Marketing's Great Identity Crisis: A Revised Definition and an Urgent Research Agenda

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Over recent times a small but growing body of articles has suggested that, for a variety of reasons, marketing is currently in decline as a credible business discipline. This paper develops this theme and argues that the fundamental problem is a severe 'identity crisis' that is eroding Marketing's influence where it really counts: in the boardroom. Symptomatic of this crisis is that many so-called Marketing practitioners, as well as academics, business commentators, and even the discipline's own professional bodies seem to have lost sight of its essential strategic dimensions. Consequently, in an attempt to resolve the problem, this paper proposes a revised definition of Marketing: one that accommodates its various operational dimensions but within the context of its more important strategic dimensions. It also offers an urgent research agenda for resurrecting the stature of the discipline.

Field of research: Contemporary Issues in Marketing

1.0 Introduction

Earlier this year, one of the most prominent marketing authors of our time, Malcolm McDonald (2009, p.433) asserted "… the discipline of marketing is destined to become increasingly less influential unless there is some kind of revolution, or at the very least a new beginning". He is not alone in signalling this sort of 'doomsday' scenario for Marketing. Over recent years, a number of other authors similarly have drawn into question the direction and relevance of the discipline, charting its decline from a variety of different perspectives (e.g., Reibstein, Day and Wind, 2009; Kotler, 2009; Davidson, 2009; Mick, 2007; Wilkie and Moore, 2007; Sawhney, 2004). Consequently, the purpose of this paper is twofold. First, on the basis of a review of recent articles in this arena we develop an argument that the fundamental problem can be usefully characterised as a 'great identity crisis'. In particular, we elaborate upon the main causes and complications of this 'illness' and the serious downstream consequences of doing nothing to remedy the situation.

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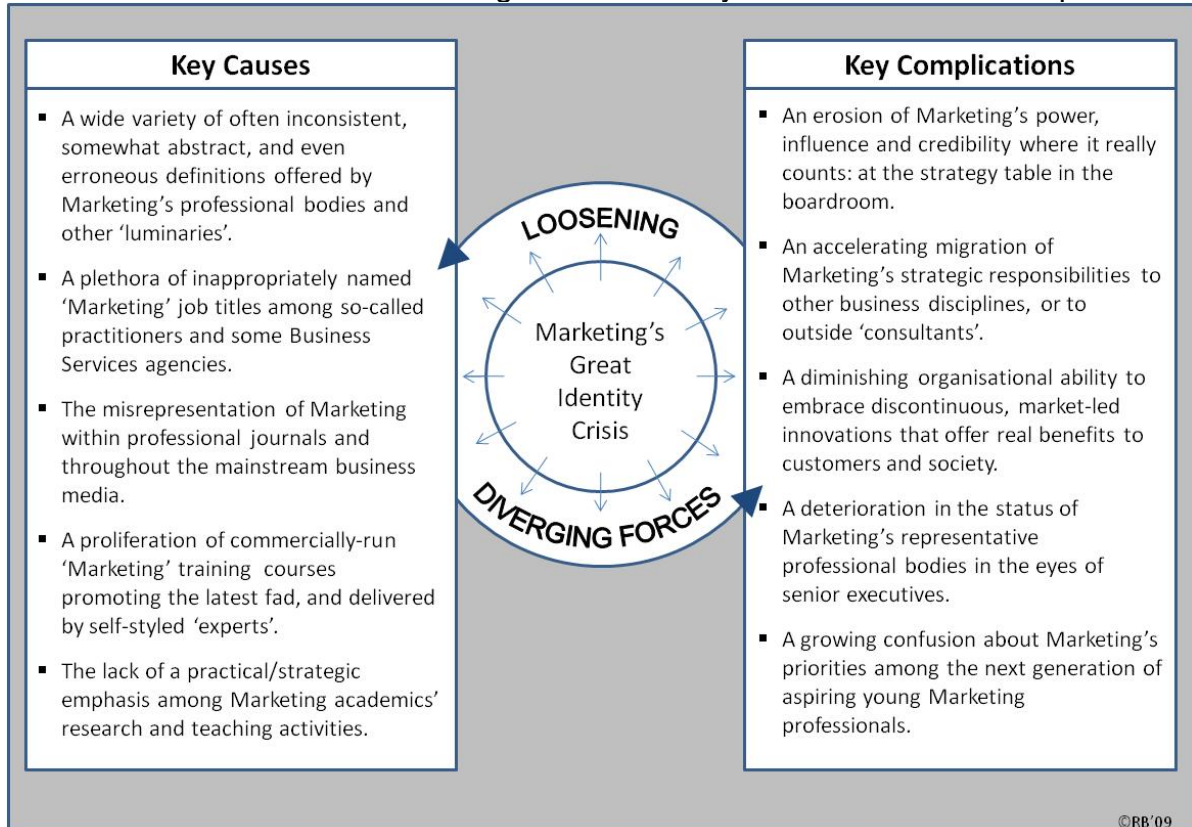Email: jamesm@waikato.ac.nz

Central to our argument is that many so-called Marketing practitioners (of different types) as well as Marketing academics, business commentators, and even the discipline's own representative professional bodies seem to have lost sight of Marketing's essential strategic dimensions. Second, we offer at least a starting point for resolving this crisis by proposing a revised definition of Marketing: one that is more instructive, practical, straightforward, and up-to-date than previous definitions and as a consequence, one that will (hopefully) have a more universal appeal and thereby help to re-establish Marketing as a strategic discipline that is of pivotal importance to both the long-term prosperity of the organisation and the betterment of society. We propose also a 'call-to-action' in the form of an urgent research agenda for helping to resurrect the stature of the Marketing discipline before it becomes forever relegated to the tactical and operational ranks of organisational decision-making.

2.0 The Creation of Marketing's Great Identity Crisis

The main underlying issues that are, in our view, creating Marketing's Great Identity Crisis can be categorised under two headings: 'Key Causes' and 'Key Complications', as shown in Exhibit 1. The centrepiece of this exhibit also provides a visual representation of how the interplay between these issues is combining to worsen the crisis. Thus, in the following sections we elaborate upon these issues and develop an understanding of the 'diagnosis' already suggested by others (e.g., Brown, 2005; Sawhney, 2004; McCole, 2004; Webster, 2004) that Marketing is suffering from an Identity Crisis, together with a 'prognosis' for the future if the situation is allowed to continue unchecked.

Exhibit 1: The Creation of Marketing's Great Identity Crisis: Causes & Complications

Key Causes

- A wide variety of often inconsistent, somewhat abstract, and even erroneous definitions offered by Marketing's professional bodies and other 'luminaries'.

- A plethora of inappropriately named 'Marketing' job titles among so-called practitioners and some Business Services agencies.

- The misrepresentation of Marketing within professional journals and throughout the mainstream business media.

- A proliferation of commercially-run 'Marketing' training courses promoting the latest fad, and delivered by self-styled 'experts'.

- The lack of a practical/strategic emphasis among Marketing academics' research and teaching activities.

Key Complications

- An erosion of Marketing's power, influence and credibility where it really counts: at the strategy table in the boardroom.

- An accelerating migration of Marketing's strategic responsibilities to other business disciplines, or to outside 'consultants'.

- A diminishing organisational ability to embrace discontinuous, market-led innovations that offer real benefits to customers and society.

- A deterioration in the status of Marketing's representative professional bodies in the eyes of senior executives.

- A growing confusion about Marketing's priorities among the next generation of aspiring young Marketing professionals.

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2.1 Key Causes

Exhibit 1 deliberately employs the notation 'Causes' to convey that the issues categorised under this heading are, in our view, the primary drivers which have caused the onset of the 'illness'. These issues are expanded upon below.

A wide variety of often inconsistent, somewhat abstract, and even erroneous definitions offered by Marketing's professional bodies and other 'luminaries': Traditionally, previous definitions of Marketing have done little to dispel the misunderstood values, activities, and knowledge domain of the discipline (Davidson, 1999). More recent definitions have not been much of an improvement. For example, following the launch of the American Marketing Association's 2004 and most recent 2007[1] definition, much debate has centred around a lack of instructional content, insufficient focus on Marketing's values and responsibilities, the omission of an explicit financial imperative and an almost complete absence of the discipline's strategic dimensions (Gundlach, 2007: Hunt, 2007; Lusch, 2007; Mick, 2007; Sheth and Uslay, 2007; Shultz, 2007; Wilkie and Moore, 2007). Further, these definitions have even been criticised for being too abstract and difficult to understand (Drucker, cited by Darroch, 2009). Similarly, we believe that the current Chartered Institute of Marketing's[2] definition shares many of the same shortcomings. Most importantly, it also fails to communicate the discipline's strategic dimensions. In short, we agree with McDonald (2009, p. 434) that

> *"a major stumbling block to finding a way forward is the cacophony of definitions of marketing that exists. It doesn't help when one of CIM's ex Presidents, Diane Thompson declared: "Marketing isn't a function. It is an attitude of mind". Many will wonder how an attitude of mind can be measured, researched, developed, protected, examined etc."*

A plethora of inappropriately named 'Marketing' job titles among so-called practitioners and some Business Services providers: Over recent years most organisations have witnessed an explosion of newly-named and apparently more 'fashionable' job titles across all functional areas. This trend has probably impacted Marketing more than most, resulting in an increasingly large proportion of an organisation's staff members (as well as those working for Business Services agencies) who now have the word 'Marketing' in their job title. However, as pointed out by McDonald (2009), many of these people are actually masquerading as Marketers such as; salespeople, telesales operators, public relations people, business researchers, copywriters and website designers among others. This unfortunate trend engenders real confusion about the true nature of Marketing both within an organization and more generally throughout society.

The misrepresentation of Marketing within professional journals and throughout the mainstream business media: A preoccupation with promotion and sales-related topics within the Marketing literature misrepresents Marketing's multi-faceted nature as being simultaneously a philosophical, strategical, and operational discipline (see Section 4). Increasingly, however, evidence of this can be clearly seen in much of the mainstream business media including Marketing's own publications, a powerful source of influence (Frost and Taylor, 1985). For example, a recent content analysis of New Zealand's leading marketing practitioner publication showed that the 'promotion' category was by far the most predominant theme being written about (West, 2008). Regrettably, this trend is also reflected in professional academic journals which do little more than perpetuate the status quo. Worse still, unorthodox or controversial research often fails to be published in the top academic journals (Brown, 2003), which further entrenches a limiting, misrepresentative view of Marketing.

A proliferation of commercially-run 'Marketing' training courses promoting the latest fad, and delivered by self-styled 'experts': In many ways, the Marketing community is its own worst enemy! (Webster, 2004). For example, over at least the last three decades, various Marketing short-course training providers have quite successfully hyped dozens of the 'latest and greatest' marketing-related fads as the road to improved market visibility and market share gains (the latest of these being the use of some of the 'new' blog media). Unhappily, this has bred both a 'quick fix' and a 'lazy' mentality among practitioners (Davidson, 2009), effectively embedding the belief that Marketing is more concerned with generating short-term cash-flow from 'me-too' offerings than it is about securing long-term profitability based on serving the real needs of customers. In addition, it is unfortunate that many of the self-styled 'experts' who deliver these kinds of courses do not have an in-depth understanding of Marketing and therefore pay scant attention to providing their audiences with an appropriate context for their ideas.

The lack of a practical/strategic emphasis among Marketing academics' research and teaching activities: A number of commentators lament the increasing divide between Marketing academics and Marketing practitioners (e.g., Reibstein, Day and Wind, 2009; Pavia, 2006; Medcalf, 2005; Brennan, 2004; Tapp, 2004; Ankers and Brennan, 2002; Hunt, 2002; Starkey and Madan, 2001), arguing that academic research is often undertaken for its own sake and to further the self-interests of the researchers themselves, rather than because it addresses any pressing practical/strategic challenges faced by practitioners. Recent academic research thereby provides precious little by way of practical insights or meaningful instruction for those who have to make the decisions (Gulalti and Oldroyd, 2005; November, 2004; Gautier, 2002). This problem is perpetuated by the top Marketing journals which have been criticised for having myopic views of research, low readability, and adding to the "inertia and rigidity of the marketing discipline" (Svensson and Wood, 2008, p. 287). Consequently, dissemination of academic research among practitioners is often slow and is hindered by its limited practical usefulness (Buchanan and Wan, 2005; Crosier, 2004; November 2004; Hansotia, 2003). In short, scholarliness is getting in the way of relevance and readability (Bennis and O'Toole, 2005; Crosier, 2004; McKenzie, Wright, Ball and Baron, 2002). Unsurprisingly, Marketing academics' teaching activities similarly tend to lack a practical/strategic emphasis (Baker and Holt, 2004).

2.2 Key Complications

Exhibit 1 deliberately employs the notation 'Complications' to extend the use of the medical metaphor and to indicate that new conditions are arising, making the initial 'illness' even worse. These are expanded upon below.

An erosion of Marketing's power, influence and credibility where it really counts: at the strategy table in the boardroom: Marketing's power, influence, and credibility has declined in the boardroom to such an extent that there are claims that 'real' Marketing is either already dead (e.g., Donaldson, 2009; Kotler, 2009; McCole, 2004) or at least fighting to retain its status (Varcoe, 2009; McCole, 2004). Fewer Marketers are being promoted to the boardroom. Indeed, Webster (2004) asserts that less than 20% of Marketers are appointed to boards of directors and Ronay (2006) reports that only 14 of the UK FTSE 100 companies had a Marketing director on their boards). Yet without influence at the board level there may be a lower probability of a firm delivering customer-focused strategies, and new market opportunities might not be acted upon (Bennett, 2009; Doyle, 2000). Notably, among senior executives, Marketers are more likely to be perceived as having a role in execution rather than strategy (Bennett, 2009; Baker and Holt, 2004).

An accelerating migration of Marketing's strategic responsibilities to other business disciplines, or to outside 'consultants': For anyone with any involvement in the practitioner world, it has been plain to see for some time now that Marketing's strategic responsibilities are migrating to the other functional areas of organisational life. In many cases, those involved in sales, accounting and production have, knowingly or otherwise, assumed full control of strategic decision-making, usually allowing a sales, finance, or production-led organisational

philosophy to flourish at the expense of a customer-led approach. In other cases, Marketing's strategic responsibilities have been out-sourced. This means outside 'strategic marketing consultants' have occasionally, and usually for short time periods only, occupied Marketing's empty seat at the strategy table in the boardroom with varying success. Not coincidentally, this trend has been paralleled in the academic world. Marketing frameworks, concepts and models have been adopted, refined, developed and applied by other fields (e.g., strategic management, operations management, behavioural sciences, accounting and finance) (Reibstein, Day and Wind, 2009). In short, Marketing's territory has been allowed to be 'colonised'. The voids left by indifference or neglect on the part of the Marketing community are being filled by other fields to the detriment of the discipline's status (Reibstein, Day and Wind, 2009).

A diminishing organisational ability to embrace discontinuous, market-led innovations that offer real benefits to customers and society: Marketing is currently travelling away from the place where Drucker (1954) positioned it – as the organisational domain that is chiefly responsible for delivering truly innovative and useful offerings to the marketplace. The predominant short-term/quick pay-offs mindset crowds out resources for new products that have longer-term pay-offs and real customer and societal benefits. Marketers have become fixated on serving and retaining current customers (Day, 2004) to the exclusion of discontinuous innovation, which requires creative strategic thinking that does not necessarily rely on minor re-definitions of markets. For example, brand extensions can kill innovation because they lead to ever more 'trivial' products (Muzellec and Lambkin, 2009). By contrast, discontinuous innovation needs to be embraced, not avoided, since the only route to purposeful innovation is to go back to customers (via market research and imagination) to identify new jobs or tasks for which new offerings will add genuine value to their lives (Christenson, Cook and Hall, 2005).

A deterioration in the status of Marketing's representative professional bodies in the eyes of senior businesspeople: Based on first-hand observations and other anecdotal evidence collected by the authors over many years' interaction with businesspeople around the world, it is our firmly held opinion that in the eyes of senior executives, the status of Marketing's representative professional bodies has long been deteriorating. We suggest that this is partly because they have failed to take the profession towards a level of accreditation commensurate with other comparable professional bodies, that is, some sort of fully 'Licensed Marketing Practitioner' status. More importantly, however, we suggest this is also a reflection of their failure to properly 'market marketing' as a serious strategic discipline, both within their own membership ranks as well as across the wider business community and beyond. Perhaps Marketing's representative professional bodies do not always practice what they preach?

A growing confusion about Marketing's priorities among the next generation of aspiring young Marketing professionals: Since the authors themselves are currently working within Marketing academe, we feel duty bound to report that the tertiary Marketing education sector itself is not immune from blame in adding fuel to 'Marketing's Great Identity Crisis'. It is our considered view (as we know it is for many of our counterparts in other institutions) that a growing number of students are

graduating without a clear understanding of Marketing's real priorities. Worse still, we suspect this is true for graduates at all levels: diploma, degree, and at the post-experience level. The underlying reason(s) for this growing confusion is unclear and certainly worthy of urgent investigation (see Section 5). In the meantime, the uncomfortable question persists: are we producing responsible, knowledgeable, and skilful young Marketing professionals who understand the 'big picture' of Marketing's priorities and who are capable of making a positive contribution to the world over coming decades?

2.3 An Understanding of the Crisis

In medical circles, the malaise known as an 'identity crisis' is well established and documented. The term was first coined by the psychologist Erik Erikson (1970). In short, it can be defined as: "a period of confusion concerning a person's sense of self and role in society" (Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 2009). Some of its key symptoms are illustrated in Exhibit 2, which serve to illustrate why a person suffering from an identity crisis provides a near-perfect metaphor for Marketing's current problems. Albeit within an organisational context, we believe Marketing is presenting with all these symptoms. Hence, our characterisation of the situation as a *Great* Identity Crisis seems particularly apposite. However, of all the symptoms listed in Exhibit 2, we believe '*a disintegrating commitment to a prior dominant identity'* signals the most significant, revealing and defining symptom of Marketing's identity crisis – because it would appear that almost the entire Marketing community has lost sight of Marketing's implicit strategical dimensions that are the origins of the discipline. Indeed, it is Marketing's role in formulating strategy and determining the 'customer value proposition' that binds the whole of the discipline together, making sense of its other philosophical and operational dimensions (see section 4). In particular, it is important to appreciate that its many operational tasks cannot be effectively carried out in the 'vacuum' that is created by the absence of a strategy. The fact is that without a strategy 'blueprint' to guide all of Marketing's operational decision-making, over time an organisation's day-to-day Marketing activities will almost certainly lack coherence, direction, and purpose.

Exhibit 2: The Key Symptoms of an Identity Crisis

WHEN A PERSON IS EXPERIENCING ...

1. A disintegrating commitment to a prior dominant identity

2. An increasingly confused and blurred perception of self

3. An unravelling sense that historical continuity is lost

4. An unfolding exploration of different identities

5. A gathering uncertainty about his or her real role in life

6. A deteriorating ability to face future life challenges

Developed from: Erikson, 1970; Marcia, 1980.

Whether it is 'benign neglect' (Reibstein, Day and Wind, 2009) or something else that has allowed Marketing's identity crisis to reach the sorry state it is in today is immaterial. Unless and until the entire Marketing community re-commits to a proper understanding of Marketing as being fundamentally a strategic discipline, our 'prognosis' is that things will only get worse. Unchecked, the 'loosening' (unfastening) and 'divergent' (opposing) forces depicted in Exhibit 1 by the anti-clockwise and outward-pointing arrows respectively, will undoubtedly continue to undermine Marketing's credibility and influence where it really counts: at the strategy table in the boardroom. No wonder this augurs a 'doomsday' scenario for Marketing. It means the discipline is in grave danger of becoming relegated to the tactical and operational ranks of organisational decision-making to the ultimate detriment of customers and all other stakeholders.

## 3.0 A Justification for Marketing's Role in Strategy Formulation

Just in case any of our readers remain to be convinced about the strength of 'business logic' that lies behind the assertion that Marketing, at its heart, is a strategic discipline that *must* be represented at the strategy table in the boardroom, then little more than a cursory glance at Exhibit 3 should be sufficient to dispel those doubts - even for the most hardened of sceptics. If nothing else, this exhibit is surely a powerful visual reminder that an essential requirement of strategy formulation is that for every planning period it is always necessary to set a clear 'strategic focus' for each of an organisation's product/service offerings (either existing or intended) and that in this respect the options available to the strategist are limited. In fact, Exhibit 3 emphasises that the 'generic' pathways to cultivating an offering's profitability are either to focus on increasing volume or to focus on improving productivity (i.e. squeezing more profit out of the same sales volume). Further, the highlighted boxes

in Exhibit 3 illustrate that each pathway can be usefully subdivided into 'basic' options that contain an assortment of inherent 'intrinsic' options. On the one hand, when seeking to increase volume the 'basic' options are to 'Enter New Market' (N.B., only applicable when there is an intention to broaden the organisation's portfolio by introducing a new product/service) or to 'Grow Existing Market' (via the 'sub-basic' options of market expansion or market penetration). On the other hand, when seeking to improve productivity the 'basic' options are to 'Increase Price(s)' or to 'Reduce Costs' (via the 'sub-basic' options of rationalising various operating procedures or rationalising the sales mix). So even a simple 'head count' appraisal of the strategic foci laid out in Exhibit 3 makes it plain to see that Marketing–related considerations are integral to all options. Furthermore, Exhibit 3 makes it easy to appreciate that only an in-depth understanding of customer- and market-dynamics can facilitate the choice of an *appropriate* strategic focus at each planning period during the 'lifetime' of a product/service - as it evolves from volume-based to productivity-based, that is, from being more of a cash user to being more of a cash generator within the organisation's portfolio.

Exhibit 3: Options for Strategic Focus
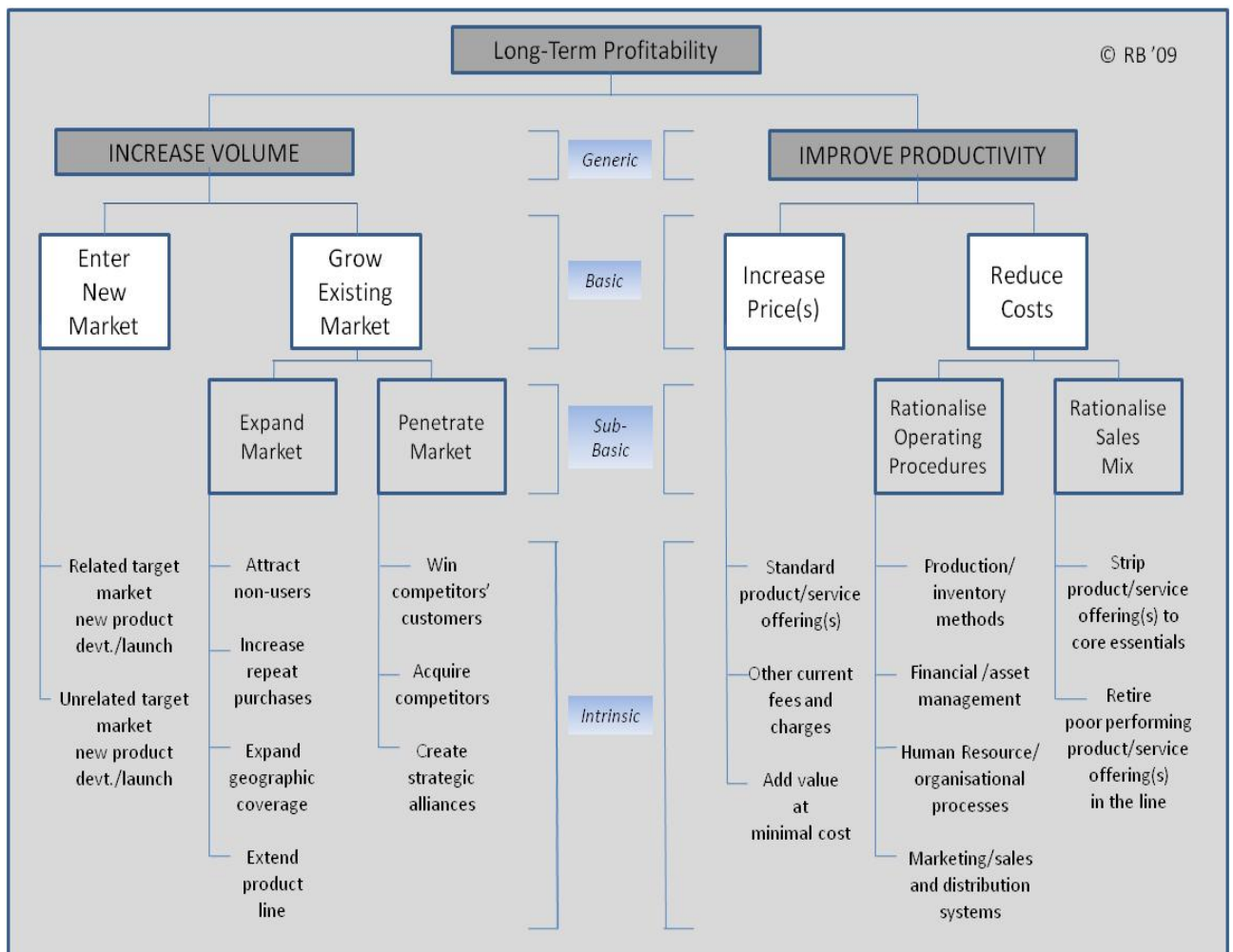
Developed from Doyle, 2002

4.0 Towards a Resolution of the Crisis: A Revised Definition

On the strength of our previous analysis we contend that the single most important first step towards resolving Marketing's identity crisis is for all its representative professional bodies to vigorously promote one 'globally-recognised' definition. In so doing, this would give the discipline (patient) an opportunity to re-centre itself around a proper sense of 'self' – that of an essentially strategic discipline. To this end, we set ourselves the task of devising a revised definition that would be more instructive, practical, straightforward, and up-to-date than previous definitions in the hope that by conforming to these criteria it would be more likely to have the necessary universal acceptability and appeal. The result of our efforts is shown in Exhibit 4. As is the case for all definitions, ours consists of words and concepts that are both founded upon, and beget, other words and concepts (Webster, 2004). Consequently, we provide further explanation and rationale for each line of our definition as follows.

Exhibit 4: A Proposed New Definition

MARKETING IS ...

A philosophical, strategical, and operational managerial discipline involving:

1. the creation of a customer–centric organisation;

2. the identification of appropriate target markets and corresponding value

    propositions, and in each case;

3. the development of satisfied customers in a socially and environmentally responsible

    manner at a planned financial return.

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A philosophical, strategical, and operational managerial discipline: This line is designed to communicate 'at first glance' the multi-level, multi-faceted nature of Marketing. The intention is to emphasise the fact that the discipline is endemic to every aspect of an organisation's existence whilst simultaneously conveying a sense of Marketing's priorities (as echoed under each of the numbered tasks that comprise the remainder of the definition). Specifically, Marketing is 'philosophical' because it is 'of philosophy' in that it provides an unequivocal 'raison d'etre' for any organisation centred on the pursuit of satisfying customers; it is 'strategical' because it involves rigorous strategic analysis and mid to long-range product/service planning; it is 'operational' because plans have to be administered/implemented, and; it is 'managerial' because all Marketing activities need to be carried out effectively, efficiently, and intelligently using finite resources.

The creation of a customer–centric organisation: This line is designed to communicate that a key task of Marketing is to ensure that the philosophy is fully embraced through cultivating an organisational-wide commitment to satisfying customers and encouraging all the functional areas of the organisation to work together towards this common purpose. This is a 'journey' that the whole organisation has to take (Agee, 2007; Gulalti and Oldroyd, 2005). As such, the on-going execution of this task provides the necessary context for all subsequent Marketing decision-making.

The identification of appropriate target markets and corresponding value propositions: This line is designed to communicate that another key task of Marketing is to formulate a separate Marketing strategy for each of the product/service offerings within the organisation's portfolio. Indeed, in its capacity as the domain of market-related knowledge, expertise, and customer advocacy, arguably the 'engine-room' of Marketing's true contribution to any organisation lies in determining a set of mid to long-range objectives for a particular product/service offering, and how best to position that offering in the marketplace to achieve those objectives. Essentially, an offering is well 'positioned' in the marketplace to the extent that it is differentiated from its competitors, is well targeted, and incorporates an authentic customer value proposition. Notably, this line of our definition deliberately uses the word *appropriate* in order to signal some other important attributes of strategic Marketing decision-making. First, a strategy is only 'appropriate' if it maximises the 'fit' between the requirements of a market and an organisation's capabilities because this gives it the best chance of success. Second, a strategy is only 'appropriate' if it results from an informed and exhaustive amount of forward planning; especially revenue and cost projections that indicate the strategy will be commercially viable. Third, a strategy is only 'appropriate' if it is entirely ethical and in keeping with the spirit of the Marketing philosophy. This means that every product/service offering should, in some positive and meaningful way, help customers to 'be'/'do'/'have'/'experience'/'achieve'(etc.) more in their lives (N.B., to the extent that this happens, the discipline will then be discharging its responsibilities at the macro-marketing level and contributing to the betterment of society).

The development of satisfied customers in a socially and environmentally responsible manner at a planned financial return: This line is designed to communicate that a further task of Marketing is concerned with translating the strategy for each product/service offering into action on a day-to-day basis. It refers to the operational dimensions of Marketing, whereby a whole host of highly 'visible' marketing mix-related and other interdisciplinary, value-creation activities have to be coordinated and implemented to 'make the strategy happen'. Notably, this line of our definition deliberately includes three phrases, each of which highlights an important aspect of operational Marketing. First, an organisation's operational activities will only be successful, collectively, to the extent that they are 'on strategy' and facilitate target-customer satisfaction; hence *the development of satisfied customers*. Specifically, the word *development* is intended to convey that, in reality, satisfying customers is not so much a goal as it is an ever-maturing process that necessitates on-going dialogue – and sometimes collaborating with customers to co-create value (Lusch, 2007). Second, a modern organisation is required to conduct its business in ways that are entirely legal, decent and truthful, whilst at the same time being sensitive to 'green' environmental considerations; hence *in a socially and*

environmentally responsible manner. Third, any organisation (whether it operates for profit or not-for-profit) always has a financial imperative that is integral to conducting its day-to-day operations; hence *at a planned financial return.*

5.0 Another Step towards a Resolution of the Crisis: An Urgent Research Agenda

In earlier parts of this paper we suggested that Marketing academics are part of the problem, but they can also be part of the solution. Indeed, we believe it is now incumbent upon the Marketing academic community to help the discipline move towards a resolution of the problem and we offer an urgent six-point research agenda for getting started, as shown in Exhibit 5. Each item on our agenda is expanded upon below. (N.B. these research agenda outcomes must be disseminated via an appropriate mix of media that reflect the priority target audiences that need to be reached - including not only the traditional academic journals but also a variety of other media such as newspapers, professional journals, business magazines, newsletters and so on).

Exhibit 5: An Urgent Research Agenda

1. Examine and develop R.O.M.I. metrics as they relate to strategic level decision-making and Marketing's contribution to 'value'

2. Learn more about the underlying 'how to' of successful Marketing strategy formulation

3. Investigate the methods by which senior executives can work organisation-wide to promote a better appreciation of Marketing

4. Understand the means by which discontinuous, market-led innovations are successfully conceived, developed, and brought to market

5. Monitor and evaluate strategic Marketers' perceptions of their ethical, social, and environmental responsibilities

6. Appraise all undergraduate and post-experience level Marketing programmes and identify areas for improvement

Examine and develop R.O.M.I. metrics as they relate to strategic level decision-making and Marketing's contribution to 'value': There has been much recent debate about how Marketing's contribution to an organisation should be measured and justified (AMA, 2009; Varcoe, 2009). Interestingly, the debate almost always refers to the term R.O.M.I. (return on marketing investment). However, in reality, the debate has been largely restricted to R.O.P.I. (return on promotional investment) measures, meaning that the more important, strategy-level measures are being ignored (Carey, 2009). Consequently, there is an urgent need for research to examine and develop metrics that relate to strategic Marketing decision-making and especially, Marketing's contribution to 'value'. That way, it can better justify its presence in the boardroom.

Learn more about the underlying 'how to' of successful Marketing strategy formulation: Most previous research in this area has been quantitative in nature and served only to answer the 'what' questions in relation to high performance strategic Marketing, thereby ignoring the underlying 'how to' questions (Brooksbank and Taylor, 2002). Hence, there is a real need to understand much more about the qualitative aspects: the decision-making skills, knowledge-base and processes employed by top strategists. In order to gain such insights it will be necessary for researchers to use more 'involving' qualitative methods, such as phenomenology and ethnography (Brooksbank and Taylor, 2007).

Investigate the methods by which senior Executives can work organisation-wide to promote a better appreciation of Marketing: Little previous investigation has been undertaken to find out what can be done to build a unified understanding of Marketing throughout an organisation and, specifically, at the strategy table in the boardroom. Thus, we suggest more research needs to be undertaken to uncover 'best practice' in this area.

Understand the means by which discontinuous, market-led innovations are successfully conceived, developed, and brought to market: The current widespread reluctance among organisations to deliver market-led innovations that offer real customer benefits needs to be addressed. Consequently, we suggest a renewed research focus aimed at understanding how successful organisations manage to profitably bring discontinuous and truly innovative offerings to market. The aim is for this research to be able to educate and inspire managers to embrace discontinuous innovation.

Monitor and evaluate strategic Marketers' perceptions of their ethical, social, and environmental responsibilities: The spirit of Marketing demands legal, decent and truthful behaviour. It is therefore essential that the Marketing academic community devotes effort to researching, monitoring and evaluating senior strategists' perceptions of their ethical, social and environmental responsibilities, together with the extent to which they actually exercise them.

Appraise all undergraduate and post-experience level Marketing programmes and identify areas for improvement: The suggested focus here is to appraise the positioning, interrelationships and sequencing of marketing papers across an institution's portfolio from a student learning perspective. The goal of this research should be to identify and profile 'best practice' with respect to these dynamics so that it can be modelled throughout the entire tertiary education system. This will help to ensure that the system produces graduates with a well-rounded understanding of Marketing's priorities.

6.0 Conclusion

There continues to be nothing short of a systemic failure throughout the Marketing profession to 'market marketing' both at the level of an individual organisation and more generally throughout society. As a result, Marketing remains largely misunderstood and seems to be a word that, for most people, is synonymous with

the promotional aspects of operational marketing; effectively ignoring its origins as a strategic discipline and as an organisational philosophy. The fact is that real Marketing runs a lot deeper than just being an exercise in sophisticated persuasion, puffery, and image management. In a truly Marketing-savvy organisation, Marketing becomes everyone's responsibility - because everyone, and especially those responsible for strategy development in the boardroom, appreciates that in order to prosper, they must all work together towards the common goal of target customer satisfaction. The good news is that once Marketing's essential strategical and philosophical identities are re-established, then many of the problems associated with Marketing's Great Identity Crisis will dissipate, allowing the discipline to quickly regain lost credibility and realise its true contribution to organisational prosperity and the betterment of society.

In a business world that has become a pressure cooker of economic, environmental, and societal stresses, now is the time for Marketing to assume a leadership role. In the words of Davidson (2009, p. 24), "Marketing *can* change the world" by influencing the direction of organisational life in the twenty-first century in a meaningful way. All that is required is for members of the Marketing community to stand up and show the vision and courage necessary to make it happen. Now is the time to accept responsibility. Now is the time for action!

Notes

1. Current AMA definition: "Marketing is the activity, set of institutions and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large."
2. Current CIM definition: "Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably."

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