A Suggested Taxonomy for Marketing Thought: the Case of Lacking Applied Development and Research in Marketing

Joseph J. Vidali, Ph.D.
San Diego State University

EDITOR’S FOOT-NOTE: Reviewers have agreed that marketing has no Taxonomy and needs one, but that a full study and statement would be a Herculean task. The paper published here is presented as a beginning and, as the author himself states, “in the hope to stir controversy, debate, and effort.”

Marketing theory can be segmented according to intent (prescriptive or descriptive) and extent (general—applicable to firms in general, or specific—applicable to specific firms). Such a dual dichotomy allows the following schemata.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTENT OF THEORY</th>
<th>PRESCRIPTIVE</th>
<th>DESCRIPTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXTENT OF THEORY</td>
<td>GENERAL</td>
<td>SPECIFIC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

147
A SUGGESTED TAXONOMY FOR MARKETING THOUGHT:

While not all of marketing's theoretical efforts and existing paradigms fall exclusively into any one segment, enough do to make this approach valuable for analysis.

When theory is approached in this manner, some surprising inconsistencies are pointed up. For instance some areas are very heavily represented in the literature while one of them is virtually ignored. This short treatment gives a partial listing of marketing theory areas and paradigms applicable to each subset or segment of the above model. The references are not conclusive but do reflect existing work in these areas as well as appropriate topics for study in each segment.

GENERAL PRESCRIPTIVE-MARKETING

A review of the literature and an examination of current marketing trends reveal at least the following general theories and paradigms applicable to prescriptive marketing:

(1) The Concept of Marketing—conflicting paradigms arise from questions of whether marketing is a profit or service oriented, business or social activity. A familiar example showing this conflict is the Kotler-Luck debate (1969; Luck 1969, Kotler 1972).

(2) The Production Concept—this paradigm of “produce it, we'll sell it” is out of vogue today but is still very evident (Barksdale and Darden 1971).

(3) The Marketing Concept—now fashionable, this “satisfy consumer wants” philosophy has attracted much print, but markedly less application (Bell and Emory 1971; McNamara 1972).

(4) Marketing Theory—increasingly the qualitativist (Aspinwall, Bartels, Kotler, Alderson and Levitt) basis of marketing is being questioned by quantitativists such as Green, Frank, Massy, Bass, and Forrester. The debate involves whether marketing should strive for the rigorousness and replicability of true science or retain a strong qualitative flair.

PRESCRIPTIVE SPECIFIC-MARKETING

Since much consulting effort is concentrated on prescriptive specific-marketing, a large number of such theories could be expected. The results are not disappointing. Some of the more notable theories and paradigms involve:

1. Consumer Pre-Purchase Behavior, Buying Behavior, and Consumption Behavior—there are a number of theories and models here dealing with