2 I coulda been a contender!

There is something extremely odd about the geography of supermarkets. I may not have studied it deeply, nor experienced it widely, nor even considered it generally: but I know one most peculiar aspect of it rather well, and I have experienced it in every one of the dozen or so countries in whose supermarkets I have stood, disoriented and uncertain, while the hustling trolleys of orientated and certain foreigners have ricocheted off mine as their drivers gloated and babbled at the obstructive stranger that was within their gates.

The peculiar aspect is that whenever one is in a new and therefore uncharted supermarket, whether in Dundee or Stuttgart or Cairo, not knowing which way to turn for some simple staple, one invariably ends up in the pet food section.

Quite why this should be so is a very great mystery indeed... (though)... it is just possible that it is a mystery no longer. I have this moment returned from the huge Leclere in Venice, where it was, a mere hour ago, dawn on me that this... was a trick of marketing strategy so brilliantly cunning as to administer the antidote with the poison - irritation at the cunning by which one was being seduced was instantly mitigated by the recognition of the brilliance with which it had been done.

I had fetched up, after the statutory 20 minutes, staring at a display (I swear) of TV dinners for cats... And, immediately a French shopper beside me began talking about her cat, inquiring after mine and so forth. And it suddenly struck me that this selfsame thing had happened several times before in other foreign supermarkets... Within seconds, I had explained my shopping needs to this lady, within nanoseconds thereafter she had begun not only dragging me around the place but recommending all sorts of goodies, special deals, own-brand bargains and so forth, which I could never have sussed for myself. I thus ended up spending three times as much as I should have done unassisted.

(Goren 1990, pp.50–3)

The Greatest Story Ever Sold

As an aficionado of mainstream marketing textbooks, or at least of the introductory sections where the authors attempt to capture the magic of the marketing concept, it seems to me that there are at least four basic approaches to this next-to-impossible encapsulatory task (Table 2.1). The first involves some sort of quasi-evangelical homily, a mini-case study of a deeply troubled organisation that is unfamiliar with or has strayed from the path of marketing righteousness. By embracing the marketing philosophy and giving the customers what they want, however, the organisation is replaced, or set, on the straight and narrow, the one true path to business salvation.

The second approach comprises a lightning sketch of hundreds, occasionally thousands, of years of economic history - western economic history - which culminates, fortuitously, with the emergence of the modern marketing concept in the early 1950s. Thus, from the primordial soup of the 'production era', and the neanderthal practices of the 'sales era', we have evolved into the homo sapiens and higher life forms of the current 'marketing era'.

The third perspective adopts an 'attack' is the best form of defence' policy by directly addressing and endeavouring to refute popular misconceptions about marketing, the regrettable widespread view that it is manipulative, devious, unethical and inherently distasteful. Although unsavoury and unprincipled practices undoubtedly occur in the name of marketing - just as there are negligent doctors, unprofessional lawyers and dishonest politicians, so too some marketers are deeply suspect - such activities, so the argument goes, are not representative of marketing as it is understood and performed by the vast majority of practitioners and academics.

The fourth and, as Kotler employs it, the introductory approach to which most marketing neophytes are exposed involves an imaginative flight of fancy, an attempt to capture the sheer ubiquity, extent and importance of modern marketing. After all, it pertains to the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the entertainments we enjoy, the sports we play, the cars we drive, the presents we buy, the services we procure, the jobs we do and so on ad infinitum. Indeed, as brand names are often cited in these explanations, we can probably conclude that, in what must be the outer limit of marketing's pervasiveness, the space in the textbooks concerned has been sold to participating marketing organisations.1

(There is, of course, a fifth strategy, the strategy of outlining the introductory strategies employed by marketing textbook writers. Such a meta-strategy, however, is just too juvenile for words and it is never employed, except by dilettantes, charlatans and the academically challenged. Under no circumstances whatsoever believe a single word of a book that utilises this particular approach to the marketing condition. . . .)
Table 2.1 The magic of modern marketing: textbook approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Indicative texts</th>
<th>Authors/Publisher (year)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td>Marketing: An Introduction</td>
<td>M. Christopher and M. McDonald/ Pan (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western history</td>
<td>Modern Marketing</td>
<td>F. Jefkins/ Pitman (1993)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing Today</td>
<td>G. Oliver/ Prentice-Hall (1980)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introduction to Marketing</td>
<td>J. Frain/ McDonald and Evans (1983)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>M. Cameron, A. Rushton and D. Carson/ Penguin (1988)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Essence of Marketing</td>
<td>S. Major/ Prentice-Hall (1993)</td>
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Although, as the Kotlerite wannabes constantly remind us, the marketing system is all but ubiquitous at present, it is by no means a new arrival on the socio-economic scene (academically, admittedly, it can be considered something of an arriviste among the social sciences). On the contrary, marketing practices have been around since the dawn of civilisation or, depending on which definition of ‘civilisation’ you subscribe to, even earlier still (Gottrell 1988). For example, flint and obsidian axe heads, in both finished and semi finished form, were traded over literally thousands of miles in late palaeolithic times (Clark and Piggott 1990). Precious metals and minerals, such as gold, tin, copper and lapis lazuli, were widely exchanged throughout ancient Mesopotamia prior to the advent of the Sumerian civilisation (Gurney 1990). The economy of pre-dynastic Egypt, given the locality’s complete lack of natural resources, was heavily reliant on trading relationships (Walters 1988). And amber, pottery, bone figurines and personal adornments fashioned from the marine shell Spondylus gaederopus were being exchanged in Europe before 4500 BC (Renfrew 1978). Along with the domestication of plants and animals, fixed settlements, monumental architecture and the advent of literacy, long-distance trade is widely considered to be one of the mainsprings of civilisation (Renfrew 1988).

Activities analogous to marketing, as we now understand it, undoubtedly occurred before the ‘marketing revolution’ of the 1950s, but it is common knowledge, among marketing textbook writers at least, that these activities were basic, naive, rudimentary and primitive. At best, they can be described as proto-marketing practices rather than marketing practices per se. They refer to marketing as a function, which has to be performed in all exchange situations, rather than in the modern sense of a marketing orientated management philosophy (Baker 1991). As is so often the case, however, this common knowledge is more than a little suspect. Notwithstanding the dangers associated with a Whig view of history — interpreting the past by the standards of the present — pre-marketing era marketing activities, so to speak, were often highly complex and astonishingly sophisticated, more sophisticated on occasion than today. For example:

- a customer focus was evident among the traders of classical and pre-Hellenic Greece, whose lines of merchandise (textiles, pottery and food, for example) were adapted to allow for differences in taste between markets, modified to meet changes in demand through time and presented in ways, such as stamped and shaped amphorae, which enabled customers to identify their place of origin (Nevett and Nevett 1987);
- the marketing strategies of participants in the medieval book trade involved, according to Rassuli (1988), tailoring the product to the needs
of the target market, selective distribution, celebrity endorsement, sponsorship, test marketing, market development and the choice of appropriate store locations;

- international marketing, as practised by the textile guilds of northern Europe, was supremely well organised in the Middle Ages, with stalls in foreign fairs and markets being rented en bloc often years in advance of the gathering, tax burdens being shared, most notably the imperiously imposed Royal 'prize', and strict control exercised over the quality of goods sold in the organisation's (brand) name (Moore 1985);

- the periodic markets of eighteenth century Ethiopia, as decreed by the great king Adirangapomineerina, comprised a complex, carefully coordinated 'ring' (days on which the markets assembled) and the internal layout of these marketplaces was minutely controlled, more so even than the tenant placement policies of modern shopping centres (Brown 1992);

- youth-based market segmentation long predated the 'Pepsi generation' of 1940, having previously been employed by nineteenth century newspaper publishers, retail stores, financial institutions, automobile dealers, offering equipment manufacturers, entertainment facilities, non-profit-making organisations and many more (Hollander and Germain 1992);

- and, as Fullerton (1988) describes in some detail, many 'modern' marketing practices like branding, segmentation, advertising, market analysis, credit provision, vertical marketing systems and market-plus pricing were in widespread use in Britain, Germany and the United States by the late nineteenth century.

Just as marketing practices long predated the putative marketing revolution of the 1950s, so too marketing theory and thought is by no means a post-war phenomenon. As noted in the previous chapter, marketing scholarship 'officially' dates from the early 1900s when the first university-level courses, textbooks and academic publications emerged in the United States. Particularly important in this respect were the pioneering contributions of Edward D. Jones, Simon Litman, George M. Fisk and James E. Hegarty at the universities of Michigan, California, Illinois and Ohio respectively (Bartels 1951). Important though they were, these US developments were based in turn on the German historical school of economics, which advocated inductive, comparative and literal approaches to business study. Many of the pioneers of US marketing education and thought were actually educated in Germany and, as Jones and Monieson (1990, p.111) speculate, 'marketing courses may actually have been offered in Germany before those offered in American institutions at the turn of the century'. In Britain, moreover, the first bachelor's degree, faculty and professorship in Commerce were established by the University of Birmingham in 1901 (the professorship incidently was held by Sir William Ashley, who was also heavily indebted to the German historical school of economics) and the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the principal professional body in the UK, was also established (as the Institute of Sales and Commerce) before the First World War. Indeed, if a fairly liberal interpretation of marketing 'thought' is adopted, then its lineage can be traced back through the early sales training programmes (see Fullerton 1988), The Retailer's Manual (Terry 1869), Adam Smith's (1776) The Wealth of Nations, Daniel Defoe's (1745) The Compleat English Tradesman, Martin Luther's (1524) treatise on Trade and Usty and suchlike, to a starting point that is almost as indeterminate as marketing 'practice' itself.

Peter's Friends

Although marketing practices and thought have been around for a very long time, even the sternest critics of the marketing discipline's depressingly presentist perspective are prepared to acknowledge that an appreciable intensification of marketing activity, a new phase in the development of marketing thought, has taken place in the last half century (see Fullerton 1988). Apart from the environmental factors that underpinned this process, primarily the post-war economic miracle, growing consumer affluence, high levels of intra-sectoral competition, and a situation where supply often exceeded demand (Baker 1991), the 'trigger' of this transmutation is traditionally held to have taken place in 1954, when Peter Drucker stated that,

The customer is the foundation of a business and keeps it in existence. He alone gives employment. And it is to supply the customer that society entrusts wealth-producing resources to the business enterprise. ... Because it is its purpose to create a customer, any business enterprise has two - and only these two - basic functions: marketing and innovation. ... Marketing is the distinguishing, the unique function of the business. ... Actually marketing is so basic that it is not just enough to have a strong sales department and to entrust marketing to it. Marketing is not only much broader than selling, it is not a specialised activity at all. It is the whole business seen from the point of view of its final result, that is, from the customer's point of view. Concern and responsibility for marketing must therefore permeate all areas of the enterprise.

(Drucker 1954, pp.35-6)

While this assertion merely repackaged a long-held principle of business success, that customers are the be-all and end-all of organisational well-being, Drucker's elevation of marketing to a position of paramount importance, and his spellbinding rhetoric, represented a forceful articulation of
what has come to be known as a marketing orientation – viewing the business from the customer's standpoint and placing the customer at the very centre of an organisation's endeavours.

Drucker's seminal, albeit brief, exhortation was subsequently expanded upon and codified in perhaps the two most frequently anthologised papers in the marketing literature, 'The marketing revolution' by Keith (1960) and 'Marketing myopia' by Levitt (1960). The former described the experiences of the Pillsbury Company, contending that the organisation (like many other American businesses, according to Keith) was in the throes of a marketing equivalent of the Copernican revolution. From the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, the company was 'production orientated', in that it was preoccupied with the manufacturing process, with new products being launched to dispose of manufacturing by-products rather than serve a market need. From the 1930s to the 1950s, Pillsbury was characterised by a 'sales orientation', where a sophisticated sales organisation, backed up with advertising and market analysis, was assembled to dispose of the company's product lines. The subsequent era, however, was 'marketing orientated', in that the purpose of Pillsbury was no longer to mill flour, nor to manufacture and sell a wide range of products, but to satisfy the needs and desires of its customers. This tripartite periodising schema, though deeply flawed as a general model, has since become a mainstay of marketing ideology (its belief system in other words). As the content analyses conducted by Hollander (1986) and Fullerton (1988) have shown, variants of the production era, sales era, marketing era schema are indiscriminately recycled in almost every introductory textbook – even today.

Alongside Keith's so-called marketing revolution, Levitt (1960) highlighted the dangers of 'marketing myopia': companies' failure to respond to the changing requirements of consumers; their preoccupation with the products they produce rather than the markets they serve; a tendency to define their purpose and customer needs too narrowly (railroads rather than transportation, movies as opposed to entertainment, etc.); and an inability to recognise that all industries, even the then rapidly growing chemicals and electronics industries, would one day decline like the corner grocery stores, dry cleaners and huggy whip manufacturers before them. He emphasised, in addition, that businesses must develop 'backwards', commencing with the customer's needs, through the delivery of customer satisfaction, and the creation of new products, to finding the raw materials from which these needs are ultimately satisfied. The whole purpose of the exercise, in effect, was not to produce goods and services but to buy customers. Although Levitt's polemic has since been dismissed as contradictory, ambiguous and misleading (e.g. Kaldor 1971; Marion 1993), his paper undoubtedly encapsulated the essence of modern marketing, succeeded in setting the agenda for a generation of marketing academics and practitioners and, over thirty years later, it has lost little of its extraordinary resonance and rhetorical power.

The criticisms of Keith and Levitt should not disguise the fact that, along with several other enthusiasts, most notably McKitterick (1957), they were responsible for the propagation of the modern marketing concept. Albeit expressed in a variety of colourful apothegms – 'customer satisfaction engineering' (Kotler and Levy 1969, p.10), 'creating and keeping profitable customers' (Brown 1987, p.30), 'selling goods that don't come back to people that do' (Baker 1991, p.4) etc. – and albeit predated, as Powers and Martin (1987) have shown, by the writings of Charles W. Hoyt, Ralph Star Butler and Percival White in the early part of this century, the marketing concept is generally considered to comprise three elements: an awareness of customer wants, which are regarded as the point of departure for a marketing-led organisation; the integration and co-ordination of all the activities of the firm around this basic customer orientation; and regarding profit rather than sales volume as the measure of success of the organisation's marketing activities (Hollander 1986). As we shall presently discover, not everyone subscribes to this particular definition and distinctions are sometimes drawn between the associated family of terms (e.g. marketing concept, marketing philosophy, marketing orientation, market orientation and customer orientation), but the nuances of these categorisations, though a boon to academics in pursuit of publications, are unimportant for the purposes of our discussion. The essential point is that marketing in general and the marketing concept in particular are widely regarded, by academics and practitioners alike, respectively to comprise the single most important management function and the key to success in business (Baker and Hart 1989; Kheir-El-Din 1991).

Indeed, there is considerable empirical evidence to support this contention. To cite but a few examples:

- Barkdall and Darden's (1971) early survey of business executives and marketing educators in the US revealed a widespread belief in the efficacy of the marketing concept. Interestingly, however, top managers were more favourably disposed toward marketing than marketing managers, who in turn were more positive about the concept than marketing educators.
- Hooley and Lynch's (1985) detailed analysis of 1504 British companies found that 'high flyers' exhibited a significantly greater market orientation, as measured by their use of market research in all its forms, strategic sensibility and concern with product quality and design than the 'also rans'.
- Narver and Slater (1990) examined the marketing orientation of the top managers of 140 strategic business units (SBUs) in the USA, using a comprehensive, multiple-item scale, and discovered not only a clear
relationship between marketing orientation and profitability but also that the highest degree of marketing orientation was exhibited by managers of the most profitable companies.

- Kohli and Jaworski (1990) reported, on the basis of 62 semi-structured interviews with marketing practitioners in four US cities, a high degree of familiarity with the three component parts of the marketing concept – customer orientation, co-ordination and profitability, though the last of these was seen as a consequence of the marketing concept not an integral part of it – and that the perceived benefits of the marketing philosophy included better overall performance, benefits for employees and more positive customer attitudes.

- Wong and Saunders' (1993) multivariate study of matched Japanese, American and British companies demonstrated that organisations classified as ‘innovators’, ‘quality marketeers’ and ‘mature marketeers’ were significantly more successful in terms of profits, sales and market share than those classified as ‘price promoters’, ‘product makers’ and ‘aggressive pushers’ (Figure 2.1).

Many other ringing endorsements of the marketing philosophy could be paraded but suffice it to say that the relationship between marketing and business ‘success’ appears to hold regardless of company size, sector or geographical context (see Kheir-El-Din’s (1991) detailed review of the literature). Conversely, some of the principal reasons for failure in business are weaknesses in marketing performance – inability to develop a distinctive image, a lack of understanding of company strengths and weaknesses and unwillingness to adjust to changing times and consumer needs. Doyle (1985), for instance, contends that inept marketing is the primary cause of British industry’s continuing lack of international competitiveness and rather than seeking macro-economic solutions to the country’s commercial ills, much greater attention should be paid to improving the marketing competence of individual companies.

Phil and Ted’s Excellent Adventure

If thanks to the endeavours of Levitt and his fellow evangelists, the late 1950s–early 1960s witnessed the efflorescence of modern marketing, the subsequent decades have been characterised by periodic, occasionally intertemporal and undeniably stimulating debate. These debates have ranged from the efficacy of individual marketing constructs or principles (attitude–behaviour consistency, the product life cycle, hierarchy of advertising effects, for example) and the periodic attempts to develop an all-encompassing ‘general’ theory of marketing, to the old ‘art versus science’ chestnut alluded to in the previous chapter. Clearly, it is impossible to do justice to these controversies in an essay such as this. However, three issues have proved to be of particular importance: (1) marketing’s domain, the area over which it extends; (2) marketing’s core, its unique distinguishing feature; and (3) the precise character of the marketing concept itself.

The debate over marketing’s proper domain was initiated by Kotler and Levy (1969) when they contended that marketing was an all-pervasive activity which applied as much to the selling of politicians, universities and charities as it did to toothpaste, soap and steel. As a consequence of dramatic, post-war social changes and the emergence of large, complex, professionally managed non-business organisations, such as museums, police departments and trade unions, it had become necessary to broaden the concept of marketing. Traditional notions of the ‘product’, the ‘customer’ and the marketing ‘toolkit’ had to be redefined in non-business terms and attempts made to transfer the principles of effective marketing management – generic product definition, target groups identification, customer behaviour analysis, integrated marketing planning, continuous feedback and so on – to the marketing of services, persons and ideas. In effect, ‘the choice facing those who manage non-business organisations is not whether to market or not to market, for no organisation can avoid marketing. The choice is whether to do it well or poorly’ (Kotler and Levy 1969, p.15).

Developing this theme, Kotler (1972) went on to argue that it was necessary to extend the concept even further. There were, he maintained, three stages of marketing consciousness. The first represented the traditional view of marketing that it was essentially a business-oriented philosophy involving market transactions, the economic exchange of goods and services. Consciousness two held that marketing was applicable to all
organisations that had customers or clients, even though payment in the normal sense may not take place. However, the third level of consciousness, deemed the 'generic' concept, contended that marketing was not only relevant to all organisations, be they churches, political parties or government departments, but to the relations between an organisation and all of its publics, not just the consuming public. To this end, Kotler developed a typology of nine distinct publics, six types of products and six types of organisation (Table 2.2). In fact, he went even further still, extending the concept beyond organisations to transactions between any two parties or 'social units' (e.g. watching television) and, in what can only be described as a rush of blood to the head, he concluded that 'marketing can be viewed as a category of human action, distinguishable from other categories of human action such as voting, loving, consuming and fighting' (emphasis in original).

Needless to say, not everyone shared Kotler's marketing megalomania and several critics warned of the dangers of over-extending the concept. Luck (1969) believed that marketing should be confined to considerations of market transactions and decried the 'semantic jungle' that broadening entailed. Lacznik and Michie (1979) held that it was becoming all but impossible to distinguish between marketing and non-marketing transactions. And, in a particularly prescient paper, Bartels (1974) predicted that broadening would only serve to direct attention away from important but neglected areas of marketing activity, like physical distribution, lead to an emphasis on methodology rather than issues of substance, and give rise to an increasingly esoteric and abstract marketing literature. Set against this, however, Kotler's (1972) denunciation of his critics as 'myopic' (which, thanks to Levitt, remains the most damning indictment in marketing's lexicon), his declaration that failure to rethink marketing at a time of great social change ran the risk of marginalisation and irrelevance (which dovetailed neatly with contemporaneous concern about the nature of the relationship between marketing and society) and, not least, the simple fact that the marketing message was deemed relevant to, and hence enthusiastically embraced by, individuals and organisations outside the traditional marketing arena, rapidly rendered the 'broadening' debate irrelevant. Only five years later, Hunt (1976) could declare the battle won by the broadeners and all that remained was the need to (a) go forth and multiply by 'marketing to marketing to non-marketers' and (b) develop a framework which did justice to the enormous scope of marketing. Fortunately, Hunt had one to hand, a typology made up of three dimensions — normative/positive, micro/macro and profit/non-profit — which when combined produced eight cells of contrasting marketing foci (Table 2.3). Although this 'three dichotomies' model has been severely criticised in turn — a cynic once described it as 'the three calamities model' (Brown 1995, p.37) — it has not yet been superseded and remains, arguably, the definitive statement on marketing's vast domain (see for example Robin 1977; Arndt 1981; Hyman et al. 1991; Hunt 1991a).

If marketing is as ubiquitous as Kotlerites maintain, then the question must be asked, what is the common denominator, what makes marketing different from other areas of intellectual endeavour? When watching television, religious experiences, human relationships, self-image and the trading practices of neolithic man are considered legitimate topics of marketing inquiry, what distinguishes the subject from media studies, theology, sociology, psychology and history? Clearly, it is not the phenomena under investigation. As noted in Chapter 1, just as marketers claim dominion over non-business arenas, so too sociologists, psychologists, theologians and historians are happy to explore the nooks and crannies of the marketing edifice. Nor is marketing distinguished by a distinctive methodology. Not only are most of our procedures employed by other academic specialisms, but, as Ragozzi (1975) points out, defining a discipline by its tools and techniques is both reductive and circular (in that marketing is defined by its tools and its tools are defined by marketing). Nor, for that matter, is the discipline distinguished by a particular scale of analysis. Marketing is concerned with everything from the workings of the human brain (in the study of memory effects, for example) to globalisation tendencies in the world economy (courtesy, once again, of Levitt), and if attempts to communicate with alien life forms are included (interstellar 'messages' often include advertisements as examples of human culture), then the entire universe falls within marketing's ambitious orbit.

Although marketing is characterised by attempts boldly to go where other disciplines have gone before (yes, I know I've unspilt the infinitive, but, this is supposed to be a work of scholarship, remember!), it has often been argued that marketers adopt a particular perspective, that the specialism has a distinctive focus, that the core concept of marketing is
Table 2.1 The three dichotomies model

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Positive</th>
<th>Normative</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROFIT SECTOR</strong></td>
<td>Problems, issues, theories and research concerning: individual consumer behaviour; firms' determination of prices, products, promotions, channels of distribution; and, case studies</td>
<td>Problems, issues and research concerning how firms <em>should</em> determine the marketing mix; implement the marketing concept; and, make pricing, product, promotion, packaging, purchasing and international marketing decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Macro</strong></td>
<td>Problems, issues and research concerning: aggregate consumption patterns; legal and comparative aspects of marketing; and the relationship between marketing and economic development</td>
<td>Problems, issues and research concerning: how marketing can be made more efficient; whether distribution costs too much; and whether marketing should have special social responsibilities</td>
</tr>
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</table>

**NON-PROFIT SECTOR**

|                      | Problems, issues, theories and research concerning: consumers' purchasing of public goods; non-profit organisations' determination of prices, products, promotion and channels of distribution; and case studies | Problems, issues and research concerning how non-profit organisations *should* determine the marketing mix; implement the marketing concept; and, make pricing, product, promotion, packaging, purchasing and international marketing decisions |
| **Macro**            | Problems, issues, theories and research concerning: the institutional framework for public goods; whether television or public service advertising affects behaviour; and, the efficiency of distribution systems for public goods | Problems, issues and research concerning: whether society should permit the 'selling' of politicians; and, whether the demand for public goods should be stimulated |

Source: Adapted from Hunt (1976)

Exchange. Admittedly, many other academic subject areas, such as economics, anthropology and geography, have demonstrated an interest in exchange relationships, but many academic authorities consider 'exchange' to be the very essence of the marketing condition (Baker 1987, 1992; Houston and Gassenheimer 1987; Dwyer et al. 1987). Bagozzi (1975, 1979), in particular, has gone to great lengths to propagate the 'marketing as exchange' paradigm, arguing that three types of exchange – restricted, generalised and complex – can be identified and that exchange relationships carry three types of meaning for the parties involved, utilitarian, symbolic and mixed. Indeed, Bagozzi (1975) went so far as to assert that not only is marketing a general function of universal applicability but that it is the discipline of exchange behaviour, no less.

As was the case with the debate over marketing's domain, not everyone subscribes to the marketing = exchange analogy. On the contrary, the concept has been examined in detail and found wanting. After examining Bagozzi's typology of exchange, for example, Foxall (1984a, p.36) concluded 'it is difficult to imagine how this line of marketing thought can be reconciled with the fundamental principle, namely consumer sovereignty'. Martin (1985, p.21), moreover, maintained that the notion was 'nebulous and ambiguous', and even Houston and Gassenheimer (1987, p.17), who have provided one of the most detailed and sympathetic explanations of the exchange paradigm, concede that, 'it has yet to fulfil its promise of providing a coherent structure for the discipline' (see also Firt 1984; Hirschman 1986; Belk and Coon 1993). Inevitably, a host of alternative disciplinary foci have been proposed – 'matching', 'transactions', 'potency', 'market behaviour' and so on – but it is fair to say that none of these have managed to unseat 'exchange'. As with the equally debatable three dichotomies model, marketing = exchange is very deeply entrenched in the disciplinary psyche and, although the question of marketing's core concept periodically surfaces in the literature, it is generally considered to be a dead or irresolvable issue.

Marketing, like many academic disciplines, may lack a universally agreed core, its boundaries may be ragged and ill-defined, and aspirant explicants may be reduced to such neologisms as 'marketing is what marketers do', but at least we can rest assured in the belief that the marketing concept itself is unassailable. Unfortunately not. Even the marketing concept, with its tripartite emphasis on customer orientation, overall integration and profit maximisation, has been the subject of extensive debate and periodic modification (see Houston 1986). Apart from intractable, albeit comparatively minor, issues like the operationalisation of the measure of profit or the relationship between profit and market share, the all-important stress placed upon meeting customer needs has been criticised, firstly, for its failure to take the offerings of competitors into account. Success in marketing, so the argument goes, is gained not by meeting customer needs...
per se, but by meeting them better than the competition (Sachs and Benson 1978). Secondly, the emphasis on customer orientation has been condemned for diverting attention away from the product and its manufacture. By focusing attention on the consumer's perceived needs, the marketing concept has served to stifle innovation as, in many situations, consumers are incapable of articulating latent needs and talk in terms of the familiar. This gives rise to the proliferation of minor twist, 'me too' products and the eventual loss of technological leadership (Fauber 1974; Bennett and Cooper 1981). Third, and most importantly, it has often been contended that the marketing concept should transcend mere customer orientation and deal instead with broader societal concerns (Bell and Emory 1971; Kotler and Zaltman 1971). The key question, in other words, is not whether products or services can be developed to meet consumer needs, but whether they should be developed in light of the attendant social consequences (environmental pollution, depletion of natural resources, global warming, neo-colonialism etc.).

Marketers, not unnaturally, have responded vigorously to the attacks on and controversies surrounding the marketing concept. Interestingly, however, the defenders of the faith did not react to the challenge by arguing, in line with Drucker’s original exposition, that marketing’s domain did not extend to innovation and that the concept was being criticised unfairly. Such a stance was clearly impossible given marketing’s less than modest post-Kotler claims to universality. Instead, the response has been to extend the marketing concept to incorporate the competitive context, technological innovation and societal concerns. For example, most latter-day definitions of the marketing concept in mainstream textbooks specifically mention the need to meet customer needs more efficiently and effectively than competitors, and great store is placed on strategic considerations generally (Kotler 1988; O’Shaughnessy 1992a). Many theorists also include ‘technological push’ as well as ‘market pull’ in their conceptualisations, even though the former places marketers in the paradoxical position of appearing to advocate the once-reviled ‘product orientation’ (Samli et al. 1987). Similarly, societal concerns have been embraced with some vigour, especially by the macromarketing fraternity and notwithstanding the fact that to non-marketers this altruism smacks of ‘poacher turned gamekeeper’ at best and breathtaking cynicism at worst (Sheth et al. 1988).

Although often bitter and polemical, and although they remain resolutely unresolved and hence subject to periodic exhumation, the above debates concerning the concept’s domain, core and composition should not disguise the fact that marketing has made remarkable strides in the post-war era. As Figure 2.2 demonstrates, this process of development can be described in terms of Ansoff’s celebrated and much-cited product–market matrix. The first cell, penetration, comprises the early attempts to demonstrate the

Figure 2.2 The evolution of the modern marketing concept
Source: Adapted from Ansoff (1957)

veracity of the modern marketing concept, to highlight its superiority over the sales and product orientations that once prevailed, and to promote its acceptance throughout the business community. The second cell, market development, refers to the revolution, initiated by Kotler and Levy, involving the application of the marketing concept to all manner of non-business organisations, from charities to high schools, and to all of an organisation’s constituents. Product development, the third cell, pertains to the subsequent modifications of the original marketing concept, which was expanded to embrace the competitive environment, strategic concerns, technological push and suchlike. The final cell, diversification, alludes to the societal concept of marketing, in so far as this involved a reformulation of both the product/concept itself (the key issue is not consumer needs or profit but societal concerns) and the market/domain to which it pertains – public policy, consumerism, resource exploitation, the deficiencies of the marketing system etc.

Phil and Ted’s Bogus Journey
In their recent book, Competitive Positioning, Hooley and Saunders (1993, p.3) argue that the marketing concept has come of age. Whereas a decade or two ago marketing was misunderstood by most senior managers and
typically considered to be a new name for old-fashioned selling, marketing
is now 'on everyone's lips'. Certainly, there is much to support this
contention. As we have noted already, there is considerable empirical
evidence that a marketing orientation is the key to long-term business
profitability and survival (Baker and Hart 1989). Innumerable surveys
of senior management attest to its continuing importance (Wong 1993).
The marketing concept has been deemed applicable to fields as diverse
as healthcare, public administration, the not-for-profit sector, aesthetic
accomplishments, individual people and religious experiences (Hirschman
1983, 1987; Doyle 1993; Walsh 1993; Jennings and Saunders 1993). It is
rapidly colonising the erstwhile command economies of Eastern Europe
where the market is supplanting Marxism as the societal touchstone,
 albeit not without privation (see Hooley 1993). The proliferation of
publications, professorships, degree programmes and autonomous uni-
versity departments testifies to the fact that marketing is in the ascen-
dent as an academic discipline. And, as Huczynski (1993, p.35) has shown,
the diverse writings of the new generation of management gurus – Tom
Peters, Michael Porter, Kenneth Blanchard, etc. – concurred on one point,
'that the central fact of business today is the emergence of consumer
sovereignty'. In these circumstances, indeed, it is fair to surmise that
approximately forty years after Drucker's original exposition, thirty-five
years after Levitt's codification and a quarter of a century after Kotler
and Levy's endeavours to broaden its base, the modern marketing concept
has fully matured.

Yet despite the undeniable achievements of modern marketing, an under-
current of concern is equally apparent. Many latter-day commentators
on the marketing condition have concluded that something is amiss, that
the concept is deeply, perhaps irredeemably, flawed, that its seemingly solid
theoretical foundations are by no means secure and that the specialism is
teetering on the brink of a serious intellectual crisis (Cova and Svenfeldt
1992; Marion 1993). True, people have been declaring that marketing
is in some sort of 'crisis' from time immemorial (e.g. Bartels 1962;
Bell and Emory 1971; Bennett and Cooper 1981). After all, the identifi-
cation of spurious crises and the provision of a timely 'solution' is a
standard ploy in the game of academic self-aggrandisement and personal
fortune-hunting. Nevertheless, such is the pervasiveness of the current
unease – the 1993 Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) conference,
for example, devoted a special session, featuring some of America's fore-
most marketing scholars, to the issue and a contemporaneous European
conference entitled 'Rethinking Marketing' was also considered necessary
– and so prominent are the practitioners, consultants and academics
concerned, that even the staunchest defenders of modern marketing might
be prepared to concede that the field is facing a crisis of representation
(self-aggrandisement, moi?).

- Piercy (1992, p.15), for example, maintains that the traditional
marketing concept, 'assumes and relies on the existence of a world
which is alien and unrecognisable to many of the executives who
actually have to manage marketing for real'.
- Gummesson (1987, p.10) states that 'the present marketing concept
... is unrealistic and needs to be replaced'.
- Nilson (1992, p.4) contends that 'a revision of the marketing concept
is necessary'.
- Rapp and Collins (1990, p.3) suggest that 'the traditional methods
... simply aren't working as well anymore'.
- Brownlie and Saren (1992, p.38) argue that 'it is questionable whether
the marketing concept as it has been propagated can provide the basis
for successful business at the end of the twentieth century'.
- McKenna (1991, p.67) concludes that 'there is less and less reason to
believe that the traditional approach can keep up with real customer
wishes and demands or with the rigors of competition'.
- And, Professor Michael Thomas (1993), one of the most respected
marketing academics in Britain, has recently made the frank, and frankly
astonishing, confession that after thirty years of disseminating the
marketing message, he is having serious doubts about its continuing
efficacy.

If, as many authorities appear to imply, marketing is facing the onset of
a 'mid-life crisis' (Brady and Davis 1993; Wilson and McDonald 1994),
there is less consensus on the most suitable means of transcending this
unfortunate state of affairs and the future direction that the specialism
should take. For the sake of argument, however, the various suggestions
can be summarised in the four-cell matrix illustrated in Figure 2.3.,
which involves the inversion or reversal of our earlier product-market
typology. The first position, realisation, subscribes to the view that the modern
marketing concept is basically sound, but that the problem is one of implementa-
tion. In other words, the traditional difficulties of getting the concept
accepted by top management, of distinguishing successfully between
marketing philosophy and function, trappings and substance, rhetoric and
reality etc., have been superseded by a concern with making marketing
work through a heightened understanding of organisational politics and
inter-functional rivalry. To this end, a programme of internal marketing –
marketing the marketing concept within organisations – is often advo-
cated. Typically, this involves a series of decisions on organisation, informa-
tion gathering, planning, budgeting, control procedures and, above all,
action, ensuring that the transformation process actually takes place (e.g.

The second position, retrenchment, also regards the marketing concept
as reasonably acceptable in itself, but acknowledges that there are certain
circumstances in which it is either inappropriate or of minor rather than major relevance. For some people, it is irrelevant in hi-tech industries where discontinuous innovation is the norm and traditional marketing research can inhibit rather than enhance the process (Workman 1993). For others, it is unsuitable in basic commodity markets where the opportunities for meaningful differentiation are less clearly marked than is the case elsewhere (Narver and Slater 1990). For yet others, the concept has shortcomings when applied to certain sectors, such as services, public administration and not-for-profit (Wensley 1990); in certain countries, most notably in Eastern Europe (Thomas 1993); for certain companies depending on their specific organisational, competitive and market circumstances (Kohli and Jaworski 1990); and, in certain macro-economic conditions (Foxall 1984a). These uncertainties, it must be emphasised, do not represent a re-run of the old questions 'how does marketing differ in various settings – industrial versus consumer, domestic versus international, goods versus services and so on?' The key point is not that the nature of marketing differs, but that the marketing concept itself is deemed inappropriate when applied in certain contexts.

Rearrangement, the third position, does not so much take issue with the domain of the discipline as the very character of the marketing concept, and how it needs to be modified to meet today's marketing realities. According to Webster (1988), for example, it has become necessary to 'rediscover' marketing, to scrape away the encrustations of strategic management, which have led to an unhealthy and (surprise, surprise) myopic preoccupation with competitor activity and market share, and replace them with a renewed focus on the customer. To get back, in effect, to the basics of the original marketing concept – customer orientation. Baker (1989), by contrast, contends that too much emphasis has been placed on the consumer, consumerism and societal concerns generally. Marketing, he argues is about exchanges which are mutually satisfying for both consumers and providers. More fundamentally perhaps, many scholars maintain that attention should increasingly focus on a very specific aspect of the marketing concept, namely, 'relationships' (Christopher et al. 1991). In other words, to the establishment and maintenance of long-term marketing relationships rather than the former preoccupation with one-off transactions. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to state that, at the time of writing, relationship marketing is the single most popular topic on the academic research agenda, though it is noteworthy that most of the studies thus far are concerned with relationships in the profit sector. Broadening the concept of relationship marketing to the not-for-profit and non-business sectors has yet to be meaningfully addressed (Butler and Brown 1994).

Rearrangement, the final and by far the most radical position, comprises an acknowledgement of the simple fact that the marketing concept has not succeeded and is unlikely to prove successful in its present form. Despite the latter-day 'triumph' of marketing, the failure rate of new products is as high as it ever was – possibly higher. Consumerism, the so-called 'shame of marketing', is still rampant, especially in its virulent 'green' mutation. Selling has not, contra the marketing concept, been rendered redundant because few products actually sell themselves. Companies in countries where the marketing message has not been received loud and clear, such as Japan and Germany, continue to outperform their Anglo-American counterparts and, even in the latter milieu, businesses can still succeed without the aid of modern marketing (Piercy (1992) cites The Body Shop, Amstrad, Ratners and Marks and Spencer as prime examples).

In these circumstances, it has been suggested that marketing should revert to pre-marketing era marketing; in other words, to adopt a neo-sales or post-product orientation. Dickinson et al. (1986), for instance, stress that marketing is basically manipulative and monopoly seeking, that customers in many instances are totally unaware of their needs, and that marketing's task is to shape consumer wants, determine their perceptions and persuade them of the attractiveness of what the company has on sale. Likewise, Chen et al. (1992, p.441) have recently made a case for the pre-eminence of production, concluding with the words 'the conventional wisdom that
marketing is expected to play a major role in formulating corporate strategies, with manufacturing simply responding to these strategies, is no longer affordable'. An alternative form of reversion, to an intuitive, creative, flexible, idiographic, essentially ‘non-scientific’ marketing concept, has also been suggested. This approach recognises that ‘each marketing situation should be treated as unique and in its own right, drawing upon all the available knowledge that may help in handling the situation’ (Gummesson 1987, p.19). Another, and potentially the most extreme position of all, highlights that marketing-orientated management is an historical artifact which emerged in certain countries under a particular set of socio-economic conditions (Foxall 1984a; Baker 1989). Just as the sales and product orientations were appropriate to their own particular historical eras, so too a marketing orientation is a product of its time. For a growing number of commentators, what is more, that time has passed and we are facing nothing less than the end of marketing (cf. Lynch 1994).

Howard’s End

Above and beyond the uncertainty surrounding the continuing relevance of the modern marketing concept, there is evidence of a deepening crisis of representation in several other areas of marketing endeavour. Indeed, this crisis contributes to and is reinforced by the palpable sense of aimlessness and unpredictability that characterises the underpinning marketing concept. For the purposes of our discussion, this predicament can be summarised under four headings: practice, principles, philosophy and prescriptions. The four Ps in other words. These categories, of course, are not clear cut and, as we shall see, a postmodernist would reject out of hand any such attempt to impose order on what is undeniably a complex, inchoate and tightly interwoven process. But in the interests of convenience — and in pursuit of the postmodernist grail of intertextuality — they can be described as the four Ps.

Whenever one examines the current practices of marketing, the process of disintegration looms large. Analyses focus on the massive fragmentation of markets into smaller and smaller, more and more inaccessible segments, and the associated proliferation of offerings in existing product categories — soft drinks, washing powder, yellow fats, etc. (Muehler-Leumann 1992). Consumer researchers note the rise of new individualism, a desire to ‘keep away from the Joneses’, the sheer unpredictability of buyer behaviour and the difficulties of selling to ‘Generation X’ (McMurdo 1993; King 1994). The new world order, or rather disorder, that has transpired since the break-up of the communist bloc into a multiplicity of nation states and ethnic enclaves, coupled with the emergence and reorganisation of trading blocks (EC, NAFTA, ASEAN) and the convolutions of the GATT agreement, have served to undermine the basic premises of the globalisation concept and, at the risk of gross understatement, rendered international trade increasingly problematical (Ogilvy 1990). Competition is proliferating in almost every sector of the economy as a consequence of the pace of technological change, the just-in-time revolution, the rapid diffusion of know-how, the shortening of product life cycles, the advent of flexible manufacturing systems and the increased porosity of barriers to entry as economies of scope supersede economies of scale (Imrie and Morris 1992). Marketers, moreover, appear to be going to ever-increasing lengths in order to reach and satisfy customers, even to the extent of customising individual products, promotional material and so on (Pine 1993). This has led Hoyt (1991, p.4) to the inescapable conclusion that practitioners are increasingly dealing with segments of one and, as a consequence, ‘we don’t do marketing here anymore’.

Likewise, the literature is replete with considerations of the reorganisation of organisations and assessments of the implications for marketing (Gummesson 1991; Achrol 1991). This ranges from the flattening, de-layering and re-engineering of management hierarchies, and the demise of marketing as a separate function, to the increasingly blurred boundaries between companies. The necessity for and benefits of joint ventures, collaborative networks, strategic alliances, dedicated suppliers, multi-layered partnerships, overlapping organisations, hollow corporations, virtual companies and their ilk are being enthusiastically extolled with evangelical fervour, though the extent to which rhetoric and reality coincide is rather less certain (Bucklin and Sengupta 1993). Nevertheless, as Webster (1992, p.14) points out, not only is it not uncommon in today’s marketing environment for a producer or supplier to be ‘simultaneously customer, competitor, and vendor, as well as partner’, but also that ‘the clear distinction between firms and markets, between the company and its external environment, has disappeared’.

In these turbulent and seemingly paradoxical circumstances, where the certainties of the past are no longer certain and the era of mass marketing is but a dim and distant memory, it is perhaps not surprising that there are many extant declarations of discontent with long-established marketing principles. Whether it be the product life cycle, market segmentation, the hierarchy of advertising effects, the classification of goods, Fishbein’s behavioural intentions model, the wheel of retailing, the stages of internationalisation concept, the celebrated Howard–Sheth model of consumer behaviour, the strategic matrices of Porter, Ansoff and the Boston Consulting Group, or, come to think of it, the four Ps itself, the continuing utility of these models and constructs is being increasingly called into question (e.g. Wood 1990; Foxall 1984b, 1990; Sparks 1990; Turnbull 1987). The fact of the matter is that, despite decades of research and replication, the validity, reliability, universality and predictive power of these and many other prominent marketing principles are far from established.
(though, it goes without saying, my own use of such models as argument-framing devices remains the one island of certainty in a sea of conceptual ambiguity).

Worse, the constructs themselves may have a counterproductive or deleterious effect on marketplace behaviour. It is not unknown, after all, for perfectly sound products to be killed off because of management's belief in the existence of a product life cycle (van Rossum 1984). The codification of the retailing hierarchy concept has contributed to decades of conflict between urban planners and retail organisations and impeded the introduction of innovative retailing formats, as has the classification of goods typology (Brown 1993a). STP (segmentation, targeting, positioning) stands accused of reinforcing managers' preoccupation with existing product and service offerings, or minor variants of existing offerings, rather than developing them anew (Bennett and Cooper 1981); the stages theory of internationalisation provides the basis of government export assistance policies, yet the model itself is far from proven (Bell 1994); and the four Ps framework, according to Gummesson (1991) and Grountos (1990), is a conceptual strait-jacket which has served to misdirect both practitioners and academics. A recent evaluation of the Boston matrix, moreover, found that 'it is a real worry that the original matrix is seductively simple and the temptations of using it off the shelf are real... Those who now use it may be boxed in terms of restrictive assumptions about both the nature of market and competitive dynamics... It is a badly taught, outmoded and discredited orthodoxy, which is seductive and dangerous for our young managers of tomorrow' (Morrison and Wensley 1991, p.118).

Just as the practices and principles of marketing exhibit crisis-like tendencies, so too the underpinning philosophy of science in marketing appears to be in turmoil, though it is debatable whether this represents a true paradigmatic crisis in the Kuhnian sense. As Barnes (1982) has shown, fully-fledged paradigm shifts are rare in the social sciences. Be that as it may, Hunt's (1993) recent report in the Journal of Marketing, and all the previous papers in the (interminable) series 'Shelby Hunt versus the barbarian hordes', specifically mention the 'crisis' literature (e.g. Hunt 1991b, 1992). The perceived bifurcation, in other words, between the positivist and logical empiricist defenders of the marketing faith, though they are at pains to reject such apppellations (thereby deflecting some of the criticism), and the profusion of relativistic philosophical heresies - phenomenology, hermeneutics, semiotics, existentialism, historicism, literary theory, critical theory, ethnomethodology, etc. - propounded by post-positivist, interpretive, constructionist and humanistic marketing researchers (see Sherry 1991). Summarised in Table 2.4, this latter group espouses a methodology (procedures and aims), epistemology (theory of knowledge), ontology (assumptions about existence) and axiology (overriding values) that are markedly different from the marketing research mainstream.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.4 Positivist and interpretivist paradigms: key features</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic beliefs</strong>:</td>
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<tr>
<td>The world is external and objective</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observer is independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science is value-free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The world is socially constructed and subjective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observer is part of what is observed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science is driven by human interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Researcher should</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on facts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to understand what is happening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for causality and fundamental laws</td>
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<tr>
<td>Look at the totality of each situation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reduce phenomena to simplest elements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop ideas through induction from data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Formulate hypotheses and then test them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preferred methods include</strong>:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalising concepts so that they can be measured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using multiple methods to establish different views of phenomena</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking large samples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small samples investigated in depth or over time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Easterby Smith et al. (1991)

In fairness, it must be emphasised that both the 'positivists' and 'interpretivists' have gone to great lengths to stress their open-mindedness and their support for a multiplicity of epistemological perspectives (e.g. Hunt 1989; Hirschman 1989a). Nevertheless, to the uncommitted, the unedifying sight of prominent marketing scholars indulging in gratuitous mud-slinging and name-calling contests looks very much like a debilitating, demeaning, unnecessary and potentially ruinous civil war (though, let's be honest, most of us secretly revel in their amusing attempts to maintain a modicum of academic decorum whilst slugging it out). At one extreme, Shelby Hunt (1994, p.21) is happy to dismiss all interpretive approaches as unworthy of serious consideration by marketing scholars and asks pointedly, 'how could marketers trust the output of such research methods?' At the other extreme, committed interpretivists like Holbrook and Hirschman (1993) are openly advocating the secession of consumer research from the marketing mainstream and an abandonment of the
long-standing connection with practising managers. As Geelner (1993, p.215) rightly points out, ‘dogmatism is not uncommon among creative intellectuals, even or especially among those who preach liberalism’.

This all-pervasive sense of crisis is exacerbated by the plethora of prescriptions pertaining to the marketing condition and the host of conceptual cure-alls that have recently materialised. In a recent overview concerning the state of marketing research, for example, Hodock (1991) concluded that the seductiveness of quantification, rating scales and sophisticated data gathering technology has led to a situation where researchers are increasingly out of touch with real market needs and the voice of the consumer. Wells (1993) contends that progress in consumer research has been inhibited by the mistaken assumptions that (a) students represent consumers, (b) the laboratory represents the real world, (c) statistical significance confers real significance, (d) correlation equates to causation, and (e) mentioning limitations makes them go away. Strategic marketing stands accused of ceding territory to other academic specialisms, standing idly by while its concepts and methods are appropriated by non-marketers, and of adhering to outmoded characterisations of strategy processes and issues (Day 1992). The editors of prominent marketing journals complain of unoriginal insights, me-too contributions, redundant research and ‘mechanical’ manuscripts comprising marginal additions to and minor variations of well-worn themes (Peterson 1992; Ingene 1993). Dickinson (1992) lists no less than nineteen frequently recycled ‘myths’ about marketing ranging from the supposed congruence of marketer and consumer goals, and the presupposition that individuals are motivated by self-interest, to researchers’ preoccupation with identifying similarities among marketing phenomena (and hence generalisability) rather than seeking differences. When it comes to marketing education, moreover, the traditional curriculum has come under attack for its functional orientation rather than multifunctional emphasis, its concern with analytical skills instead of action-orientated skills and, in the United States at least, the lack of attention to internationalisation.

Although periodic diagnoses of the marketing condition are prudent and healthy, the very act of examination only serves to undermine confidence, especially when the scrutiny is conducted by established and respected figures in the field (the attacks of outsiders and newcomers can be dismissed as ignorance and self-promotion respectively). This sense of uncertainty is compounded by the current rash of conceptual restoratives, the very existence of which comprise an implicit criticism of mainstream marketing. Apart from the manifold interpretive research perspectives, which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5, these solutions to marketing’s ills come in several forms, though a suitably snappy, dynamic, trendy, virile, evangelical or alliterative title is common to all – maxi-marketing, turbo-marketing, neo-marketing, micro-marketing, after-marketing, value-added

Table 2.5 Marketing panaceas: some examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terminology</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro-marketing</td>
<td>‘marketing so finely tuned that, if applied properly, it will speak to customers almost individually’</td>
<td>Schlossberg (1992)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maxi-marketing</td>
<td>‘direct contact, dialogue and involvement with the individual prospect or customer leading to increased sales and brand loyalty’</td>
<td>Rapp and Collins (1990)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Database marketing</td>
<td>‘direct marketers’ (ability) to talk to their audiences as individuals in very large numbers’</td>
<td>Davies (1992)</td>
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<td>New marketing</td>
<td>‘we are witnessing the emergence of a new marketing paradigm – not a “do more” marketing that simply turns up the volume on the sales spats of the past but a knowledge- and experience-based marketing that… finds a way to integrate the customer into the company, to create and sustain a relationship between the company and the customer’</td>
<td>McKenna (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-around marketing</td>
<td>‘two perennial problems in marketing are getting customers and keeping them. Traditionally, most marketers have spent their time getting customers. But the truth is we ought to start spending more time on the problem of how to retain the customers we have’</td>
<td>Kotler, quoted in Caruso (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-added marketing</td>
<td>‘improve existing products and concepts rather than launch new ones’</td>
<td>Nilson (1992)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship marketing</td>
<td>‘has as its concern the dual forces of getting and keeping customers. Traditionally much of the effort of marketing has been directed towards the getting of the customers rather than the keeping of them. Relationship marketing aims to close the loop’</td>
<td>Christopher et al. (1991)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neo-marketing</td>
<td>‘the basic rule is break the old rules’</td>
<td>Cova and Svanfeldt (1992)</td>
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marketing, transformational marketing, relationship marketing, interactive marketing, thrust marketing, macho-marketing, testosterone-marketing, take-me-I’m-yours marketing, if-I-can-think-of-a-sexy-metaphor-I-can-make-a-fortune marketing, and so on ad infinitum (see Table 2.5). True, the marketing of marketing nostrums has always gone on to some degree – after all, it is only through the identification of extant shortcomings and the provision of an expensive remedy that management gurus and marketing consultants can reap the rich financial rewards that are their due – but this process is arguably more prevalent than before and involves prominent, mainstream marketing scholars (Kotler, Sheth, Christopher, Piercy and their ilk), as opposed to the lunatic fringe. The lunatic fringe, suffice it to say, is writing books on postmodern marketing.

Play it Again Stan

If, to summarise our argument thus far, the conventional wisdom of mainstream textbooks and the rhetoric of its professional and academic devotees are to be believed, the nature of modern marketing is as follows: marketing is practised within, and influenced by, a highly complex socioeconomic environment characterised by intense competition and rapid change (Figure 2.4). Scientific study of this marketing environment, by means of systematic market research and (ideally) computerised marketing intelligence systems, leads to the development of clear, formally stated marketing strategies designed to serve specific segments in precisely defined markets. These strategies are translated into cogent and carefully planned programmes of marketing action, which involve totally integrated offerings tailored to the identified and thoroughly researched needs of the chosen target markets. The offerings involve elements of product and price, a programme of persuasive communications, an effective distribution network, and after-sales service, where necessary (see Piercy 1992).

Apart from its obvious utility as a pedagogic aid, in so far as it implies that a logical, atomistic, step-by-step approach can help organisations match their offerings to perceived or latent customer needs and hence render manageable the unmanageable marketing environment, this conventional model of marketing has clear political overtones. It intimates that for an organisation to succeed in a complex, competitive, ever-changing world, marketing must not only take precedence over production, human resources, finance and so on, but that these functional areas are actually part and parcel of marketing. Marketing, if fully embraced, properly implemented and relentlessly pursued (and, of course, if we wish hard enough and really, really believe in it), is the key to prosperity and long-term business survival. As we have already noted, some enthusiasts have gone much further, claiming that marketing is a universal verity and one of the fundamentals of the human condition. Unfortunately, this can lead to pronouncements which sound entirely plausible to true believers but strike agnostics as somewhat imaginative at best and sheer fantasy at worst. Consider, for example Sheth et al.’s (1988, pp.5-6) by no means atypical declaration that, ‘As the population of the world increased dramatically and marketing struggled to continually advance the general standard of living for this growing populace, many members of society began to realize that some critical resources in the environment were being placed in jeopardy... Fortunately, the marketing discipline has responded to society’s call’. Quite.

The problem with such overweening pride and self-importance is that the hubristic fall from grace, when it occurs, is all the more precipitous. Admittedly, it may seem churlish to criticise the traditional normative model of marketing for its positive failings. After all, numerous surveys reveal a substantial discrepancy between what marketing practitioners should be doing, according to the conventional model, and what they are doing (Greenley 1986; McDonald 1992). Nevertheless, as we have noted, the complexity and flux of today’s competitive environment appears to have rendered marketing mutant and unable to adapt. Extant strategic frameworks seem directionless and dangerous. The marketing mix is all mixed up. We suffer from unprincipled principles. Marketing philosophers increasingly indulge in unphilosophical mud-slinging. Tried and trusted

\[ Figure 2.4 \text{ The conventional model of marketing} \]

*Source: Piercy (1992)*
research techniques are both untrustworthy and trying. The marketing concept is in the throes of deconceptualisation. And, even marketing intelligence is oxymoronic.

Nor is it true to claim that marketing's intra-organisational hegemonic aspirations have gone unchallenged. On the contrary, surveys of senior management reveal that, although marketing is considered to be of paramount importance, marketers are often deemed to be unprofessional and lacking in sophistication (Wong 1993). Whittington and Whipp (1992) describe how marketing's failure to develop an effective professional ideology thus far is largely responsible for its inability to overcome deeply entrenched rivalries in other functional areas, especially accounting and R & D, though their suggestion that marketing should attempt to wrestle from the accountants is nothing less than a recipe for professional suicide. Claiming to represent the voice of the consumer is a powerful political weapon, which is often pressed into the service of organisational change and transformation (Morgan 1992), but many accountants, human resource managers and operations researchers remain reluctant, to put it politely, to cede authority to marketing. As Willmott (1993, p.213) points out,

> when marketers advocate a generic concept of marketing, they are likely to find themselves in direct conflict with the efforts of other specialists... that do not necessarily fully understand, share or endorse the 'marketing concept', its professed orientation or its alleged understanding of human wants and values or its view of how organisations should be managed.

In these salutary circumstances, which contrast sharply with the bland self-assurance of the generic marketing concept, it is all too easy to dwell on the current conceptual and political shortcomings of marketing. (Indeed, as this sensitises an audience to the imminent appearance of a candidate solution to marketing's ills, such an expositional stratagem possesses considerable rhetorical power – though it is not as powerful as pretending to eschew a powerful rhetorical option.) It is, nevertheless, important to place marketing's post-imperialistic malaise in some kind of perspective. Although our specialism seems to have cursed its megalomaniac tendencies, and although the supreme self-belief of a few years back now strikes us as decidedly optimistic or slightly absurd, marketing's self-aggrandising endeavours are common to most emerging academic disciplines. When we read, for example, that 'English was not just one discipline among many but the most central subject of all, immeasurably superior to law, science, politics, philosophy or history' (Eagleton 1983, p.32); or that 'Geography provides the acid test of the adequacy of social or economic theorising' (O'Brien and Harris 1991, p.3); or indeed that, 'in the early days of American sociology, some transatlantic disciples of Comte seriously suggested in a memorandum to the president of Brown University that all the departments of the latter should be reorganised under the department of sociology' (Berger 1963, p.17), then marketing not only seems to have conducted itself with comparative decorum, but it could also be accused of being insufficiently brash, of failing to market itself properly. More to the point, the above-mentioned 'crisis of representation' is by no means confined to ourselves. Many social sciences, most of which are longer established and more respected than marketing, are expressing uncertainty about their certitudes, suffering from unprincipled principles, floundering in conceptual quandaries and experiencing existential angst. Imagine, for a moment, the self-doubt that the collapse of Marxism has precipitated among radical sociologists, economists and political scientists (e.g. Bennett 1993). Consider also the implications of latter-day challenges to the interpretive authority of social anthropologists or legal precedent for jurisprudence (Rosenau 1992). By comparison, the travails of marketing seem fairly trivial and potentially surmountable (though perhaps we have not yet given it sufficient thought).

Above and beyond the crumbs of comfort that marketers can derive from the problems that afflict other areas of academic endeavour and the realisation that our earlier imperialistic ambitions are neither unique nor unduly inane, it is worthwhile reminding ourselves of the enormous strides that marketing has made in the post-war era. Apart from its adoption, nominally at least, by innumerable business and non-business organisations, its recognition as a reputable professional body (blessed since 1989, in the UK, with a Royal Charter) and its emergence as a legitimate, if not exactly Nobel Prize garlanded, social science with specialised degree programmes, university departments and the accompanying academic paraphernalia, the all-round standards of marketing scholarship have improved markedly in the forty years since Drucker's timeless contribution. You only have to glance through the back issues of major marketing journals to appreciate the technical, methodological and philosophical upgrading that has taken place. Technically, a host of sophisticated statistical procedures and mathematical models, such as MDS, Conjoint Analysis, LISREL and NBD Dirichlet, are regularly deployed. Methodologically, the issues of internal and external validity, reliability, generalisability, split-run testing, experimental designs and suchlike are routinely discussed. And, philosophically, the appropriateness or otherwise of various positions – realism versus relativism, empiricism versus subjectivism, positivism versus instrumentalism, etc. – are frequently debated. We have indeed come a long way baby!

If, you do choose to peruse the back issues of marketing's premier academic journals, you will probably be struck by at least three other closely related facts. The first of these is that many marketing
'classics', as they are referred to in the anthologies, would simply be unpublishable today. Although the quality of latter-day academic arguments may be no better – possibly worse – than a generation ago, the standards of marketing scholarship have increased so much in the interim that the *Journal of Marketing* no longer appears to have room for papers, like Kotler and Levy's (1969) prizewinner, of six pages and four references. Second, the early 'classics' are almost uniformly optimistic in their outlook, almost embarrassingly so. Their tone is redolent of having discovered the philosopher's stone, the ultimate secret of success in business and that there are no meaningful limits to marketing's applicability. Such exuberance contrasts starkly with contemporary comments on the state of marketing, where an air of pessimism, uncertainty and boundedness seems to prevail (though the boosterism of introductory textbooks remains gratifyingly undiminished). Third, some of the most enthusiastic contributors to the academic journals of the 1950s and 1960s were marketing practitioners (e.g. Keith, McKitrick, Lavidge and Steiner). Today, it is almost inconceivable that an article by a marketing practitioner would appear in the *Journal of Marketing*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of Consumer Research* or the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* and sightings of practitioners are becoming increasingly rare in British and European journals, which have long prided themselves on being hand-picked empiricism, relevance and applicability. On the contrary, the complaint is frequently heard that marketing's premier journals contain little that is of relevance to practitioners. Many papers, admittedly, contain token 'managerial implications' sections, but cynics might conclude that these are included more to appease potentially hostile reviewers than to guide the behaviour of practising marketers. They are little more than nostalgic verbal reminders of the early days of the discipline, vestigial appendages long since bypassed by the academic evolutionary process.

In light of the foregoing discussion, it is arguable that the trajectory of marketing thought in the post-war era can be described in terms of a modified wheel of retailing theory (yes, I know it's imperfect and that I've applied it to everything under the sun, but why break the habit of a lifetime?). Illustrated in Figure 2.5, this states that four stages in the evolution of retailing innovations can be discerned. At the outset, the institution is characterised by the sale of a narrow range of cut-price merchandise. This is followed by the broadening of the range of goods on offer and, subsequently, by all-round improvements in the standards, quality and sophistication of the operation. The fourth phase, however, is typified by retrenchment, contraction, intense competition, fragmentation of the offer and the emergence of a new generation of narrowly focused, price-oriented specialists.

Interpreted in these terms, the modern marketing concept emerged in the 1950s as a simple, radical and (at that time) seemingly counterintuitive approach to doing business, which proved to be enormously appealing, highly successful and relevant to the needs of practising managers. Through time, and thanks largely to the endeavours of Kotler and Levy, marketing progressively broadened its domain to include all manner of non-commercial fields from health care and politics to education and organised religion. This expansion was accompanied by growing technical, methodological and philosophical sophistication which, as predicted by Bartels (1974), led inevitably to academic esotericism, the pre-eminence of technique over applications and delusions of scholarship, universality and scientific status. Most importantly perhaps, this process of progressive trading-up was characterised by a failure to keep in touch with marketing's principal constituents, practising managers and prospective managers, who faced a business environment which bore little or no relation to that encountered by their predecessors of forty years beforehand. Marketing scholarship, in short, became increasingly divorced from activity and this has been followed by the fragmentation of the discipline into a multiplicity of hostile factions, retrenchment and a search for a new guiding paradigm. In short, a crisis of representation.

Interestingly, however, this process of fragmentation also appears to have been accompanied by another turn of the wheel with the recent emergence of back-to-basics reformulations most notably relationship marketing. It
remains to be seen whether RM will stand the test of time, but, in keeping with the first stage of the wheel model, the relationship marketing paradigm eschews esoterism, is highly focused (on the business sector), is experiencing extraordinarily rapid growth, appears to be relevant to and popular with the current generation of practising marketing managers and, not least, the overwhelming optimism of its proponents contrasts starkly with the pessimism that is evident in so many other areas of marketing endeavour – strategy, consumer research, retailing and services marketing, to name but a few. Marketing, in effect, is dead. Long live marketing.

3 What have they got in there, King Kong?

'I want to buy a spider for my godson,' I heard a far voice croak.

'Certainly,' said the assistant. 'We have a wide range of tarantulas, right up to the big bird-eaters.'

He indicated these in the showcase below. You would not want to be a bird. These were not spiders you stepped on. These were spiders who stepped on you. They looked like crabs in toupees.

'He tells me,' I said, squeaking hardly at all, 'that he'd like a Mexican red-knee.'

'Wouldn't we all?' said the assistant, a touch less accurately than he knew. 'A lovely spider, the red-knee, but you try getting them. They are the flavour of the month.'

I felt my mouth purse to a dot. You'll understand.

'What I'd suggest,' he went on, 'is a Chilean rose tarantula. Ideal. Only £35, quite docile, a very nice spider.' He pointed to a glass box. There was a ball of hair in it, the size of a fist. Very nice. Then it moved. Even nicer. Who can say why I stepped back? Doubtless, some silly atavistic twitch. I may have had a Chilean ancestor who made the stupid mistake of going out one night without his blunderbuss. . . .

'I'll take it,' I said. He reached below, 'BUT HE'LL COLLECT IT!'

Only a few customers looked round. A parrot squawked.

I paid cash. I would have given a cheque, but the bank might have queried the writing. Unsteady? Of course not! Just a bit spidery.

(Coren 1993, pp.56–7)

The Little Shop of Horrors

Variously described as 'the new perspective on life and the human condition that is sweeping across the globe' (Firat and Venkatash 1993, p.227), 'ubiquitous, overused and probably meaningless in the global scheme of things' (Beaumont 1993, p.43), and, not least, 'the most intellectually demanding challenge facing consumer researchers' (Foxall 1992, p.403), postmodernism has attracted an enormous amount of academic and lay
Postmodern marketing

Stephen Brown