

UNCERTAINTIES DURING THE EVOLUTION OF MARKETING

Dr. Mesut iek, Yalova University

mcicek@yalova.edu.tr

Abstract

In the literature, there are several issues regarding to marketing which has not been finalized yet during the decades. In this context, the objective of this paper is to represent the uncertainties of the marketing during the development of marketing thought. To indicate that effectively, the author will try to ascertain the answers of the following critical questions providing several examples: “Is marketing a distinct field in social sciences?” “Is marketing a science?” “What is the scope of marketing?” and “Do the marketing practitioners and academics collaborate to be more effective” “Is marketing losing its territories”.

PAZARLAMANNIN EVRİM SÜRECİNDE KARŞILAŞILAN BELİRSİZLİKLER

Özet

Literatürde, pazarlama bilim dalı ile ilgili yıllardır nihayete erdirilememiş birçok konu mevcuttur. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmanın amacı pazarlama biliminin ve teorisinin gelişme ve evrilme süresince karşılaşılan belirsizlikleri ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bunu daha etkin bir şekilde ortaya koyabilmek için yazar aşağıdaki kritik soruları teorik olarak ve örnekler aracılığı ile cevaplamaya çalışacaktır. “Pazarlama sosyal bilimlerde farklı bir bilim dalı mıdır?”, “Pazarlama Bilim midir?”, “Pazarlamanın kapsamı nedir?”, Pazarlama bazı alanlarını kayıp mı ediyor?”, “Daha etkin olabilmek için pazarlama akademisyenleri ve pratisyenleri iş birliğine mi gitmelidirler?”.

1. Introduction

Dubin (1969, p:112) in his book, *Theory Building*, claimed that “When scientists from other disciplines attack problems of a less well-developed discipline, its practitioners are likely to resist the invasion and refuse to give credence to the invader's theories. This is happening increasingly as physical and biological scientists encroach upon the territory of social sciences”. One of the main reasons is that the scientists of natural sciences argue that the social sciences mostly consist of theoretical laws which are not as reliable and generable as the empirical laws (Bartels, 1951). There is a very similar debate within the social sciences. One of the most important fields that suffer from the pressure of other social sciences is marketing. During the evolution of marketing, it went through an identity crisis. Consequently, marketing has started to lose its branches; even they are positioned at the core of it such as distribution or logistics. The objective of this paper is to represent the situation of the marketing during the development of marketing thought. To indicate that effectively, the author will try to ascertain the answers of the following critical questions: “Is marketing a distinct field in social sciences?” “Is marketing a science?” “What is the scope of marketing?” and “Do the marketing practitioners and academics collaborate to be more effective”, and “Is marketing losing its territories”.

2. The Nexus among Marketing and Other Disciplines

Science is mainly divided into two parts as Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. The two types of sciences have their perspective, strengths and weaknesses along fundamentally different dimensions. However, it's a common belief that there is a kind of a war between these two sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Natural scientists claimed that they produce highly reliable knowledge by using well established methods, while social science do not (Rosenberg, 1988) and they also stated that social scientist envy natural sciences (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Furthermore, they encroach upon the territory of the social sciences (Dubin, 1969). On the other hand, social sciences put barriers against natural scientist. For instance, Dubin (1969) states that although Rashevsky's mathematical models of human behaviors which employ laws of the highest level of efficiency; they have been ignored by the social scientists.

On the contrary, there was an exact opposite relationship between the marketing and other social sciences related to the theory development stages, because, marketing was constructed on theories of other social sciences. Marketing which is considered as a social science was begun as a discipline of economics right after 1900 (Kotler, 1972; Harris, 1996) and it had no identity of its own (Bartels, 1983). Its first core concept was exchange and marketing was constructed on exchange theory (Arnt,1983) which was even considered in the field of economics (Levy, 1976). As marketers discovered that economic theories were not sufficient to explain variations of individual purchase behavior (Harris, 1996, Baker, 1995), marketing has broadened its scope by integrating other social science's theories such as psychology, sociology, accounting, law,

production, engineering and political sciences (Bartels, 1951). Bergen (1992) also claimed that marketing discipline had a long and productive tradition of creatively borrowing adapting and synthesizing constructs from a variety of social sciences. During this broadening period the marketing discipline experienced an “Identity Crisis”. The reasons of this crisis were not only the major changes occurring in the social, technological and economic environment but also its own rapid growth and expanding influence (Sweeney, 1972). Consecutively, in the realm of marketing some questions were emerged and criticized such as “Is Marketing a Science?”, “What is the scope of marketing?” and “Do the marketing practitioners and academics collaborate to be more effective?” In the next part, it will be striven to find the answers of these questions.

3. Marketing as a Science

Marketing scholars have debated whether or not marketing is a science (Converse 1945, Alderson and Cox 1948, Bartels 1951, Baumol 1957, Buzzell 1963, Taylor 1965, Hunt 1976, O'Shaughnessy and Ryan, 1979). Prior to this discussion, the definition of science and its essentials will be discussed. The nature of science is fuzzy that the authors adopt different perspectives and its scope has changed in time. For example, in ancient Greece any ordered and teachable body of knowledge was viewed as science. Later, in Europe it was viewed as all branches of analytic and empirical study. (O'Shaughnessy and Ryan, 1979). One of the general accepted definition of science made by Wartofsky (1969, p.23) as “An organized or systematic body of knowledge, using general laws or principles, that it is knowledge about the world; and that it is that kind of knowledge concerning which universal agreement can be reached by scientists sharing a common language (or languages) and common criteria for the justification of knowledge claims and beliefs”. In addition, the essentials of the science are to have a distinct matter drawn from the real world which is described and classified, presume underlying uniformities and regularities interrelating the subject matter, and adopt intersubjectively certifiable procedures for studying the subject matter (Hunt, 1976, p.27).

Whether marketing is a science or not mostly depend on the author’s viewpoint and approaches (Baker, 1995). O'Shaughnessy and Ryan (1979) stated that marketing literature is only consistent in demonstrating the disagreement on the status of marketing science. Some authors claim that marketing is not and never will be a science, the second group advocate that marketing is a science and the last view is the marketing has not been a science yet, but it has a potential. Vaile (1949) and Hutchinson (1951) was two of the first supporters of the idea that marketing is not a science (Baker,1995). Vaile (1949, p.522) claimed that “when all is said and done, marketing will remain an art in which innovation and extravaganza will continue to play an important and unpredictable part. In addition, Hutchinson (1951, p.289) rejected that the marketing is a science made critics of Alderson and Cox (1948) and

believed that “There is real reason, however, why the field of marketing has been slow to develop a unique body of theory. It is a simple one: marketing is not a science. It rather an art or a practice, and as such much more closely resembles engineering, medicine, and architecture than it does physics, chemistry, or biology. The members of marketing are called “practitioners” and not scientist”. Bartels (1951) explained the reasons why authors did not consider the marketing as a science as follows; the objectives of science are not always achieved in marketing study, it is not always been the intent of marketers to evolve a science of marketing, the marketing is too narrow a field of investigation to be regarded as a science, there is no high degree of uniformity in marketing social sciences, there are no highly reliable generalizations because human behavior cannot be predicted, subjective factors do not yield objective knowledge it is more descriptive than theoretical and analytical.

On the other hand, some of the marketing academics alleged that the marketing is a science (Robin, 1970; Kotler, 1972; Hunt, 1976, and so on). Hunt (1976) claimed that marketing meets the requirements of being a science as follows; positive dimension of marketing pursues the objectives of science, marketing has a unique focus in the transaction, the positive dimension of marketing has led to the discovery of uniformities and regularities among phenomena, positive marketing uses scientific method. In parallel with this perspective Bartels (1951) asserted that marketing can be considered as a science. Because; marketing has scientific and philosophic characteristics, group pattern constitute uniformity sufficient for making valid and reliable predictions and generalizations, data classification is possible in marketing and experimentation is an increasing application in marketing research. Apart from this debate, another perspective is that whether marketing is a science or not dependent on the scope of marketing.

4. The Scope of Marketing

After the emergence of marketing as a discipline in the early 1900's, the scope of marketing has changed and developed (Harris, 1996). Marketing evolved through a commodity focus (farm products, minerals, manufactured goods, services); an institutional focus (producers, wholesalers, retailers, agents); a functional focus (buying, selling, promoting, transporting, storing, pricing); a managerial focus (analysis, planning, organization, control); and a social focus (market efficiency, product quality, and social impact), each new focus had its advocates and its critics. Marketing emerged each time with a refreshed and expanded self-concept (Kotler, 1972, p.46). However, the marketing academics and practitioners disagreed on the scope of marketing. One of the most important breakthroughs related to the scope of marketing was the Kotler and Levy's (1969) article named “Broadening the Concept of Marketing”. The authors claimed that the scope of marketing must broadened to include non-business organizations such as police departments, churches, hospitals and public schools which can use the marketing mix tools.

On the other hand, at that time another concept, societal or social marketing, emerged related to the broadening concept of marketing (Hunt, 1976). Lazer (1969, p.9) discussed that “There need be no wide chasm between the profit motive and social responsibility, between corporate marketing objectives and social goals, between marketing actions and public welfare. What is required is a broader perception and definition of marketing than has hitherto been the case—one that recognizes marketing's societal dimensions and perceives of marketing as more than just a technology of the firm. For the multiple contributions of marketing that are so necessary to meet business challenges, here and abroad, are also necessary to meet the nation's social and cultural problems”. In addition, Kotler and Zaltman (1971, p.5) used the term social marketing and defined it 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 (1972) and Hunt (1976) proposed models to classify the marketing regarding the boundaries of marketing. According to the Kotler's three consciousness model; Consciousness one, which was the traditional one, that marketing is essentially a business subject. In consciousness two, there is no payment required for a transaction and marketing appropriate for all the organizations that has customers. According to the most broadened level, consciousness three, marketing is related area for all the organizations with all their public, not only the customers. In this level transaction is defined as the exchange of values between two parties. On the other hand, Hunt (1976) proposed three dichotomies model to classify the marketing phenomena. According to this model, all marketing phenomena were categorized using the three categorical dichotomies of (1) profit sector/nonprofit sector, (2) micro/macro, and (3) positive/normative. Here the questions to be answered Is marketing for profit or both profit and non-profit companies? Do the marketing activities have micro (individual units) or macro (societies) scope? Does the perspective of marketing descriptive (positive) or prescriptive (normative). Actually, this debate also affected the answer of the question “Is marketing a Science?” If the marketing is restricted to profit/normative/micro perspective, then marketing cannot be considered as a science. If the scope of marketing broadened to the Non-profit/positive/macro definition, marketing is considered as a science (Hunt, 1976). Furthermore, the scope of marketing differed according to the academics and practitioners. The academics agreed on the broadened of scope of marketing to non-profit/positive/macro. However, the practitioners like Lewitt, Buzzell, Vaile and Taylor would suggest that marketing should be restricted to the profit/normative/micro definition (Baker, 1995). To clarify the debate between the academics and practitioners, it must be zoom in to their relationships.

5. The Relationship between the Marketing Academics and Practitioners

For decades, there is a distance between the practitioners and academics of marketing due to conflict of aims, procedures, concept of scientific and professional standards, etc. (Levy, 1976). Baker (1995, p.20) claimed that “Practitioners has tended to dismiss marketing theory as irrelevant or an impossible dream since the various assumptions made by the theorists can always be disputed, marketing models are often seen as reductionistic and therefore useless, concentrating on the individual as oppose the aggregate factors like market demand, and static equilibrium models are worthless in the dynamic real world”. Furthermore, Levy (1976) stated that practitioners see theorist as ivory tower thinkers, impractical people who do not know anything about the professional marketing world. As an expected result, marketing practitioners neither subscribe nor read academic marketing journals (Hunt, 2002). However, Practitioners must be related with the outcomes of the marketing academicians which lead to meta-language that creates clarifying effect, learning in new situations and better frames of reference which can also be called as decision making models generated by the scientists (Zaltman, Lemasters and Hoffing, 1982). In the extant literature, some authors argued to separation of ways, whereas others proposed several solutions to solve this problem (Levy, 1976). Baker (1995) stated that marketing should develop a theory both to improve operational performance as well as to satisfy an intellectual desire to evolve an explanation of a confused world. Thus, practitioners will speed up and improve their decision making capability, also they will have more time to solve other problems. In addition, to closed this gap Davidson (1975) proposed that marketing education cannot take place only in classroom but also requires clinical expertise, and also both marketing practitioners and academics accept the fact that marketing is a doing profession not solely a technical science.

It is almost impossible for the marketing academics and practitioners to agree on the answer of these questions both inter se and inter alia. While they were struggling on these topics, they started to lose their core aspects.

6. Is Marketing Losing Its Territories?

The Extent of marketing has been narrowed while seemed to be broadened because of the exclusion from marketing of elements not directly related to exchange and promotion. (Bartels, 1983). He continued that marketing excluded both agricultural marketing and physical distribution. It was a surprise, because physical distribution of the goods was one of the main responsibilities of the marketing discipline (Clark, 1923 cited in Gripsrud, 2004; Kotler, 1972; Harris, 1996) and even it was one of the 4P's named as place. During the 1950s, the physical distribution aspect of marketing became the domain of a new academic discipline, usually called physical distribution, or logistics (Gripsrud, 2004). In this period, physical distribution divided into two aspects that marketing would be responsible from the social aspects of exchange, on the contrary logistics would be responsible the physical aspects of exchange (Bartels,

1988 cited in Gripsrud, 2004). Namely, marketing focused on more managerial approach, while logistics focused on functional approach. However, logisticians had gradually widened their responsible area to include social considerations in management decision making (Bartels, 1983). Finally, logistics has been considered as a distinct science and it has its own theories (Jahre and Persson, 2008). Insomuch that, in the last decades there have been several articles related to the integration (re-integration) of logistics and marketing in order to provide more efficient and effective customer service performance (Rinehart, Cooper and Wagenheim, 1989; Alvarado and Kotzab, 2001). Gripsrud (2004, pp.203) claimed that “Distribution channels may once again become an important research area in the marketing discipline. However, the approach, theory base, focus and unit of analysis in present channels research in marketing all need to be scrutinized if a revitalization of distribution research is to be achieved. The challenge is to develop a framework and a theoretical basis that can bring marketing back in the forefront in this area.”

7. Conclusion

Marketing has evolved very rapidly. However, this evolution, concurrently, has given harm by itself and marketing experienced a crisis. Some of the main reasons are the amorphous scope of marketing and the disagreement clash of ideas between the marketing academics and practitioners. Practitioners neither use the information generated by the academics and nor read the marketing journals. In addition, they argue that the scope of marketing should be narrowed and has a profit based perspective. On the other hand, it is claimed that academics do not target to produce practical information. Namely, instead of collaboration there is a separation of them. Practitioners generate needed information and use by themselves, while academics produce information and this information is just used for academic purpose. However, in order to improve the concept of marketing and make it more beneficial, an intimacy must be developed between the practitioners and academics. Afterwards, they together give shape to a uniform marketing concept.

Herewith, the realm of marketing will gain strength and capable of defend its terrain. At present, it looks almost all its territories are under attack. For example, it has already lost logistics and supply chain. In addition, communication, advertising, procurement, public relations, production are claimed to be considered as a distinct field or science. It can also be understood by looking at the newly opening departments in the universities. When the curriculums of these departments are analyzed, it is seen obviously that most of the courses and topics are closely related to marketing. Accordingly, before losing its main areas, the marketing academics and practitioners should collaborate and ponder to prevent marketing to be annihilated.

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