

MARKETING AND PUBLIC POLICY:
A NEGLECTED AREA OF THE MARKETING CURRICULUM

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INTRODUCTION

Periodically universities must evaluate their curricula to determine whether their students are being adequately prepared to begin a career in their chosen field. This is especially true within departments such as marketing where the subject matter is diverse and dynamic. Over the years, marketing educators have responded to the needs of their students by offering courses in retailing, advertising, and marketing research. More recently, some marketing departments have offered courses in services marketing and nonprofit marketing. In spite of these developments the curricula of many marketing departments does not include a course in marketing and public policy. The purpose of this paper is to suggest reasons for including a course in marketing and public policy in the marketing curriculum and to assess how marketing educators have responded to a need for such a course.

WHY A COURSE IN PUBLIC POLICY

The public policy environment has and will continue to have a significant impact on marketing decisions. In addition, although the variables composing this environment are largely uncontrollable, new arguments have emerged which suggest marketers could take an active role in shaping this environment. For these reasons, it is the authors' opinion that marketing departments consider developing a separate course that would investigate the generation, impact and opportunities of public policy decisions.

HOW HAVE MARKETING
EDUCATORS RESPONDED

To get an indication of how marketing educators have approached the study of marketing and public policy, undergraduate marketing texts, the availability of publication outlets, and the syllabi of public policy related courses offered at different universities were examined. Nineteen recent edition texts were evaluated on the basis of their coverage of various public policy issues. Most of the texts cover the antitrust laws, consumer protection laws, consumerism, and marketing ethics. The most common method of presenting these issues is to provide a brief description of the issue. Seven texts, however, relate their discussion to how these aspects of public policy impact marketing decisions.

In terms of publication outlets, the Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer

Research and Journal of Marketing Research have all published empirical tests of certain marketing activities in a public policy context. In addition, most educator conferences regularly include sessions devoted to the discussion of public policy issues.

Finally, a review of the course offerings in the marketing departments of AACSB-accredited schools that offer a marketing related major or concentration was conducted. Thirty-eight of one hundred seventy-one marketing departments offered one or more public policy related courses. A personalized cover letter (explaining the purpose of the study and requesting a copy of the syllabus) and a postage-paid return envelope were mailed to the chairpersons of the marketing departments. Of the thirty-eight chairpersons contacted, a total of twenty-five replied for a response rate of sixty-six percent. Seven schools indicated that they no longer offered the course. Twenty syllabi were received from the remaining eighteen departments.

Content of Course Syllabi

Information derived from a content analysis of these syllabi was somewhat limited given the variability in the completeness of each syllabus. Some courses covered several topics while others were more limited in their scope. Social responsibility, ecological issues, marketing ethics, and government regulation were the topics most frequently covered in these courses. The importance of consumerism, labor relations, and the antitrust laws to marketing decisions were also studied in approximately twenty-five percent of the courses. The small sample of syllabi does not provide a consensus as to what should be covered in a course in marketing and public policy. However, the syllabi do provide some sense of the types of topics that might be covered in such a course.

CONCLUSION

The Fall 1984 edition of the Marketing Educator and the call for papers at this conference both featured neglected areas of marketing education. The study of marketing opportunities and development of strategies from public policies is one of these neglected areas. Marketing students need to be exposed in detail to this interaction before their marketing education is complete. Marketing educators should adapt their curriculum to ensure that this need is met.