

An Evaluation of Marketing Thoughts in Search of an Identity

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Preface

While writing on ‘the identity crisis in marketing’ Robert Bartels (1974) says, “The crux of the issue is this: is the identity of marketing determined by the subject matter dealt with or by the technology with which the subject is handled? Specifically, is marketing the application of certain functions, activities, or techniques to the dissemination of economic goods and services, including the satisfaction they provide? Or is it the application of those functions and techniques to the dissemination of any ideas, programs, or causes – noneconomic as well as economic, nonbusiness as well as business ?”

The questions have been put very succinctly and squarely. A straightforward answer to these questions is necessary to resolve the identity crisis in marketing. As viewed, marketing in its proper perspective becomes the subject matter in itself - an all pervasive philosophy, an attitude – both an art and a science – the branch of knowledge which involves a systematic, critical, action oriented study relating to fulfillment of human aspiration. It provides the philosophy behind aspiration fulfillment explains the phenomenon of fulfillment of aspiration, studies and analyses the manner and method in which aspirations originate, evolve, form, develop, heighten, accentuate, and get fulfilled. It is a philosophy that applies to every sphere of the existence of mankind, as long as the situation has something to do with aspiration fulfillment.

As long as one fails to define marketing in its totality as an all pervasive philosophical concept, to share Bartels agony, the identity crisis in marketing will remain unsolved; the development of a general theory of marketing will remain a far cry. It is in this context that the development of marketing thoughts in its historical perspective assumes importance.

Chapter 1 gives the background of the current thesis. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 deal with the past of marketing – thoughts, themes, writings and concepts as they developed. Even the decade of 70’s, the most fertile one to broadening the concept of marketing and sharpening the thought process, stands as one of the past. Chapter 5 deals with the philosophy of marketing for an identity. Chapter 6 concludes with a brief account of marketing movement ever since considered on the lines of a discipline and holds the promise that future has in store for marketing.

Approach of the study has been eclectic that stresses similarities rather than the differences between various approaches of viewing marketing. Dependence on the contributions of many authors – practitioners and academicians alike – becomes apparent as one goes past the chapters. Two papers on ‘Marketing Concept’ developed with Professor Mitra during the period of my academic intercourse have helped in providing directions to the present work.