

GIVE US THAT OLD-TIME MARKETING RELIGION?

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ABSTRACT

A special session at the 1993 WMEA Conference demonstrated promise for debate about marketing instructional paradigms, but instead resulted in a unified responsive reading praising the accepted doctrine. This paper identifies the lack of empirical support regarding the educational efficacy of the 4P paradigm. An experimental investigation of competing instructional models is suggested. Experimentation should be based on measurement of the relative merit of competing instructional paradigms for producing knowledge, affect, and applied marketing skills.

INTRODUCTION

On its face, a special session which was conducted at the 1993 WMEA Conference in Santa Clara appeared promising for the development of lively debate regarding pedagogy for marketing fundamentals. The session featured major textbook authors William Pride and E. Jerome McCarthy, along with T. McTier Anderson. The intent of the session was to present an alternative to the standard 4P's managerial paradigm, with plenty of opportunity for rebuttal. Aply moderated by Ruth Taylor, who also presented a modification to the 4P's as an alternative, the session was well-attended and was successful in stimulating thought about theoretical models for delivering marketing fundamentals.

Two characteristics of the special session, however, were troubling. One disappointment was that neither proposed alternative was actually a meaningful departure from the predominant marketing concept and 4P's approach. Another characteristic of the session was that it was very much like a religious revival. Rather than critical and objective assessment of revisions suggested from new approaches, it seemed instead that any challenge to accepted doctrine was dismissed on general principle as inconsistent with the true faith without the assistance of any objective data. Figuratively, but almost literally, the preacher spoke and the people said Amen!

This casual observation is not intended to offend the faithful from any religious group. As a Christian, I

appreciate the role of encouragement in matters of faith and am amazed that those who give the greatest attention to critically evaluating the meaning of their faith as it relates to their behavioral practices are frequently depicted as being mindless adherents to religion.

It is possible that the same mistake is being made here. The group of marketing educators may be basing their support for the 4P paradigm on carefully evaluated, objective criteria. However, one would expect that more citation of evidence supporting the defense of their position would have been present in the meeting if this were the case. The single relevant defense offered was that the 4P Model is the most parsimonious, but there seemed to be little concern that empirical tests of effectiveness are absent.

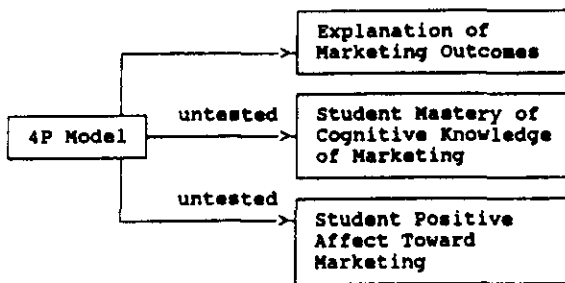
STRIKING THE CHAUTAUQUA TENT

Acceptance of the managerial marketing paradigm as the appropriate pedagogical approach for marketing fundamentals is currently an act of faith. To some degree it always will be. The point here is that additional empirical investigation is needed to support the level of emotional commitment to the 4P model that is common. There has been little empirical evaluation of the 4P's effectiveness for developing marketing practitioners when compared with alternative paradigms. This paper examines the current state of research for evaluating the pedagogical effectiveness of the 4P's model. A more robust model for examining the approach is presented along with a propositional inventory for future research. Also included is a discussion of promising alternative (or complementary) approaches to the study of marketing fundamentals.

Research emphasis has been placed on the examination of the validity of the marketing mix conception. For example, a representative question would be: Does the marketing mix model allow for adequate explanation of changes in marketing outcomes like sales, profit, market share, and/or customer satisfaction. Of course the veracity of a model is a necessary, but insufficient condition for proclaiming it an effective pedagogical tool. Additional concerns include the ability to transfer knowledge, affective motivational qualities, and

relevance to educational objectives for both the educational system and the end-users of the educational product. Review of the existing literature in marketing education yielded no study of the role of marketing paradigm use in explaining or predicting educational outcomes. The current state of the evaluation of the 4P model as a teaching tool is graphically presented in Figure 1.

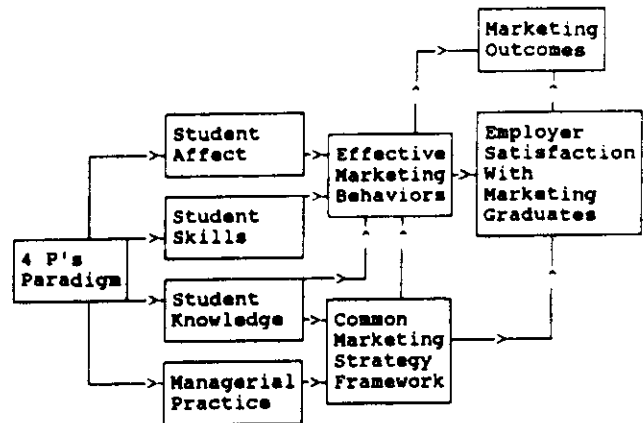
FIGURE 1



CONSTRUCTING A TEMPLE OF EMPIRICISM

Representation of the absence of empirical evaluation of the 4P's model as a teaching tool in Figure 1 also reveals the absence of a strategic orientation to the evaluation process. Examination of the 4P Model is tied to managerial objectives for its use, but not sufficiently tied to educational objectives. A more robust theoretical model which describes the process through which marketing knowledge and marketing skills are translated into marketing behavior, marketing outcomes, and end-user satisfaction is presented in Figure 2. The model is useful as a checklist for considering the level of empirical support generated to date for each of the relationships hypothesized. An inventory of propositions follows presentation of the model.

FIGURE 2



INVENTORY OF PROPOSITIONS

- H1 - Use of the 4P Model provides superior [to competing model (TCM)] student cognitive knowledge in marketing.
- H2 - The 4P Model is superior (TCM) for use in managerial practice.
- H3 - Use of the 4P Model provides superior (TCM) development of skills relevant to managerial practice.
- H4 - Use of the 4P Model contributes more favorably (TCM) to the development of positive student affect toward the study and practice of marketing.
- H5 - Use of the 4P Model contributes more favorably (TCM) to the development of student cognitive knowledge which is useful in applied settings.
- H6 - Use of the 4P Model contributes more favorably (TCM) to the development of desired marketing behaviors.
- H7 - Marketing behaviors produced as a result of instruction using the 4P Model correspond to better marketing outcomes than those behaviors produced as a result of instruction using a competing model.
- H8 - Employer (or other end user of marketing education) satisfaction with marketing behaviors and marketing outcomes generated through use of the 4P Model is higher than satisfaction with behaviors and outcomes generated through use of a competing model.

Current State of Research

The model and propositions derived from it are based on the applied purpose of marketing education. It is recognized that intrinsic educational purposes also exist, that the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake is meritorious. It also recognizes the contribution of three learning domains (Bloom et.al. 1956) -- cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The behavioral domain corresponds to Bloom's identification of a psychomotor domain which involves the translation of thought into action. For marketing, this goes well beyond the typical early childhood concerns of large motor skills, fine motor skills, and eye-hand coordination. It includes complex behavioral skills such as speaking, listening, and writing. Affective learning has been described as learning about the relationship between the student and the subject matter (Laughlin and Hite 1993).

A review of research in marketing education yielded no direct comparison of marketing paradigm choice with either educational efficacy or student application of marketing knowledge to business settings. The issues identified in the model shown in Figure 2 are all addressed in the marketing education literature, but examination typically is restricted to differences related to choice of teaching methods, environmental conditions, or the student group targeted. Some studies have investigated the generation of cognitive knowledge through the use of various teaching methods (Miles, Biggs, and Schubert 1986) (Butler, Markulis, and Strang 1988). Others have examined the need for skill development as important for applied marketing success (Arora and Stoner 1992) (Corbin and Glynn 1992) (Kelley 1992) (Urban 1993). Very recently, efforts have begun to examine the contribution of teaching method to the development of affective learning (Laughlin and Hite 1993) and the central role of the teaching of affect in marketing is recognized by Berry (1993).

Propositions questioning the relevance of the marketing education to managerial practice (similar to H5 above) are addressed in Kress and Wedell (1993) and Urban (1993). The former article stresses the importance of communication with business leaders to ensure educational relevance. The latter effectively calls the question regarding the ability of the prevailing paradigm to provide a complete foundation for applied educational relevance. In summary, there is little, or no, empirical evidence to support the contention that the 4P managerial paradigm is best for teaching marketing

fundamentals. Neither is there any empirical evidence to refute the notion, but questions about the universality of the approach are becoming common.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Given the absence of empirical research directly testing the effectiveness of the 4P managerial paradigm with regard to educational outcomes, the predominance and fervor with which the 4P Model is offered as the BEST for teaching marketing fundamentals is surprising. Marketing education researchers have focused their attention on examining teaching methods and have relied on general marketing research which examines the validity of the managerial paradigm as sufficient evidence for its acceptance as a universal instructional tool. It is proposed here that a more rigorous test is required to make this claim and that propositions identified earlier in this paper should be empirically tested for both the accepted 4P managerial paradigm and competing paradigms.

Quite obviously, the primary factor that has inhibited the advancement of this line of research is the absence of viable competing educational paradigms. Since the managerial model is a more parsimonious derivative of the functional approach, which is a successor to the commodity approach, little improvement has been realized from efforts to reassemble functions in different ways. The disappointing alternatives offered in the special session at the 1992 WMEA Conference referenced early in this paper are examples of this type of effort. Anderson's 7 C's simply carves the marketing functions in a different way than the 4P's. Taylor's 4P's and an S (service) simply expands on a component of the Product concept of the existing model. If either of these approaches are superior to the existing 4P's paradigm, it is incumbent on the authors to demonstrate that superiority, possibly using the model depicted in Figure 2 above.

The emerging discipline of Relationship Marketing (Kotler 1992) offers a competing paradigm which will provide an interesting challenge to existing notions about how best to educate marketing students. Already several questions have been raised about the success of current educational approaches and methods (Arora and Stoner 1992) (Berry 1993) (Gaedeke and Tootelian 1989) (November 1993) (Urban 1993). The primary area of shortcoming to be examined is in the area of marketing skill

development which is depicted in the model in Figure 2 and can be referenced in Proposition H3. In many marketing settings such as business-to-business and services marketing, it may also be more managerially relevant (Proposition H5) and therefore generate desirable marketing behaviors (Proposition H6) when combined with teaching methods that enhance behavioral learning.

Although the 4P's managerial marketing paradigm has since the early 1960's been omnipresent, questions raised recently about the success of marketing education raise serious doubt about its omnipotence. Despite its apparent weaknesses, many continue to zealously place complete reliance on its suitability. Insufficient attention has been given to empirical examination of the suitability of marketing paradigms for attaining desired educational objectives. A likely outcome of this kind of study is that the 4P's and competing paradigms need to be included for the development of curricula that address educational objectives in a complementary fashion.

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