

A Practitioner's Perspective of Marketing Theory Evolution

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ABSTRACT

The study seeks to explore the history of marketing as a practice and the development of marketing as an academic discipline. The research is set out to decide whether or not marketing theory empowers young marketing practitioners. This literature review and integrative synthesis study considers the impact that neoliberal modes of governance have had on the academic discipline of marketing. The literature synthesis revealed that marketing was built as a discipline at the turn of the 20th century when universities operated under an academic paradigm where faculty were given academic freedom and autonomy. These ideals helped form the professional identity of the academic prior to the shift toward neoliberalism. Marketing is moving toward defining its place in academics as a distinct discipline—and not as a branch of economics. Finally, with a new definition of marketing, the study concludes that marketing has not yet developed an overarching theory—nor has it been able to construct a definition that is not dynamically dependent on economic theory.

KEYWORDS

Big Data, Integrative Synthesis, Macro Marketing Theory, Market-Driven Ethics, Neoliberalism, New Definition of Marketing, Qualitative Literature Review

1. INTRODUCTION

Marketing is a relatively young academic discipline. The first lectures in this field were delivered at American universities in the 1890s; interest in the subject grew at the turn of the century when the discipline became established within the academy as evidenced by the introduction of the first marketing courses in 1902 (Plank & Canedy III, 1989; Baker & Saren, 2010; Berghoff et al., 2012). Also, the advancement of marketing as a formal academic discipline is predated by the study of marketing thought—which originated within firms in the late 1800s and was successfully practiced in the first branded goods markets by managers and marketing experts (many of them had no formal training) (Baker & Saren, 2010; Berghoff et al., 2012).

Pragmatic approaches dominated the academic discipline initially—with marketing “experts” coming from the practice—where intuition and experience were valued over theory—which was in many cases considered irrelevant (Carson & McCartan-Quinn, 1995). Many practitioners at the time viewed marketing as an “art” or “craft”. Veteran marketing practitioners often held the belief that experience, intuition, and common-sense—tools that developed through practice over time were the necessary components for successful marketing (Carson & McCartan-Quinn, 1995). Arons (2011) credits these early marketing practitioners working at large companies including Procter and Gamble, General Foods, and Unilever with bringing brand management to marketing; it was “brand managers”

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who were responsible to give a new product an identity—distinguishing it from similar offerings marketed by competitors. Branding was developed as a tactical response to the improved quality of products being made by less established firms seeking entry into the marketplace (Arons, 2011).

The fact that brands created during the heyday of Madison Avenue have endured and remained successful today—examples include, Tide, Kraft, Lipton, and Coca-Cola—are evidence of the power of branding (Arons, 2011). The formula for “winning” in the marketplace at the time, was to understand and target the consumer through getting the “brand mix” right; this involved positioning the brand in the market with the best logo, price, packaging, advertising, and promotions (Arons, 2011). The brand mix ensured that the brand offered more than just function; there was an emotional component associated with owning the item—marketing sold a feeling or belief that bonded the customer to the product, often inducing a sense of trust (Arons, 2011).

Throughout the 50s and 60s, college-trained marketing experts were increasingly sought out by companies as more and more branded goods including fresh and packaged agricultural products were entering the marketplace (Berghoff et al., 2012). Marketing, as a growing academic field, began seeking to define itself; a process which would include developing theories of marketing to ground the field foundationally (Berghoff et al., 2012). While marketing was in the throes of its existential crisis of becoming a discipline within the academy, the debate between experts with backgrounds in marketing thought (practitioners), and those with formal academic backgrounds became focused on whether or not the foundation of marketing as an academic discipline should be grounded in the social sciences if not the hard sciences, or whether marketing was science at all (Buzzell, 1963). Experts with managerial backgrounds asserted their perspective that marketing—while it might make use of scientific principles to measure the effectiveness of a given approach or campaign, was foundationally vocational—more aligned with engineering and medicine than with positivist fields such as physics (Taylor, 1965; Saren, 2010). Even as this debate continues, the issue of Big Data rendering theory and science obsolete with regard to marketing presents another dimension to the argument over whether there is any need for marketing theory (Madsbjerg & Rasmussen, 2013; Kitchin, 2014; Sætra, 2018). This literature search and synthesis will address the question of whether or not marketing theory has a place in the academic discipline of marketing today, or whether it is indeed obsolete. The literature review and integrative synthesis will focus on answering the research question of whether modern-day marketing theory empowers young practitioners.

The paper’s remaining part is sorted as such: 2nd section demonstrates the literature review on marketing theory; 3rd section illustrates materials and methods; discussion on marketing theory is stated in the 4th section; and, this research work is concluded with future direction in the 5th section.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Marketing Theory: Definition of Marketing

Before assessing the literature regarding the historic and current state of marketing theory, the ongoing and related issue of defining “marketing” should be discussed. Although the definitions change in general ways that reflect the socio-political and economic climate of the times, there is no universally believed global definition of marketing and there never has been (Shultz, 2007; Murphy, 2010; Brunswick, 2014). Shultz (2007) critiques two evolved definitions and descriptions of marketing as presented by the American Marketing Association (AMA) in 2004 and revised in 2007.

The 2004 definition is as follows: “Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders.” The 2007 working definition is as follows: “Marketing is the activity, conducted by organizations and individuals, that operates through a set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging

market offerings that have value for customers, clients, marketers, and society at large” (Shultz, 2007, p. 293).

There were numerous concerns regarding the 2004 definition. The 2004 definition characterized marketing as excessively narrow in its domain as well as perception was prominent amongst these concerns. Stating marketing as an “organizational function and a set of processes” was not accepted by some people since it is excluded from the domain of marketing with regard to its systematic as well as aggregative aspects. For any definition, it is essential to define marketing in a way that it should capture all the constituents involved in marketing. An inclusive marketing definition was also regarded vital rendering the substantial historical body of academic marketing scholarship that concentrated on marketing systems, as well as the current scholarship being undertaken by means of researchers studying an assortment of elements of the effects of marketing in society. Although the scope of the revised definition is expanded to include an acknowledgment that market transactions “benefit”, or should benefit society, Shultz (2007) asserts that these definitions remain largely microeconomic—reflecting the reductive, atomistic, assumption of humans as autonomous, asocial market actors, dispassionately pursuing their own needs and desires with the goal of acquiring more at a lower cost (Varey, 2010). This is the neoliberal model for market transactions that has brought about class bifurcation as well as the continual obliteration of environmental, political, as well as social systems throughout the world because of the intensification of the capitalistic viciousness in opposition to the bodies (Graeber, 2015; Zwick, 2018).

2.2 Early Marketing Theory: Wroe Alderson

Shortly after the first classes in marketing were introduced in American universities, Alderson & Cox (1948) proposed the need for a theory of marketing—in part to address the many difficulties that marketing men face when practicing in areas where public and private policies intersect. The intention of the authors was to present some basic problems faced by practitioners, for consideration by the academic and marketing thought communities (Alderson & Cox, 1948). The first situation of concern that the authors presented was:

Problems of Price Discrimination-Difference in the prices competing buyers pay for goods bought from a common supplier or in the prices they receive from a common buyer raise critical problems of managerial and public policy. Here, as in other aspects of economic life, we come up against the twentieth century’s version of an ancient problem—that of the just or fair price (p.3).

Wroe Alderson based many of his marketing theories on the functionalist paradigm—also known as structural functionalism—which takes a systems view of societies—the perspective is similar to looking at biosystems, organisms, or ecosystems—the society is viewed as a whole with many integrated social subsystems operating synchronously to maintain healthy, functioning, and harmonious equilibrium (Wooliscroft et al, 2006). Equilibrium, in this case, is a metaphor for maintaining social order by consensus rather than force (O’Sullivan et al., 1983; Wooliscroft et al, 2006).

2.3 Marketing Theory: Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an ideology that has led to the restructuring of institutions, and the transfer of the commons to the private sector (Harvey, 2005; Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015). This is accomplished by creating public-private enterprises that are intertwined below the surface by a vast mycelium connecting private individuals involved in business and non-governmental non-profit organizations, with government actors who have been entrusted with overseeing state power (Harvey, 2005; Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015).

Microeconomic definitions of marketing reflect the neoliberal model that defines the market as the producer of social values both locally and globally (Harvey, 2005; Shultz, 2007; Birch & Siemiatycki, 2015). Shultz (2007) notes that the 2004 definition of marketing was not completely accepted by the American Marketing Association (AMA) membership, or by other important global marketing associations. He suggested a more macroeconomic definition for marketing that would

be in keeping with today's global perspective—as well as being consistent with the historic roots of marketing which viewed the discipline with respect to larger societal concerns:

Marketing is a form of constructive engagement—a societal function and a systemic set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer and societal relationships in ways that benefit local and global stakeholders of these processes (Shultz, 2007, p.293).

The definition is given by Shultz clearly reflects the need for the imposition of an explicit marketing ethic. Early marketing theories struggled to define marketing from a sociological, psychological, and economic perspective; many theories considered the human element of the market and rejected the idea that unregulated market forces would drive public-private initiatives in a way that would produce the best, most ethical, and fair social conditions for the greatest number of people (Ferrell et al, 2013).

2.4 The Failure of Marketing to Obtain a General Theory

The quest for a general Marketing theory dates back to an article published in the October 1948 volume of the *Journal of Marketing* by Wroe Alderson and Reavis Cox entitled, “Towards a theory of Marketing”. The academic discipline was in its infancy at the time the article was published—and the firm-based schools of marketing thought were developing highly successful practices of advertising and branding products—many of these brands remain on the market today (Bastos & Levy, 2012). Despite the success of these firm-based marketing teams, the newly emerging academic marketing community gave little notice to “branding” (Price, 2010; Bastos & Levy, 2012).

The academic community viewed advertising, retailing, branding, and promotion, etc., as fragmented sub-divisions of marketing that do not readily lend themselves to scientific analysis in the absence of a model that could theoretically postulate the relationships between them (Shaw, 2014). Marketing managers may have fixated on one or more of these fragmented entities; but the academy was more interested in understanding the whole of marketing through building a general theory that might properly model the physical, sociological, psychological, and other aspects of marketing under a scientifically derived and empirically testable theory (Shaw, 2014).

This study is a literature review that starts from the question of whether marketing theory empowers young practitioners. The question is based on the need to examine the temporal gap in the marketing literature with regard to theoretical Marketing papers—particularly macro-marketing theory—that has existed from around the time of influential marketing theorist, Roe Alderson's untimely death in 1965 until the late 80s (Scherer, 1980). During the interim, Marketers relied on neoliberal micro-science and empirical measurements of performance indicators, as well as data mining for gaining an understanding of marketing—discarding academic macro-modeling and theory (Wooliscroft et al, 2006). The recent revival of interest in macro-marketing theory has suggested a change from short-term to long-term concepts of what the best outcome for most people might look like when the initial assumption of the invisible hand that is the basis of the free-market theory is questioned (Baker & Saren, 2010). Theorists are proposing that the implicit ethic of the invisible hand might be replaced with an explicit ethic that does not limit the stakeholder interests to those specifically involved in a given market transaction (Baker & Saren, 2010). Taking all of the above into consideration, this research attempts to address: Does marketing theory empower young practitioners? Correspondingly, this research attempts to investigate the gap in macro-theory and the revival of macromarketing theory as it relates to marketing practitioners.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study is a qualitative literature review and integrative synthesis which includes literature that draws from both qualitative and quantitative research studies. Sampling is purposive and iterative. The synthesis is narrative and focuses on the research question—whether or not marketing theory

empowers young practitioners. The purpose of the study is to bring to light the historic arguments regarding whether marketing is best defined from a vocational perspective that values experience, mentoring, intuition, and common sense, as opposed to an academic field of science that values positivism. In addition, the review and synthesis examine more recent work which questions the need for marketing theory in light of the burgeoning role of Big Data in determining marketing strategies through empiricism in the 21st century.

The selected studies were mostly from peer-reviewed papers or collections of works in edited books containing peer-reviewed references. Several articles were taken from credible news sources. Marketing research is suited to cross-disciplinary exchange of ideas—and utilizes concepts and theories from the social and behavioral sciences, economics, business, and the social sciences (Lazer & Kelley, 1960). A keyword search was first used as input to several search engines and databases viz. Web of Science, Elsevier, Proquest, Ebsco, Springer, Emerald, etc. Studies were originally retrieved and read, or discarded if the abstract indicated that the research was outside the scope of the inquiry; analysis of the texts generated further search terms that resulted from the researcher's reflection on initial readings. The process was inductive and sampling was iterative; internal references and cross-references were also used when they helped further illuminate ideas and concepts related to the research question as they arose.

The qualitative review and evidence synthesis are often defined as including *only* qualitative literature studies (Grant & Booth, 2009). However, in complex cases, quantitative studies are used in a general sense (they have not been considered for the purpose of evidence-based confirmation of statistical relevance, i.e. they are “qualitised” (Snyder, 2019). Also, Ames, Glenton & Lewin (2019) point out that in a qualitative synthesis, the inclusion of an excessive number of studies can undermine the ability to achieve a meaningful analysis of a large body of work. Purposive sampling of the literature for inclusion in the synthesis provides a means of narrowing the sample used to include a manageable amount of data.

Snyder (2019) indicates that integrative review and synthesis are often employed when studying a broad, complex, topic that has been the subject of multiple interpretations from diverse groups. Since the research question involves the nature of marketing as an academic discipline —particularly as it regards whether or not there is a need for marketing theory, the choice of a qualitative, integrative literature review and synthesis is appropriate for this study. Snyder (2019) classifies the various types of literature reviews based on their characteristics and intended purpose as exhibited in Table 1.

Table 1. Approaches to literature reviews

Approach	Systemic	Semi-Systemic	Integrative
Typical purpose	Synthesize and compare evidence	Overview research area and track development over time	Critique and synthesize
Research questions	Specific	Broad	Narrow or broad
Search Strategy	Systemic	May or may not be systemic	Usually not systemic
Sample characteristics	Quantitative articles	Research articles	Research articles, books, and other published texts
Analysis and evaluation	Quantitative	Quantitative / Qualitative	Qualitative
Examples of contribution	Evidence of effect. Inform policy and practice	State of knowledge Themes in literature Historical overview Research agenda Theoretical model	Taxonomy or classification Theoretical model or framework

From (Snyder, 2019, p. 334).

The disagreement among scholars and practitioners on the need for a general theory has been ongoing since marketing became established as a discipline within the academy. There are two different schools of marketing; the school of marketing thought (originating from practitioners in firms), and marketing theory (originating from the academic discipline—where there is still internal debate over whether or not marketing is a science) (Baker & Saren, 2010). In addition, there is further complexity surrounding the research question; the rise of Big Data has brought marketing theory to the forefront. The reason for this statement is that the data analytics in the Big Data domain turns out to be the successful marketing strategy by means of the utilization of target advertisement targeted in the directions of manifold segments of customers—with some scholars positing that Big Data has made marketing theory obsolete (Madsbjerg & Rasmussen, 2013; Kitchin, 2014; Sætra, 2018). The synthesis of qualitative literature can be helpful in research studies where the topic is complex; there are many approaches that can be used — although the approaches to synthesis should be internally consistent within the literature if possible (Ring et al., 2011).

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Marketing Theory: Academics and Practitioners

It has been over 70 years since Alderson & Cox (1948) first invited the readers and audience of the *Journal of Marketing* to come together as a community and build a general theory of Marketing, which could be tested. There has been no general theory of Marketing to date. Indeed, the field remains divided on whether or not to continue with efforts to construct one (Shaw, 2014; Madsbjerg & Rasmussen, 2013; Kitchin, 2014; Sætra, 2018). Resistance to continuing may be attributable in part to the disconnect between vocational marketers and academic marketing researchers in their respective views of what marketing is and should be (Alderson & Cox, 1948; Taylor, 1965; Carson & McCartan-Quinn, 1995; Ferrell et al, 2013).

Shaw (2014) discussed the dismissive attitudes of academics toward the firm-trained marketers—giving an example of what he describes as “underdeveloped conceptualization” of contributions from practicing marketers as evidenced by an assertion made by the University of North Carolina Marketing professor, Edmund Brown (1925), who wrote:

The term brand is often used as synonymous with trade-mark, although it does not always have the same significance. The trademark implies an exclusive property right. The brand, on the other hand, maybe merely a label describing a particular variety and grade of goods (Brown, 1925, p. 422).

The main difference between brand name and trademark is that brand name is a name (made of words and phrases) e.g. McDonalds, Coca-Cola etc, whilst a trademark can well be a name, logo, slogan, or their combination that legally signifies the business e.g. the McDonalds golden arches, the Microsoft Windows startup sound, the brown colour in the UPS logo, and the shape of the glass Coca-Cola bottle. The marketing practitioner can be just as dismissive of academic knowledge and claims as Brown (1925) was of the highly successful process of branding. In a study done on the acceptance of marketing theory, small business owners/managers were queried about their views on theory—responses included remarks about not having time for “jargon-ridden columns” by experts—further dismissive responses included remarks indicating that some respondents were not at all interested in theory and that theory was “usurping practice” (Wills et al., 1984).

Unfortunately, the rift between academia and the schools of marketing thought regarding the value of marketing theory remains (Berghoff in Berghoff et al., 2012). Moreover, Shaw (2014) contends that the discipline of Marketing continues to face an identity crisis. The field is fragmented to the degree that there still is not a single, agreed-upon global definition of Marketing (Lancaster & Reynolds, 2005). The definitions that are given continue to change over time (Brunswick, 2014). The changes reflect the socio-economic and political changes that have taken place in the United States, and globally, over the interim. Contextually, in 1963, Martin Luther King delivered his iconic speech “I Have a

Dream”, and in 1964, the Civil Rights Act was signed that outlawed the discrimination centered on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. The United States was a different place at that time. It wasn’t until the 1970s that brands commenced marketing to African American consumers.

Marketing theory (small theories) have been important for untangling many of the complexities involved in understanding markets; however, there is still no overarching general theory of marketing that would be amenable to empirical testing (Berghoff et al., 2012; Shaw, 2014). There are many smaller, sub-theories that are not generalizable and frequently contradict predictions generated by other sub-theories that use different approaches (Shaw, 2014; Berghoff et al., 2012). (Berghoff et al., 2012) point out, even the highly respected marketing men from the schools of marketing thought, who have had great success operating “from gut instinct”, were often only successful in specific markets.

4.2 Marketing Theory: Questioning the Dominant Social Paradigm

At present, neither theoretical academic approaches nor pragmatic intuitive approaches based on experience, have led to the establishment of robust, marketing structures that remain stable over time (Berghoff et al., 2012). The inability to develop a general theoretical model for marketing is likely due to the overwhelming number of predictor variables that would be needed; the system is non-linear, and—although it is assumed that humans behave rationally, in neoliberal economic models—human behaviour is inherently irrational (Ariely, 2008). Such irrational behaviour of humans affects the logical tightness of the theoretical model of marketing, which brings about the optimization of the predictions or presumptions of the humans’ extreme rational behaviour. A large number of predictor variables as well as nonlinearity of the system make the development a tedious procedure since they rely on the rational behaviour of humans. As a result, it may be necessary to consider the validity of the current dominant social paradigm that both approaches adhere to.

Economic science provided the foundation for the emergence of marketing as well as some of the urgency. Economics in its pure science form was lacking in the practical potency required by commerce and industry at the turn of the century (Vargo & Morgan, 2005, p.45).

4.3 Marketing Theory, Empowerment, and the Failure of Market-driven Ethics

Economic theory is serving implicitly as the underpinning for marketing theory created by marketing academics—an economic theory also provides the fundamental principles for how marketing is practiced (Kotler, 2015; Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). The question with regard to marketing today is: “are unregulated economic markets *really* the most efficient, and ethical way to arrange transaction exchanges between people and institutions that bring the greatest good to the most people?” It is beyond the scope of this paper to include an extensive list of evidence to conclude that the “implicit ethics” provided by the *invisible hand* have failed to bring wellbeing to most people in the most efficient manner, at the least cost. The audience is no doubt painfully familiar with the many large debacles of the 20th century having global reach; examples include—Enron, the global financial crisis of 2008, the Exxon Valdez, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, and the explosion and sinking of the Deepwater Horizon. This list does not begin to examine global problems such as poverty and conflict that have been exacerbated by the markets (Karnani, 2017).

Marketing played a role in all of these disasters. Marketing guru, Philip Kotler declares that the role marketing played and continues to play is that of an enabler because the marketing of a product involves processes like setting target customers and the creation of a marketing mix that would be attractive to that customer segment, which enhances the capitalistic economy—marketing is the enabler of Capitalism. It is the Engine of Capitalism. Without marketing, capitalism would collapse (Kotler, 2015).

4.4 Big Data, Empiricism, and the Future of Theory

The stochastic power of Big Data analytics to find correlation by brute force has led to the bold assertion that the ability to store, access, and process (using stochastic ensemble pattern recognition

algorithms), petabyte data sets to reveal correlations within them, will signal the end of theoretical science (Kitchin, 2014). Chris Anderson, former editor-in-chief at Wired magazine made the statement in 2008:

Correlation supersedes causation, and science can advance even without coherent models and unified theories (Anderson, 2008).

Anderson expanded on his claim stating that the scientific method would soon be obsolete—Big Data can be empirically analyzed to produce knowledge about complex phenomena that will provide the researcher insight and meaning (Kitchin, 2014). The issue here is that correlation is not causation as correlation can merely be utilized to make a prediction. However, it can't tell the fundamental cause of the relationship. Further, there is an increase in correlations found in large data sets; correlation increases as the number of points, N , increases since arbitrarily generated databases have a large quantity of similar sort of data. This brought about the correlation augments with number of points N and many of these correlations will be spurious or irrelevant (Calude & Longo, 2016). Essentially Big Data stochastic solutions that seek correlation with no underlying model to explore causation—could be construed as models that strip meaning from the data by removing the contextual information that is usually provided by theory from the analysis (Calude & Longo, 2016).

While it is early in the process, many marketing researchers from both the schools of marketing thought and academia are turning their attention to the dominant societal paradigm—that the best outcomes for society will come by way of the invisible hand of the market (Kotler, 2015; Lim, 2015; Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). Also, marketing's struggle for an identity may very well be related to its ties to economics. Without a clear identity, the discipline will remain disempowered—or as Kotler (2015) asserts—"a branch of economics".

4.5 Marketing Theory: Considering What It Might Become

Marketing is starting to focus less on what it is, and more on what it might become (Tapp & Hughes, 2008; Lim, 2015; Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). If successful, marketers may take on a leadership role and reclaim the creative power to construct marketing theories, if they chose to, which have an explicit ethic that can guide their discipline, inform their market research, and clarify the constraints under which they, as marketers, choose to practice. Developing a general marketing theory based on an explicit ethic or founding principles and associated actions would allow marketing academics and practitioners themselves—to define their professional identity, and their discipline (Tapp & Hughes, 2008; Lim, 2015; Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). In essence; such actions would empower both academic marketers and practicing marketers. Although they are not in place today, these theories appear to be "works in progress".

Recently, the consensus among scientists is that global climate change and environmental degradation are critical issues that must be addressed quickly or the consequences will be devastating—eventually leading to the end of the human species. Global climate change and environmental degradation are deemed important issues because they have a negative effect on marketing which could be direct or indirect. For instance, a beverage firm's marketing is influenced by water scarcity. Corporate social responsibility is developed by individuals and organizations engaged in marketing because of such impact. In light of these ominous forecasts, Hurth & Whittlesea (2017) have examined 2 fundamental paradigms of current marketing theory (Make-and-Sell, and Sense-and-Respond)—as being related to (classical and neo-classical) firm-centric marketing theory. They examine these in comparison to a third emerging marketing paradigm—Guide and Co-create. In fact, they evaluate the compatibility of all three approaches with the potential development of a sustainable Meso-level marketing theory—based on a change in the marketing perspective from materialism to promoting holistic global wellbeing.

As such, considering the issues addressed in above-mentioned sections, and keeping abreast with the needs of the time, the authors of this research suggest a new definition of marketing as follows:

Marketing encompasses sustainable activities to craft, communicate, carry and compound value in customers' everyday lives, and provides compelling experiences harnessing market, consumer and data driven strategies leveraged through people with profound technology grasp, and technologies that mimic humans.

5. CONCLUSION

As a whole, marketing theory is essential to both marketing practitioners and academics, for defining their professional identities and delineating what marketing is, what it isn't, and most importantly what it could become. Marketing is a profession that stands at the forefront in humanities' struggle to break through the chrysalis of fear that defines the measure of an individual's worth in terms of "having"—into the light of "being"—a shared journey that affirms a collective human commitment to sheltering all life while respecting the integrity of each individual's separateness. Recent marketing literature indicates that this may be what marketing theorists are now proposing (Lim, 2015; Hurth & Whittlesea, 2017). With a global climate catastrophe on the horizon that threatens the survival of our species, the stakes couldn't be higher. However, constructing a marketing theory based on new paradigms such as Guide and Co-create, would certainly be met with great resistance because it goes against the dominant narrative and threatens a paradigm change where the society and the environment are assigned real value that may transcend monetary value. Furthermore, in this research, the selection of the sample was done over a wide range of disciplines that were seen as relevant to the research question; not all knowledge that may be relevant might have been included in the conceptual analysis of this work. The aforesaid issues could be taken into consideration in future research.

Although uncertainty is an issue, the possibility for Co-creation holds promise for developing marketing guidelines that could change the world significantly in the direction of actually delivering the best for the most people. Future studies should be conducted that examine the will of the various potential stakeholders to assume the risk and uncertainty that would be involved in a collaborative marketing theory based on Co-creation. Studies should involve open-ended interviews and ethnographic approaches that would not just answer the question of whether there is an acceptable level of risk but also how do each group of stakeholders imagine what such Co-creation might look like with regard to real outcomes and obstacles.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of this publication declare there is no conflict of interest.

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