kotler's (1975) interpretation of nonprofit marketing, Capon & Mauser (1982) challenged the appropriateness of the marketing concept in a nonprofit sector context. The

conventional wisdom of marketing advocated by Kotler and his followers (Andreasen, 1995; Hunt, 2010; Nickels, 1978; Lovelock & Weinberg, 1978; 1984; Mokwa, Dawson, & Prieve, 1980; Mokwa & Permut, 1981) suggested that the core task of marketing is to satisfy the publics' needs and wants. Accordingly, the marketing concept (marketing philosophy) as defined in almost every commercial marketing text states that the satisfaction of customer needs is the justification for an agency's existence and its actions.

Hence, alternatives to the concept of marketing - a sales orientation or a product orientation—are seen as inappropriate and likely to lead to a company's demise. The conventional task of marketing is perceived to be a continual adjustment of product or service offerings to meet customer needs (Kotler & Levy, 1969b). In the public sector context, Kotler (1975a) suggested that a sales orientation was indicative of an unresponsive organization, while a responsive organization would be characterized by a marketing orientation.

Capon & Mauser (1982) dispute this conventional view of marketing in the public and nonprofit sector contexts. They contrast business and nonbusiness organizations and argue that business firm and public sector organizations have different objectives. Business firms have a long run objective to survive and in pursuing this objective, firms can change their core mission as many times as it necessary for survival. Change of mission means either adapting the firm's products to match the external environment (the marketing concept) or adapting the environment to match the firm's product (the selling concept). Most marketers favor adapting the marketing concept, that is, changing a firm's core mission, services, or target markets in order to best match its resources to environmental opportunities. For example, a commercially oriented recreation center could totally change its service offering, increase prices, reduce costs, target high-income market segments in a different geographical location, and abandon low-income local markets that were not contributing to the center's long run survival objective.

Capon & Mauser (1982, p. 128) argue that this notion of satisfying customer needs and wants, or the application of the marketing concept in a public organization is "absurd ... as far as pursuing its core mission is concerned." They distinguish between *extant* and *core* missions of public and nonprofit organizations. The extant mission reflects the activities of public and nonprofit organizations that are designed to improve relationships with publics. For example, a church can provide scouting, women's clubs, and soup kitchens to cement relationships with believers. A public university may modify its course offering to serve students better. A city park and recreation department may introduce new recreation services in response to citizens' requests. The extant mission, and nature of activities associated with it, may change over time as relationships with publics improve or deteriorate. However, the core mission, which is more important than the extant missions, is less likely to change. Churches and political parties do not change their core religious doctrines and political philosophies. Public universities do not change the length of semester or core course requirements because some students want them shorter, fewer, or cheaper. Park and recreation departments do not provide highly profitable services such as casinos or striptease bars because these contradict their core social mission to deliver healthy recreation opportunities. Rather these organizations attempt to persuade their members and publics either to adopt the core political, educational, religious, or community doctrines and philosophies, or request

them to drop their membership with the organization.

Capon & Mauser (1982) argue that for a nonprofit or public sector organizations, the appropriate behavior relating to the core mission is "persuasion to its point of view." For other areas of activities and services defined by the extant mission, either a marketing or sales orientation may be appropriate. A similar position regarding the role of marketing in public organizations was taken by Hutton (1996) who recommended reconsideration of the fallacious understanding of relationships between marketing and public relations suggested by Kotler & Mindag (1978). Comparing Kotler's definition of generic marketing with definitions of integrated marketing communications (IMC) and relationship marketing, Hutton (1996) found them to be almost identical and, that all of them were, "a definition of public relations, as it has been practiced by more enlightened organizations for decades" (p. 158). Hutton suggested that public organizations adopt a "separate but equal" model of relationships between public relations and marketing. Consistent with Capon & Mauser (1982), Hutton (1996) suggested that public relations were the appropriate vehicle for implementing persuasion and the core mission, while marketing was more appropriate for the extant mission with its focus on physical distribution, capacity utilization, new product development, and the like.

These critical works stimulated further discussion of the conceptual underpinnings of broadened marketing proposition. Walsh (1994) accepted Rados' dissension with the notion of voluntary exchange in the nonprofit and public sectors, as did Pandya & Dholakya (1992) who suggested as an alternative the institutional theory of exchange informed by Arndt's (1981) political economy theory of marketing systems.

4. Conclusion

Three decades later, after introducing the broadening idea, authors of the broadening marketing proposition recognized:

> The broadening idea created a stir. It was criticized by some people as obvious, wrongheaded, and even as evil. One piece (Laczniak & Michie 1979) in the*Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* accused us of creating social disorder by distorting the definition of marketing. (Levy, 2003, p. 5).

The overall status of the idea of applying marketing principles to contexts beyond business situations in the marketing literature was perhaps best summarized by Kerin (1996, p.6). In his comprehensive review of outstanding contributions published during the last 60 years in *the Journal of Marketing,* Kerin characterized the works of Kotler, Levy, and associates (Kotler, 1972; Kotler & Levy, 1969a; 1969b; Kotler & Zaltman, 1971) as "controversial."

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