

AN EXPLORATORY EXAMINATION OF POTENTIAL
MARKETING APPLICATIONS FOR INTERPRETIVE
STRUCTURAL MODELING

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Interpretive Structural Modeling or I. S. M. is a systems methodology that has proven useful in situations characterized by many decisional elements with complex interactions among the elements. Sage [1977] contends that the interpretive structural process transforms unclear, poorly articulated mental models of systems into visible, well defined models useful for many purposes. Past I. S. M. applications range from Waller's [1975] applied research which aided a special education teacher in the development of optimal strategies for helping learning disabled children to the development of computer software applicable to the study of information-decision flows in a research and development environment [Hanson, 1979]. I. S. M. has its origins in and developed from a systematic iterative application of graph theory which results a directed graph representation of complex patteredns of a particular contextual relationship among a set of elements.

A possible marketing application, the development of a model of consumer choice criteria, was analyzed using I. S. M.. Although the proposed application was brief, no major impediments were discovered in expanding the scope of I. S. M. to include marketing applications. A need appears to exist for actual marketing research to test this hypothesis. The purpose of this paper is to introduce I. S. M. in the marketing literature, to elicit discussion about potential uses in marketing, and to explore in a tentative manner how this process may be useful in marketing theory development.

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