Scientific marketing management and the emergence of the ethical marketing concept

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Abstract Our objective in this paper is to recall the linkages between marketing and management thought. At the turn of the twentieth century, the two disciplines were connected via the work of Frederick Taylor and Percival White. As conventionally represented, Taylor was the father of scientific management and, by extension, the management sciences more generally. He is also frequently associated with a focus on production efficiency. However, a close reading of Taylor reveals his appreciation of the connection between production and consumption and thus the importance of the ultimate consumer. Taylor’s ideas and the work, published in the Bulletin of the Taylor Society, which provided an outlet for the scholarship of early marketing thinkers, provide the linchpin between the production ethos of Taylor and the emergence of ‘scientific marketing’ exemplified in the work of Percival White. The latter demonstrated the ideological credibility of his scientific marketing system via its association with science and attributes such as objectivity. Importantly, in his work we find the first clear articulation of the marketing concept. Unlike present-day debates, which frequently treat it as a synonym for shareholder value, the early articulations of the marketing concept were underwritten by an explicit ethical orientation that placed limits on corporate behaviour, ideas that were again brought to prominence courtesy of the consumerist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Keywords Percival White; scientific marketing management; scientific salesmanship; Frederick Taylor; the marketing concept; customer orientation

Introduction

Much has been written about the history of scientific management, which emerged in the late nineteenth century and dominated early twentieth-century development of management theory (Wren, 2005). In his well-known survey of marketing scholars, Converse (1945) concluded that scientific management was one of the most influential ‘concepts’ and one of four foundational fields of knowledge for marketing. Yet, oddly enough, little has been written about the influence of scientific management on marketing ideas (Wrege & Greenwood, 1985).
Bartels’ (1988) seminal treatise on the history of marketing thought virtually ignores scientific management (e.g. pp. 224–225). In view of this, we can move through the limited number of scholars whose work has touched upon scientific management and its incarnation, via Charles Hoyt and Percival White, of scientific sales management and scientific marketing management respectively. La Londe and Morrison (1967) appear to have been the first to write about the historical significance of scientific management to marketing (see also D.G.B. Jones, 1997; Scully, 1996). Usui (2008) is the next major touchstone, who in his overview of scientific management, its relation to sales management, and his chapter on scientific management and marketing management discusses White’s (1927a) text as a means to articulate the emergence of the notion of the Four P’s (Usui, 2008, p. 60).

What we do not see in this literature are the clear connections between Taylor’s (1911/1998) own production focus and marketing activities. As such, in this paper we seek to highlight the relationship between scientific management and early marketing scholars. The interrelations between these groups are situated in their historical context, and we draw upon a source rarely cited in marketing, the Bulletin of the Taylor Society, to showcase the engagement of marketing scholars with the scientific management movement.

Our study calls attention to the earliest explicit formulation of the marketing concept, connecting this with scientific management, thereby adding further support to Converse’s (1945) argument about the foundational importance of scientific management for marketing theory and practice. More than this, however, close attention to the historical record reminds us that marketing practice, while frequently bemoaned as excessively egotistical in ethical orientation in its search for profit, sometimes at the expense of the consumer (Bell & Emory, 1971; Chonko & Hunt, 1985, 2000; Desmond & Crane, 2004; Robin & Reidenbach, 1987; Tsalkis & Fritz, 1989), did have a prominent ethical core in the 1920s and 1930s. Put simply, the earliest incarnation of the marketing concept has clearly discernible ethical foundations (White, 1927a).

These ethical foundations are all too frequently forgotten in place of treating the marketing concept as a synonym for shareholder value1 (Bell & Emory, 1971; Fitchett, 2005). This, commentators have claimed, is a function of the micro-level, managerial focus of marketing theory and practice (Benton, 1987; Ellis et al., 2011; Hackley, 2009a; Powers & Martin, 1987; Wilkie & Moore, 2006). With corporate objectives of profit and efficiency as the central focus of business attention, there is always a danger that consumers will be treated as if their satisfaction – however problematic and life-harming this may be (e.g. Smith & Cooper-Martin, 1997) – is justified on the basis of its legality and profit-generating potential (Abela & Murphy, 2008; Schipper, 2002; Smith, 1987). In doing so, such actions provide the returns to shareholders desired, at least in the short term (Bell & Emory, 1971; Robin & Reidenbach, 1987). What thus seems like an inviolable given – the pursuit of profit without due regard for all relevant stakeholders – is consequently a historically long-standing practice that has been subject to criticism for some considerable time (D.G.B. Jones & Monieson, 1990; Schlegel & Öberseder, 2010; Tsalkis & Fritz, 1989).

We will argue that the influence of scientific marketing reverberates throughout the history of marketing thought. This claim is made on the basis that ideas from this

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1We thank one of the reviewers for pointing this out. The turn of phrase is also the reviewer’s.
intellectual current form the axiological foregrounding of the ‘modern’ marketing concept. Since the latter is considered the bedrock for the marketing mix (Borden, 1964), relationship marketing (S. Brown, 1998; Gummesson, 1994) and services marketing (e.g. Grönroos, 1994b), then scientific marketing and, by extension, Percival White’s arguments have an important, if underappreciated, impact on the way we think about marketing.

His scholarship and practitioner engagement was praised by his contemporaries. As an early reviewer of White’s book opines: ‘If we could choose only three books on business management, *Scientific Marketing Management* would be one of them’ (Cowan, 1927, p. 461). Its importance is underscored by Cowan (1927) referring to White’s 1927a text as a ‘fundamental contribution to marketing management’ (p. 461). These views were not limited to US readers of White’s work. H.F.J. Kropff, a prominent Austrian commentator on American marketing scholarship, calls a number of White’s contributions to the discipline ‘fundamental’ and ‘ground-breaking’ (in Fullerton, 1994, p. 55). In addition, White was considered a pioneering advocate of market research through his publications and practice (Lockley, 1950). He was active in the foundation of the Market Research Council (Starch, 1986) and inducted into the Hall of Fame of this organisation in 1981. Only the most outstanding scholars and practitioners have been given this distinction (see Market Research Council Hall of Fame Winners, 2010). At the end of his life in 1970, his obituary described him as a ‘leader in market research’ (Percival White, marketing aide, 1970).

We submit that his work remains important in terms of its call for what was as large a mental revolution in marketing practice as Taylor demanded in production. He developed ideas about the importance of the customer and the necessity of market and customer research in a more systematic fashion than any other writer. While we agree with Skålén, Fougère, and Fellesson (2008), Tadajewski (2009a), and Usui (2008) that White’s work was prescient, his comments were also consistent with those published in the *Bulletin of the Taylor Society*, and so we wish to put the originality of White’s work into much-needed context.

Our focus on scientific marketing and the subsequent methodological strategy we employed deserves a brief discussion. Historical research often involves an element of serendipity (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). This research is no exception. The first author became aware of White’s work as a doctoral researcher, when he noticed the limited number of times that White’s name was invoked in the literature. This said, when he was cited, White was praised (e.g. Barksdale, Kelly, & MacFarlane, 1978; Fullerton, 1994; La Londe & Morrison, 1967; Tadajewski & Saren, 2009), but his ideas were never subject to systematic exegesis. So, when it became possible to explore White’s scholarly catalogue in more detail, we approached our study of White’s contributions using the methodological guidance offered by Witkowski and Jones (2006).

Witkowski and Jones (2006) outline a structured approach for undertaking historical research. Scholars are encouraged to review all the key literature on their topic of interest, including both primary and secondary sources. Where possible, Witkowski and Jones suggest, researchers should try to access multiple sources of information, above and beyond primary and secondary published material. Specifically, they reference the value of oral historical research, which adds further context and can potentially reveal unrecorded information about a given individual and their intellectual contributions (Davies & Elliott, 2006; Witkowski & Jones, 2006).
Adopting the approach proposed by Witkowski and Jones, we formally began this research by examining the relevant secondary literature, much of which is cited at the start of this paper. From this, we returned to the original writing of Frederick Taylor (1911/1998), reading this in conjunction with appropriate biographical materials (e.g. Kanigel, 1997). Consulting original sources in this way was a guiding logic of this study, enabling us to explore facets of a given scholarly contribution that have not necessarily been appreciated previously or explored in detail (see C. Jones, 2003, 2007; Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2007). To understand the connections between scientific management and marketing better, we sourced all marketing-related material from the *Bulletin of the Taylor Society* from 1914 through to 1934, along with available archival material, period newspapers, and periodical publications.

We also identified White’s publications via references in his own work, relevant secondary sources, and courtesy of an oral historical study conducted with Lucy Sallick, Percival White’s granddaughter (e.g. Riley, 1995). As with any author, White’s (1929) ideas continue to develop in later works, and given that such material is presented as refinements (or as a ‘logical sequel’) of his earlier work (p. vii), we draw upon his later work where appropriate. Each publication was subject to a close reading by both authors and interpretations discussed and refined over a period of two years.

It could quite plausibly be argued that recalling this forgotten history is important for its own sake (Baker, 1992; Witkowski & Jones, 2006), especially in light of the ahistorical nature of marketing theory and practice (Fullerton, 1988; Hunt, 2010; Tadajewski & Saren, 2008; Tonks, 2002; Vink, 1992). But historical research of the kind we undertake in this paper has relevance for all those involved with teaching and practice at whatever level they work (Vink, 1992). As Hunt (2010) states, ‘Doctoral students in marketing should be historically informed’ (p. 443). Domegan (2010) concurs with Hunt, expanding his argument to master’s-level students. Wooliscroft and Lawson (2010) take this one step further, encouraging those teaching undergraduate students to study the history of the discipline (see also Vink, 1992).

Introducing historical research in this way helps avoids the perpetuation of marketing ‘folklore’ (Savitt, 2009) or ‘myth’ (D.G.B. Jones & Richardson, 2007). One of the most frequently perpetuated myths is the suggestion that the marketing concept emerged in the 1950s and 1960s (Fullerton, 1994; Vink, 1992). This narrative continues to be reaffirmed in research (e.g. Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo & Morgan, 2005; Webster, 1988, 2002) and pedagogic materials (D.G.B. Jones & Richardson, 2007; Nevett, 1991; Savitt, 2009). Our contribution in this paper destabilises such erroneous arguments. In stronger terms, Hunt (2010) asserts that if we wish to consider marketing a profession, then we ‘incur an obligation to know marketing’s intellectual history and to transmit that knowledge to . . . students’ (p. 443).

Obviously, it expands their knowledge of the disciplinary horizons of marketing and ‘it imparts a greater sense of who we are as scholars and practitioners’ (Domegan, 2010, p. 461). With respect to the students Domegan has taught, historical study increased their ‘connection with the subject matter in their working life’ (p. 461). Nevett (1991), likewise, has illustrated the value of historical awareness for practitioners, particularly in relation to their decision-making and forecasting practices (see also Vink, 1992). Having briefly sketched out the main domains for this research, as well as the relevance of historical research for the multiple constituencies...
of the *Journal of Marketing Management*, we now briefly introduce the figure whose work forms the prism for this study, Percival White. We then focus our attention on Frederick Taylor’s scientific management and its impact on production efficiency, situating this in appropriate context. We then discuss early marketing studies that sought to take Taylor’s ideas as a basis for rethinking marketing and distribution efficiency. From this, the work of White is focused upon, specifically his *Scientific Marketing Management* (1927a). We draw attention to the ethical orientation found in this book-length study and highlight White’s use of the lexicon of science and logical empiricism to justify his vision of the marketing system. This is followed by brief reference to the critique of White’s work in circulation during the 1920s. Finally, we reprise the influence of scientific marketing on marketing theory and practice.

**Percival White and marketing engineering**

Born in 1887, Percival White did not fit the mould of the typical pioneer contributor to marketing thought. He did share with early twentieth-century marketing scholars a wealth of experience in industry and government. He was an engineer, mechanic, manufacturing business owner-manager, and later became a marketing research consultant (Who’s Who in Commerce and Industry, 1948). However, White never taught in a university. His education was in science and engineering, an unusual background for someone who eventually specialised in marketing (Bartels, 1951). That education and professional experience shaped his distinctive contributions to marketing thought, especially in marketing research and the application of scientific management to marketing. White wrote and published 14 scholarly books, all between 1921 and 1931, several dealing with marketing research, where he ultimately carved out a distinguished career as a consultant.

It was during the decade from 1910 to 1920 that the field of marketing research really began to emerge in earnest (Lockley, 1950). Marketing research naturally lent itself to the application of a scientific approach, and during 1919 White started to moonlight as a marketing consultant specialising in market research, continuing in that line of work for the next four decades. He also began to write books, primarily about marketing, notably about market research (e.g. White, 1921). His book publishing can be segmented into two periods of time and two corresponding groups of work, the first authored from 1921 through to 1931 that were more scholarly in approach. After 1931, White co-authored publications with his wife and market research partner, Pauline Arnold, that were intended for a wider readership, but still related to the market research work that occupied the rest of his professional life.

The unifying theme throughout White’s books on marketing research was the application of scientific methods to marketing and marketing research, methods with which he was familiar through his training in science and engineering and courtesy of his observations of the application of the principles of scientific management to manufacturing. More than anything, White’s distinctive contributions to marketing thought were shaped by his early training as an engineer and by his subsequent experiences with Taylor’s work in scientific management. To foreground our later interpretation of White’s research, we now survey the main themes in Frederick Taylor’s (1911) influential scientific management text.
Frederick Taylor and scientific management

In Taylor’s work, marketing scholars recognised a way to make marketing, retailing, and salesmanship more efficient (Cowan, 1924a; Graham, 2000; La Londe & Morrison, 1967; Usui, 2008). Taylor achieved popular acclaim through his attempts to examine production in scientific terms. To highlight the originality of his ideas, Taylor contrasts his own ‘philosophy of management’ with an earlier approach that he argues was extremely inefficient in terms of productivity, time management (Hassard, 2002), and gave the worker too much power in the employer–employee relationship. Current practice when Taylor entered the workforce was termed ‘initiative and incentive’ workmanship. This is where employees were expected to utilise their practical-based knowledge to operate their machinery in the most effective way possible.

Since these workers were usually on some kind of piece rate, it was assumed that they would indeed work as hard as they could, because they were incentivised to do so. This issue was slightly more complex than it appears on face value. Workers might work harder, thereby increasing their wages, but this often had the effect that management saw the wages of workers spiralling, and so they reduced the piece rate. This created animosity. In response, workers operated their machinery at the pace they wanted.

In an effort to remedy this, Taylor enunciates his ‘philosophy of management’, which was a ‘combination of the four great underlying principles of management’ (Taylor, 1911/1998, p. 68). These principles were: ‘First. The development of a true science. Second. The scientific selection of the workman. Third. His scientific education and development. Fourth. Intimate friendly cooperation between the management and the men’ (Taylor, 1911/1998, p. 68 n1). Taylor sought to scrutinise the way that particular activities were undertaken in order to determine the ‘one best way’ of organising the activity.

Behind the strategy of determining the ‘one best way’ was the issue of organisational efficiency. By way of making his time-and-motion study of the workers more palatable, Taylor repeatedly argues that management under his system was required to undertake more of the tasks that were previously left to the worker. Management, put simply, were the support staff helping the worker to operate at their optimal efficiency. They did this by drawing up production plans, allocating appropriate tasks to suitable workers, who could thereby accomplish more work in a given period of time and receive greater levels of financial reward.

With respect to this last point, we can appreciate Taylor wanting to alleviate somewhat fractious management–worker relations. These were seized upon by Socialist commentators who wanted the proletariat to overthrow extant production relations (e.g. Kanigel, 1997, p. 284). As an alternative, Taylor told his workers to ignore the way that the economic surplus was currently being distributed (i.e. in favour of the owners of capital) and focus their energies on increasing the overall level of productivity and profitability, so that all could be suitably compensated. In this regard, it was partly successful. Taylor’s work was heralded as encouraging a revolution in management practice, increasing production efficiency to rates previously unheard of. It was also critiqued. By turning skilled mechanics into simple machine operators, working according to a set of written instructions, all of the practice-based knowledge that the worker previously relied on was discounted.
Management and the planning office now dictated the appropriate skills and machinery to be used, not the worker.

However much we might see the Taylor system as dehumanising or ‘excessively bureaucratic’ (Waring, 1992), it was impressive in terms of production efficiency and reduced the frequency of strike action by workers to nil\(^2\) (Taylor, 1911/1998, p. 11). Henry Ford, for example, utilised Taylor’s ideas in his production process in a relatively successful – but not wholly unproblematic – way (Blyton & Jenkins, 2007; Gabriel & Lang, 2008). Nevertheless, with production rising, there needed to be an increase in distribution efficiency (Kendall, 1930). After all, there was no point producing goods at an ever-increasing speed, if they could not be sold in a similarly efficient manner.

While marketing came comparatively late to Taylor’s ideas, a number of environmental changes focused the attention of marketers on Taylor’s scientific approach. Scholars pointed to the growing distance between producer and consumer that required manufacturers to understand consumer needs, wants, and desires better (Jelleme, 1927; Shaw, 1915; White, 1927a). In addition, there was an acute sensitivity among writers of the time to changes in the composition of American demographics that made understanding the consumer more difficult.

Post 1911, Nystrom notes, ‘there was scarcely a retail dealer’s meeting of any magnitude in which the subject of scientific management and costs of selling in their relation to retailing were not discussed’ (Jelleme, 1927, p. 299). Nystrom even held out hope that a ‘science of distribution’ could be created (D.G.B. Jones & Monieson, 1987, p. 157). Diffusion of Taylorite principles were, even so, slow to pass into the mainstream of marketing thought or practice. Nystrom attributes this to the high levels of demand for many goods, all of which encouraged retailers to neglect the lessons of Taylor (Jelleme, 1927).

This said, business people did reacquaint themselves with Taylor’s research. Important motivators in this regard include the depression after the end of World War I (Cowan, 1924a). Other factors were the public criticism of business profiteering and the rising prices of some consumer products (Adams, 1926), ‘Buying Fatigue’ (Goodell, 1930), the ‘consumer strikes’ of 1920 (Jelleme, 1927), the ‘simplification movement’ (Cochoy, 2005; Hollander, 1986), the decline in wages over the period 1919–1921 (Powers, Koehler, & Martin, 1988), relatively high levels of personal saving (Hollander, 1986), the ‘depression of 1921’ (White, 1931, p. 4), and the increasing ‘area of caprice’ in buying behaviour (Lough, 1931, p. 238).

Further focusing attention on marketing was the growth in the size of organisations and the changing nature of ownership (Berle & Means, 1935; Mercer, 1925; White, 1926a), particularly with respect to the shift from owner control to the use of trained, younger employees (Cowan, 1924a). And the stock market crash (Goodell, 1930), Great Depression, New Deal, and National Industrial Recovery Act all demanded greater managerial interest in the coordination of production and consumption (Carroll, 1933; Cherington, 1931; cf. Crossley, 1931). The activities of prominent members of the banking community, such as Fred Shibley, in promoting market analysis were vital forces stimulating the adoption of ‘progressive’ business practices

\(^2\)This is a contestable point. One of Taylor’s contemporaries reminded Taylor of the strike at the Watertown Arsenal in 1910 where Taylor had implemented his production system. Yet he curiously ignores this strike in his 1911 text (see Kanigel, 1997, pp. 449–450; cf. Barley & Kunda, 1992, p. 389).
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(Cowan, 1927; Tadajewski, 2009a), as were the activities of advertising and market research agencies (Hollander, 1986; White, 1931).

So, as the sellers' market changed into a buyers' market (P.S. Brown, 1925; Goodell, 1930), marketing and sales activities garnered greater interest among the membership of the Taylor Society, the group who published the Bulletin of the Taylor Society. Importantly, the Bulletin contains some of the most insightful analyses of production and marketing activities available in the early twentieth century (P.S. Brown, 1925).

Marketing in the Bulletin of the Taylor Society

As the journal of the Taylor Society from 1914 until 1934, the Bulletin was meant to promote an ‘engineering point of view’, that is, a way of approaching management problems using the scientific method. Writers contributing to the Bulletin were an eclectic mix from academia and practice. Common themes found in the papers that dealt with marketing included issues of waste (Adams, 1926; Cowan, 1924a; Platte, 1931), inefficiency (Lies, 1925; Platte, 1931; Weld, 1933), consumer value (Cherington, 1931), intra-firm cooperation (Lum, 1930; Rindfusz, 1925), market analysis (Cherington, 1925; Cowan, 1931; Livingston, 1925; Lough, 1931; Lyon, 1931; McDermid, 1925), sales training (Mercer, 1925), segmentation (Cowan, 1924b; Mercer, 1925; Platte, 1931), the cost implications of each of the aforementioned factors for the manufacturer, retailer and ultimate consumer (Alderson, 1933; Platte, 1931; Weld, 1933), pricing strategies (Lyon, 1931; Mercer, 1925), and the possibility of planning the American economy (Alderson, 1933). Much of this research resonates with Taylor’s comments on waste and efficiency, the application of the scientific method, and the benefits of cooperation between workers and management.

For example, the cost and waste associated with marketing was a prominent theme. Because of the furore surrounding the costs of distribution, members of the American Marketing Society presenting their work before the Taylor Society emphasised the value of the marketing system, attempting to defuse the criticism emanating from arguably ill-informed commentators (Alderson, 1933; Weld, 1933). There appear to have been two major ways in which this was accomplished. First, taking the arguments posed by Taylor in relation to greater cooperation between management and key stakeholder groups in a slightly novel way, authors signalled the central role of the consumer in terms of business decision making, implying a more equal relationship between business and the consumer than was previously the case. This was important in the face of the criticisms of big business and the robber barons. It was also not dissimilar to a point made by Taylor at the very end of his seminal work. In reference to the distribution of benefits from the implementation of scientific management, Taylor (1911/1998) appreciates that his studies largely deal with ‘only two parties to the transaction, the workmen and their employers’ (p. 71). There is a further stakeholder that requires consideration, namely consumers. He maintains that,

We overlook the third great party, the whole people – the consumers, who buy the product of the first two [workers and employers] and who ultimately pays both the wages of the workmen and the profits of the employers. The rights of
the people are therefore greater than those of either employer or employé. And this third great party should be given its proper share of any gain. In fact, a glance at industrial history shows that in the end the whole people receive the greater part of the benefit coming from industrial improvements. In the past hundred years, for example, the greatest factor tending toward increasing the output, and thereby the prosperity of the civilized world, has been the introduction of machinery to replace hand labor. And without doubt the greatest gain through this change has come to the whole people – the consumer. (p. 72)

Second, and on a related point, authors in the Bulletin, much like Taylor in relation to production, stress the benefits of the marketing system in terms of improving standards of living. As we should expect, attention to the consumer was an important topic. Cherington (1931), for one, asserts that: ‘One significant common characteristic of all . . . prosperous concerns is the fact that they are companies which have a keen realization of the consumer’s attitudes and desires and adjust their operations to these rather than to their own habits or traditions’ (p. 232). In simple terms, companies needed to understand the nature of consumer demand for their products, benchmark their goods against the competition, and maintain appropriate records about items in high demand, alongside sales activities by product line, geographic distribution, and so forth. For Livingston (1925), firms should not rely on market analysis alone; rather this must be used in conjunction with the careful study of salesperson behaviour. A progressive company, he indicates, should keep records on the sales made per salesperson, the geographical location of sales, the variations of merchandise being sold, and the type of customer purchasing the firm’s products (Livingston, 1925, p. 20).

All of these scholars and practitioners, then, were critical of managers for relying on trade customs and ‘rules of thumb’ when determining appropriate forms of business practice and consider this unscientific attitude to result in large amounts of ‘marketing wastes’ that are economically and socially undesirable. Into this breach strode a number of early marketing thinkers who wanted to apply Taylor’s insights to marketing practice, including Arch W. Shaw, Paul Converse, Charles W. Hoyt, Stuart Cowan, and Percival White, and practitioners such as H.W. Brown of Tabor Manufacturing Company and Edward A. Filene, the famous retailer (Cowan, 1924a; Hoyt, 1929/2000; La Londe & Morrison, 1967; Scully, 1996; Usui, 2008), as well as industry bodies such as the Society of Industrial Engineers (Hollander, 1986). Let us now look at these ideas in more detail by focusing on the work of Percival White.

**Scientific marketing management and the wastes of marketing**

The axis of the economic system was perceived in the Bulletin of the Taylor Society to be shifting from a focus on production as the main value-producing activity towards a greater appreciation of the value constitutive role of distribution and marketing. In view of this, White cogently outlines a rationale for putting the marketing system on a scientific basis. Enrobing marketing in the language of science, White uses changes in the external environment to justify modifications to the internal organisational structure of firms. The scientific method and rigorous fact-gathering efforts of companies were central not only in making the economic system more efficient; the ramifications were much larger than this. People would enjoy a greater
range of products and services more commensurate with their requirements, and marketing efforts could contribute to improvements in general standards of living. Still, the system required modification. The key ‘marketing wastes’ were due to a lack of understanding of the marketplace; further aggravating firm-level problems was the general lack of managerial competency, leading White to criticise the level of ‘company mismanagement’ in the US economy (White, 1927a, p. 4). He acknowledges the fact that marketing functions – the ‘assembling and grading’ of products, ‘demand creation’, and ‘storing, transportation, communication, financing, and risk-taking’ (White, 1927a, p. 72) – always needed to be performed. Because of this, he argues there was little point condemning the activities of middlemen.

Firms exacerbated the competitive difficulties they faced through their ignorance of the requirements of consumers, producing goods that would not necessarily clear the market (White, 1927a, 1929). Accompanying this ignorance was a massive profusion of product lines. Companies manufactured minor variations of products in an attempt to provide their salespeople with something to talk about to the otherwise weary consumer. Even so, such product novelty only offset competitive pressures for a minimal amount of time, whilst adding a disproportionate cost to the price the ultimate consumer paid.

In organisational terms, firms were confused. There had been no effort to separate the marketing functions on the whole; the most firms had done was outsource their marketing operations to external providers such as advertising agencies. This made the coordination of production and marketing activities even more difficult (i.e. firms were advertising in national markets when they neither had the production capacity to fulfil such orders or the appropriate distribution skills to supply far distant markets).

A final waste relates to ‘supersalesmanship’. White calls this an ‘evil’ of the contemporary marketplace, describing it in the following way: ‘Large sums are expended for the services of men who, through extraordinary personal force, succeed by dint of unabashed persuasion in “unloading” or “dumping” the products of quantity production’ (White, 1927a, pp. 3–4). What firms need to do instead is adopt a more progressive way of considering firm–marketplace relations. Just as Taylor (1911/1998) said that scientific management requires ‘a complete revolution in the mental attitude and the habits of all of those engaged in . . . management, as well as of the workmen’ (p. 69), White’s (1927a) appeal for a focus on the consumer demanded a cognitive reorientation that led to his call for ‘A New Philosophy for the Enterpriser’. To make himself completely clear, he asserts that:

All reform in the marketing system, of whatever kind, is bound to depend largely on the attitude which the enterpriser himself adopts. This will require a complete reversal of position from that held at present, where the enterpriser begins with his product and ends with the market’ (p. 48).

Pressing his point home, he declares: ‘The thesis of this book is that the beginning and end of all marketing problems is the consumer’ (White, 1927a, p. 19; emphases in original; see also White, 1927a, pp. 171, 183; White, 1927b, p. 9; White & Hayward, 1924, p. 405). This is the new mantra for the modern marketing organisation. Nevertheless, White (1927a) appreciates that it is only one of two business strategies currently being employed; the other is more production oriented. By contrast, the marketing focused firm ‘is a newer and rarer development’ (p. 60).
In the interests of illustrating quite how advanced White’s ideas were, his principles of scientific marketing are worth citing in full:\(^3\)

1. **Objectivity of Demand.** Marketing centers in all cases around the needs of the consumer. This is an absolute shift from the old practice of making the producer the focus of all business relations. It provides a definite goal based on the logic of cold facts rather than on the subjective wishes of the industrial autocrat.

2. **Division of Labor.** The principle of the division of labor is applied to marketing through the greater functionalization and specialization of effort. Sales and advertising are no longer supreme; room is made also for training, research, planning, service, and other essential activities.

3. **Analysis.** The marketing problem is carefully analyzed by means of a research organization. The analysis is made the basis of all plans.

4. **Planning.** Just as in modern production management, there is a special division organized for the planning in detail of all marketing processes and operations.

5. **Training.** All members of the marketing division of the business should be trained in the best methods. This training constitutes one of the bases of scientific marketing management.

6. **Control.** A careful system of supervision, discipline, and remuneration must be worked out if scientific management is to prove successful. The organization cannot function by itself unless a parallel system of control is provided. One of the essential elements of this control is cost accounting.

7. **Coordination and cooperation.** Although the principle of the division of labor is carried out on a functional basis, provision must be made for coordination of each of these separate functions. In the second phase, this coordination must be conducted in a cooperative fashion. There must be help and support all along the line.

8. **The Ethical Concept.** The guiding and all-embracing principle of scientific marketing is an ethical one. That marketing practice which is most ethical – that is, which is best for all concerned – is the one which will bring success, in the largest and most enduring sense. (pp. 97–98)

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**Systematising marketing and the objectivity of demand**

At the beginning of *Scientific Marketing Management*, White adopts the engineering lexicon of Taylor. He makes reference to ‘system’ and ‘science’, clarifying how he intends to invoke these terms. White believes Taylor’s ideas could be useful in providing a ‘system’ for the marketing organisation. It is a system based on a balancing act between the standardisation and differentiation of products, which are tailored to the real needs of the market. This latter point is important and relates to what White calls the ‘objectivity of demand’. By this, White means that firms should cater to the ‘real’ requirements of the consumer:

\(^3\)We do not examine each of these elements in turn. We do so to avoid repetition and to improve the flow of the article. The topics that we do examine are central to Taylor and White’s respective approaches.
Scientific marketing is based on the theory of finding out what the consumer wants and then giving it to him. If there are goods which he needs, but does not want, it will often be possible to educate him for his own benefit and for the benefit of the company producing the goods in question’ (p. 99; emphasis in original).

Companies are therefore no longer in the dominant position, trying to make the marketing system work only in their favour, possibly to the detriment of the customer. There are limitations placed on marketing activities by White (1927a): ‘Scientific marketing adopts, in accordance with its principle of [the] objectivity of demand, this axiom: “I will sell a man what he needs and ought to have, and I will not sell him anything else, even though he might be induced to buy”’ (p. 99).

He was particularly scathing of companies that violated the ‘objectivity of demand’ and used methods of ‘supersalesmanship’ to promote goods that were not needed by consumers (see also Platte, 1931). In equal measure, White dislikes firms producing goods that offer no greater benefit to the customer than those already available. Simply moving customers from one product to another like product was not socially beneficial. By contrast to commentators who talk about ‘producing’ or ‘creating’ consumers (Cochoy, 2005; Drucker, 1955/2006; Hollander, 1986; Waring, 1992), White (1927a) describes marketing in terms of ‘supplying wants rather than . . . creating them’ (p. 77). ‘Progressive marketers’, White submits, are those who critically reflect on the amount of money they spend engaged in ‘supersalesmanship’, redirecting this away from pushing products on to consumers that do not fit with their requirements. Instead, they allocate funds to marketing research that is used to bring goods in to line with consumer specifications, as this provides ‘a lasting, rather than a temporary [competitive] advantage’ (p. 41).

Of course, there is an element of self-interest here. Marketers were vulnerable to accusations of market manipulation, selling shoddy products (Goodell, 1930; Nystrom, 1932), and defacing and wasting the resources provided by the natural environment (Beckman, 1940; Leach, 1994; McFarland, 1924; White, 1923). Marketing activities had an impact on society, and marketers, Shaw (1915) and White (1927a) appreciate, had to realise that society could have a dramatic impact on marketing activities via expressions of public concern that attract the interest of policymakers, perhaps resulting in changes to the legal system, so that undesirable activities were curtailed. The best means of demonstrating the value of marketing activities at this juncture was to produce items that were deemed useful or desirable, and this required the use of appropriate forms of market analysis.

**Market analysis, scientific method, and triangulation**

In his attempt to buttress the credibility of marketing within the ‘progressive’ organisation, the production of ‘objective’ marketing analysis was, White attests, a means to secure the organisational legitimacy for marketing in relation to other ‘political coalitions’ in the firm (Cyert & March, 1963). Engaging in market research, White (1927a) registers, ‘indicates the requirements of consumption, both actual and potential’ (p. 17). The problem, as White saw it, was that many firms demonstrated an almost complete ignorance of the requirements of the marketplace (p. 101). This was myopic, as it was ‘consumer’ and ‘market analysis’, whether undertaken
via personal interviews (White & Hayward, 1924, p. 402) or by ‘correspondence’ (White, 1927a, p. 150, 1927b, p. 6), that provides the company with information about ‘market preferences’ (see White, 1927b, p. 11). The use of marketing analysis effectively moves decisions about new product development, for instance, beyond mere managerial intuition, beyond the whims of the owner of the company, thereby reducing the risk that the product will fail to connect with consumer requirements (White, 1926a, 1927a, 1927b; White & Hayward, 1928; White & White, 1948).

‘The Market Research Department’, he argues, ‘is the eyes of the business. It must see whether a competitor’s policy is better liked by the company’s customers. It must also find out whether there is any dissatisfaction with the company and what reasons there may be for this’ (White, 1927a, p. 154). Specifically, he differentiates three elements that constitute the term ‘market research’: ‘first, the gathering of data; second, their organization; and third, their preservation in available form for use by the planning and other departments’ (p. 143). Much like the environmental scanning performed by ‘learning organisations’ (Morgan, Katsikeas, & Appiah-Adu, 1998; Slater & Narver, 1995), the ‘primary and always continuous function’ of the research department involves ‘giving . . . management an adequate reflection of the status of its market’ (White, 1927a, p. 147; see also White & Hayward, 1924, p. 402).

In view of the influence of Taylor on his work, White’s commitment to the scientific method is to be expected. But White is no methodological exclusivist, only advocating the use of the methods of the natural sciences (O’Shaughnessy, 2009). White continually gestures to the ‘human element’ in marketing. This necessitates the use of methods that tap into the lived experience of any research subjects in an attempt to discern latent needs not currently being fulfilled by the marketplace.

This ‘human element’ made the practice of research more difficult. Human subjects are, naturally enough, less controllable than production machinery. As a result, the marketing researcher has to modify his research practices accordingly. In short, White appears more inclined towards a critical methodological pluralism. As defined by O’Shaughnessy (2009), this position holds that no single method of research is capable of accessing the ‘truth’ of marketplace activities; all have their limitations and need to be supplemented through methodological triangulation, which itself may highlight new research questions or ways of thinking about the phenomena under investigation. White admits that there will still be a certain level of uncertainty in determining the approach to the market, but on the basis of scientific knowledge combined with ‘empirical’ (White, 1927b), ‘ordinary knowledge’ (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979), that is, managerial experience and expertise, that certain ways of acting will suggest themselves as more likely to succeed than others.

‘Market analysis’,4 White (1931) asserts, ‘is the application of scientific principles and methods to problems connected with the nature, extent, and peculiarities of the market, together with the means for bringing the product to the market and distributing it there’ (p. 45). Scientific marketing, like any science, had to be ‘built on facts. Therefore, the first step in the application of science to markets is to

4White (1927b) distinguishes between consumer and market analysis. ‘Consumer analysis’, he proposes, is used by the advertising or marketing manager to ‘learn as much as possible of the character, habits, abilities, disabilities, prejudices, and finances of the possible purchaser or user’ (p. 11). A ‘market analysis’, on the other hand, considers ‘consumers in the aggregate’. Differentiating this from the ‘psychological studies’ used in consumer analysis, White indicates that market analysis draws upon ‘statistics’ to ‘appraise consumers as a group’ (p. 12).
learn all the pertinent facts that it is possible to obtain’ (p. 45). This is done by approaching distributors, jobbers, influential figures in the market, and ultimate customers. Unusually, White does not describe this process as one of speaking to respondents in a positivistic fashion – with its connotations of passive interviewees – or co-participants in the sense of interpretive research; rather he presents the market researcher as more deferential, appreciating the fact that research is ‘based upon asking a pure favor from the “authority”’ (p. 142).

White (1926b) proposes that companies engaging in market research must adopt a type of disciplinary-level multiple paradigm analysis5 (see also White & Hayward, 1924, p. 5), triangulating their studies through the use of multiple methods, multiple interpreters (e.g. White, 1931, pp. 217–218, 224), possibly checking the findings provided by the research department by commissioning a further study by an independent organisation (e.g. White, 1931, pp. 24, 47, 50, 51, 218). The use of such a complex battery of approaches to market research is important in view of the fact that:

the study of markets is an extremely difficult problem, calling on the one hand, for an engineering grasp of markets as an entity having structure and form as tangible as are found in manufacturing, and, on the other hand, requiring a knowledge of the practical and human aspects of the selling process. It is difficult to apply to markets the definite methods and practices of engineering and of the physical sciences. It is necessary to make use of the technic [sic] and the viewpoint of the economist and sociologist’ [White, 1926b, p. 3].

Continuing in this vein, he argues that there are three6 ways of viewing markets: first, via the prism of economics; second, through psychological thought; and finally, through the use of statistics. White (1926b) enumerates these in more detail: ‘Markets partake of the essence of economics. Economics deal with production, consumption, exchange and distribution, and each of these four elements has an immediate bearing upon marketing’ (p. 5).

Far removed from Hollander’s7 (1986) proposal that ‘much of the marketing research of the 1920s and 1930s seems cold and impersonal . . . hardly even hint[ing] at such topics as motives and attitudes’ (p. 13), White (1927b) fully understood that markets involve people with various motives driving behaviour (p. 11). Consequently, this demands the competent analyst to be conversant in psychology:

He must know how people react to certain stimuli, how they are affected by various environments, and, in short, what their entire mental behavior is with respect to the product dealt with. Psychology is useful because it gives an acquaintance with consumers and others as individuals. But statistics are also necessary in order to make it possible to evaluate consumers as a whole, that is, as a market. Thus psychology gives a qualitative analysis of marketing data, while statistics give a quantitative conception of them’ [White, 1926b, p. 5].

5This is a remarkably contemporary position and commensurate arguments have been made more recently by Zinkhan and Hirschheim (1992, p. 83).
6White actually mentions four ways, but does not appreciate this, as he slips between referring to psychology and sociology in his examples. In other work, he differentiates these clearly (White, 1927b, p. 6).
7Hollander does, it must be admitted, later provide examples of companies that wanted to get close to the consumer using interviews in order to understand their requirements better.
Here, White is making reference to ‘qualitative analysis’, but we should point out that his approach remains quite positivistic. For example, in a later piece of work he returns to thinking about marketing research through a psychological prism and states: ‘The technique of controlling conditions when human subjects are being studied is being developed rapidly by psychologists’ (White, 1931, p. 168; see also White, 1927b, p. 5). The idea that conditions are controlled, so that the experiment being undertaken can be replicated, suggests positivistic, qualitative research, an unusual approach, but not totally exceptional (e.g. Hunt, 2001).

In spite of White often not being specific about the credentials required for roles beyond sales management, he does devote attention to the skills expected in a market researcher. The consumer and market analyst:

...must have an understanding of the scientific method, he must be trained in research technic [sic], and he must be able to employ intelligently at least three sciences of a high order. In addition, he ought to have had actual experience in selling and advertising. The difficulty of finding men of this caliber is largely responsible for the fact that market research has not yet been adopted more widely, even by those companies to whom its theoretical advantages are known. (White, 1926b, p. 6)

According to White, the entire process of market research had to adhere to the scientific method, and he repeatedly refers to the objectivity that must guide all research (e.g. White, 1927b, p. 2, 1931, pp. 19, 21, 62, 101, 109, 111, 145). In calling attention to his scientific credentials, White employs a logical empiricist vocabulary (i.e. verification: White, 1927b, p. 5, 1931, pp. 51, 220; generalisation: White, 1927b, p. 5, 1931, p. 58; induction: White, 1927b, pp. vi, 7, 1931, p. 62) and describes the use of ‘analogy, induction and deduction’ (e.g. White, 1931, pp. 215–216). By virtue of its use of the scientific method, the research department is consequently ‘in a position to convince other departments about the validity of its findings through direct and continuous contact with the persons involved’ (White, 1931, p. 17). This places marketing on a scientific basis and improves its standing in the organisation. A further means towards buttressing the legitimacy of marketing was through the provision of appropriate training.

Training and employee control

Along the lines outlined by Taylor in relation to production, White suggests that his system of scientific marketing requires personnel selection to be based on merit and ability to perform allocated tasks appropriately. In terms of implementing his marketing system, White partly adopts a ‘cognitive’ and ‘micropolitical orientation’ (see Skålén, 2009; Whittington & Whipp, 1992) in that firm objectives had to be clearly specified and appropriate training programmes provided to employees, distributors, and retailers alike, so that all groups understood exactly what the company was trying to achieve in terms of customer satisfaction (e.g. White, 1927a, p. 255).

8On the qualifications of the marketing manager, see White (1927a, pp. 127–128). On the skills required by the manager of the market research department, see White (1927a, p. 149).
Like Hoyt (1929/2000), White thinks it is desirable to provide standard sales presentations to sales people, along with appropriate sales paraphernalia. As a result, ‘The importance of the individual in selling work is reduced to a minimum’ (White, 1927a, p. 175). In equal measure, sales talks are not completely ‘McDonaldized’ (Ritzer, 2001) in the sense that there is some room for freedom of expression on the behalf of staff. Elucidating this, White (1931) makes the case that when approaching a customer, the salesman should ‘adapt his approach quickly to the peculiarities of the individual whose assistance he desires’ (p. 151). Standardisation was thus desirable to a degree and when there were certain sales talks known to be effective, companies encouraged their sales-force to use them. Nevertheless, training staff in this way functions as a means of control, and White believes that control is essential. Having now outlined a representative sample of relevant content from White’s oeuvre, we now briefly call attention to the critique of White’s work that circulated in the Bulletin of the Taylor Society.

Toward a critique of White

Despite White’s prescience, his work was subject to a limited range of contemporary critique. In his review of White’s (1927a) work, Cowan (1927) comments upon the ‘tone of positiveness that appears here and there’ (p. 461). What appears most problematic for Cowan is White’s ethical orientation and his focus on the ‘objectivity of demand’. Cowan proposes that ‘perhaps too much emphasis has been placed on the ethical-economic viewpoint’ (p. 461). In view of the prominence given to marketing ethics and responsible marketing practice today, White’s discussion of these issues is advanced. Having admitted this, it remains difficult to establish how far we can really consider certain forms of consumption as ‘objectively’ determined, whilst others were cultural constructions, and such distinctions remain as contestable as those between ‘real’ and ‘false’ needs that appeared in the work of the Critical Theorists (e.g. Marcuse, 1964/1972; Tadajewski, 2010). The other criticism levelled at White relates to the ‘superficiality’ of his discussion. This is a matter of taste, as Cowan appreciates, and there were topics that Cowan opines deserved more attention than White was able to devote to them. Still, he notes that ‘Mr. White was forced to condense his thoughts in order to keep his text within the limits of a book written for executives’ (Cowan, 1927, p. 461).

White’s contribution to the history of marketing thought

Notwithstanding the many and varied contributions of Percival White, his influence on the development of marketing theory and practice has gone largely unrecognised by historians of marketing thought. Few scholars mention his work, and none connect his 1927(a) text with his other important studies. But why, we may ask, has he received far less attention than he arguably deserves? One reason is that he was not a marketing academic, and those who are not accredited by association with an academic institution tend to be intellectually marginalised and their contributions ignored or misrepresented (Tadajewski, 2006). Moreover, while scientific management changed the way businesses were managed and continue to be managed today, most teachers and practitioners now do not recognise the
practices enumerated above as scientific management (cf. Baker, 2009), so people like Taylor and White are largely forgotten by many within the academy, but not by all.

Certainly it is true that White and scientific marketing has garnered some limited attention recently (e.g. Skålén et al., 2008; Tadajewski, 2009a; Usui, 2008). Nevertheless, what has not been fully appreciated is the impact of White’s thought on his business contemporaries. As was shown at the start of this paper, Cowan (1927) certainly considered White’s work very important, positing that it should form part of any business library. Lockley (1950, p. 735), in his review of the history of market research, which referenced seminal contributions to this domain, deemed White’s (1921) *Market Analysis* important enough to merit inclusion. In equal measure, as already mentioned, White helped found the Market Research Council, a body that sought to bring highly skilled market researchers together to share best practice (Starch, 1986).

If White is among the earliest to articulate arguments that share a ‘family resemblance’ (Wittgenstein, 1953) with the modern marketing concept, then it would seem logical to partially credit him with foregrounding the advances that followed. Direct genealogical connections between White’s scholarship and that of other writers of the period are difficult to obtain, given the limited extent to which authors of that period co-cited one another. Despite this, other scholars have stressed the historical connections between scientific marketing (Powers & Martin, 1987) and ‘modern’ marketing debates (La Londe & Morrison, 1967), including those associated with the marketing concept (Skålén et al., 2008; Usui, 2008), the marketing mix (Borden, 1964), services management (Grönroos, 1994b), and relationship marketing (Brodie, Coviello, Brookes, & Little, 1997; S. Brown, 1998; Grönroos, 1994a; Gummesson, 1994), with the latter being a convenient catch-all term for a variety of strands of research genealogically traced to the 1960s at least (Sharma & Sheth, 1997; Tadajewski, 2009b; Tadajewski & Saren, 2009).

After all, La Londe and Morrison (1967) claim that ‘Scientific marketing management as described in the early literature actually is a very close evolutionary forebear of modern marketing management’ (p. 9). They continue, whilst the ‘literature of present-day marketing is more sophisticated and has available a greater range of analytical tools than the published works of the 1920s, its conceptual foundations are found in the literature of that period’ (p. 13); a perspective with which many commentators concur (e.g. Grönroos, 1994b; Powers & Martin, 1987; Skålén et al., 2008; Usui, 2008).

As a result of the considerable amount of research that has taken place since White’s death, the value of a customer orientation has been empirically supported (Day, 1994), and there is evidence that a marketing orientation, linked to appropriate customer research and market sensing, leads to improved returns-on-investment (Webster, 2009). Furthermore, since the rise of the consumer movement in the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a slow (Robin & Reidenbach, 1987) but steady recognition that marketing-oriented companies cannot just pursue efficiency gains and profit at the expense of the consumer and wider society (e.g. Bell & Emory, 1971; Lavidge, 1970; Robin & Reidenbach, 1987; Tsalikis & Fritzsche, 1989). This is not to say that efficiency and standardisation are not still important (cf. Grönroos, 1994b, pp. 7–8).

In keeping with the arguments of Taylor (1911/1998) and White (1927a), there has been much attention given in theory and practice to cost savings, standardisation, and operational efficiency (e.g. Cochoy, 2005; Kotler & Castilone, 2009; Shankar,
Berry, & Dotzel, 2009). The most obvious exemplar of these Taylorite principles is
the budget airline industry, with companies such as Southwest Airlines (Shervani &
Zerrillo, 1997) and Ryanair (Boru, 2006) reducing the turnaround time of their
aircraft and limiting the types of planes flown by pilots to decrease training costs
(Shervani & Zerrillo, 1997). Other key examples include: Marriott Hotels (Day,
1994) and the ‘big box’ retailers who follow a logic of standardisation in pursuit
of efficiency savings (Rigby & Vishwanath, 2006); McDonald’s, who standardise
product and service provision to an enviable degree (Kroc & Anderson, 1977); not
to mention the debates regarding standardisation versus adaptation in international
and global marketing (Hall & Johnson, 2009; Sands, 1979; Witkowski, 2005). Some
scholars have gone so far as to refer to the extension of Taylorised ideas into the
world of everyday life (Hancock & Tyler, 2004; Honneth, 2004).
To be sure, there remain ethical conflicts between marketers and consumers
(Chonko & Hunt, 1985, 2000; Fitchett, 2005; Schlegelmilch & Öberseder, 2010),
with producer interests sometimes prioritised over consumer welfare (Desmond &
Crane, 2004; Robin & Reidenbach, 1987; Willmott, 1999). Notwithstanding this,
it is true that responsible corporate behaviour and ethical business practice are
increasingly viewed as important to business legitimacy and profitable in their own
right (Tsaliikis & Fritzschke, 1989). In an argument that reads like a paraphrase of
the comments from White (1927a) above, Lavidge (1970, p. 27) writes that business
strategy should not totally hinge on whether it is possible to produce certain goods
and services (see also Bell & Emory, 1971; Dixon, 2008). Rather, the question that
has to be posed is not whether certain product lines can be produced, but if they
‘should’ (Lavidge, 1970), and if they are, what are the likely implications to society in
terms of resource use, consumer health risks, and concomitantly corporate reputation
and possible anti-corporate backlash (Higgins & Tadajewski, 2002).
On a final note, marketing continues to be dominated by a variant of logical
empiricism and draws upon the legitimacy of science in a manner relatively consistent
And what could be more Taylorite than the desire by Vargo and Lusch (2004) to
present their ‘service dominant logic’ as the ‘one best way’ to reflect upon marketing
theory and practice? Whether we agree or disagree with the desirability of some
of the above facets of marketing–society interaction or the epistemology guiding
marketing theory, it is obvious that Taylor and scientific marketing have had an impact
on the way we think about marketing theory and practice, even if we do not fully
appreciate it.

Conclusion

This paper has documented the relations between scientific management and
scientific marketing. Percival White’s work was used as a prism to highlight how
debates surrounding the marketing concept did not actually emerge in the 1950s
and 1960s. More important than this, however, early thinkers made a case for
practices that bore a ‘family resemblance’ (Wittgenstein, 1953) to the marketing
concept, albeit a vision of the marketing concept that had explicit ethical foundations.
As was pointed out, White was remarkably forward thinking in the way he discussed
marketing theory and practice. But White was not unique. He further developed
ideas that were in circulation during the 1920s and 1930s, but he did so in a
more systematic fashion than any other writer. He articulated a ‘philosophy for the enterpriser’ that bore all the characteristics of a marketing orientation, fashioning his argument using the language of science and logical empiricism.

References


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