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ABSTRACT

Society relies on marketers to ensure that producers make goods/services that offer utility. Reasons are reviewed why marketing scientists/scholars have largely neglected to build the requisite conceptual base. It is argued that such an oversight arose from misapprehensions and mishaps that, happily, may be corrected. Marketers may then possess conceptual tools appropriate to the task of directing how technology is deployed for human purposes.

IS THERE A FLIGHT FROM FORM UTILITY?

For many years, among the staples of introductory texts, marketing authors have presented four different kinds of utility from which, according to economists, customer satisfaction derives. As the function responsible for delivering customer satisfaction, marketing must ensure that utilities of form, time, place, and possession are identified and provided. Recently, however, some introductory textbooks with "marketing" in their title do not include form utility as part of marketing's domain, while retaining utilities of time, place, and possession—or their equivalents, using other terms. The purpose of this paper is to draw attention to what could be the beginning of a trend. If allowed to go unremarked, a few years hence we may find that the discipline abdicated its responsibility for form utility without ever considering the implications of such a move, or to whose hands it relinquished its role.

Paralleling the omission of form utility from some recent textbooks is a related movement that urges dropping one of the four, by now classic, "ps" that designate marketing's domain. Significantly, the "p" in question stands for product, while promotion, price, and place are retained. In this instance, some information about the context for such a move is available in published form. In the proceedings of a recent annual conference of the Association for Consumer Research, Hirschman (1986, p. 433) recounts the efforts of some individuals to have the official definition of marketing by the American Marketing Association read:

Marketing involves the integrated analysis, planning, and execution of a set of activities concerning pricing, promoting, and distributing ideas, goods, and services intended to bring about exchanges to satisfy human or organizational objectives (emphasis added).

The AMA Board finally adopted a version that includes the threatened "p" ("conception," here) as follows:

Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives (emphasis added).

Unfortunately for present purposes, the account does not include the rationales for omitting and retaining the significant activity of conceiving ideas, and goods/services.

Given the presence of imperialistic tendencies in the human animal, there is something quite extraordinary about a mo-

¹ The author gratefully acknowledges discussions with Al Boote, Fuat Firat, and Gene McCarthy.

vement to curtail the scope of one's scholarly and professional reach. Minimally, such a trend must not pass unremarked. It has implications for the domain of the natural world that marketing scientists may call their own, for the range of organizational influence that falls within the professional expertise of marketing practitioners and, more broadly, for the way society regulates how its resources are allocated to realizing human purposes.

Retaining or omitting form utility bears directly on the scope of marketing's role as society's provisioner. Is that role to be restricted to the task of distributing goods/services that are conceived and created outside the purview of marketers? Or does marketing's domain properly also include answering society's question: What shall we make? If not marketing, then which societal institution is (1) equipped to, and (2) charged with answering that all-important question? People with expertise in production must surely take responsibility for how society's goods/services are to be put together. Knowing how to make soap or soup or hats or houses does not necessarily equip one to answer the qualitative question: What kinds of soap, soup, hats, or houses are responsive to the human circumstances in which such items are used? At issue are (1) the basis on which such qualitative questions are to be answered and (2) who has the operational responsibility for answering them.

Certainly, marketing's claim to provide form utility should not be abandoned without discussion. Perhaps there are good reasons for the discipline to renounce its responsibility for ensuring that the output of society's productive enterprise possesses utility. Those who see such reasons will, I trust, state them as their contribution to the present debate. Let me place my cards on the table by saying that I can think of no good reasons for backing off from marketing's responsibility for form utility, and no reason at all other than faintheartedness in the face of the intellectual and moral challenges that the responsibility entails.

Plan for This Paper

Only misapprehension and mishap can have brought marketers to the point where the idea of forsaking form utility is up for discussion. My plan for this paper is to address such misperceptions and misadventures, in the belief that once these sources of mischief have been dispelled, all segments of the marketing community will embrace form utility as marketing's natural domain and significant societal contribution. It is as though Demon Technology, unwilling to be restrained, had dispatched six evil sprites to attend the birth of marketing science. His messengers brought gifts to blur the infant's vision and cloud its mind. Three sprites saw to it that marketing scientists would fail to apprehend essential issues relating to form utility; three others orchestrated events for maximal confusion. Their machinations benighted the infant science, creating a monumental task for one who would try to disentangle the outcomes of their handiwork. First, I discuss three misapprehensions, then the three mishaps:

(1) Top management's reason for making form utility marketers' responsibility has not been widely understood outside business, where the public seems to envisage a two-stage process: Created "somewhere else," goods/services are dispatched to marketers for a coating of desirability. Form utility's meaning for marketers' professional standing is not appreciated;

(2) Authors have not grasped operational and conceptu-

al ramifications of form utility--what the proactive task of "Making what people want to buy" involves;

(3) Apparently unexamined by those who would drop form utility from marketing's domain is the question: If not marketers, who? Three mishaps are:

(4) Authors who have been most partial to including form utility within marketing's domain inadvertently state marketing's case equivocally;

(5) Significant change in the disciplinary training of marketing scholars and scientists (e.g., the influx of behavioral scientists) occurred before marketing's responsibility for form utility was appreciated outside business, or supported by conceptual development within the discipline;

(6) The basic behavioral science in which such scientists were trained is congruent with the task of distributing and selling productive output, and antithetical to the task of deciding the nature of that output.

THREE MISAPPREHENSIONS

1. Top Management's Perspective

What shall we make? is one of the most important decisions top management takes--both the broader questions, What business are we in? What products shall we make? and the myriad specific decisions that result in the actual attributes of brands: What kind of (product) shall we make? How are such decisions to be made? As a member of top management, does one simply listen to the manufacturing/R&D people, challenge and, ultimately, accept most of their recommendations? On what basis does one challenge their proposals? Top management is mainly concerned with the quality of support for the claim that demand exists for a proposed output, at a price that yields a satisfactory return. But production management cannot speak for the nature of demand, other than on the basis of personal opinion and anecdotal report. Indeed, given their field of expertise, discussion with production people inevitably features the specifics of how to produce some technically feasible output, not systematic information on the constituents of contexts of use.

A few instances of a firm's finding itself left with unwanted output may prompt top management to search for ways to rationalize productive decisions, and the idea soon presents itself: Is it possible to first find out what people want, and then make that? In the 1950s, top management in large US corporations moved to bring under managerial control the process of deciding what to make. No longer was the decision to be a chance outcome of what manufacturing and R&D people can make. Planning was to be substituted for happenstance: Producers would first find out what prospective customers want and make that, and the responsibility for finding out was assigned to marketing. The What? and the How? aspects of creating useful form are thus explicitly recognized, and the task of imbuing form with utility is brought under managerial control.

Accordingly, added to the logistical responsibility of a director of distribution, marketers assumed the task of deciding the nature of the output. People in manufacturing and R&D know about bringing diverse materials together to create form. Among the infinite varieties of form, it became marketing's responsibility to identify, and quantify in relevant universes, the attributes that imbue form with utility for human purposes.

In thus assigning responsibility for form utility to marketing, top management (a) recognized its need for independent input i.e., from a source other than manufacturing/R&D people, in deciding what to produce, and (b) it established

the defining responsibility of professional marketers as that of ensuring utility in a firm's output i.e., ensuring that the output would be responsive to significant elements in its intended context of use. Marketing professionals were not to be handed something--a finished good/service or a bunch of attributes--conceived on who knows what grounds, and told to "run with it." On both counts--good managerial practice and professional responsibility--marketers were to be intimately involved from inception, and continuously thereafter, in deciding the nature of a firm's output.

Although it is clear that such an arrangement makes good managerial sense, old ways die hard. Even today, professional marketers and marketing researchers may find themselves presented with some readymade good/service (or set of attributes), with the expectation that they will "take it from here." In major corporations where procedures to guard against such eventualities are in place, such occurrences may be rare but not unheard of so that, even where their proper contribution has been institutionalized, marketers may still find that they must do battle to ensure their input is obtained at the earliest stages of planning.

In other contexts, circumstances may be less favorable for marketers. There seems to be an implicit model abroad in the public mind that envisages a two-stage productive process in which a good/service is first created outside the influence of marketers to whom it is then dispatched for the addition of customer-seducing attributes. Marketing consultants and advertising executives, who serve unsophisticated clients, from time to time find themselves asked to work magic on a readymade offering that represents someone's idea of a "better mousetrap."

Although the operational solution to the problem of ensuring utility in the output of goods/services has been in place since the marketing revolution of the 1950s, business has been slow, or has not bothered, to ensure that the public at large understands marketing's role. As discussed later under "mishaps," with regrettable implications for what became marketing's dominant behavioral paradigm in the ensuing decades, the general public was unaware of marketing's business--and societal--function when the discipline began to receive a substantial influx of behavioral scientists, starting in the 1960s.

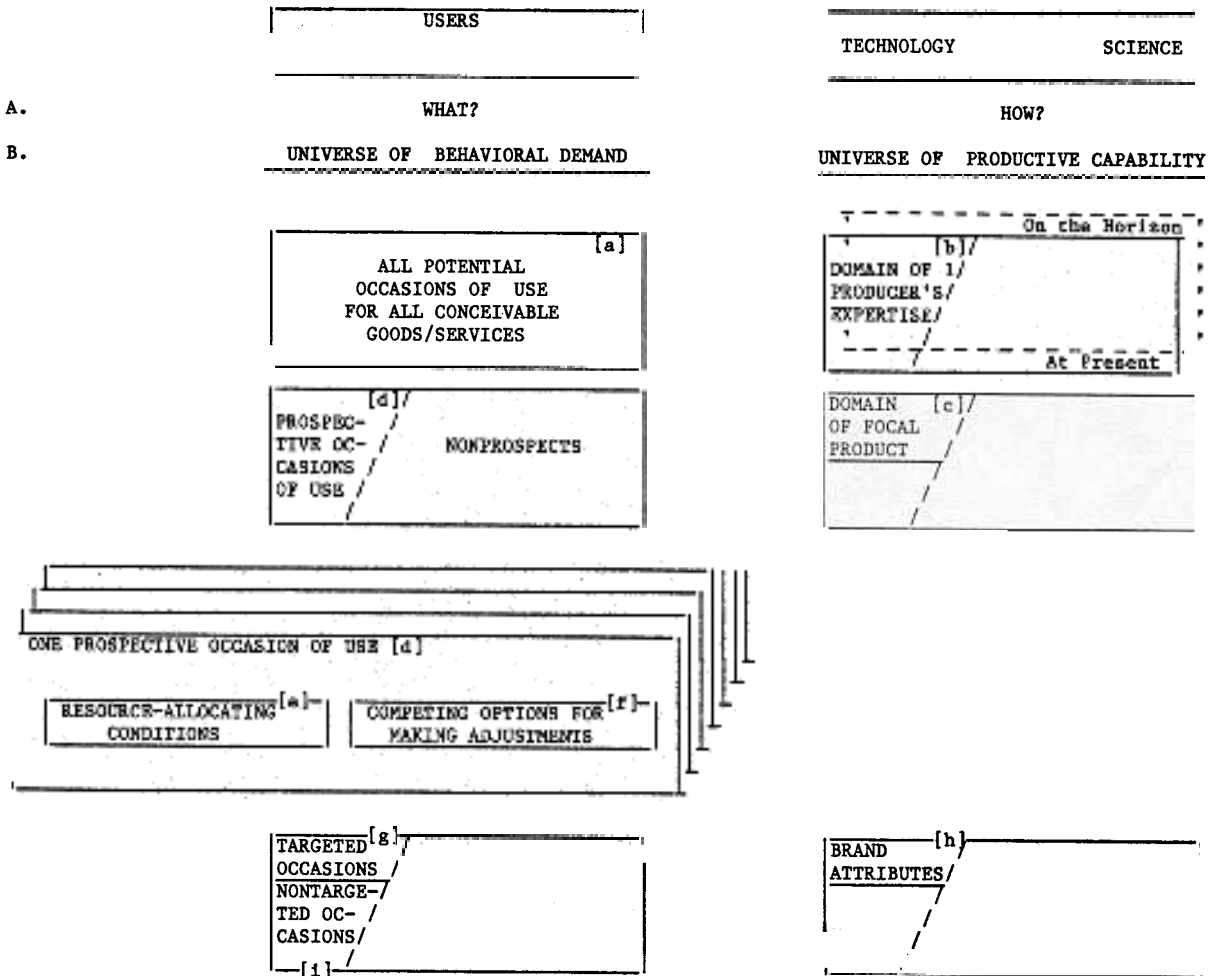
2. How does one "Make What the Customer Wants?"

Is it possible first to find out what people want, and then make that? Authors have not considered or have misunderstood what obtaining an answer involves: (1) For "marketers take the customer's perspective," they read "marketers do what benefits the customer." Unaware of top management's reason for designating marketers as the inhouse source of user-perspectives, they hear only a patently inauthentic claim of corporate altruism, which is not to be taken seriously. Neglecting to examine what "taking the customer's perspective" means conceptually, authors fail to recognize, for example, that it embraces a competitive orientation (Oxenfeld and Moore 1978). (2) Some wrongly assume that it implies asking people to state the kinds of goods/services that they want (e.g., Belk and Zhou 1987, Bennett and Cooper 1979, Hayes and Abernathy 1980, Hayes and Wheelwright 1984, Oxenfeld and Moore 1978, Park and Zaltman 1987), or conducting long-term demographic and socioeconomic research as well as studying consumer attitudes and preferences (e.g., Anderson 1982). (3) Some mistakenly consider that marketers are diminished because they did not invent microwave ovens or telephones. They equate customer orientation with a "market-" as opposed to a "technology-driven" approach (e.g., Hayes and Wheelwright 1984, Samli, Palda, and Barker 1987), thus failing to appreciate that: a) "customer

2 Asking marketers to select among proposed attributes of goods/services--attributes whose systematic origins are unspecified--is a difference without a distinction.

- [1] TAKE CUSTOMER'S PERSPECTIVE = DO WHAT BENEFITS CUSTOMER
- [2] THE MARKETING CONCEPT IS UNWORKABLE BECAUSE PEOPLE CAN'T DESCRIBE THE GOODS/SERVICES THEY WANT
- [3] THE RELEVANT CHOICES ARE: MARKET DRIVEN v. TECHNOLOGY DRIVEN
- [4] THE RELEVANT CHOICES ARE: MARKET PULL v. SCIENCE PUSH

ONE SOURCE: FAILING TO PERCEIVE USER'S WORLD AS DISTINCT FROM MARKET



orientation" involves being responsive to the circumstances that prospective users experience outside the market and b) what is available in the market reflects the producer's side of the user-producer interface. The "me-tooism" associated with being "market-driven" reflects producers' aping what competitors are making. (4) Some authors state the alternatives as "market pull v. science push" (e.g., Bennett and Cooper 1979, Park & Zaltman 1987)--seeming to: a) deny the reach of science to the user's side of the user-producer interface and b) imply competition between doing basic science and using its outcome to make goods/services. Pursuing knowledge for its own sake ("science push") may be admirable, but for a producer to create a good/service not knowing its place in human lives is foolhardy or irresponsible. In sum, failing to cognize determinants of what as distinct from how to make (Figure 1A), authors overlook the task of representing the domain of behavioral demand, which coexists with and is distinct from the domain of productive

capability (Figure 1B). Above all, they fail to articulate the components of "taking the user's perspective," which include prospects' ongoing projects and currently available options for addressing them (e.g., Figure 1[e,f]).

In fact, breaking free from the tyranny of the given--from output that reflects available technology, whether in the market or the laboratory--is the essence of the proactive managerial strategy at issue here. It may be implemented: (1) Empirically, e.g., obtain relevant information about something other than existing goods/services--as pursued in proprietary qualitative research, where qualified respondents are asked to speak about a focal behavioral domain, specifically, about the elements that constitute prospective occasions of use (Figure 1[d]); (2) Conceptually, e.g., construct representations of relevant aspects of the natural world--as scientists pursue understanding. Here, this means representing naturally-occurring everyday actions

(e.g., Fennell 1980, 1988), including the conditions (Figure 1[e]) that allocate people's resources to doing what they do and try to do. These are the conditions to which goods/services must be responsive in order to perform well in relation to competing options (Figure 1[f]).

Society and business rely on marketers to provide information that fits productive output for its environment. "Making what the customer wants to buy" means understanding the user-side of the human-technology interface. If one views the productive enterprise as existing to serve human purposes, those who guide how technology is deployed must start from a base of independent information about the conditions that give rise to realworld experience and action. (See later, 6. Nature of Mainstream Behavioral Formulations.)

3. If Not Marketers, Who Is Responsible for Form Utility?

Consider what it means to let form utility drop from marketers' purview: Marketers' expertise and scholarship are to begin at the point where goods/services or candidate attributes² already exist, i.e., physical form has been (largely) decided. It becomes marketers' responsibility to unload readymade goods/services conceived who knows on what grounds. This means nothing more nor less than requiring marketing: (a) Practitioners to try to make prospective customers perceive value in goods/services that were created outside the reach of marketers' influence, and (b) Scientists to try to develop a science of hype and a "technology of influence" (Anderson 1983, Capon and Mauser 1982).

More broadly, should marketers abandon answering the producer's question: What shall we make?, to whose disciplinary lap do we consign this most central aspect of society's provisioning? Absent marketing, who in society decides what is made? The likely answer is: Those who understand and control what can be produced.

Who knows about the attributes of the contexts in which goods/services are used? Who knows about the personal and environmental--psychological, social, and physical--contexts in which the activities of human lives are embedded? Not those who have expertise in manufacturing--in bringing together and imparting new form to diverse materials--whose information on these matters is anecdotal and unsystematic, at best. Manufacturing experts are not trained to and, in practice, do not try to survey the range of human circumstances from which their focal technology or domain of productive expertise may derive its realworld utility.

Accordingly, here within our discipline we have our very own example of humankind confronting its technological capability. We see our version of a general pattern: Humankind tends to adopt a passive stance vis a vis the ways technology is used. Those in whose hands lies the know-how to develop ever more sophisticated tools have free reign. Few who might articulate the human circumstances and purposes for which tools are needed seem inclined to do so or to take the lead in directing how technology is deployed.

The time is long overdue for improving our ability to describe human circumstances with a view to directing technology's use for human purposes. In the marketing discipline, a myriad opportunities are at our fingertips if we would grasp them--as many opportunities for making realworld impacts as there are brands of goods/services. We can turn a blind eye to the flight from form utility and allow these opportunities to slip through our fingers. Or, having articulated and reflected on the issues, we may decide not to abandon form utility to the chance ministrations of those with expertise in producing form, who lack expertise in describing the contexts from which utility derives.

2 Same footnote as before, two pages back.

3 "Do" embraces various processes, including experiencing.

Unfortunately, authors who understood marketing's responsibility for form utility seemed to equivocate inadvertently, as discussed below under the first of three mishaps (i.e., evil sprite #4). But the problem lies deeper. Because of an accident of timing, what could have been a most significant event in grounding marketing science failed to affect the orderly conceptual development of the discipline. In major corporations in the 1950s, marketers had assumed responsibility for the utility of the firm's output. Marketing scientists should have located their science at an intersection of economics and behavioral science, and they should have identified marketing practitioners as producers' in-house resource on the nature of behavioral demand.

Already for a number of decades, economists and psychologists had obtained considerable conceptual mileage out of "utility" and "reinforcement," respectively, without, in the case of either discipline, moving to lend substance to the concept (Williams 1986). With the marketing revolution of the 1950s, utility and reinforcement are reborn as "customer satisfaction." It became the task of marketing scientists to represent the antecedents of customer satisfaction, and of marketing practitioners to deliver customer satisfaction through the attributes, physical and symbolic, of goods and services. Where economists and psychologists, respectively, had found the constructs of utility and reinforcement useful in developing core disciplinary formulations, marketers faced the realworld task of generating the information that would deliver utility/reinforcement through brands. Marketing scientists were handed a task that neither economists nor psychologists had grappled with.

Due to no failure of application or invention, marketing scientists have not bent major effort to developing behavioral formulations appropriate to specifying the constituents of utility. They seem not to have appreciated that such was the nature of their task. They were somehow untouched by our newly-in-place function as the societal institution charged with representing and describing behavioral demand. That function in fact calls for an emphasis that is the antithesis of a science of interpersonal influence, which began to monopolize the discipline's literature, starting in the mid-60s. Lacking appropriate behavioral formulations, marketing's claim to provide form utility, as presented in texts and journals, assumes the status of empty rhetoric.

As a practitioner whose mentors participated in, or were trained by participants in, the marketing revolution of the 1950s, I know this critical stage of the discipline's history at some remove, and from the side of practice. Turning now to speculate about events that contributed to the absence of a pervasive scholarly commitment to providing form utility, I offer tentative comments, trusting those who know the events from the academic side to contribute a complementing perspective.

There seem to be two main reasons--gifts of the fifth and sixth evil sprites--why entering behavioral scientists did not fully grasp the meaning of the "marketing revolution." (5) Although present in the literature before behavioral scientists began to enter marketing in large numbers in the 1960s (e.g., Drucker 1958, Keith 1960, Levitt 1960, McKittrick 1957, Smith 1956), early statements of marketing's role may not have been sufficiently compelling to overcome the two-stage production-selling model that entering behavioral scientists likely held as members of the public. (6) Their mainstream training provided the entering behavioral scientists with formulations consonant with the popular mythology of "marketing as influence," and not at all with marketing as arbiter of form utility. Papers like those just cited may not have been sufficiently developed conceptually to prompt entering behavioral scientists to, in effect, reject much of their own professional training and create behavioral science appropriate to marketing's task.

4. The Meaning of Form Utility

Some authors of introductory textbooks in marketing have understood very well two things about producing goods/services: (a) The decision to "make tennis rackets," for example, leaves manufacturing paralyzed until someone decides the rackets' specifications. It is impossible to make a tennis racket in the abstract. One can make only particular rackets with particular specifications—handle sizes, shapes, weights, materials for frame and strings, plain or adorned, and attendant symbolic implications. (b) Choosing specifications so that a particular racket may be produced does not guarantee the racket's utility. Among the numerous, probably infinite, options of form for a tennis racket, some combinations have utility and some do not.

If utility means customer satisfaction, as the economists tell us, providing form utility means selecting, from all the possible realizations of tennis rackets, those whose attributes provide customer satisfaction. Utility does not inhere in the attributes of an item. The racket's utility lies in its attributes' relating appropriately to attributes of the context for using the racket. Similarly, a "better" tennis racket is only "better" if it corresponds more closely than does another racket to the inherent requirements—physical and psychological—of some actual context in which it will be used.

Textbook authors have not always made the point at issue without equivocating, however inadvertently. Consider the following extract from an author who is among the most enlightened regarding marketing's responsibility for form utility. Following a lucid treatment of the many decisions a firm must take before it can make tennis rackets that provide utility—that have "the power to satisfy human needs" (McCarthy 1981, p. 5)—an attentive reader is surprised to find this statement:

Form utility is provided when a manufacturer makes something—for instance, a tennis racket—out of other materials (p. 5).

Not necessarily! Surely something is missing here. McCarthy had just described the kinds of decisions that may imbue form with utility and had shown that mere form does not necessarily provide utility. He had led the reader to expect a summarizing statement along these lines:

Form is present when a manufacturer makes something out of other materials; utility is present when the attributes embodied in that form correspond appropriately to attributes of the item's intended context of use.⁴

Ambivalence is similarly apparent in the most recent version of the section's final paragraph:

Stated simply, marketing provides time, place, and possession utility. It should also guide decisions about what goods and services should be produced to provide form utility (1987, p. 6).

There would seem to be no good reason to single out for special treatment marketing's contribution to providing form as distinct from time, place, and possession utilities. In all cases, marketing's essential contribution is informational. Marketers neither drive the trucks that realize utility of place nor tend the machines that realize utility of form. Regarding all four, if utility is not present by mere happenstance, it is there because marketers specified its essential constituents.

Once again, the logic of McCarthy's own analysis throughout the section leads the reader to expect a stronger conclusion, possibly along these lines:

Marketing's contribution to society's provision-

ing is informational. From a societal as well as a business perspective, marketers' task is to provide information that ensures utility in the goods/services produced. "Utility" means the capacity to satisfy by providing attributes of form, time, place, and possession that are appropriate to the context of use.

5. Timing of Behavioral Scientists' Entry into Marketing.

As noted, numerous papers published in the late 50s and early 60s reported management's belief the newly-instituted marketing function represented a significant development. Henceforth, marketers should lead production planning by articulating attributes of the contexts for everyday activities and, in conjunction with production management, organize systematic reviews of candidate productive responses in the present and near-term future.

Considering timing alone, the "marketing revolution" writings of the late 50s and early 60s would seem to have been available to ensure a behavioral science tailored for marketing. At the end of "Marketing Myopia," for example, Levitt (1960 p. 56) asks: "What does customer orientation involve?" and goes on to say that he will suggest some "general requirements." In fact, his words lack operational or behavioral content and beg for one trained in behavioral science to pick up where he stops: "No organization can achieve greatness without a vigorous leader who is driven onward by his own pulsating will to succeed. He has to have a vision of grandeur, a vision that can produce eager followers in vast numbers..." (original emphasis). Perhaps the entering behavioral scientists paid heed to more sedate works, some of which even into the 1960s still focused on the task of a director of distribution, i.e., distributing a readymade output, rather than on providing information to specify the characteristics of that output (e.g., Cox, Goldman and Fichandler 1965).

Probably most influential in introducing behavioral scientists to the discipline of marketing are the "comprehensive" buyer/consumer behavior models of the 1960s (Engel, Kollat, and Blackwell 1968, Howard and Sheth 1969, Nicosia 1965), which are conceived from a vantage point that is alien to a marketing orientation in three respects. The authors: (a) Consider a dyad of seller-buyer rather than producer-user; (b) Envisage consumers facing an existing array of goods/services; (c) Construe the persuasive task as one of influencing buyers to accept some good/service, rather than directing producers to imbue goods/services with utility. Once these works were written, perhaps the die was cast, certainly for the short run. Gathering frequency and volume, the discipline's literature became an avalanche of research conceived in a mode of interpersonal

⁴ In the latest edition, the corresponding section reads: "Form utility is provided when someone produces something tangible—for instance, a tennis racket. But just producing tennis rackets doesn't result in consumer satisfaction. The product must be something that consumers want—or there is no need to be satisfied—and no utility" (McCarthy and Perreault, 1987, p. 6). The ambivalence remains and, once again, the first sentence should read: "Form is present when someone..."

⁵ As others have pointed out (e.g., Borch 1957, Hollander 1986), "customer orientation" had existed since much earlier times. To mass producing were now added mass communicating and distributing, separating producers from users as never before. How could producers know which kinds of output would satisfy customers? Accordingly, what was significant about the 50s is top management's making the marketing function responsible for customer satisfaction. Among other things this means that one's status as a professional marketer requires one to be involved in deciding the nature of the firm's output, at the earliest stages and ongoing.

influence: A good/service exists and must be disposed of. The plain content of a significant portion of the discipline's research and teaching relates to people's reactions (e.g., beliefs, importance ratings, perceived similarities) to (attributes of) goods/services (Figure 1[c,h]). In contrast, marketing's responsibility for form utility demands conceptualizations (task of marketing scientists) and descriptions (task of practitioners) of the human contexts that goods/services serve and in which their utility, if any, is realized (Figure 1[d]). The question remains: Why were authors of the "comprehensive models" uninfluenced by the behavioral implications of the "marketing revolution?"

6. Nature of Mainstream Behavioral Formulations

There is one more sprite whose mischief must be told. Notwithstanding what I have said up to now, if mainstream behavioral science contained formulations congenial to providing form utility, some marketing and consumer psychologists would surely have made the connection. They would have begun to develop a conceptual grounding for the behavioral assignment that delivering utility implies.

Behaviorally, what are we talking about when we say that producers "take the user's perspective"? What image comes to mind upon hearing the words "needs and wants"? In the interdepartmental planning sessions at which firms address the question: What shall we make? what concepts and models do marketers use to instruct colleagues in R&D/manufacturing about the attributes of contexts of use—source of the utility that production management, properly guided, knows how to provide?

Behavioral science for marketing would try to understand the world from the perspective of the focal individual, in the present instance, the prospective user. It would model the conditions that give rise to everyday activities. It would develop formulations and taxonomies of the domains of individual sensitivity—the kinds of circumstances that, when they occur, compel individuals to allocate their resources to making adjustments (Figure 1 [e]). It would investigate intelligent action—individuals selecting among a set of options (Figure 1[f]) those whose qualities correspond to elements in the individual's context for acting. In sum, it would try to model the context, psychological and nonpsychological, in which everyday activities are embedded so that goods/services may have utility—possess attributes that are instrumental for whatever individuals do or try to do. In competitive conditions, producers would be seen to survive by their superior skill in differentiating and responding to the characteristics of such behavioral domains.

As it was, speaking of mainstream psychology, the paradigms of stimulus-response (S-R) behaviorism and, in social psychology, of attitude change, to mention just two, are compatible with the task of distributing and selling readymade goods/services. Such formulations are not well-adapted to a marketing that must try to stand where prospective users stand and, viewing the world from that perspective, guide producers to make goods/services that, in effect, extend the user's mind and body. Neither S-R nor attitude formulations address the producer's essential task: Design a stimulus (S) or an attitude object (A_o) with reinforcing attributes. To the contrary, in the major formulations of mainstream psychology, both S and the attitude object are usually givens—just as are goods/services in the public mythology—and interest is directed to describing subjects' response upon being exposed to them.

Among the unfortunate outcomes of a behavioral science that is inappropriately cast for marketing's assignment is the mistaken notion that producers have two viable options for proceeding: a "production" and a "marketing" orientation. What seems to be missing in such a view is recognizing that user-circumstances exist whether or not producers take heed of them. No less than under a "marketing" orientation, brand attributes (Figure 1[h]) chosen under a "production"

orientation have implications of relevance and appropriateness for user-circumstances (Figure 1[e,f]). As represented in Figure 1, the domains of behavioral demand⁶ and productive capability exist side-by-side, a fact that producers ignore at their peril.

Any realworld form bears some relationship—relevant/irrelevant, appropriate/inappropriate—to the attributes of the context in which it will be used. In this sense, no form is neutral with regard to use context. Whether or not microwave ovens exist, people are going to prepare food. If such ovens are somewhat successful, it is because their attributes are responsive to some set(s) of conditions that already exist in the user's world. Moreover, since brands comprise the aspects—tangible and intangible—of a product about which a producer may exercise discretion, microwave ovens continue to be "invented" until producers stop making them. Once a particular oven—or anything else—exists, it is committed with regard to the features of actual contexts of use (Figure 1[d]). It is more relevant to and suitable for some contexts (Figure 1[g]) than others (Figure 1[i]). In choosing brand attributes, it is best to regard no decision as context neutral. There may be decisions that are context blind.

However, as long as the concept of "use-context" (e.g., Fennell 1978) lacked currency or was underdeveloped, it could seem that the attributes of goods/services and people's reactions to them were the only reality. Conceptual neglect of the user's world is disastrous for a discipline charged with specifying the attributes that goods/services should possess. To do so, one must start at some place other than already existing goods/services or proposed attributes. One must stand where the prospective user stands, i.e., appreciate the "user's perspective"—for present purposes, the naturally-occurring features of contexts of use (Figure 1[e,f]). In order to specify the attributes that some brand must possess if it is also to possess utility, marketers must be able to speak in a differentiated manner—psychologically and physically—about the contexts in which real-world action may occur. To do so requires conceptualizations that did not exist, readymade, in the formulations of mainstream psychology.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

In sum, misapprehensions and misadventures combined to initiate a vicious cycle. Marketing's assumption of responsibility for form utility in practice was not generally appreciated outside major corporations. Such traces as entered the literature seem not to have been substantial enough to overcome (a) an already entrenched view focused on distributing output produced "somewhere else," and (b) the popular conception of marketing as a sophisticated means of unloading goods/services on buyers. With no appropriate behavioral science readymade in the mainstream, a conceptually compelling statement of marketing's corporate role was needed to induce behavioral scientists to develop new, appropriate, formulations. Neither business nor academic marketers appear to have provided such a compelling statement, or understood the source of the communicative break-

6 Note: the economist's market definition of demand (i.e., goods/services sold) is inappropriate for marketers who must specify the attributes that imbue offerings with utility, and who need a concept of demand upstream from the market. Stated at a more basic level than in Figure 1[a], the universe of behavioral demand is: All occasions when conditions allocate people's resources (e.g. time, thought, energy) to making adjustments. Producers consider if they may participate in effecting (some of) these adjustments.

7 I am using "naturally-occurring" to refer to the real-world conditions that any one producer finds at the point of initiating a marketing analysis.

down that, as time went on, began to be documented (e.g., Cunningham and Enis 1983, Fennell 1982, 1987a,b). Recent moves to drop form utility from marketing's domain finally confirmed the nature of the breakdown: The import for marketing's business and societal function of the "revolution" of the 1950s had not been communicated to some significant proportion of the academic community. Marketing's role as society's provisioner was simply not present in their thinking. It finally appears that many have misunderstood the references to customer orientation--included in all texts of the past couple of decades--as referring to activities performed in regard to a good/service significantly formed outside the reach of marketing's influence. So misconstrued, marketers' claim to provide form utility is indeed empty and should be dropped. Abandoning misconstrual, business and society can only benefit from marketers' systematically specifying the contexts in which a good/service may offer utility.

Challenge and opportunity aplenty are to be found in overcoming the impediments that so far have denied serious treatment to marketing's responsibility for form utility. Marketing scientists must focus attention upstream from the point where psychologists traditionally have concentrated their efforts. In so doing, we shall have taken a first step toward articulating the conditions that allocate human resources and the contexts in which human activities are embedded. Guided by such understanding, there is hope for a humane use of technology to serve human ends. Failing to articulate the human side of the human-technology interface, whom shall we blame but ourselves as we confront a productive monster run wild, lacking mind and heart?

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