REFERENCES


IS MARKETING READY FOR KUHN?

Alladi Venkatesh

ABSTRACT

Using T. S. Kuhn's basic position on paradigmatic changes, this paper analyzes the state of the marketing discipline. Reference is made to other social science disciplines which have faced similar issues over the past 10 or 15 years. The basic premise of this paper is that there is a dominant paradigm in marketing whose intellectual roots can be traced, as in the case of other social sciences, to the logical empiricist approach to knowledge production. The paper concludes with a discussion on the three crises facing marketing discipline: (1) a crisis in theory building, (2) a crisis in problem orientation, and (3) a crisis of relevance.

I. INTRODUCTION

The call for papers for this volume mentions the following as its theme and rationale:
In the social sciences, paradigms are difficult to elicit. In Kuhnian terms, under conditions of “normal science,” the dominant paradigm is generally accepted and unchallenged. It is only in a period of crisis that paradigms come under scrutiny. The changing global environment of the 1980s approximates a crisis situation which brings the underlying paradigm of marketing into question. This workshop will explore dominant and alternative paradigms in marketing.

The present paper is an attempt to evaluate, in somewhat modest terms, the questions raised by the above statement using Kuhnian framework. The practice of utilizing the concepts of philosophers of science such as Feyerabend (1975), Hanson (1961), Kuhn (1970a, b), Polanyi (1958), and Popper (1959) to evaluate the progress of the social sciences is reasonably widespread. For better or worse those concepts have become the yardstick by which we appear to increase our self-understanding. It is in this context that the present author has chosen Kuhn as the frame of reference for this paper.

The format of the paper is as follows. In Section II, a discussion of Kuhn’s ideas is presented. Section III gives some sample reactions to Kuhn from other social sciences. In Section IV, the focus of discussion turns to marketing. Section V presents some concluding remarks.

II. KUHN’S BASIC POSITION

Kuhn’s intellectual contributions can be categorized into three stages. First, there are the historical narratives of the 1950s and the early 1960s of which The Copernican Revolution (1957) is particularly noteworthy. The audience for this stage was clearly the historians of science. The second stage, beginning around 1960 and lasting till the 1970s, represents the most impactful and visible period when Kuhn developed his basic notions about the practice of science in his The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1962; rev. 2nd ed., 1970). The third stage represents his return to the role of historian of science and is captured in his book Black Body Theory (1978). It is the second stage with which we are concerned in this paper.

Since Kuhn’s position is well known, only a general description will be provided here. For additional clarity and convenience, Kuhn’s arguments are diagrammed in Figure 1.

A. Kuhn’s Basic Formulation

In his well-known work The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Kuhn puts forward an idea of paradigm which is neither linear nor cumulative but one characterized by normal period of development followed by a crisis and then a revolutionary change.

Thus, he speaks of normal science as follows: “Normal science means research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements that some scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practices” (1970a, p. 10).

During periods of normal science, the scientific disciplines operate under the direction of successful paradigms. Kuhn describes a paradigm in the following way: “In its established usage, a paradigm is an accepted ‘model’ or ‘pattern.’ In a science, a paradigm is rarely an object for replication. Instead, like an
accepted judicial decision in the social sciences, it is an object for further articulation and specification” (p. 23).

The next step for Kuhn is to identify the relationship between paradigms and normal science. To quote Kuhn, “Paradigms gain their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving a few problems that the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute. The success of paradigm is at the start largely a promise of success discoverable in selected and still incomplete examples. Normal science consists in the actualization of that promise” (pp. 23–24). The actual operationalization of the relationship between normal science and the paradigms is done through the puzzle-solving activity. Thus for Kuhn, “perhaps the most striking feature of the normal research problems is how little they aim to produce major novelties, conceptual or phenomenal” (p. 35).

But if the aim of normal science is not major substantive novelties, it merely refers to the scope and precision with which the paradigms can be applied. This is accomplished through “puzzle-solving activity.” A central requirement for puzzle solving is no longer “the intrinsic value [of the puzzle] but the assumed existence of a solution” (p. 37).

If the period of normal science does not entail a search for the unexpected or for conceptual novelty but only the continual validation of the paradigm, how does science change? Ultimately, nature presents problems not amenable to solution within the established tradition. Scientific workers are then confronted with “anomalies” where existing instruments and models do not yield meaningful results. Anomalies by themselves do not bring about any major changes in the paradigm. On the other hand, they are usually taken care of within the paradigm or the practice of normal science. For example, Kuhn argues:

It follows that if an anomaly is to evoke crisis, it must be more than just an anomaly. Sometimes an anomaly will clearly call into question explicit and fundamental generalizations of the paradigm. When an anomaly comes to seem more than just another puzzle of normal science the transition to crisis and to extraordinary science has begun. The anomaly itself now comes to be more generally recognized as such by the profession. More and more attention is devoted to it by more and more of the field’s most eminent men (p. 82).

Kuhn finally puts forward his conceptualization of the occurrence of crisis:

The transition from a paradigm in crisis to a new one from which a new tradition of normal science can emerge is far from a cumulative process, one achieved by an articulation or extension of the old paradigm. Rather it is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes some of the field’s most theoretical generalizations as well as many of its paradigm methods and application (p. 82).

Since Kuhn developed his ideas there have been several criticisms of his notions of science. Feyerabend (1970) has deplored the dogmatism inherent in

Kuhn’s normal science—doubting whether normal science actually occurs in science. Toulmin (1970) has stated that “Scientific advances occur in highly orderly fashion; there have been no major behavioral discontinuities between the revolutionary and supposedly non-revolutionary science, and this revolutionary metaphor is at best a colorful exaggeration” (emphasis mine). Masterman (1970) found 21 definitions of the word paradigm; Popper (1970) thought normal science was poor science, suggesting an “alienated, mediocre labor force.”

Partly in response to the criticisms and partly as a reexamination of his own ideas, Kuhn de-emphasized the notion of paradigm in favor of the twin notions of disciplinary matrices and exemplars, representing a sociological component of shared values and community structure and an aspect of involving exemplary puzzle solutions.

III. KUHN AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

Kuhn himself has admitted that his study of natural sciences was partly motivated by his perception of confusion in the social sciences (Kuhn, 1970a, p. viii):

Particularly, I was struck by the number and extent of the overt disagreements between social scientists about the nature of legitimate scientific problems and methods. . . . The practice of astronomy, physics, chemistry, or biology normally fails to evoke the controversies over fundamentals that today often seem endemic among, say, psychologists or sociologists. Attempting to discover the sources of that difference led me to recognize the role in scientific research of what I have called “paradigms.” Once that piece of my puzzle fell into place, a draft of this essay emerged rapidly (p. 5).

One can argue that Kuhn’s perception of social sciences is very impressionistic and is not based on systematic observation such as we would credit him with in his evaluation of the natural sciences. However, the statement made by Kuhn about the social sciences, casual as it might be, is intriguing enough for a number of social scientists to examine his ideas closely.

An important reason why social scientists found Kuhn’s analysis appealing is the parallels they discovered between his account of science and developments in their own subject areas (Perry, 1977). Perhaps another reason why they were attracted to him is the manner in which he attempted to destroy the idealized model of the scientific activity which began with Baconian concepts and which through the ages had found strong expression among the logical positivists. This model was what social sciences were aspiring to but appeared to lose confidence in, so it seems, in light of Kuhnian analysis. Kuhn had somehow exposed the goddess with clay feet. More specifically, Kuhn’s characterization of the aforementioned scientific activity as sociological and the use of religious metaphors such as “conversion experiences,” “professional initiation,” and “decisions based on faith” seemed to fit the social scientists’ imagery of their own disciplines.
But the problem arises not only because Kuhn's analysis of science is sociological but because it is also epistemological. That is, Kuhn not only talks about how paradigms are developed but also about how the puzzle-solving occurs within the paradigm.

Let us examine some of the general reactions of workers in other social science disciplines to Kuhn's analysis.

### A. Sociology

Eckberg and Hill (1979) have cataloged several different sociological paradigms (Table 1) which have been identified by various sociologists. The general criticisms Eckberg and Hill offer about these typologies are that they do not practically and conceptually define the course of future research; they are discipline-wide paradigms but are not specific to substantive areas; methodological paradigms are limited to the conduct of research and have no use for the substantive components of the field; and arbitrary classifications miss both the cognitive and structural aspects of the paradigm concept.

Perry (1977) finds that social scientists, and sociologists in particular, have distorted Kuhn's intent and analysis. Thus, he says, "if Kuhn has been concerned to delimit the meaning of his key terms, others have been engaged in extending them." Similarly, Perry argues that the twin sociological ideas of Kuhn—the professional control and the process of socialization—are exaggerated to the point where the scientific community has now become the "priesthood".

Urry (1974) argues that a precondition for a scientific revolution to take place is a consolidation toward a paradigm in the normal science. He feels that sociology is still "groveling" in the pre-paradigm stage and hence may not be a right candidate for Kuhnian revolution.

### B. Psychology

Palermo (1971) argues that the field of experimental psychology as found in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries constituted the first paradigm in psychology. Citing Wundt's own statement (1907), Palermo states that "this revolutionary statement [i.e., Wundt's] marks the official launching of behaviorism as the new paradigm for experimental psychology." Palermo then proceeds to recount several efforts that question the paradigm of behaviorism. The eventual challenge to the paradigm of behaviorism came in the form of psycholinguistics which was expounded in Chomsky's book, *Syntactic Structures* (1957). Thus, according to Palermo, "This book clearly precipitated a scientific revolution within the discipline, changing [psychology] from the behavioristic paradigm to a rationalist approach."

Lipsey (1974) reacts to Palermo and other advocates of the Kuhnian framework by saying that "it is my contention that psychology is neither preparadigmatic nor postparadigmatic, but misparadigmatic." He believes that psychology does exhibit shared consensus on beliefs and values but has not given rise to dramatic problem solutions. He further argues that it is an ideology rather than a normal science because a disciplinary matrix without exemplars does not qualify as a science.

### C. Economics

The direct relevance of Kuhn to economics was discussed by De Vroey (1975) in his evaluation of the transition from classical to neoclassical economics. The main differences between the two schools are shown in Table 2. It is De Vroey's contention that the shift from classicalism to neo-classicalism may be likened to

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**Table 1. Sociological Paradigms**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>J. D. Douglas</th>
<th>R. W. Friedrichs</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>(1) Hypothetical-statistical</td>
<td>(1) Priestly</td>
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<td>(2) Phenomenological</td>
<td>(2) Prophetic</td>
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<th>T. Lehman and R. T. Young</th>
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<td>(1) Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Consensus</td>
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<td>(1) Postivistic</td>
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<td>(2) Phenomenological</td>
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<th>H. Kuklick</th>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Structural functionalism</td>
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<td>(2) Ecological interactionism</td>
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<td>(3) Operationalism</td>
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<tr>
<td>(1) Nomological</td>
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<tr>
<td>(2) Interpretive</td>
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<td>(3) Critical</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Structural functionalism</td>
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<td>(2) Historical</td>
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<td>(1) Microsociology</td>
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<td>(3) Functionalism</td>
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<td>(4) Conflict Theory</td>
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<th>Source:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eckberg and Hill (1979).</td>
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Table 2. A Comparison of the Main Features of the Classical and the Neoclassical Paradigms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classical Paradigm</th>
<th>Neoclassical Paradigm</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The object of economics</td>
<td>Accumulation and distribution</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The aim for engaging in economic research</td>
<td>To assist policymakers</td>
<td>To discovery of universal laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional framework and unit of analysis</td>
<td>Specification of the institutional framework, especially in terms of the division of society between social classes; behavior expresses class belonging</td>
<td>No classes, but a &quot;general public&quot; making decisions through votes (individually) in the market; the idea of choice is central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core of the theoretical structure</td>
<td>Capital, defined in a comprehensive way, is at the center of the theoretical structure</td>
<td>Prices form the central concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception of value</td>
<td>A production theory of value, in which value is viewed as the expression of the social division of labor</td>
<td>Value flows from the subjective mental evaluation of the individual agents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conception of profit</td>
<td>Profit results from the unequal distribution of wealth between classes; it is the source of growth</td>
<td>Profit is the reward for abstinence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source:
De Vroey (1975).

In response to the above thesis proposed by De Vroey, Baumberger (1977) has countered that currently both traditions continue to exist; the conflicts between the two persist; there is puzzle solving going along both tracks with more neoclassical puzzle solving occurring in the United States than in other countries; and, finally, both traditions have produced qualitative and quantitative changes.

D. Summary

The preceding are but a few examples of the ways in which different social science disciplines have attempted to evaluate themselves through the application of the Kuhnian framework to their own situations. These can be summarized as follows:

1. New paradigms do not necessarily replace the old; they seem to coexist.
2. Some communities may go through a full cycle of secure tradition → novelty and confusion → coalescence around a candidate that might become → another secure tradition. Other communities may never achieve the unanimity necessary for this cycle.
3. Kuhn’s analysis is an empirical study of what happened in a particular discipline and does not contain any prescriptive notions. That is, he is not recommending that all disciplines resolve their differences in a revolutionary manner.
4. Social sciences should not compare themselves with sciences which appear to be better candidates for Kuhn’s analysis because, generally speaking, in the sciences there is (1) a scarcity of competing schools, (b) other members of the scientific community are the only audience in the reference group, and (c) scientific effort is by definition puzzle solving.

With this background let us turn our attention to marketing.

IV. THE QUESTION OF MARKETING

A. Alternative Paradigms

As the marketing discipline moved through different stages from its institutional origins to individual-consumer orientation and then on to societal and macro analyses, some areas of inquiry received little or no attention, leaving a number of gaps in knowledge. In attempting to fill these gaps and construct bridges across them, marketing scholars engaged themselves in various issues that appeared to be highly significant. In no particular order, some of these issues are the following: broadening the marketing concept (Kotler and Levy, 1969); micro and macro levels of analyses (Bagozzi, 1976; Fisk, 1982; Hunt, 1983); historical
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Bartel’s (1968) classification is a combination of grand theory and naive formalism. The reason why it did not create much impact is because it needed some more development before it could be used as a framework within which appropriate theory could be developed or tested. But it is a very good example of an attempt to generate a theory of marketing that encompasses a whole range of behavioralistic issues.

Hunt (1976) was the first researcher to systematically explore the epistemological as well as methodological foundations of marketing. His classificatory schemata have two basic strengths. First, they clearly state what marketing is and equally clearly, if somewhat implicitly, describe what marketing is not. He is also the first writer to put marketing into the logical empiricist framework. By formally grounding marketing as a scientific discipline (this is a debatable issue) and providing a valuable discussion base encompassing the context of both justification and discovery, he has initiated a very important process of legitimization of the knowledge production process in marketing.

The schools of thought approach of Sheth and Gardner (1982) is a rather loose classification that attempts to identify some subideologies within marketing. The classification is loose because the schools of thought are partially overlapping. For example, the macromarketing school shares some ideas with the consumerism school or the systems approach school. The classification does have some merit because it provides a chronological basis for marketing.

Carman’s (1980) classification provides a very elegant conceptual map of the marketing discipline. First, it captures the interdisciplinary influence on marketing during its evolution. Unlike Bartel’s (1968) classification, Carman has sought to ground his conceptual scheme in marketing realism. He has also compared different paradigm candidates before choosing the one considered best, based on his arguments.

Fisk and Meyers (1982) propose a classification which is a bold attempt to bring both micro- and macromarketing into a single framework. It has several interesting features. It views marketing at an aggregative systems level and incorporates micromarketing in a macroenvironmental framework. Their classification suggests that the micro and macro phenomena are related and can also be jointly investigated.

While the aforementioned paradigmatic schemata describe marketing from various perspectives, what is missing is any reference to the burgeoning literature and emphasis on quantitative modeling that has had a pervasive influence over marketing discipline in the past 15–20 years. The logical empiricist development, as identified by Hunt (1976), clearly subsumes the quantitative superstructure that is characteristic of modern marketing. Recognizing this development as well as others related ones, we propose a schema which embodies the current developments in marketing that can be collectively labeled as the dominant paradigm. It is the opinion of the present author that there now exists a mode of thought, a way of raising problems and giving explanations, that has coalesced into a discipline with new research techniques and a quest for some intellectual coherence.

self-understanding (Bartels, 1976; Sheth and Gardner, 1982); philosophy of science perspectives (Bush and Hunt, 1982); the need for theory development (Olson, 1981; Cunningham and Sheth, 1983), theory construction (Bagozzi, 1984; Zaltman et al., 1982); a general theory of marketing (Bartels, 1968; El-Ansary 1979); and marketing measurement (Green & Srinivasan, 1978).

In most of these discussions there is no hint of a crisis nor a need to establish a dominant paradigm. It seems that the major thrust was merely to gain scientific respectability. Thus the general tenor of the debate was to refine the existing marketing knowledge and practice, a sort of introspective reconstruction of the marketing field within a given external environment. Most of the impetus for this rearrangement was internally generated among marketing scholars who wished to give a better focus to an otherwise diffused field.

More recently, however, the notion of paradigm (but not always the exact term) has entered our minds once again with no expectation of an impending crisis but with a view to establishing an identity for the field that may be growing beyond its power to cope with the phenomena it is supposedly addressing. The different attempts at paradigm classification are shown in Table 3. We discuss below each scheme in the order presented in the table.

The definitional paradigms suggest periodic attempts by scholars to reach a consensus on the epistemological domain of a discipline during its various stages of development.

The flow of goods paradigm in marketing presents a very formal structure of the marketing institutions and was developed during a highly deterministic period in the history of social science disciplines. The institutional approach to marketing underscores the rationale for marketing institutions as facilitators of the flow of goods as they move from one channel member to the next and ultimately to the consumer.

The next development is a related view that marketing is a set of activities. Once again we see the continuation of the mechanistic notions of marketing in this definition. Alderson’s (1963) functionalism is an example of the deterministic/mechanistic approach to marketing.

In the next stage marketing moved from an institutional orientation to behavioral orientation. With the publication of Cyert and March’s (1963) classic, A Behavioral Theory of the Firm, came the 4-P’s of McCarthy (1960), which were later incorporated into Kotler’s (1967) terminology with more formal vigor. The same underlying philosophy found expression in the articulation of the “marketing concept.” From the marketing concept to social marketing was just one additional step in the behavioral ethos that continues to dominate the discipline even today. The behavioral approach to channel management (Stern, 1969) and the social exchange notion of marketing (Bagozzi, 1975) are a few examples in this direction.

Fisk’s view of marketing at a macro level is a combination of his systems approach (1967) and the pre-Kotlerian institutional approach but with a societal emphasis. The whole subfield of macromarketing appears well entrenched with a strong group of researchers uniquely qualified to work in this area.
### Table 3. Approaches to Paradigms in Marketing

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Definitional Paradigms</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Flow of goods (Pre-Kotler)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Set of activities (AMA)</td>
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<td>• 4 P's (McCarthy)</td>
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<td>• Integrated marketing (marketing concept, broadening) (Kotler and Levy)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social Marketing (Kotler and Zaltman)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social exchange (Bagozzi)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Macromarketing (Fisk, Dholakia)</td>
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- Theory of social initiative
- Theory of economic separation
- Theory of flows, expectations, and interactions
- Theory of behavior constraints
- Theory of social change and marketing evolution
- Theory of social marketing


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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profit Sector</th>
<th>Nonprofit Sector</th>
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<tr>
<td>Micro</td>
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<td>Positive</td>
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<th>Macro</th>
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<td>Positive</td>
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<td>Normative</td>
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- Macromarketing school
- Consumerism school
- Systems approach school
- Buyer behavior school
- Behavioral organizations
- Strategic planning

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### (Table continued)

- The microeconomic paradigm
- The persuasion/attitude change paradigm
- The conflict resolution paradigm
- The generalist system paradigm
- The functionalist paradigm
- The social exchange paradigm

- Network flow paradigm
- Market scarcity paradigm
- Competitive marketing management paradigm
- Evolutionary systems change paradigm
- General systems paradigm
- Dissipative structures paradigm

#### 7. The Dominant Paradigm

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contextual orientation</th>
<th>Consumer orientation (foundations laid by F. Nicosia; A. Andreassen; J. Howard and J. Sheth; EKB)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationale</td>
<td>Historical - Individualism, laissez-faire, capitalism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Philosophical - Economics, psychology, social psychology, operations research, logical positivism</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interdisciplinary - Relevance to marketing practitioner</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Professional - Methodology, modeling, eclecticism</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Intradisciplinary - Consumer decision making rather than consumption process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Subject focus - Single-firm orientation</td>
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</table>
B. The Dominant Paradigm

Given these "social facts" about marketing, what relevance can we establish between marketing and Kuhn, which is really the theme of this paper? After all, Kuhn himself has admitted that he has meant all things to all people. We shall answer this question by first examining the dominant paradigm and then follow up with a discussion of the anomalies that marketing is facing. In this context some relevant questions are inevitably raised: What is the nature of the normal science as practiced in marketing? What are the anomalies that confront the discipline? Are the anomalies being tackled within the puzzle-solving enterprise in marketing or is it the case that the situation is reaching a crisis? Finally, are there alternative viewpoints competing for a new paradigm status?

In marketing, as in most other disciplines, we are concerned with epistemology (knowledge), ontology (reality), and methodology (the logic of research). Although some people are still arguing as to whether marketing is a science, most scholars now treat it as a science. In creating a science of marketing, we seem to have pursued the task of creating objective knowledge. By objective knowledge we mean knowledge that does not reflect the personal values of the researcher, knowledge which is scientifically verifiable, and knowledge which attempts to discover uniformities and lawlike regularities in the phenomena it studies. By common acclaimation marketing is made to move in the direction of an objective, neutral, and value-free scientific discipline.

The contextual orientation of marketing is microempirical. Its micro foundations appear to have a twofold objective: the welfare of the profit-seeking firm (although nonprofit marketing is a careful afterthought) and the satisfaction of the individual consumer. On a more holistic level, however, the historical and philosophical foundations of marketing are clearly embedded in the American notions of capitalism and individualism, and in the pragmatic character of the dominant institutions. In this respect marketing has strong philosophical ties with other disciplines such as economics (neoclassical), sociology (structural/functional), and psychology (empirical/experimental). The ontology of the dominant paradigm is embedded in the notion of buyer-seller exchange. The puzzle-solving activity admittedly revolves around the context of buying and selling. In a recent article, for example, Arndt (1983) has stated that "perhaps the most important contribution in general theory construction [in marketing] has been the conceptualization of marketing exchange." The major research focus of marketing discipline has been the exchange system which comprises a set of assumptions: there are parties to an exchange whose behavior, motivations, and characteristics may be studied.

The dominant paradigm has been operating in an environment of relative security and stability for a long time. Institutional arrangements in the marketing profession have been organized to support and nurture the dominant paradigm. For example, there are several established journals in marketing and the discipline has attained a certain rigor comparable to most social science disciplines. It also has a strong core of followers, and most of them are exclusively trained in marketing. Over the past 20 years marketing has grown into a mature discipline and has dealt with anomalies by appropriate responses from within the discipline.

C. The Crisis in Marketing

Does this all mean that marketing is facing, intellectually, a crisis-free environment? The present author does not believe so. The crisis in marketing appears to be taking place at two levels: At the first level it seems to be a crisis among scholars trained in the positivistic tradition. At the second level the crisis is generated by the mode of thinking which distinguishes scholars with more humanistic and philosophic inclinations. Before we discuss the specific crisis issues, let us examine the general context surrounding them.

The general context of the crisis is that which is facing most social sciences. To summarize Easton (1983), the surrounding factors can be described in the following terms: (1) the changing world order which is the result of unregulated industrialization, world poverty, and threat of nuclear war; (2) the counterrevolution of the 1960s and 1970s which raised the fundamental questions as to why social scientists could not foresee the above kinds of problems — and even if they did, what were they going to do about them; (3) the withdrawal of social scientists into the practice of value-free science, thus avoiding research into urgent social problems and maintaining a remote if somewhat irrelevant stance from the world of reality; and (4) the inadequacy of the logical positivistic training of the social scientists, which is more geared to axiomatization and narrow specialization.

While the general context described above may not be exactly applicable to the field of marketing, the broad picture is quite relevant. After all, marketing operates within the same social order as other social sciences. However, there are some special forces which are unique to marketing. Historically, marketing had to deal with certain types of intellectual developments that required some discipline-specific responses. Such developments had the character of anomalies, and they were not necessarily crisis points. See Exhibit 1 for a sample of anomalies that have occurred in the past and how the marketing discipline has responded to them. As shown in the exhibit, the most typical response of marketing to the anomalies has been the creation of a journal with support from the marketing establishment. In recent years, however, various signals with a potential to develop into crises have appeared. The crises in marketing can be classified as follows: (1) a crisis in theory building; (2) a crisis in problem orientation; and (3) a crisis of relevance (practitioner vs. academician).

1. Crisis in Theory Building

The notion that no major theories of marketing behavior have been generated in the past decade or so is quite prevalent among marketing scholars (Deshpande,
### Exhibit 1. Anomalies in Marketing

| Anomaly                              | Marketing Response* | Support from Marketing Establishment* | Nature of Impact on Marketing Discipline |
|                                     | New Association     | New Journal                          |                                         |
| Need for research orientation       | —                   | Journal of Marketing Research         | Very high                               | Strengthened existing paradigms |
| Need for a systematic study of consumer behavior | Association for Consumer Research | Journal of Consumer Research | —                                   | Very high                               | Strengthened existing paradigms |
| Need for a theory orientation       | —                   | —                                   | American Marketing Association started the theory conference | Very high                               | Strengthened existing paradigms |

| Anomaly                              | Marketing Response* | Support from Marketing Establishment* | Nature of Impact on Marketing Discipline |
|                                     | New Association     | New Journal                          |                                         |
| Need to create a science of marketing | —                   | Marketing Science                     | High                                    | Reinforced existing paradigms          |
| Need for the study of product development and innovation | Product Development and Management Association | Journal of Product Innovation | —                                   | Low to moderate                         | Moderate impact on the discipline |
| Lack of opportunities for a European point of view | —                   | Economic Psychology; International Journal of Marketing Research | —                                   | Moderate to high                        | Too early to evaluate               |
| Macroenvironment has become critical | —                   | Journal of Macro Marketing            | Low                                    | Somewhat outside the existing paradigm |

* There are also other journals but they appear to be outlets for additional articles rather than response to anomalies.

* Support is evaluated by a set of composite factors including the composition of the editorial board, editorial philosophy, and type of contributions.
We believe that the reason why theories have not been forthcoming has
to do with some practical considerations and other factors relating to the issue
of the nature of inquiry in marketing. We shall take the practical issues first.

As the field of marketing was growing rapidly, it was often very convenient
to borrow theoretical statements from other disciplines to explain marketing
phenomena. Over a period of time this practice has not been found entirely
satisfactory and has produced very mixed results. Also impeding the theory
generation effort is the recent preoccupation with theory construction instead of
the actual production of the theories themselves. Such exercises in developing
the norms for theory construction can sometimes divert intellectual energies from
important epistemic pursuits. A third reason can be attributed to the view held
by some that marketing is an applied discipline. Implied here is the notion that
theory development may not belong in an applied area. A final reason has its
origin in the fact that theory development requires a kind of training which is
not available to most academic marketers who come out of traditional marketing
departments, where the emphasis is on empirical research, data analysis, and
quantitative modeling. These areas offer limited potential for theory generation.

There are also some fundamental issues relating to the nature of inquiry in
marketing. Although the role of theories in the development of marketing knowledge
has long been recognized, the recent concern has been prompted by the burgeoning
growth of published material in marketing without any intellectual threads to tie
them. Our notion of what a theory is, of course, has been strongly influenced
by the prevailing view of what a theory is in the natural sciences. It is my belief
that this kind of theory does not exist in marketing. What exists is a more
liberalized view of theory. To elucidate this point more fully, the schema shown
in Exhibit 2 is proposed. It presents a hierarchical theoretical structure composed
of various subrepresentations. The highest form of theoretical representation is
"theory" as understood in the natural sciences. Of this there is none in marketing.
The lowest form is a set of empirical findings which are not supported by any
theoretical explanations. In between these two extremes are other possibilities.
Using Exhibit 2 as the basis for discussion, it is arguable that the crisis in theory
is attributable to our inability to climb the theoretical ladder in any significant
manner.

2. Crisis in Problem Orientation

A recent article by Bartels (1983) was titled "Is Marketing Defaulting its
Responsibilities?" Bartels has claimed that over the past two decades marketing
has acquired a rather narrow focus and what is known as marketing is really
marketing technology. He also points to an interesting paradox: "A factor shaping
the discipline is the manner in which its scope is narrowed while appearing to
be broadened. . . . Broadening has consisted of extending marketing management
technology to other than commodity distribution." A similar concern was articulated
by Firt and Dholakia (1982), who, after identifying three possible areas of study

### Exhibit 2. A Hierarchical Theoretical Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Notions of Theory</th>
<th>Situation in Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest form</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory (natural science model)</td>
<td>None exists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carefully developed classificatory schemata</td>
<td>Very few</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex models</td>
<td>A small number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex concepts leading to interesting findings</td>
<td>A small number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research questions of highest significance</td>
<td>Quite a few and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad ideas about how marketing phenomena behave</td>
<td>growing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations about empirical findings</td>
<td>A large number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lowest form</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relating empirical findings to other empirical findings</td>
<td>A large number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table represents a hierarchical structure of theoretical notions, from the broadest to the most specific, and indicates how they are applied in marketing.

in the field of consumption (highly studied areas, barely studied areas, and areas
that need studying), concluded that out of a total of 25 areas only 4 are highly
studied. This indicates a degree of specialization that makes the field vulnerable.

3. Crisis of Relevance

The question of relevance of marketing knowledge has been discussed recently
by a few authors especially in regard to the usefulness of the knowledge produced
by the academicians to the practitioners [Myers, Greysen, & Massy (MGM), 1979; Monieson, 1981]. The MGM report, if somewhat equivocally, points out
that the gap between academic work and marketing practitioners' use of knowledge
exists even after 25 years. Part of the reason for such a gap is that what the
academicians consider relevant is different from what the marketing manager
views as relevant. Monieson (1981) argues that the gap between the two exists
because one is interested in developing a scientific body of knowledge and the
other is interested in practicing a craft. It is the present author's opinion that
academic researchers are not perceived as useful because practitioners want their
day-to-day problems solved and marketing academicians cannot serve this function.
They are also perceived as researching either very trivial problems or irrelevant
ones. For a fuller development of this idea, see McSurely and Venkatesh (1984)
and also the paper by Heffring (1985) in this volume.

The issue of relevance would not be critical were it not for the turmoil surrounding
the world of the marketing practitioner. That world is not static and has been
subject to rapid and unpredictable changes in recent years. Practitioners look for
knowledge that will permit them to understand the environment and exercise
some mastery over it. When they are unable to find this kind of knowledge, a
sense of insecurity and crisis develops.
V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The problem confronting most marketers is how to develop a paradigm that advances their understanding of the relationship between marketing knowledge, marketing action, and marketing change. Marketers have been successful in producing specialized knowledge in rather narrow areas. There is a danger that the field of marketing might be trivialized because of a lack of attention to substantive issues.

We believe that the crises in marketing can be averted if researchers are allowed to think unconventionally and are rewarded for such efforts. For example, it is not clear that the exchange paradigm which has received such widespread approval is either ontologically true or epistemologically valid. Perhaps there is a need to look at some other paradigms. The marketing discipline should also promote freedom in methodological formulations and allow greater flexibility in the research strategies used by scholars. At present, there is confusion between methodological form and methodological rigor. There seems to be a great tendency to hold authors responsible for the form rather than the rigor, possibly because it is easier to evaluate form. Methodological rigor refers to the logic and completeness in the presentation of arguments, and form refers to the mode of delivery. More and more marketing scholars appear to play the role of packagers of knowledge rather than producers of knowledge. The quest for scientific knowledge using the logical positivist framework may have to be modified to knowledge based on understanding, or what Max Weber has called Verstehen. What is needed is a balance between explanatory-analytical modes of research and interpretive-constructive approaches to research.

REFERENCES


Is Marketing Ready for Kuhn?


