

MARKETING AND THE IMAGES OF 1984: REFLECTIONS ON  
THE NEGLECT OF VALUE ISSUES IN MARKETING EDUCATION

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The novel, 1984, by George Orwell (1949) is used as the focal point for discussing the neglect of value issues and relationships in marketing education. Emphasis is placed on the adverse effects of neglect on the content and practice of marketing. Based on the limitations discussed it is concluded that the process of resolving value dilemmas should be given more attention in rethinking marketing education beyond 1984.

The year 1984 is an especially appropriate time to reflect on the images of the novel, 1984. But timeliness is not just the coincidence of calendar and title. The dramatic impact of the symbols and messages of 1984 are likely to receive more attention in the middle years of the 1980's than at any time since the chilling controversy surrounding its first reading in the 1950's. Thus, we have an opportune time to reflect on the meaning of 1984 for our times and for our discipline.

With respect to value issues in 1984, personal and social values are not just neglected, they are virtually nonexistent. One exception is the ruling oligarchy's ultimately perverse purpose of having power for the sake of power. There is, in the novel, no redeeming moral justification or human basis for social behavior and action. In that fictional world, such a condition accomplishes its scary and dramatic aims of showing life in its most inhumane forms. People are reduced to being less than pawns to be manipulated and coerced into thinking and acting like robots in human form.

In the real world of marketing and the domain of marketing education, value issues are, of course, not abandoned. But they are seriously neglected. Their neglect diminishes the moral consciousness and social concern regarding the consequences of marketing preferences, priorities and decisions. Social relationships are negatively affected because of the neglect of value issues. This necessarily includes the very market exchange relationships that marketing education is supposed to be all about. Because real people are involved in the outcomes of market transactions, the harm of neglecting value issues is real and often substantial. By exploring some of the images of the novel and comparing them with their actual or symbolic extensions in the real world of marketing, it should be possible to provide a perspective on the place of value issues and relationships in marketing education and practice.

IMAGES AND CHALLENGES OF 1984

"Negative utopia" is used to characterize the world of 1984. It offers some provocative images and important challenges regarding marketing and society relationships. Some comparative perspectives on the images are outlined in Exhibit 1. The point to be made in the comparisons is that in marketing practice, if not in what is taught, methods, messages and influences in the marketplace do parallel the images presented in 1984. The most vivid illustrations are likely to be associated with the criticisms of advertising and promotional aspects of marketing in the form of sexual imagery and subliminal seduction (Key 1973, 1976); Labeling clutter, and distorted product claims (Schrank 1977).

Exhibit 1  
Perspectives of 1984 and Contrasts  
in the U.S. Marketing System

<u>Elements/ Characteristics</u>	<u>Perspectives and Contrasts</u>
VALUES	<u>1984</u> Autocratic, oligarchic, sadistic
	Marketing System Democratic, pluralistic, hedonistic
DOMINANT PROCESS	<u>1984</u> Power for the sake of power
	USMS Consumption for the sake of satisfaction
NATURE OF THE SYSTEM	<u>1984</u> Centralized, bureaucratic, despotic, virtually closed
	USMS Decentralized, diverse, dynamic, relatively open
MECHANISMS OF CONTROL	<u>1984</u> Coercion through pain, terror and intimidation; exploitation of people's interest in avoiding pain; in surviving
	USMS Seduction through pleasure and the promise of satisfaction; exploitation of people's desires and interest in experiencing variety, ego-satisfaction, etc.
ILLUSTRATIVE USES OF TECHNOLOGY	<u>1984</u> Telescreen, speakwrite, and pneumatic tubes for message transfer
	USMS Television monitors; personal computers with voice synthesizers; portable videotex systems; home and telephone robots
ILLUSTRATIVE USES OF COMMUNICATIONS	<u>1984</u> Government propaganda, including explicit contradictions and absurd beliefs; denial of objective reality
	USMS Commercial propaganda (advertising) puffery and pressure selling; distortion of objective reality through imagery, weasel words
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS	<u>1984</u> Dehumanized existence; virtual absence of privacy, trust, friendships and love
	USMS Intrusions on privacy through TV monitoring; conformity in responses to mass merchandising

Fundamentally, the context and intended effects of the images of 1984 and the marketing system are diametrically opposed. For example, desire is celebrated in our marketing system. It is officially banished in 1984. Desire (not lust) is thoughtcrime, 65 to use Newspeak--the language of 1984. There, sex is

nothing but a physical act. By contrast, much of advertising as a part of marketing, uses sex extensively as part of messages and visual presentations to make products more attractive and marketable.

There are also several product comparisons that can be made:

In 1984	In Contemporary Marketing
"rubbish newspapers containing sport, crime, and astrology"	"sensational checkout stand papers and magazines"
"sensational five-cent novelettes"	"generic romance novels"
"films oozing with sex-- <u>Pornosec</u> " (in <u>Newspeak</u> )	"X Rated films and adult video"
"sentimental songs composed by computer"	"computerized music"

Lest it be inferred that only frivolous examples exist, there are also issues related to product hazards, environmental pollution and other damaging results from market action guided on short-run, micro-oriented policies that neglect social costs and societal consequences of marketing. Such topics are given serious attention in the literature of macro- and ecological marketing as well as consumerism.

Consider, for example, that about 28,000 Americans are killed each year in consumer-product related accidents. Another three million are injured. About 125,000 children are injured each year in accidents associated with toys. (USA Today, 11/21/83, p. 11A; Nielsen 1979, p. 128). Even at minimal figures for the economic and social losses involved, the amounts are substantial.

Damage from various forms of pollution are also well known and need not be described here. Also relevant are contemporary uses and abuses of information technology; the power to influence and manipulate aspects of behavior through propaganda; and other uses of marketing technology which have undesirable effects on consumers and society as a whole. To neglect the value issues and dilemmas posed by such results of applications of marketing technology clearly reflects a diminished moral consciousness and disregard for externalities involved in marketing and consumption-related activities. Unfortunately, very little is offered in the way of marketing education to confront value issues and dilemmas which often are inherent in marketing decisions. Little opportunity is provided even for the few students who might elect to take advantage of such study.

#### IDENTIFYING VALUE ORIENTATIONS IN MARKETING

The extent of neglect of value orientations in marketing education is further reflected in the fact that there is no generally accepted framework for even classifying value issues and relationships. Except for social responsibility questions, value issues seem to be avoided, even in many discussions of the future directions for marketing (Fisk, Arndt and Grønhaug 1978; Greyser 1980; Lindgren, Berry and Kehoe 1982; and Wilson and Darley 1982).

A framework for identifying the broad outlines of value orientations is summarized in Exhibit 2.

It should be recognized that value orientations are likely to be implicitly expressed in the borrowing that is done from the various disciplines that provide the main conceptual foundations of marketing. Given the applied nature of the subject, there is a strong pragmatic flavor to most of the content of marketing.

Exhibit 2  
Outline of Dominant Value Orientations in Marketing

	Explicit Value Content	Methods and Themes of Analysis	Theoretical Orientation	Topics and Areas of Specialization
POSITIVISTS & PRAGMATISTS	Low; explicitly value-free	Information technology for management and competitive efficiency; dominance of short-run financial results	Micro-analytic, descriptive and normative decision rules	Resource allocation and management strategy; most educators in the managerial and modeling tradition
BEHAVIORALISTS & FUNCTIONALISTS	General acceptance of the value-free tradition	Behavioral and management science technology for guiding competitive behavior	Micro-analytic, descriptive, heuristic and varied decision rules	Consumer behavior, marketing mix policies and decisions; academic mainstream of marketing
INSTITUTIONALISTS & ENVIRONMENTALISTS	Highly varied with strong public policy or prescriptive bias	Adaptation of methods from the policy sciences; search for regulatory and control mechanisms	Combines micro- and macro-analytic approaches; prescriptive decision rules	Marketing channels, public policy; industry policy applications of marketing
HUMANISTS & MORALISTS	High; explicitly value-focused; strong influence of situation ethics	Ethics, social responsibility, equity, social efficiency and environmental impact	Macro-analytic, descriptive/prescriptive decision rules	Marketing and society relationships; ecological marketing; social marketing

A prevailing view is that much like economics (the original science of markets), marketing is also largely value free. But virtually all of the frameworks except the one embraced by humanists and moralists lean towards an avoidance of value issues and relationships as integral parts of marketing analysis. Thus, direct consideration of value issues and relationships is left largely to priests, philosophers and professors outside the managerial and behavioral mainstream of marketing.

#### FURTHER REFLECTIONS ON THE NEGLECT OF VALUE ISSUES IN MARKETING

In examining the content and purposes of marketing there are several logical and practical limitations that result from the neglect of value issues and relationships. The following are illustrative.

1. There are fallacies in the notion of value-free marketing.
2. Social concerns are neglected in the microanalytic bias of marketing.

3. Preoccupation with techniques and measurement overshadows concern for value issues and relationships.
4. Irresponsibility in the use of marketing technology or other sources of power is less likely to be admonished or even confronted on a systematic basis.
5. Externalities are generally excluded from consideration in marketing decisions and activities.
6. Neglect of value issues detracts from efforts to professionalize marketing.

Each statement is discussed briefly.

The proposition that it is fallacious to regard marketing as a value-free discipline stems from its basic operational purpose--preference implementation in the market system. That is, tastes, preferences, perceptions, feelings and the innermost workings of the mind are the targets of marketing knowledge and technology. The fact that people may be cajoled, badgered and induced through fear and anxiety (as well as through less controversial means) to consume in certain ways unavoidably places marketing in a value-focused posture as a psychosocial process. Persuasion and commercial propaganda often outweigh information as factual presentations of what is offered in the marketplace. Even choice and satisfaction are likely to be narrowly conceived as short-term pleasure rather than as long-term well-being. Hence, for reasons of intellect and in the consumer interest, value issues deserve to be an integral part of marketing education.

The microanalytic bias of marketing stems in large part from its evolution as the ideas, tools and techniques for managing aspects of supply and demand. Yet the social context and consequences of their application are often disregarded. Because the micro aspects are more easily measured and managed, they are given a higher order of importance. But in the absence of a fully recognized macro dimension, we have an incomplete account of the effects of marketing activities beyond the level of the individual consumer or the firm and the market(s) that it serves. Marketing education generally has not kept up with the emergence of value dilemmas associated with materials recycling, conservation and the rate of usage of exhaustible resources.

As implied in the preceding statement there is a decided imbalance in the attention given to micro and macro aspects of the discipline. Such imbalance carries with it risks, costs and other consequences associated with sustaining direction and outcomes that are not guided by evaluations and knowledge of how well marketing education is serving long-term societal well-being.

Judgments as to what are responsible and irresponsible uses of marketing power require some set of social values. To the extent that resolving value dilemmas is considered to be unimportant or is neglected for other reasons, the basis on which responsibilities are assessed and whether they are met are likely to remain neglected as well. Through default and neglect, irresponsibility in the uses of market power becomes mainly the concern of those outside of marketing (e.g., regulators, critics, etc.). In such a situation marketing as a discipline is being defined as lacking a sound and systematic basis of determining and following its own desired level of social concern and responsibility.

Another major limitation of the several propositions noted on the neglect of value issues is expressed in the notion that externalities (all social

costs and second-order effects from marketplace decisions and activities) can be properly excluded from any really influential place in marketing analysis and education. Such concerns properly fall within macro-marketing. But this aspect of the discipline is still in its formative stages. Their exclusion leaves out a host of issues regarding ecological influences, health outcomes as well as long-term societal impacts of marketing. As a result marketing analysis and education are left without well-developed foundations and frameworks for the long-term guidance of the marketing system (or even sustainable and long-term system maintenance)! Thus, when either miracles or monsters are introduced into the marketplace, marketing education currently has little to offer regarding efforts and means to minimize their unintended consequences. Through neglect, then, marketing education is perpetuating the exposure of the economy and society to sometimes costly and possibly avoidable risks and hazards. This is not a condition that an aspiring applied social science discipline can proudly uphold.

Since all professions and professional disciplines give some formal attention and academic importance to value issues (as in ethics of practice, legal obligations to clients, etc.), their neglect in marketing education detracts from efforts to professionalize marketing. While codes of practice in marketing research and advertising are sometimes mentioned in teaching marketing as a discipline, omission or inattention are far more common responses. Thus, to elevate value issues and relationships to a place of greater importance could be part of a move to really elevate the discipline as part of professional management studies. Unless and until this occurs, with greater force and frequency, marketing educators (as mentors and masters of the discipline) can be cast in the roles of advocates and apologists for much that is undesirable and unprofessional in marketing.

#### CLARIFYING AND RESOLVING VALUE ISSUES

In developing an approach to clarifying and resolving value issues, the process that is used for the tasks should be the focal point of analysis. As marketing educators our role is to assist students in acquiring the skills to undertake and apply such a process. A framework for approaching the task is presented in Exhibit 3. The basic elements of the framework are based primarily on the work of Tymchuk (1982).

#### Exhibit 3 Decision Criteria and a Process for Clarifying/Resolving Value Issues

##### Decision Criteria

- . COSTS and BENEFITS
- . RISKS and GAINS
- . TIME/EFFORT and RESULTS
- . DIRECT/INDIRECT EFFECTS
- . INTENDED/UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES
- . SHORT-TERM/LONG-TERM EFFECTS
- . OTHER WHAT-IF CONSIDERATIONS

##### Steps in the Process

1. Identify important parameters of the situation.
2. Determine the most influential issues involved.
3. Describe the major constraints and the manner in which they will affect likely outcomes.
4. Specify ideal or optimum outcomes (and accompanying decision rules).
5. Describe feasible alternatives or options.
6. Weight the probability of outcomes (consider uncertainty, unknowns).
7. Enumerate the consequences of outcomes.
8. Provide some manner of review and follow-up.