

MARKET ECONOMY VS. MARKET SOCIETY: IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETING EDUCATION

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The existence of marketing education presumes the existence of a market economy. However, as modern societies begin to take on new characteristics in which not just the economy, but the social fabric, become market-based, the role of marketing education could conceivably broaden beyond the typical business-education context in which it is now ensconced. It thus follows that marketing educators must at least acknowledge the ways in which this phenomenon could affect our curricular dynamics. In short: does the emergence of a market society—in which the boundaries between economic function and social/civil function are blurred—change the role of marketing education?

Background and Foundation

Moral philosophers are beginning to recognize the emergence of the market society (e.g., Sandel, 2012) and the resulting conflicts between social norms and market norms. Manifestations of these conflicts include: paying for prison-cell upgrades, buying permits to hunt endangered species or to pollute, and subscribing to privileged access to health care.

Philosophers like Sandel are mainly focused on (1) describing the characteristics of a market society and (2) exploring the normative question of whether a market society *should* exist. These foci form a broad basis for marketing educators to explore the practical question: if we accept that at least some elements of a market society do exist, what are the implications for marketing education and the marketing curriculum?

Relevant Marketing Education Literature

Extending the discussion of the potential contribution of marketing to a liberal-arts education (Petkus, 2007), Lim and Svensson (2013) discuss the potential for marketing education to provide students with the skills and perspectives of social criticism; they propose that the marketing curriculum can complement, or even replace, traditional critical curricula like the arts and humanities. Rosa (2012) discusses the need for marketing education to evolve as the world's subsistence economies develop into market economies. To the extent that these developing market economies may also become market societies, a global focus appears to be appropriate.

Implications for the Marketing Curriculum

A first important implication of the emergence of a market-society focuses intrinsically to the marketing curriculum: marketing education needs to explore the moral implications of a marketing-dominated society. This would involve an infusion of moral philosophy, with consideration of moral justice, beyond the discussions of “ethical marketing practices” to the consideration of the moral justice implications of the extent to which marketing pervades society. Moral issues such as equality and corruption would be explored: can marketing phenomena be a social moral justice problem?

A second implication of the emergence of a market society is broader and more systemic: should marketing education come earlier and/or be more pervasive in the overall educational spectrum? Should marketing knowledge be part of a high school, or even middle school, curriculum? Following the “marketing as liberal-arts” idea—should marketing and other “business” courses be required for all, not just those heading into the field?

References Available upon Request