

Contemporary Issues in Marketing

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Marketing Under Threat

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In this article I wish to address the shift which has taken place in marketing in recent years whereby consumers have in effect switched places with the former 'marketers'. They now have far more power than was previously possible, have access to far more information than was previously admissible and marketing is changing as a result; indeed it has to if it is to escape obsolescence. As well as changes in consumer behaviour, marketing thought has also evolved in response; such that it is outgrowing the confines of its organisational silos. I wish to examine this state of affairs initially in a broad sense, and then consider the responses marketers have operationalised to keep the marketing concept alive; albeit perhaps in a different form. If we are to keep marketing a credible force in the future of the organisation, marketing must evolve.

Part 1 – Marketing Under Threat?

“The boundary between the firm and the outside world is dissolving...leading to the possibility that the traditional notion of marketing as a distinct functional area... is being rendered obsolete”

Glazer 1991

On a general level, there's no doubt that advances and ubiquity of the internet and IT have given rise to this power shift, with consumers now easily able to share and solicit opinions from other consumers and not rely upon traditional communications when evaluating purchase decisions. It could be argued that marketing is thus becoming irrelevant, as consumers no longer require, nor respond to it in its traditional sense.

Over the last few years, Marketing as a discipline in academia and as a function within organisations is indeed being contested. The argument goes that perhaps marketing is becoming irrelevant; becoming out-dated and losing its place as a unit in the modern organisation. This is in part inevitably due to the aforementioned changing consumer environment, but also because marketing does not seem to have had input to advances in other areas of management such as strategy and information technology. Similarly, Piercy (2002) predicts that marketing may indeed be losing its territory; first as an academic discipline, but also in the organisation. He says that the traditional domains of marketing such as Market Research and Sales Management for example will be re-classified into Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and thus taught by academics in IT and information systems. Similarly, Consumer Behaviour will migrate to the domain of psychology and will be taught as such, and so on. Thus it appears marketing is disbanding due in part to its revised holistic nature; marketing is increasingly a pan-company affair (Moorman & Rust 1999) which is the concern of every agent in the chain of value delivery. Indeed, the problems faced by marketing have been because firms have *not* recognised that marketing is more than a discrete, functional unit and thus, the structure has restrained the marketing concept. As Piercy (2002:233) has observed “strategy has followed structure”, however new practices by true market-led firms are changing this.

Let us briefly revisit the traditional marketing concept as it was defined in 1960 by the likes of such greats as Drucker and Kotler (Brown 1995). Kotler for instance, defined the concept as being based in exchanges, suggesting that *value* is embedded in the material product itself. This has continued to be the dominant paradigm for marketing until very recently due to the existence of a gap between producer and consumer. This gap, prior to the post-Industrial Revolution era characterised by mass production and communication, did not always exist; as in the pre-marketing days of the 'bartering' economy. The consumer would go direct to the producer of the good or service and in return for that there would be the exchange of something of value to the producer. There was no mediation and no need for marketing.

This 'gap' which then opened up during the era of mass production and targeted segmentation exists in varying dimensions. Of course, there was a great geographical distance between the two parties and even the *product* itself is often disparate to the *actual* requirements of the consumer, largely because of the *compromises* inherent in *segmentation* (something we'll come back to later). In addition to the place and product, there is clearly a gap in the promotion — the 'selling' approach. The goods were produced separately to the consumer and there's therefore been a subsequent need to simply shift the products, again, signifying a one-way *make-and-sell* paradigm which is somewhat disconnected from the market and I would suggest, antithetical to the marketing concept. Finally, the price; simply, the price would be determined again by the segment which probably will not ideally suit the consumer at an *individual* level.

These are symptoms of the syndrome of mass production, which by design requires markets to be economically viable in size and so the marketing is conducted to conform to this by using segmentation techniques to leverage efficiency in selling the product. The logic being that these segments will respond differently to different communications and product attributes. Even the marketing staple *four-Ps* are inherently *product* driven (Vargo & Lusche 2004) which are widely used to teach marketing and so perpetuate the *make-and-sell* paradigm. The four Ps epitomise the *mass* in marketing. Value is assumed to be *embedded* into the product itself, and value is thought of as being distributed *as* the product's utility for the consumer.

In light of this illustration of the chasm between producers and consumers, we can see that marketing has been about reducing this gap by the creative mixing of these elements, but still, there has always been the underlying paradigm of transactions, exchanges, targeting and differentiated segmentation techniques. This is a so-called push/pull model which produces goods to fit a need which is then aggressively promoted and distributed. Even though this approach does encapsulate to an extent the marketing concept of value and market-focus, it is increasingly outdated. It may be shocking to think that the marketing concept as we know it has existed in largely unchanged form for around 50 years, and hasn't been fundamentally shaken up since (Woodall 2007).

Largely facilitated by technological advances, marketers have since developed a fine ability to segment consumers by demographic and psychographic 'profiles' into ever-finer groups, and given the fundamental shifts in the consumer environment aforementioned and the power increase they have enjoyed, surely it's time for an update to this increasingly-out-dated paradigm.

But it shouldn't be forgotten that while advances and ubiquity of IT has driven this upsurge in consumer power, it has also been used by marketers as a *means* of closing this gap by harnessing such techniques as CRM (Customer Relationship Management), micro-marketing and Mass Customisation which has given rise more recently to a very contemporary, almost post-modern marketing paradigm of customer *advocacy* — a departure from the traditional value-exchange paradigm. It would seem that marketing has done such a good job of closing the gap between producer and consumer and making offerings absolutely optimal by using IT, that it has inadvertently rendered itself endangered.

So while the industrial revolution and mass production gave rise to the marketing concept, so the *information* revolution might see its decline.

What we're perhaps seeing is the realisation of Levitt's prophetic (1960) classic article *Marketing Myopia* in which he warns of the dangers and repeated mistakes of corporations who define their business by *product* as opposed to the value and utility sought by the customer, citing the demise of various industries to others who are not direct competitors *per se*, but developed products which do the job *better* and at greater value to the customer.

Levitt introduces the uncomfortable reality that firms should seek to bring about their *own* product's obsolescence in order to remain in control; otherwise competitors will do this for them! Firms should therefore think more *generically* about their product or service; lest another offering from a completely 'unrelated' industry may fill the gap far better, thus killing the original firm's offering outright. Levitt also crucially reminds us that the product is a consequence of the marketing, not vice versa, where the product comes first and the market needs *second*. In fact, very often with mass-produced goods, marketing is neglected in favour of *selling*, whereas if the firm was truly market-oriented, there'd be a focus on *marketing* which would focus on the needs of the *market* primarily and seek to delivery value by way of the product; a product that people will *want* to buy. The product would thus be determined and perhaps even specified by the buyer, *not* by the seller.

This prophetic insight from Levitt leads us to the new paradigm of marketing mentioned earlier, whereby the producer and consumer engage in two-way communication, exchanges become processes and relationships, and the consumer co-creates their own value. This will be looked at in part 2.

Levitt (1960), in the author's view essentially predicted the change in the paradigm from the post-industrial revolution model of segmenting and mass-production towards relationships and value co-creation.

It's already been mentioned that the ideals of differentiated segmentation are perhaps antithetical to the marketing concept. Segmentation is always going to be about compromise, even with smaller and smaller segments enabled by IT.

The significance here is that as consumers *do* have much more power, firms should not rely on the dated paradigm of segmenting markets, distributing value embedded *in* products and *selling* mass-produced goods which only fit rigid pre-determined segments. Instead one can consider *service* as being a source of value and *products* as merely being the vehicle for service, something heavily purported by Vargo & Lusche (2004). A focus on the actual needs of the consumer *at and individual level* will be crucial to success — and that's 'needs' defined at a generic level, not by product. Market fragmentation demands it and technological advances now enable it.

In light of this new state of affairs in a fragmented market place (or rather market *space*), where relationships supersede transactions, it seems sensible to suggest that there is now no need for marketing. A victim, perhaps of its own success in closing the gap between producer and consumer.

Part 2 – The Evolving Marketing Concept Continuum

“Marketing’s hairline may be receding, its eyesight and hearing may be imperfect...cosmetic surgery may well be necessary...but there’s life in the old dog yet!”

Brown (1995)

“The central economic contribution of marketing is efficient matching and connecting - matching supply to demand and connecting buyers to sellers ... But right now, the environment in which this task is undertaken — and the best means to achieve it — are changing, rapidly and fundamentally”

Mitchell (2006)

That was Mitchell referring to the gap-closing role (Holbrook & Hulbert (2002) of old marketing and he rightly points out that the consumer landscape has changed. He suggests that the era of marketing being about 'messaging' to the consumer is over. He appears to allude to what Levitt (1960) mentioned previously – consumers search for information which deliver the best value and will not seek information *designed* to be bias to a company. This has quite profound implications for the way marketing is conducted. It means firms may have to *earn* consumers' trust and attention, and since consumers are now so used to being riled (Brown 2004) this may prove difficult; the consumer is distrustful of the well-meaning marketer. Information should be provided which fits the consumers' agenda instead of that of the marketer, even if that means connecting them to a competitors' product. Marketing therefore becomes an agent of the *consumer* instead of the producer (Achrol & Kotler 1999) and the marketing itself becomes a source of value; this proposition is almost the opposite of what marketing has always been.

Gummerson (2002) has cited the 'theory mess' and lack of direction and codification in marketing theory presented in textbooks. He has spoken up about that which restrains free thinking in marketing; the apparent obligation to become familiar with the existing arcane marketing theory and pick out a 'storyline' for marketing so far, when in fact, such linear development is a folly. However, first let us attempt to pick out some general paradigms of the past in order to contextualise the current situation of marketing.

The vocal opinions of the potential demise of the present transaction-based marketing paradigm (Mitchell 2006; Piercy 2002:234; Webster 2002; Grönroos 1999, Woodall 2007; Brown 1995) have risen out of a move away from discrete marketing departments and out-dated methods which have characterised the discipline over the decades, towards a more process-based, relational view of value-creation. This has been driven by advances in IT, a key component of CRM.

The paradox here is that while IT has empowered the consumer, it has simultaneously empowered the corporation to have a more unique relationship with the consumer, which suggests that 'marketing' is far from dead; it just needs re-defining. Marketing has always chased corporate performance metrics of success, those which have *zero* relation to the customer — marketing now needs to adapt itself to the *customers'* metrics of success instead of its own (Mitchell 2006; Piercy 2002:263). This disparity between the consumer's and the organisation's metrics of performance are evident in the marketing staple: segmentation.

2.1 The Broken Paradigm of Segmentation

Zolkiewski (2004) raises the important issue of the reliance upon segmentation. She calls it into question and suggests we should move away from one-size-fits all and towards understanding the needs of individual consumers. If organisations are addressing consumers in groups of homogenised psychographic values, ignoring the idiosyncrasies of human purchasing behaviour, can they really be said to have a relationship? Any repeat purchases and B2B-esque 'relationships' in consumer markets may well be nothing more than inertia and barriers to exit created by the seller (Williams & Visser 2002). Christensen (et al 2005) have also commented on the "broken paradigm" of segmentation, calling again upon Levitt's (1960) suggestions that consumers do not conform to the criteria that corporations use to target the 'average' consumer. Segmentation is thus (almost by design) about compromise (Holbrook & Hulbert 2002) and as markets fragment, less and less relevant (Firat & Shultz 1997). These corporate metrics mean nothing to the consumer, who isn't seeking a product per se, but *value*. Segmentation encourages managers to define 'their business' in terms of product categories and thus totally miss the *real* market and their competition from the *consumer's* point of view; organisations all-to-often try to define the consumer rather than 'the job'. This contemporary insight is very similar to Levitt's prophecy of companies not seeing the *real* market. Product improvements come from understanding the job, not the consumer's 'demographic'; as evidenced by successful brands such as Google, which was designed for the job of searching, not for a 'search demographic' (Christensen et al 2005). Gummerson (2002) has commented on pre-'relationships' marketing

as *not* being customer centric, merely focused on anonymous masses rather than humans. Rather more humorously, Mitchell (1995) likens segmentation to the faux science of astrology, subverting the practice in his earnest comparison of segmentation and the arbitrary criteria employed by astrology.

Bearing in mind the 'market-constraining' effect of thinking in segments, Wright & Esslemont (1994) pointed out that "targeting is logically supported only in the rare occasions where an organisation can only operate in one segment...there is no logical reason and no empirical evidence to support the assertion that it is the best approach... targeting does not necessarily give the best overall market response".

One must ask the question – why does marketing willingly accept the futile assumptions made of our segments?

Osarenkhoe & Bennani (2007) highlight a more philosophical aspect of the marketing concept. They suggest that not only should marketers deliver value efficiently and more effectively than competitors, but also in way that enhances customer and society's well-being — something they refer to as *societal marketing*'. This notion is very similar to the ideas of customer advocacy (Urban 2005), a distinct move from transaction-based marketing, lending a 'higher social purpose' to the marketing concept (Kotler & Levy 1969).

So, given that segmentation is flawed and perhaps at the end of its life (Wright 1996), and that marketing has a societal well-being mandate, IT has driven a change in approach. A two-way dialogue is now possible with the consumer and this has started to come to the fore of marketing's on-going development. Segments are increasingly old-hat, as companies are able to serve 'segments of one'. So what are the responses the discipline has made?

2.2 The Shift to Relationships

Relationship management (RM) is one possible response to the 'old marketing' of transactions — it has been born out of globalisation of business, technological advances and shorter product life cycles (Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007). I'd like to think of this concept as *Marketing 2.0* in this sense. It holds that customer satisfaction and subsequent retention is more profitable than acquisition and that satisfied consumers have a lifetime value which exceeds the value of individual transactions (Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007; Day 2000; Raval & Grönroos 1996). Day (2000) has highlighted the importance of the successful relationship-building initiative and ties this to the constitution of a barrier to entry; relationships are difficult to copy and foster. He further adds "The best defence is to stay ahead by continuously learning and innovating, and then make it as difficult as possible for rivals to grasp the organisational recipe". This bears a strong resemblance to Levitt's (1960) theory.

IT has clearly been a key aspect of the development of this approach and with more advanced CRM systems, if properly implemented (Chen & Popovich 2003) consumer data can be accessed and shared more easily to give a '360-degree view' of the customer each time they make contact, and thus cost efficiencies

can be realised and the service can more accurately relate to the individual (Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007). It enables customers to be an individual and not treated as a segment; the business model is thus built around the customer and *their* interpretation of value. This post-segmentation paradigm focuses more on values, likes and dislikes rather than the out-dated, anonymous metrics of geography and demographic (McCole 2004). CRM implementation is therefore a key part of mass-customisation and represents a move away from the differentiated segmentation paradigm.

While this is not a discussion of CRM implementation, some point out the problems of successfully applying CRM. Fundamentally, CRM implies a whole business model, not just a more efficient way of targeting messages as per the push/pull model (Urban 2005; Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007) — it is a shift from managing products, to managing customers.

A key point here is that CRM requires cross-functional integration, and “silo-based myopia must be replaced with a customer focus” enabling collaboration between departments (Chen & Popovich 2003). This is perhaps why CRM has a high failure rate; because firms do not see CRM implementation as a ‘tripod’ of strategy, philosophy, and technology (Swift 2000: 30; Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007).

This ‘relationship’ approach is the premise for the new paradigm of marketing (Holbrook & Hulbert 2002; Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007; Woodall 2004; Vargo & Lusch 2004), the latter of whom incidentally also critiques marketer’s historical pre-occupation with tangible product attributes embedded in the *four-Ps* as we suggested earlier. He notes the absence of the service dimension from conventional marketing thought as it is thought of as “the domain of others”; but without this aspect, marketers do not have the full perspective of the customer experience. This, Woodall argues, is why ‘old marketing’ is ideologically focused on persuasion rather than performance, or ‘selling’ rather than ‘co-creation of value’. There’s a seeming contradiction too pointed out by Moorman & Rust (1999), who suggest that marketing academics do not give appropriate voice to the post-purchase aspects of marketing and service delivery, which is odd considering the supposed importance of satisfaction in the marketing concept. Gummesson (2002) has also suggested that customer relationships and service aspects of marketing have not been integrated into marketing theory.

2.3 Offensive and Defensive Archetypes

It is useful to consider Woodall’s (2004) discussion of defensive and offensive marketing approaches as these may be the ‘two sides’ of external marketing as customer *retaining* and customer *acquiring*, respectively. Offensive marketing is more focused on pre-purchase promising, communication, and product features. Woodall argues that value *delivering* as opposed to value *promising* is more important to retention as is relationship *building* instead of communications (or messaging (Mitchell 2006)) and product *attributes* which characterise ‘defensive’ marketing. This, he argues, is where value resides; in the attributes of the product and service, not just in tangible features. Satisfaction will be derived from both the expectations

formed by the offensive marketing, and the post-consumption perception formed by defensive marketing. Defensive marketing should therefore be more fully integrated into the dominant offensive strategy as they are both required for satisfaction, and full realisation of the marketing concept (Woodall 2004). This view is also proposed by Vargo & Lusche (2004) in their discussion of services-based thought being integrated to a new paradigm of marketing beyond just distribution of products with inherent value. They propose that mental and physical skills, competencies and knowledge are major sources of value creation for the consumer and more emphasis should be on *these* aspects of marketing to move it away from embedding the value in products outputted; this, more fully completes the customer experience.

So even though the marketing concept and academic rhetoric champions the customer and their retention, this may be a threatened paradigm if the more defensive, service-oriented aspects are not realised.

Achrol & Kotler (1999) have discussed the predicament of marketing, and suggested that marketing is increasingly becoming a consumer-consulting function, not necessarily a 'seller' of goods and services. The upshot of this is that 'Marketing' as we previously thought of it, has 'outgrown' the confines of its office walls. Marketing by its nature cannot be penned in, but needs to share the ownership of the market with the whole organisation which is what Piercy (2002:237) has called *Totally Integrated Marketing*. The main challenge facing marketing now is that of full-integration of departments, including their customer knowledge; organisations cannot be a collection of unrelated entities and they must 'appear' as a single unit from the critical customer's point of view (Piercy 2002: 243).

2.4 Mass Customisation

The idea of a 'segment of one' is not exactly new (Winger & Edelman BCG 1989) but this term has now been superseded and brought to a more efficient reality by CRM. This approach seeks to create a single, comprehensive view of the customer which spans all functions and customer types; it seeks to harness the tacit knowledge within organisations to effectively create a tailored experience and build a relationship (Millard 2003). CRM, though, apart from being rooted in technology and a database infrastructure, is also equally about process and strategy (Chen & Popovich 2003); to implement such a market-orientation *into* the strategy. Millard maintains that CRM can deliver value in a non-intrusive manner which is appropriate to the *consumer*, again echoing what Levitt (1960) and Christensen (et al 2005) spoke of earlier, where value is defined by the consumer and in their terms. This is suggestive of co-creation of value, or as we said, marketing being re-positioned as an agent of the consumer.

Mass customisation recognises the idiosyncrasies of human needs and that segmentation will always be inaccurate; consumers — you and I — do not fit ourselves into a firm's segments. Mass customisation is very much the opposite of the mass-production thinking which as dominated recent decades, and is premised on extracting value from *differentiated* consumers (Brown 2009). There is a distinct link between mass-customisation and CRM, as they both remove the paradigm of targeting and segmentation. Individualised offerings have been made possible by more advanced CRM information systems (Osarenkhoe & Bennani

2007) and mass customisation seeks to meet the differentiated needs of individuals, but on a *mass* basis (Davis 1996:177). Under the restraints of mass marketing, these differentiations are a *problem*, but they can equally be an untapped resource of value for the company. As Albert Einstein once said: “Behind difficulty lies opportunity”, which seems remarkably appropriate. Prominent examples of companies executing this concept well are Google with their *iGoogle* service (customisable homepage) and many car companies, who invite customers to be a co-creator of their own value; a *partner* with the company almost.

This approach requires that the efficiencies of mass production must meet individual needs, while still leveraging efficiencies. Brown (2009) commends three key antecedents for this state; firstly, knowing what the consumer wants. Often, companies merely provide a “proliferation of meaningless products” or superficial changes which don’t really add value. The consumer is a rich and appropriate source of ideas and should be consulted. Secondly, operations must support such activity; the production should be modular, with the ability to re-use knowledge and processes to create the different products. Dell has exemplified this concept, which used it to be formidable competition to Compaq (Fern 2002). Finally, it should be easy for consumers to communicate their needs and specify their choice, something which is made possible and made useful by a company’s CRM strategy.

Bardakci & Whitelock (2004) suggested likely drivers for mass-customisation: demand fragmentation being a major one — even ‘niche’ markets are too broad to comprehensively satisfy. Consumers are no longer homogenous in their needs. Further, low prices have been a blinkered historical pre-occupation of marketers, but mass customisation recognises that consumers seek *value* as opposed to low price; in that they will pay more for what they *actually* require. Bardakci & Whitelock (2004) also rightly point out that development and production technology has improved sufficiently for even small ‘segments’ of one to be served efficiently.

Fig 1 shows the relative position of the consumer in the mass customisation paradigm.

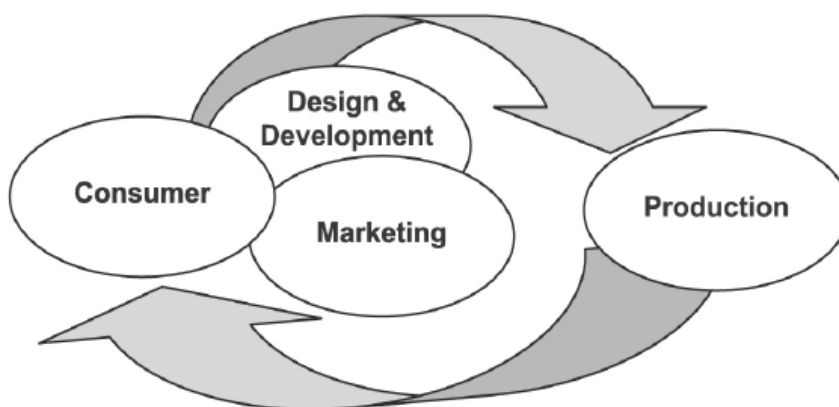


Figure 1 - Bardakci & Whitelock 2004

As can be seen, when consumers are placed at the start of the value creation process, it becomes difficult to distinguish the two parties in the traditional sense. To integrate the consumer in this way is not just a case of using marketing rhetoric; it's something which will need to be implemented fully just like any other strategy, and requires a production process which supports this ideology — one of modular design where the final differentiation is left until the last instant (Feitzinger & Hau 1997).

2.5 Marketing 3.0

While some have suggested relationships are bringing a new paradigm (Webster 2002; Holbrook & Hulbert 2002; Osarenkhoe & Bennani 2007; Woodall 2004), Gummesson (2002) has observed that many 'relationship marketing' proponents are still regarding relationships as 'another P', which is still being used in a manner befitting the old manipulative mindset of *managing, owning or locking-in* the customer. Therefore, a further departure from this half-way house is required if marketing is to truly develop the elusive 'new paradigm'.

Bearing in mind the faux-marketing sales pitches and Americanised ideas of marketing abundant on the internet, there is another development of marketing which takes the paradigm of relationships and CRM a step further, into the domain of what I'd like to term *Marketing 3.0*, so-called because CRM — which here may be conceptualised as *Marketing 2.0* — has its origins in the saturated mass market environment and was an attempt to differentiate on quality (Urban 2005), but still doesn't fully collaborate with the consumer. Relationship management thus cannot be separated too fundamentally from its roots in the 1960s marketing concept. This new departure which I called '3.0' is — and it was mentioned earlier — *customer advocacy*.

This concept is a little counter-intuitive to the accepted objectives and corporate mandate of marketing, but it involves providing unbiased, impartial information to the customer; the firm thus truly represents the customers' best interest (Urban 2005). While this may sound unwise and altruistic, it is the ultimate departure from short-term profiteering. Losses may indeed be incurred in the short term (while sales are lost and products improved) but the premise is that it pays to sacrifice individual sales, since one will win the *customer* instead, in their *trust* and thus future custom. Instead of considering consumer power to be a threat or a challenge, advocacy works on the assumption that customers will *advocate* for the firm if treated fairly in a way with others don't. The firm can then leverage the power of the consumers' networks for its own reputation; so it's not *quite* as altruistic as it first appears; but then why should it be? Urban further suggests that customer advocacy is the pinnacle of relationships, and is the present response to the empowered consumer. This approach is a difficult pill to swallow for the average market-led organisation, since it requires more than passive transparency, rather pro-active partnering with the consumer.

2.6 There's Still A Place for Marketing

Holbrook & Hulbert (2002) have lamented the possible death of marketing due to the closing of the gap marketing used to address. They say "...such gaps or separations will no longer exist in the age of information-enriched, mass-customisation. It follows that marketing [will] inevitably vanish". They propose that as we have suggested, the IT revolution is at the heart of a paradigm shift in marketing and in future, there'll be no need for complex marketing studies of consumer perceptions with mass customisation. They summarise their concern thus:

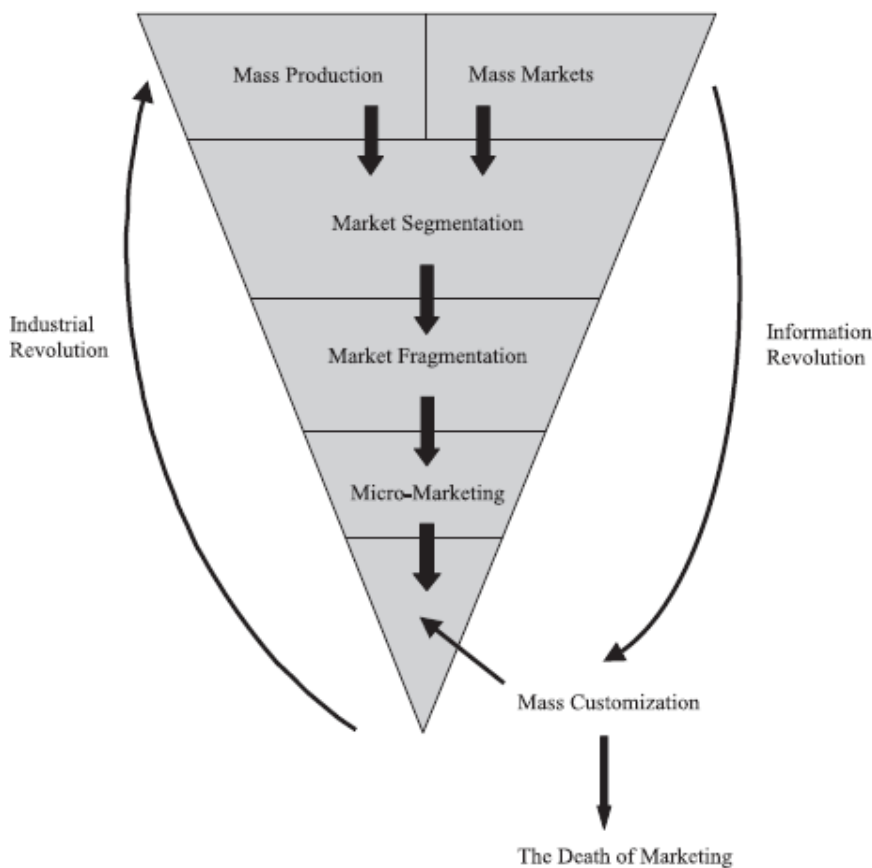


Figure 2 - Holbrook & Hulbert 2002

The chart is a convincing summary that the information revolution is removing marketing from the equation. The authors also raise the possibility of branding becoming obsolete, as products become judged on their merits and actual value and costs as opposed to the one superficially marketed.

This argument may seem convincing and the diagram does suggest marketing may be obsolete, but this argument is very selective and doesn't take into account the whole picture. While it may apply to high-involvement goods such as cars or kitchens, other such goods as FMCG and 'lifestyle' products (which are conspicuously consumed) still require a brand, since that is often their *primary* purpose; to communicate a message, which is the argument from Christensen (et al 2005) who said that only aspirational products

should be subject to brand building in the traditional sense. Therefore, many categories will always require marketing. Indeed, Firat & Shultz (1997) have previously postulated in their post-modern view, that fragmented consumers increasingly desire “fluid movement [between] experiences” — they predict that successful marketers will be those who are most sensitive to customer desires and who offer consumers contexts within which to have experiences.

2.7 Conclusion

One now has to be careful of the context in which the term *marketing* is wielded as it is both a function and a concept — indeed Woodall (2004) has said that “everything that contributes to the maximisation of positive...customer engagement is marketing”; and I propose that the function of Marketing as we know it may indeed be a moribund entity, but essentially, the corporation cannot *be* without an overarching focus on the market and the customer; indeed the market *is* the *raison d'être* for the corporation. This is encapsulated in the marketing concept which has up until recently been *owned* by Marketing departments and academics.

The marketing concept requires that marketing *cannot* die as it is tied to organisational success. So while technological changes may well be threatening ‘Marketing’ as a discreet departmental function, technological advances have too been a driver for marketing itself to change in line with the consumer. Marketing can utilise IT to facilitate co-creation of value, two-way dialogue and become closer to consumers in a way which diverts it away from exchanges and homogenous segmentations. ‘Marketing’ may become ‘marketing’ as the department is disbanded. Meanwhile, Urban (2005) tentatively suggests that advocacy will take hold over the next decade as the dominant basis of marketing. But there will always be vestiges of *Marketing 1.0* in organisations as these dated paradigms are perpetuated endlessly in textbooks (Gummesson 2002), but the most forward-thinking, market-oriented companies will recognise the full scope of marketing and will move marketing toward the higher social purpose prophesied earlier by Kotler & Levy (1969).

Rather than dictating that the organisation should be agile enough to change, so Marketing *itself* needs to practice what it preaches and relinquish its ‘property’ to the rest of the organisation to make full integration and advocacy a reality. Far from being dead, marketing will survive in concept rather than function.

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