CHAPTER 1

THE BRIDGE BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND PRACTICE

DEBATE 1: IS THERE A BRIDGE BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND PRACTICE?

Why is This Tension?

Let's consider the roots of conflict and why divides between perspectives occur. Even earlier in marketing progress, conflict as a consequence of disagreement and tension (Anderson & Narus, 1990) has been thoroughly and scholarly examined especially in distribution channels (Frazier, 1983; Heide & John, 1988). Since the dynamics of academic contribution include tension as an accelerator of research productivity via detailed models, contradicting viewpoints and trade-offs (Palmatier, 2016), tension could generate transformative decisions.

A Civilized Tension between Academia and Practice (including Tension within Academia and Tension within Practice) Could be a Positive Source of Productivity or Creativity

Placing positivity at the core of marketing, the 'positive marketing' theory goes beyond the business-as-usual routine to engage in social issues (the other theories that examine social issues are cause, green, social, and societal marketing theories) where positivity of a marketing innovation is measured by its value for an organization, its customers, and society (Gopaldas, 2015). This urge to reposition marketing theory into the broad social aspects of life and business is also visible in the recent marketing definition proposed by the American Marketing Association ('Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.') (Gundlach & Wilkie, 2010) and in a recent categorization that pursues the replacement of the 4Cs with a more socially aware 4Ws (economic wealth, environmental wellness, social well-being and human wisdom) for a better world (Kotler, 2015). How can marketing alone resolve the major and enduring issues of the world and mankind? Do not we need contribution from a variety of fields, for instance, from fine arts, which is responsible for the development of experiential settings. Social concerns seem as a major influence that drives businesses and life at large; thereafter, business functions and related fields contribute to the social progress made.

The favourable outcomes of creative tension, positive thinking and an urge to socially verify marketing concepts for academicians and practitioners could be synchronized. How can one synchronize these elements in academia and business? How can one synchronize academia and business, because examining tension signals a misleading disguise? For instance, a first impression might seemingly be tension, disagreement or conflict, but through positive thinking and creative tension, appreciation of diversity and a deeper understanding of partners involved, marketers could create innovative value for target and potential audiences, as well as key stakeholders. So, there could be a multi-layer approach that could transform a debate into a collaborative work to contribute to a higher purpose.

Apparently, a divide between academia and practice is not rooted in the creative tension stated earlier, and the main trade-off has been picking one over the other. How can we move from negativity and conflict to integration? Should we think of similarities between academia and practice more than differences? Similar to the motivation behind moving from differences-based international marketing to similarities-based integrated marketing (Sheth, 2001). While doing so, can we improve declining marketing capabilities, customer satisfaction and brand equities?

A Strong Theory Is the One that Generates a Diverse Set of Practical Applications and Managerial Implications

Marketing's modern incarnation as a science should have found significant support from marketing practitioners, for example, as a guide to produce best practices or to set organizational goals. Although many academic seniors and publishers encourage authors to explain how theoretical discussions and empirical support could benefit organizations, are there that many marketing practitioners that encourage professionals to cite scientific studies?

Overly referring to experience instead of potential, to history instead of future, to persons instead of concepts, to oneself instead of ourselves or to ourselves instead of oneself could motivate to examine exaggeration and its harm to persons and organizations. Evidence-based research as a method to replace 'legacy approaches,' 'intuition,' immediate organizational needs and their energy-consuming effects is beneficial to build a bridge between theory and practice by contributing to both (Kumar, 2017) and to social settings. As an application of the link between a theoretical foundation and its empirical support, the enriched repetitions of 'the theory-practice-theory cycle' showcase how and why theory and practice fit well together (Kumar, 2017). Relationships at its very core, this two-way cyclical approach reinforces learning, development, implementation, and learning again, but it also signals conflicts at interfaces like marketing-sales, research design-fieldwork, and art-science. Ultimately, such approach triggers the need for new criteria to satisfy both ends. For increased diffusion of more science into organizational practices, we might need research cited by organizations in addition to research cited by researchers.

Could we move towards an integrated theory of marketing, an integrated and not self-centred perspective free from violating conflict of interest and organizational privacy (academia and practice caring for each other, possibly by developing an orientation in each other)? Such a perspective could motivate citing practical problems to find research problems with theoretical reasoning. This requires a balance between a perfectionist view of an ideal world led by academic work (yet constrained by marketing capabilities) and solving organizational and managerial problems with academic guidance for a feasible world. Do organizations have time, energy, human resources, technology (processes, etc.), funds, knowledge, potential, desire and orientation to implement academic ideals?

For example, as a high-calibre research outlet in the Master Journal List, the Journal of Service Management demands a special section devoted to managerial implications from all submitted manuscripts (Edvardsson, 2004). Since 2011, Theory + Practice in Marketing Conference has a unique platform that has gained recognition from influential publishers (Lehmann & Carpenter, 2016), and the American Marketing Association (Kumar, 2017) has been arguing regarding the presence of a disconnected academia because of a separation between academic leanings towards an uneasy-to-comprehend emphasis on details and professional applications. Their ultimate recommendation is a need for a new focus to produce academic research to resolve business problems. So, there is a stream that priorities a bridge between academia and practice instead of a divide mainly to improve organizational competencies. A downside possibility of such a statement can be reducing and depreciating scientific marketing in praise of a focus on practice or a focal point in service of practice. However, implications could be easy to understand, seemingly not technical, but scientifically significant research. Such preference is also available in some influential academic circuits, but usually against very technical and highly mathematical expressions. Beyond the ideal—feasible interface, could we have a balanced approach?

The Real Divide Is Not the Divide between Academia and Practice, It Is the Divide in Translating among Persons, Organizations and Entities

The communicational device to persuade practice for science-based activities has been two-way asymmetric communications (Hunt & Grunig, 1994). If the consequence of a two-way asymmetric communication was a divide between academicians and practitioners, should we think about a paradigm shift towards two-way symmetric communications to convince marketing practitioners? Although participants in a two-way asymmetric communication exchange information about concerns and potential problems, the presence of a dominant figure and their use of communicational devices only result in a recently "allayed" but previously concerned participant with no significant change in the behaviour of the dominant figure (Roper, 2005), and so, the concerned participant is persuaded. Two-way symmetric communication could maximize the degree of overcoming issues raised by prospects through necessary behavioural changes employed by both after deeply analyzing circumstances and interdependent needs. A likely result could be effectively communicating a scientific capability's relevance to resolve professional issues. The basis on direct dialogue and feedback (Pickton & Broderick, 2001) could increase dissemination of marketing science in marketing practice.

There appears a trade-off (or a negotiation requirement) between scientific precision and organizational purposes. Theory's responsibility to produce concepts that are above products and categories (which makes it applicable to a diverse set of products and categories) and managerial priorities that require methods to develop and sustain competitive advantage under a tight profit-oriented agenda can contradict. To find a position in the theoretical rigour-managerial relevance scale, could we think of a sub-field called 'practitioner-oriented research' instead of altering the focus of all science? A meaningful ideal is achieving both theoretical rigour and managerial relevance as outcomes of scientific research projects (Kumar, 2016) with a solid knowledge base to minimize the negative effects of potential issues like 'hubris among scholars' (Stebbins, 2017), hubris among practitioners, organizational privacy (which results in minimal contact with scholars), integration of both cultures and smoothing the frontiers between academia and practice. So, if the role of practitioners in academia and their influence on literature should be improved, could we talk about 'broadening' the marketing practice?

A historical guide to synchronize and integrate academia and practice could be found in discussions at the Rede Conference in 1959 (Snow, 1999), where discussions about the conflicts between intellectuals and scientists transformed into discussions about the conflicts between natural sciences and arts/humanities (Reiners, Bliersbach, & Marniok, 2017; Snow, 1999). Referring to one's culture as all culture (Snow, 1999), the true culture, the only culture or the absolute can create a 'myopic' approach like overly depending on organizational or managerial experience and needs while appreciating minimal inspiration and guidance from outside institutions like science. So, the contention between cultures is an enduring issue between scientists and non-scientists, yet transforming as a scope for other approaches.

If There Is or Will Be a Bridge, Should n't It Be Visible in Business Curricula?

The three-step higher education evolution showcases a centuries-long transformation from the earliest universities that mainly supported the heritage and tradition to the third and latest generation through the second generation of universities that emphasized scientific productivity but not its implications (Wissema, 2014). The elements that differentiate third-generation universities are interdisciplinary and above-disciplines research, with emphasis on research and development, international competition, slight regulations, advocating entrepreneurship and collaborations with practitioners and professional organizations (Wissema, 2014).

Having improved from the earliest tendencies of abandoning one perspective for the other as witnessed during the Rede Conference (Reiners et al., 2017), science and arts/humanities are now closer as presented in a recent finding that indicates that both share instruments like theories and laws that examine similar topics; for instance, creativity research is a significant part of both humanities and science (Reiners et al., 2017). Hence, there are shared curiosities and priorities for the arts and sciences, as well as for sciences and practice.

Theoretical foundations and the progress of marketing science have produced 'noninteractive-economic schools of marketing', 'interactive-economic schools of marketing', 'noninteractive-noneconomic schools of marketing', and 'interactive-noneconomic schools of marketing' (Sheth, Gardner, & Garrett, 1988). Earlier evaluations reveal that managerial school of thought in marketing had earned the highest score among all with 9 out of 10, with its focus on integrating scholarly marketing and professional practice as inspired by the field of managerial economics (Sheth et al., 1988).

Starting with practices to develop theories (Lewin, 1945), a process with stages of observation, induction (but starting with business problems) and testing business cases (Huarng & Mas-Tur, 2016) provides a roadmap. Considering the time lag between idea generation and empirical support, brands could start with marketing philosophy and by critically processing it in great detail so that they could logically prove arguments. Then, significant practices can contribute to marketing science. The key point is that a marketplace or a consumer's life is not what a marketer should experiment with, and a consumer's mindset is too precious to confuse. Demonstrations through experiments and trial-and-error learning are valuable scientific methods but are usually not suitable for brands to conduct in the market because these methods are for learning, and organizational strategies are particularly for demand management. There is a research stream that prioritizes managerial practice, and although science and practice can be incorporated, we should not lose the divide between scientific work and consultancy.

Although there is a need to examine when, how, why or do marketing practitioners approach marketing science (Cornelissen & Lock, 2005) (positive or critical), both are in this together.

DEBATE 2: CAN BUSINESS PRACTICES BE VALUED EQUALLY AS SCIENTIFIC WORK?

Despite the Traditional Viewpoint, Organizations can Alter the Macro-economic Structure

Although the market and consumer indicators continuously evolve through knowledge gained by stakeholders, *ceteris paribus* remains as a practical method to understand complex phenomena; however, with possibilities of excluding some rapid environmental changes. Besides assumptions of *ceteris paribus*, economics usually indicates that an equilibrium functions beyond consciousness of companies. Moreover, economic perspectives do not focus on explaining why 'uneconomic channels' and cost-inefficient retailers persist to remain static over time (Filser & McLaughlin, 1989), or why retail and wholesaling formats resist change even when change signals promising economic benefits (McArthur, Weaven, & Dant, 2016).

An extraordinary concept with regard to corporate growth is 'the visible hand', as it was one of the first to prioritize management and suggest that it is the managerial team at a hierarchical organization which produces corporate growth and not markets (Rose, 2008). Can we consider the presence of significant micro and macro marketing processes as the visibility of routes to balance in a market? As this concept was developed in the 1970s, inspiration for 'the visible hand' perspective opposing the invisible hand of market forces should have come from the managerial stream of that era, and is also apparent in the managerial school of marketing and managerial economics.

Current research streams emphasize practitioner's needs and prioritizes customers and markets. However, 'the visible hand' previously highlighted managerial preferences and capabilities over extreme market orientation. Apart from creating homophony, this was mainly to communicate the effectiveness of professional management, because management as an institution had become legitimized and the next step was with regard to customers. Understanding the true motivations behind an emerging topic is a gateway to predict the next emerging topic that will arise after legitimization of the previous one.

Managerial control on corporate growth was a way to commend the emergence of multi-unit modern enterprises, instead of the traditional single-unit family businesses, and to reaffirm the effectiveness of management as a separate field (both as a discipline (or as a discipline candidate) and practice) (Chandler Jr, 1977; Drucker, 1986; Zahra, 2003). This was apparent because stable growth was related to managing organizational production and distribution processes instead of attributing it to market coordination (Chandler Jr, 1977).

As 'the visible hand' was mainly an outcome of 'technological innovation' and 'increasing consumer demand', and as it was a step beyond market coordination (Chandler Jr, 1977), and as the increasing number of demanding consumers paved way to customer orientation, the shared factor in 'visible hand' and customer orientation is the nature of consumers; but can we generalize these visible organizational practices?

Emphasis on innovation, consumer demand, professionalism, organizational efficiencies of managerial hierarchy and managerial power to influence and change businesses and economies (Chandler Jr, 1977) signalled a cumulative impact on macro-issues. Thus, we can relate this argument to social macro-marketing purposes with respect to the effects of organizations as a whole on the state of economies. If organizations can influence macro-indicators, organizational priorities can produce growth or contribute to it. Hence, organizations can have their practical and visible approach to growth.

According to a motivation behind macro-marketing, marketing management routines of organizations and related key actors at a micro-level and marketing's interaction with and its place in 'the entire economic system' at a macro-level (Moyer, 1972) can be mediated by a meso-level in marketing. Can we see the effects of organizations on economic development more clearly? Does this effect belong to marketing systems and macro-marketing? If generalization requires a certain level of homogeneity (or a common ground) among organizations that will benefit from generalized concepts, and if macromarketing examines marketing systems and industries, and if we want to generalize business practices as scientific work, how can we generalize practices from a heterogeneous body like an industry let alone generalizing or aggregating micro-practices? Alternatively, can we focus on key dynamics of innovation to generalize and classify business practices because innovation is a driver of economic growth?

Although micro-efforts can be aggregated into macro-outcomes, the effects of behavioural activities of organizations in between micro- and macro-layers are more complex to calculate (Dopfer, Foster, & Potts, 2004); so considering a meso-layer as a behavioural dimension can reveal clarity as to when to make mathematical calculations.

Borrowed from sociology, examining marketing through micro-, meso- and macro-levels (Turner, 2010 and Turner & Boyns, 2001) could increase the visibility of marketing actions and can clarify how micro-marketing activities are transformed into a macro-impact. For example, a brand experience model introduces brand meanings as a micro-level, marketplace interactions as a meso-level, and culture and market formation as a macro-level, where brand experience is a subjective response to dynamics of this three-level system (Andreini, Pedeliento, Zarantonello, & Solerio, 2018). Such a framework introduces brand experience as a responsive 'multidimensional socially constructed phenomenon' based on relationship theory, service-dominant logic and the consumer culture theory (Andreini et al., 2018). If experiencing a brand is a customer response to branding, marketers should consider both responsive and proactive approaches to market orientation. Besides this multi-layered socio-cultural focus, brand experience has philosophical and economic origins that can be examined by other multi-dimensional frameworks. In this case, meso-level is devoted to interactions between brand practices performed by consumers and brand stimuli (Andreini et al., 2018), mediating the transition between a personal understanding of what a brand means to its consumers and what cultural and behavioural qualities and experiences it brings to their lives. So, production and branding starts within consumers at a separate level. Then, customer orientation could be responsible from a similar three-level framework that starts with customer insight (micro-level), relationships in the market (meso-level) and impact on social, cultural and economic structures (macro-level). So, a micro-, meso- and macro-analysis of problems, achievements and potential is very likely to deepen our understanding of marketing and its contribution.

Can Marketing Practices Produce Growth or Stability Today? (What can be the Relationships among Corporate Growth, Business Practices, Scientific Work, Customer Delight and Brand Equity?)

Concerns in alternative economics regarding the traditional association of growth and economic outcomes are mainly motivated by a utilitarian perspective that overemphasizes the impact of macro-economic indicators, especially the gross domestic product (initially an indicator of national income), to resolve issues of personal and social welfare (Lloveras & Quinn, 2017; Schmelder, 2016). These concerns indicate that continuously and overly focusing on gross domestic product as the measure of wealth has produced 'environmental', 'humanistic', and 'social' issues (Lloveras & Quinn, 2017). Can there be a possible continuity of welfare during economic imperfections? Why is there a rigid focus on growth, although business cycles will continue to fluctuate? There is an academic need to examine the relations between business cycles in terms of categories, segments, consumption behaviour, firms (for the first research stream), online marketing activities, retailer types (for the second research stream) and brands (for the third research stream) (Dekimpe & Deleersnyder, 2018). Alternatively, we have green growth, a-growth and de-growth with focal points of environmental requirements, quality of life and pursuing a downsized presence, respectively (Lloveras & Quinn, 2017).

Can Significant Implementation Produce Significant Theories?

First, to produce significant implementation, researchers should methodologically focus on problems of significant implementation. Let's think of the roadmap in the previous debate and discuss possible contributions as a result of observing business practices, inducing from business practices and using deduction to test the outcomes of induction but with more cases (Huarng & Mas-Tur, 2016). Reviewing managerial problems (marketing practices, marketing capabilities) as revealed by previous academic studies with solid theoretical foundations could be used to find problems confronting significant implementation, and it could be the first step in integrating theory and practice and examining practice-driven problems (Najafi-Tavani, Sharifi, & Najafi-Tavani, 2016). There appears a distinction between overly depending on empirical studies instead of theory development. Second, the impacts of organizational experience and theoretical applications (significant research) on successful marketing practice (significant implementation) could be considered.

Emphasizing managerial priorities and scientific concerns prioritize relatively new research methods like the mixed approach. Considering management as a culture (Drucker, 1986) and its impact on marketing strategy development, there is a problem of preferring managerial idiosyncrasies over significance.

Are There Sufficient Amount of Frameworks Developed by Companies and Are Companies Willing to Contribute to the Marketing Progress?

An academic need is for new models and frameworks that examine marketing strategy and its relations with global consumer culture (Laroche, 2009). Referring to the potential of (global) consumer culture (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007), the implications of the five-forces model in competitive strategy (Porter, 2000) and the increased role of consumers in business, could we draw inspiration for a framework with elements of relationships within the supply chain network (a derivative of bargaining power of suppliers), alignment with consumer culture (a derivative of bargaining power of buyers) and degree of staying away from tough competition through innovation (a derivative of threat of new entries and threat of substitutes) to explain competitive advantage further?

Beyond best practice announcements, examples and case studies, a content analysis of the marketing management textbooks reveals that frameworks developed by for-profit organizations that contribute to theoretical discussions are rare. Some frequently mentioned ones are strategic work like BCG's growth-share matrix, McKinsey's 7S and Toyota's production system.

Functional capability of a theory lies in its abilities to generate managerial implications, and functional capability of an organization lies in its ability to develop customer-oriented strategies and processes, allocate resources and sustain through learning and improvement. The applicability of marketing theory to business routine and a focus on improving organizational capabilities are especially visible in product-specific journals dedicated to, for instance, food, beverage and tourism marketing. In return, one invaluable outcome of organizational knowledge base is patents and its transformation into commercial products.

Producing work equivalent to scientific studies is a very challenging purpose and an easier method could be solidifying the bridge between theory and practice to facilitate knowledge exchange and contribution to each other through improved relationships.