sciendo

DOI 10.2478/sbe-2023-0050
SBE no. 18(3) 2023

HOW THE MARKETING THOUGHT EVOLVED – A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF MARKETING LITERATURE

FUCIU Mircea
Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania

Abstract:

The fast-paced development and evolution of the marketing concept in the last decade has generated the need to delve into the past to understand the future. Therefore, the current paper aims to bring forth a better understanding of the evolution of the concept of marketing thought, while doing a bibliometric analysis on the papers that mention the term "marketing thought" in their title and / or abstract. The findings of the literature review as well as the results of the analysis are representing a starting point in the process of continuing the research undertaken by authors in the 20th century and, thus providing a starting point in the development of new marketing theories on the evolution of the marketing thought in a time governed by the internet, social media, artificial intelligence, or online consumer behaviour.

Key words: *marketing, marketing concept, evolution, marketing thought*

1. Introduction

The overall popularity of the marketing concept has generated in the last decades a great deal of attention from researchers and scholars alike. Therefore, it has become imperative that we have a better understanding of how this concept evolved and especially how the literature developed in this area, while underlining the scholastic approach to it.

Marketing as a "subject has proved almost impossible to pin down, and there is little consensus about what it means to study marketing. Most organisations now employ marketers. Marketing roles were traditionally found in commercial firms, but increasingly all kinds of organisations feel the need to employ marketers or to commission services from marketing consultants" (Eliss et.al, 2022).

The concept of the marketing usually revolves around the idea that consumers are "kings" and also around the exchange purpose that happens between companies and consumers (Palmer, 2012). The concept marketing has evolved greatly in the last century or so, from a simple product based approach at the beginning of the 20th century to the current approach that revolves around the idea of a online based approach of the current time (with the impact of artificial intelligence, content creation, influencer marketing etc.).

The usage of the Internet as a communication environment and also as a tool, has brought us connectivity, has diminished distance between consumers and companies, and also it has made us (companies and individuals) more vulnerable. The great majority of the

people are more and more connected via social media networks, via email, via YouTube and many other communication channels, and there for the marketing activity has changed greatly in the last decades or so.

2. Evolution of the marketing thought and concept over time

Although there have been and still are a number of controversies regarding the moment of the appearance of marketing, most specialists now consider it to be a product of the 20th century. One of the most important questions that scholars that study the evolution of the marketing thought can ask themselves is *How old is marketing?,* cand find its answer in Michael J. Baker position regarding this: "*The enigma of marketing strategies is that as one of man's oldest activities it is regarded as the most recent of the business disciplines"* (Baker, 2003). The same Baker (2003) mentions that as a discipline, marketing is in the process of transition from an art which is practised to a profession with strong theoretical foundations. In doing so it is following closely the precedents set by professions such as medicine, architecture and engineering, all of which have also been practised for thousands of years and have built up a wealth of descriptive information concerning the art which has both chronicled and advanced its evolution.

In his paper Jones and Shaw (2002) show an interesting approach to the study of the history of the marketing thought, by underlining the need to separate the evolution of the marketing thought and the evolution of the marketing concept, while treating them from a historical perspective. Furthermore, the study of the marketing concept and of the marketing thought separately gives us the opportunity to *"establish a baseline for recognizing changes in theory. How can we advance our knowledge of marketing if we have no prior knowledge?"* (Jones and Shaw, 2002).

Probably the most prolific author and scholar that has studied the evolution of the marketing thought has been Robert Bartles, which for more than five decades has done rigorous research on the history of the marketing thought (Shaw and Tamilla, 2001). It is very clear that there are two main periods in the study of the modern marketing thought, the period prior to 1960 (which has been dominated by marketing management related issued) and those after 1960 (which covered aspects such as: marketing systems, channels, and international Marketing etc.), as shown by Jones and Shaw (2002).

According to Bartels (1976) there are several periods in the development of the marketing thought in the 20th century, as it can be seen in table 1.

Table 1 – Evolution of *Marketing thought* according to Bartels

Period	Evolution stage	Meaning
1900–1910	Discovery	The fist marketing courses were taught and the word *marketing* was used in academic writings.
1910–1920	Conceptualization	The first steps in the academic (schools of thought) and practical approaches were studied from a functional and an institutional perspective. First concepts were developed.

Period	Evolution stage	Meaning
1920–1930	Integration	Integration of the marketing concept and its principles within the main body of study of the marketing thought.
1930–1940	Development	The main specialized fields of marketing have been developed with further development of new marketing approaches based on practical and scholastic studies.
1940–1950	Reappraisal	The first steps in the development of the marketing management approach were taken
1950–1960	Reconceptualization	Traditional approaches to the study of marketing were supplemented by increasing emphasis upon managerial decision making, the societal aspects of marketing, and quantitative marketing analysis. Many new concepts, some borrowed from the field of management and from other social sciences, were introduced into marketing (Hermans, 2009)
1960–1970	Differentiation	New marketing derived concepts were developed, such as: *marketing systems, quantitative analysis in marketing, international marketing, and consumer behaviour*.
1970 -	Socialization	Social issues and marketing became much more important, as the influence not of society upon marketing, but of marketing upon society became a focus of interest (Hermans, 2009)

(Source: Jones and Shaw, 2002; Hermans, 2009)

Strating from these aspects, there are several dimensions within the marketing thought and concept that Hermans (2009), based on Robert Bartels studies, is presenting, and further underlining the:

- *Structural dimension* – marketing activity is divided into different areas.
- *Intellectual and interdisciplinary dimension* – marketing is embracing knowledge from multiple disciplines.
- *Temporal dimension* – the evolution of marketing thought is strongly linked to the temporal evolution of the society, of the communication technology and of the business environment.
- *Personal dimensions* - the extent to which the character of marketing thought has been determined not only by external problems inciting study but by the subjective factors that have influenced the viewpoints of men (Hermans, 2009).

Of course the evolution of the marketing thought does not stop at the 1970's, but continues even today. At the same time, strongly linked with the evolution of the marketing thought is also the evolution of the marketing concept. Over the years, since the first

definitions of marketing that were presented in the first half of the 20th century, to the latest definitions presented in the second decade of the 20th century, we can see that the field of marketing is on an state of permanent evolution and development, which is in line with the current changes that occur in the business environment and in the current society.

The next step in our study is to present some of the most important definitions issued in the in the 20 and 21st century bye entities such as the American Marketing Association and the Chartered Institute of marketing as well as presented by renowned authors and scholars in the field of marketing (table 2).

Author	Definition of the marketing concept
American Marketing Association, 1948 & 1960	*"The development of economic activities (business activities) that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to the consumers" (See A., 2007)*
Denner, 1971	*"The permanent analysis of the demand on one hand and on the other hand, the development and usage of the means to satisfy this demand in the condition of having a profit"* (Denner, 1971 in Balaure 2002)
Stanton, 1974	*"Marketing represents an entire system of economic activities regarding the programming, pricing, promotion and distribution of products and services meant to satisfy the needs of current and potential consumers"* (Stanton 1974, in Manole et.al, 2011)
Baker 1976	*"Marketing is a process of exchange between individuals and/or organizations which is concluded to the mutual benefit and satisfaction of the parties'"* (Baker, 2008)
AMA, 1985	*"Marketing is the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals"* (Gunlach and Wilkie, 2009)
AMA, 2004	*"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."* (Gunlach and Wilkie, 2009)
Kotler and Armstrong, 2008	„*Marketing is the process by which the companies create value for the clients and develop a strong relationship with the consumers to obtain a certain value from them".* (Kotler and Armstoring, 2008)

Author	Definition of the marketing concept
Kotler and Keller, 2008	*"Marketing activity represents the societal process by which individuals or groups get what they need or what they want, by creating, offering and free exchange of products and of services that carry value".* (Kotler and Keller, 2008)
AMA, 2013	*"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".* (AMA, 2013)
Chartered Institute of Marketing, 2015	*"Marketing is the management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably".* (CIM, 2015)

(Source: adapted after Fuciu and Dumitrescu, 2018).

3. Bibliometric analysis of the literature on marketing thought

To further develop the understanding on the evolution of the marketing thought, a secondary data research has been conducted using a bibliometric analysis of the information available on this topic on one of the most important scientific data bases *Scopus.* While this (only using the Scopus) represents also one of the limitations of the current research, a total number of 342 publications that mention the *Marketing Thought* either in the title or in the abstract of the paper. The publication range of the findings, in terms of years, is between 1972 and 2023, with the following distribution over the years (see figure 1).

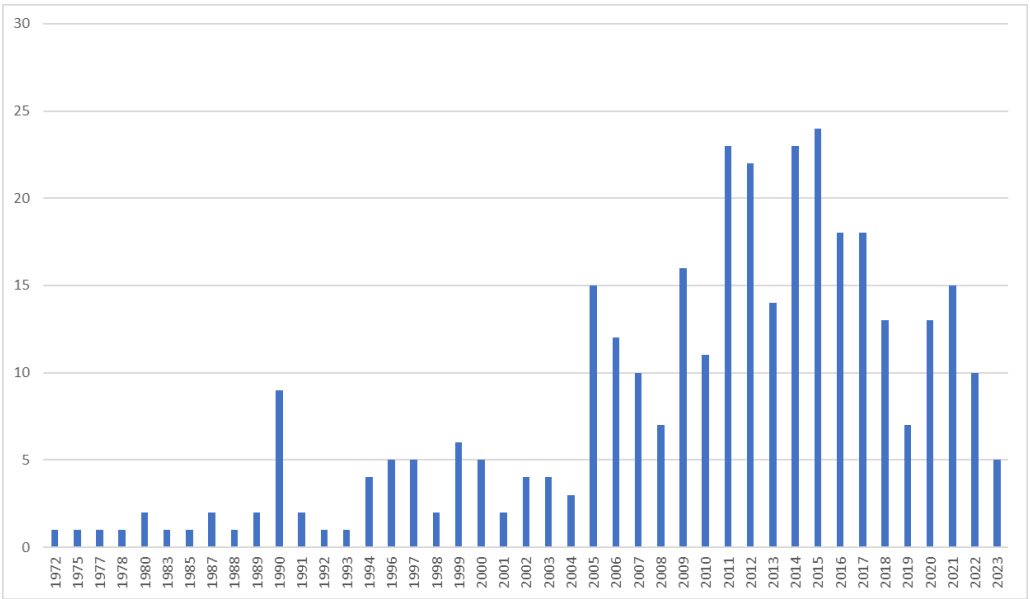


Fig. 1 Number of publications per year (1972 – 2023*)
(Source: author's computation based on Scopus data)

We can observe just a slight increase in the 1972 to 1990, with an average of less than 5 publications per year, but starting with 1994, and especially with 2005 we can observe an increase in the number of publications per year that contain the concept or the mentioning (in abstract and / or title) of *Marketing thought concept.* The highest number of published papers are in 2015 with 24 publications. More than that, 21,6% of the publications are in the Journal of Historical Research in Marketing, 7,6% of the papers are published in the Journal of Macromarketing, 5,5% of the results are in the Marketing Theory journal, the rest of the papers being distributed in 111 publications.

Considering the type of publications (figure 2) it can be observed that 71% of the publications are articles, 10% of them are book chapters, 9% of the publications are reviews, 4% are books, 2% of them are conference papers / notes or editorials and les than 1% are erratum.

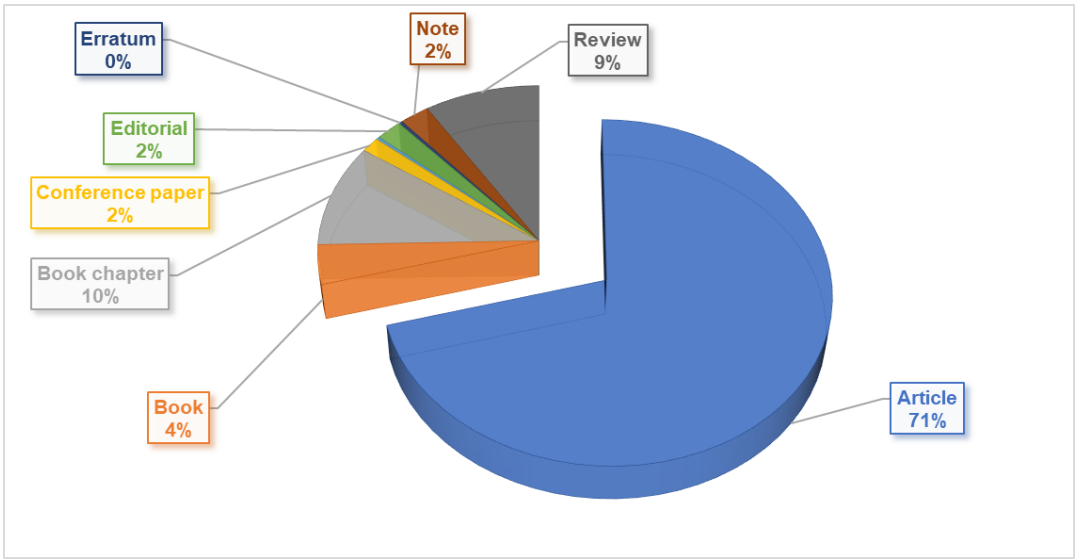


Fig. 2 Type of publications (1972 – 2023)
(Source: author's computation based on Scopus data)

Going deeper with the analysis of the literature review that mentions the *marketing thought* in either title or abstract or even both, more in-depth research has been developed using the VosViewer software, to observe the most common terms in relation with the concept analysed and to discover the depth of connections between the terms.

In figure 3, we can observe the connections with the general term of *marketing, and given the connections within the clusters, we can see that the concept of marketing is linked with elements / words like: period, article, history, contribution, discipline, development, and having a less of a link with organization, practice or research.*

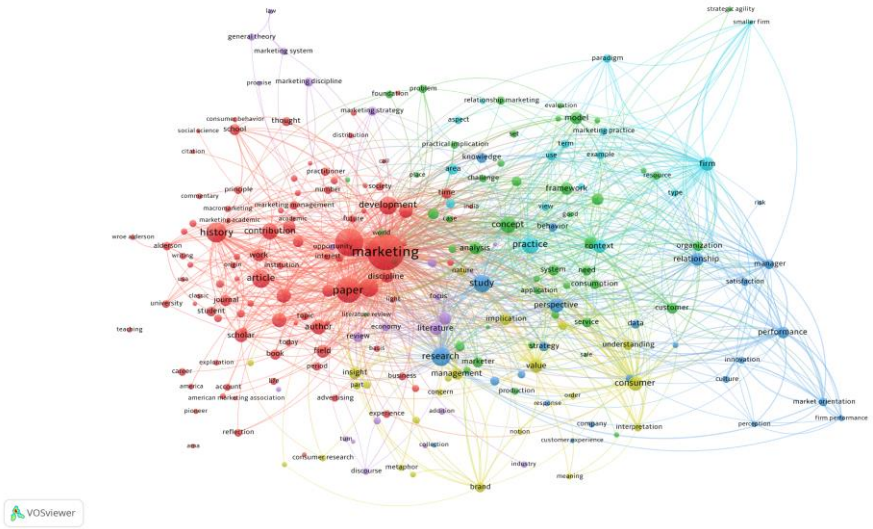


Fig. 3 – Network visualisation of the term *Marketing*
((Source: author's computation based on Scopus data)

At the same time, in figure 4, we can observe the network developed in the 342 papers that contain the concept of *marketing thought* in their title or abstract.

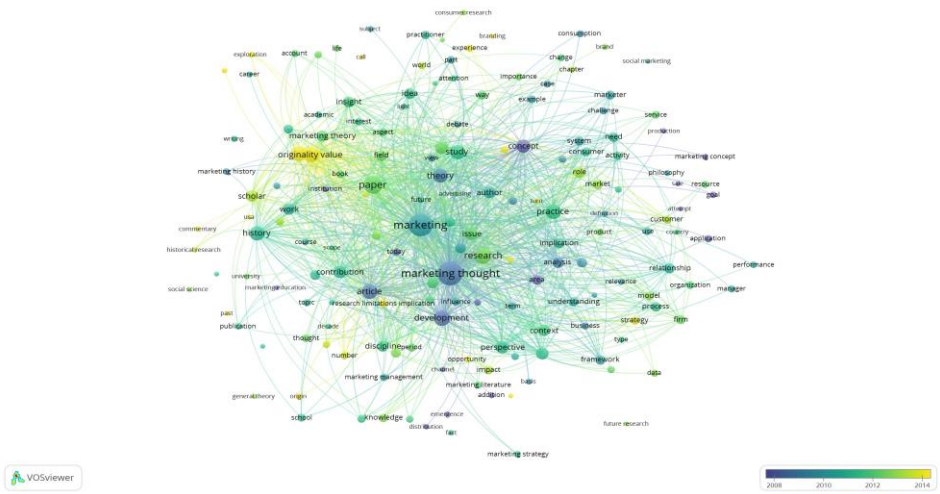


Fig. 4 – Network visualisation of the term *Marketing Thought*
((Source: author's computation based on Scopus data)

By doing a careful analysis of figure 4, we can observe that the network map of these publications is more compact, with a more even distribution of connections and links between general terms like: marketing, research, issue, practice, understanding, theory, study, concepts etc. Another aspect that must be considered is the fact that the colours

(just as the legend point out) show more in-depth research of the concept within the literature review in the period of 2008 – 2014 /2015, just as presented in figure 1, which demonstrates the intensive interest of the authors with the topic.

4. Conclusions

The research undertaken is from this perspective just the starting point of understanding how the *marketing thought has* developed in the last century or so, a topic that needs further research. The brief and limited analysis shows an interest in this area, especially in the beginning of the 21st century, but it is limited to the fact that the main body of investigated elements are papers published in Sopus data base, while prior to the 1980 – 1990's we had a better understanding of this topic from books, rather than from articles, which constitutes one of the limitations of our research.

Understanding the history of the marketing thought and that of the marketing concept, in relation with the evolution of the practical activity is of great importance for scholars and practitioners alike, due to the fast paced rhythm of the development of the industry. While understanding the past can give us a better understanding of the future, this future must not be neglected, but researched, which will constitute the next steps in our research with aims to provide a more intricate understanding of the marketing thought and theory considering the new challenges facing marketing specialists and scholars of the 21st century.

5. References

Bartels R., *The History of Marketing Thought,* 2nd edition, in Jones, B.D.G., Shaw, E.H., *A History of Marketing Thought,* 2002, accessed online in 2023, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235362475_A_History_of_Marketing_Thought,

Balaure, V. (coord.), *Marketing,* Uranus Publishing House, 2nd Edition, Bucharest, 2002

Baker, M.J., *The marketing book,* 5th Edition, Butterworth-Heineman, Elsevier, 2003, p.3;

Baker, M.J., Hart, S., *The marketing book*, 6th edition, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, UK, 2008;

Eliss et.al., *Introducing the History of Marketing Theory and Practice*, Marketing course, https://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/37775_02_Eliss_et_al_Ch_01.pdf

Fuciu, Mircea and Dumitrescu, Luigi. "From Marketing 1.0 To Marketing 4.0 – The Evolution of the Marketing Concept in the Context of the 21ST Century" International conference KNOWLEDGE-BASED ORGANIZATION, vol.24, no.2, 2018, pp.43-48. https://doi.org/10.1515/kbo-2018-0064

Gunlach G.T., Wilkie, W.L., *The American Marketing Association's New Definition of Marketing: Perspective and Commentary on the 2007 Revision*, Journal of Public Policy & Marketing, Vol. 28 (2) Fall 2009, 259–264, https://www.unf.edu/~ggundlac/pdfs/pub_07.pdf

Hermans, C., *The history of marketing thought,* Missouri state University, 2009, https://people.missouristate.edu/chuckhermans/bartels.htm

Jones, B.D.G., Shaw, E.H., *A History of Marketing Thought,* https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235362475_A_History_of_Marketing_Thought, 2002

Kotler, P., Armstrong, Principles of marketing, 5th Edition, Teora Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008,

Kotler, P., Keller K.L., *Marketing management, 5th Edition*, Teora Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008

Manole, V., Stoian, M., Ion, R.A., *Marketing*, ASE Publishing House, București, 2011

Palmer A., *Introduction to marketing,* 3rd Edition, Oxford University Press, UK, 2012, p. 4;

See, A., The definition of marketing, 21 September 2007, http://customerthink.com/definition_marketing/, accessed in September 2015, in Fuciu, M., *Marketingul și rețelele de socializare online – comunicând cu consumatorii secolului 21,* Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu Publishing House, Sibiu, 2015 pp. 7-9

Shaw, E. H., & Tamilia, R. D. (2001). Robert Bartels and the History of Marketing Thought. *Journal of Macromarketing*, *21*(2), 156-163.

*** American Marketing Association, accessed on 29.11.2015 https://www.ama.org/AboutAMA/Pages/Definition-of-Marketing.aspx;

*** The Chartered Institute of Marketing, UK, accessed on 29.11.2015, https://marketingexpert.cim.co.uk/glossary/