

Developing a Theory of Ubiquitous Marketing Research: Combining Ideology And Methodology of Marketing Research

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Abstract: This paper aims to propose a theory of ubiquitous marketing research. To that end, the paper develops a synergistic integration of the postulates, pathways and ends of the ideology and methodology of marketing research in order to make the scientific truth of the marketing research discipline uniquely universal through getting over its perpetuation, generalization and globalization hurdles of time, place and culture. These research endeavors should be expected to signposting a blueprint of genuine ubiquitous science of marketing research.

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Introduction

The drastic change in the role and essence of marketing research as a science and a professional activity was demonstrated and foreseen by Blankenship and Breen (1993). They argued that in the past, marketing research has been viewed by many companies as an activity somewhat removed from the action of sales and marketing (i.e., staff service department). Even by academics it was treated separately from the marketing mix scenario often without a clear explanation of its role. Marketing research was often called upon to measure the potential of proposed new products (often after the design had been completed and prototypes produced), to measure results, to solve day to day marketing problems, sometimes to help in planning and occasionally to point an unwelcome finger at those who committed mistakes that drained profits and created losses. The point is marketing research spent most of its time involved in ex-post analysis, i.e., looking backward or, at best, at the present. Seldom, was it asked to look into the future and work with other marketing mechanisms to plan for future profits. Therefore marketing research is viewed as assuming the sacred mission of building and safeguarding the scientific credentials of marketing, serving all other marketing disciplines through catering for their nagging and far reaching knowledge needs, and creating broadly acceptable scientific marketing knowledge that transcends applications barriers of time, place and culture. Thus, Marketing research continues to be recognized as the marketing discipline of rigor, knowledge and universality (Hirschman, 1986).

The Need for Further Research

In light of the above logic and the recent recognition of marketing research as the futurology of

marketing science that have granted the generation, communication and utilization of marketing research its central place in marketing orientation and competitiveness because this role represents the backbone of market orientation and competitive advantage (Whittington and Whipp, 1992).

By this token, marketing research is a continuing virtuous aspect of all areas of marketing providing high quality information about specific and general marketing problems/opportunities viewing past experience, the present situation and the probable future so that marketing managers can make effective, efficient and adaptable decisions (Kortam, 2004).

It can be argued that the research gap in formulating an integrated theory of marketing research that explicitly identifies and prescribes its essence and role within the full spectrum of marketing theory is twofold. First, there are no enough research efforts to link the dogmatic destinations of marketing research to its pragmatic roadmaps. Second, there is very little research endeavors to make a genuine discipline of marketing research through aiming to get over time, place and cultural limitations to perpetuate, generalize and globalize its ultimate scientific truths (Zolkiewski, 2004). It is also believed that these two sides of the gap are strongly related since managing the interfaces between the ideology and methodology of marketing research should assist in waiving the negative repercussions of enchaining the truthful findings of the disciplines by the strong cuffs of time, place and culture.

Aim of Research

Consequently, this paper aims to propose a discipline-peculiar, boundaries-blurring, owned-agenda ubiquitous theory of marketing research. This aim will be pursued through two venues; namely combining the

ideology and methodology of marketing research through deliberate synergistic integration of their postulates, pathways and ends and then capitalizing on such integration to make the scientific truth of the marketing

research discipline uniquely universal through getting over its perpetuation, generalization and globalization hurdles of time, place and culture. These research adventures should be expected to give birth to a genuine ubiquitous science of marketing research.

Review of Literature

The literature review triggering the research propositions for this paper seeks to demonstrate and conceptualize the ideological creeds and methodological means of the discipline of marketing research. An anatomic structure for comparative analysis of both pillars is composed of the postulates, pathways and ends. It is expected that this structure would allow sound combination of both platforms to develop the targeted theoretical configuration of ubiquitous marketing research.

Ideology of Marketing Research

Ideology of marketing research is conceptually and operationally defined by this paper as the idealistic underlying rationale and compulsive logic guiding the process of marketing research to its high ends. Arguably, the ideology of marketing research concerns itself with the normative questions of why, how should and what for marketing research is triggered, conducted and valued.

Ideological postulates

The ideological postulates of marketing research can be proposed to compose of: 1) marketing research is the scientific extreme of marketing thought and practice, 2) marketing research is dedicated to being the knowledge supplier to all other marketing disciplines, 3) marketing research is means to an end, 4) marketing research is a problem solving and an opportunity precedence mechanism, 5) marketing research is a change catalyst and subsequently a planned form of organizational change.

Ideological pathways

The main boundaries of marketing discipline that are proposed by this paper as most influenced by raising the above controversies are namely; customer-orientation (which can be looked at as the mainland boundary for scientific premises of marketing) , exchange management, knowledge-based marketing, value-based marketing, convergence marketing and multi-disciplinary marketing paradigms (Kortam and Mahrous, 2011).

Ideological Ends

It is deduced and expected that marketing research seeks ideally to strictly pursue the optimization ultimate ends of rigor of scientific research processes and methods, verifiability of scientific evidence, replicability of scientific procedures, building on scientific state-of-the-art theory, generalizability of scientific findings and applicability of scientific solutions and blueprints.

Methodology of Marketing Research

Methodology of marketing research is viewed by this paper as the realistic know-how of the marketing research process resulting in the inclusion and exclusion of marketing research techniques at every step and phase of the marketing research process. Arguably, the methodology of marketing research concerns itself with the positivistic questions of how, when and against which standards should marketing research be justified, implemented and evaluated.

Methodological postulates

It is claimed by this paper that the methodology of marketing research aims to maximize the quality of produced marketing knowledge through very careful and calculated prioritization of five main quality standards of marketing knowledge. Accordingly, these standards represent the guiding principles for the subsequent marketing research process and its benchmarked ends. Thus the postulates of marketing research as a methodology is to fulfill the required optimized/de-optimized levels of the quality standards of: 1) comprehensiveness of marketing research issues and process, 2) accuracy of marketing research procedures and findings, 3) timeliness of marketing research actions/reactions and analysis, 4) economy of marketing research undertakings and values and 5) relevance of marketing research interpretations, conclusions and recommendations.

Methodological pathways:

Based on that vision presented by the above postulates, the marketing research process can be, arguably, conceptualized as consisting of three main consecutive phases. . First, an encoding of concepts phase aiming to encode marketing problems and opportunities into scientific terms in the form of marketing research hypotheses/questions. The essence of this encoding process through carrying out exploratory problem/opportunity definition activities to formulate research hypotheses/questions. The main concern here should be on the comprehensive encoding of all the concepts constituting the specific and particular aspects of the problem/opportunity under research. Second, an application of marketing research methods phase which seeks to rigorously and verifiably implement the scientific process and adopt tools of marketing research. The main angle of this phase is to

reach scientifically-grounded marketing solutions to solve encoded marketing problems or seize encoded opportunities. The main concern of this phase is hung upon the strict and systematic conduct of the conclusive marketing research activities of sampling plan and design, development of measurement scales, data collection, preparation and analysis. Third, a decoding to context phase, which mainly involves translating scientific marketing solutions to defined problems and opportunities in to actionable marketing decisions and policies. The conclusive marketing research activities of this phase are those of interpretation of analyzed and reporting these interpretations with a view toward augmenting and promoting research findings and recommendations. The main concern of this phase is to come up with insightful, far reaching, precise and creative interpretations of findings that are useful within the context in which marketing organizations encountering such problems/opportunities operate.

As a wrap up, this configuration argues that the value added of marketing research rests on a comprehensive encoding of marketing research inputs, a rigorous application of marketing research process and a realistic and action oriented interpretation of marketing research outputs (Kortam(1), 2006a).
Methodological ends

On the other hand, modern marketing research methodology and its resulting practice is said by many scholars to have a short list of five established and emerging strategic benchmarked ends consisting of the value equation, global image, differentiation, strategic focus, and marketing ROI. These ends are strongly argued by a majority of marketing academics and practitioners to deliver the core credentials of marketing as a science and a functional area of business to bring about its substantial and genuine contributions under contemporary and foreseeable pressures such as globalization of markets, deregulation of industries, changes in customer bases and technological reshuffles (Kortam, Attia and Mahrous, 2011, Kortam(2), 2006b).

The value equation is a long-standing strategic end of marketing reflecting the need on the side of marketing research and practice to continuously improve the delivery of its basic utilities (i.e., customer-driven values) in terms of time, place, possession and information utilities. The strategic end of differentiation in marketing implies that companies need to distinguish themselves with uncontested competitive advantages. This competitive advantage must be in the form of a distinctive competency that is superior in customer value creation than those offered by direct competition which is perceived as a highly prioritized source of value by target customers. Globalization refers to the strategic needs of marketing organizations to build and maintain a global brand

image of all their marketing actions (even if they are exclusively operating in their local markets as a response to the growing global uniformity among customer bases, competitors, and industry and supply chain partners as far as all marketing phenomena such as perceived quality, name awareness, customer value and satisfaction and brand loyalty are concerned which represent a strong impetus for a global brand equity as the binding theme for all these globalization requirements of marketing phenomena. The strategic end of marketing focus is hung around the theme that the company needs to identify one or few market segments on which to focus its marketing offerings. Such focus allows the effective building and sustenance of competitive advantage in conjunction with efficient allocation of scarce marketing resources. Maintaining a marketing focus necessitates that the company should make sound segmentation, targeting and positioning decisions to base its focus strategy on real and solid customized marketing mix. This customization ought to be as massive as possible to be intensively used to access the target segments and undisputedly identify the company's position within these segments and clearly signals it to all parties of concern (Kortam and Mahrous, 2010). An increasing pressure is mounting on the marketing function to rationalize its capital budgeting decisions while simultaneously seeking creative means to boost its genuine marginal contribution to cause overall corporate revenues to significantly flourish. Such demands mean that the marketing function is gradually falling under dual pressures for efficiently using a diminishing amount of corporate resources while effectively magnifying its attributable value-added to corporate profitability and growth (Kortam and Hassan, 2002). Any scientific discipline earns its due place as through its rigorous endeavors and broad scope paradigms that promises and strives to advance human knowledge, scientifically pursue human causes and welfare and ultimately seek the scientific truth that transform this world into a more virtuous and sustainable place for mankind to live and prosper (Kortam and Mahrous, 2011).

Proposed Theory of Ubiquitous Marketing Research

The proposed theory of ubiquitous marketing research by this paper as demonstrated in Appendix (1) has a clear dual agenda relying on the scientific dogma and pragmatism that combining the ideology and methodology of marketing research should significantly and substantially to: 1) establish and enact the status of marketing research mandated as the marketing discipline of rigor of marketing science, exclusivity of scientific marketing knowledge and universality of scientific truths of marketing and 2) create and elaborate a ubiquitous marketing research

discipline that genuinely the above mandates in an eternal, global, and virtual through striving to make marketing outputs and deliverables rise above the boundaries of time obsolescence, culture diversity and place domains. Consequently, the proposed theory configuration as founded on the argued structures of marketing research ideology and methodology. The following research propositions express the main theoretical philosophical arguments and intellectual articulations stimulating a full fledging and frontiers penetrating theory of ubiquitous marketing research:

- R1: Ideological postulates of marketing research lead their counterpart methodological postulates to higher ideal fundamentals which make marketing-research-based knowledge more eternal.
- R2: Methodological postulates of marketing research revisit their counterpart ideological postulates to more updated fundamentals which make marketing-research-based knowledge more eternal.
- R3: Ideological pathways of marketing research idealize the means of their counterpart methodological pathways to which makes marketing-research-based knowledge more global.
- R4: Methodological Pathways of marketing research rationalize the pursuit of their counterpart ideological pathways to makes marketing-research-based knowledge more global.
- R5: Ideological ends of marketing research optimize the essence of their counterpart methodological ends which makes marketing-research-based knowledge more virtual.
- R6: Methodological ends of marketing research visualize the implications of their counterpart ideological ends which make marketing-research-based knowledge more virtual.

Realized and Aspired Research Methodology

This research has relied on triangulation exploratory research methodology. The first tool was literature review and the authors own deductive reasoning. The second phase of the methodology was conducting a number of in-depth interviews with five academic and professional lead experts in marketing research. The final exploratory research was analysis of the websites of three major multinational marketing research agencies and two global marketing research associations to explore how far they disclose the marketing research ideologies and methodologies and aim deliberately to integrate them.

The authors aspire to test the research propositions empirically in a conclusive way. The planned research design for this purpose would be a mixed qualitative methodology of protocol analysis of a carefully selected sample of marketing research professionals and academics. The utmost empirical sustentation

would be a text based content analysis where a selected number of academic marketing research papers and professional marketing research reports would be analyzed to tell their own stories with marketing research ideologies and methodologies and their implications to the creation of a theory ubiquitous marketing research. Indeed, Kolbe and Burnett (1991) emphasized that content analysis enables researchers to probe complex issues and nebulous concepts and facilitates an unobtrusive appraisal of communications (Gok and Hacıoglu 2010).

Conclusions and Further Research

This research is prophecy that the future and contributions of the discipline of marketing research is contingent on how far its reflective pillar wings are integrated in a way that is faithfully dedicated to making it the discipline of rigor, knowledge and universality thus resulting in an eternal, global and virtual marketing truths, i.e., everywhere, all the time, and to everyone which is the ubiquitous helm of marketing research. These ubiquitous aspirations of a marketing research theory should motivate further exploration and development of the ideology and methodology and how to make more synergistic portfolios of their constituents.

Apart from that, this research aims to sparkle a sense of urgency among marketing research scholars to look into other innovative approaches for a purpose-built theory of marketing research.

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Appendix 1: A Proposed Theory of Ubiquitous Marketing Research Through Combining Ideology and Methodology of the Discipline

