THE MARKETING CONCEPT

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ABSTRACT

Since the term "Market Orientation" is recognised as the critical factor in business success there has been an overwhelming increase in research issues linking market orientation with company performance. The term market orientation has been employed by scholars to indicate the implementation of the marketing concept. In order to understand market orientation, one believes that there is a need to recall what the marketing concept is. Therefore, this study reviews the "marketing concept" as a vehicle to develop a thorough understanding of the background on market orientation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The success of business is related to marketing. The failure of business is also related to marketing. One believes that the cause of this paradox lies in the misunderstanding of the marketing concept. It could be claimed that the implementation of marketing concept is the reason of this paradox. Although we agree with this idea, we also have a faith in the understanding of marketing concept leads business to the successful implementation of the marketing concept. Globalisation of business and competition drive companies to focus on marketing concept. Therefore, there is a need to understand what marketing concept is before deciding whether the concept is a "Gospel" or a "Sinner" of marketing. Implementation of marketing concept has become very popular among academicians. It is usually named as 'market orientation' (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). Actually, the term market orientation is usually employed by authors to denote the implementation of the marketing concept. The aim of this study is to develop a thorough understanding of the background on market orientation. We believe that the term marketing concept needs to be analysed to understand the term market orientation. This study commences with defining the term marketing. Its historical evolution since the industrial revolution is summarised. The delineation of and the background to the marketing concept are ensued by an examination of the issues on its relative acceptance and implementation. This study concludes with an exposition of the most influential critics of the marketing concept.

2. WHAT IS "MARKETING"?
2.1 The Origins Of Marketing
A striking feature in the notion of marketing in general is that no single definition exists. This should come as no surprise to the well-seasoned marketing practitioners and scholars. Marketing is inherently multidimensional. As such, it is practised and studied from many distinct points of view, with varying means and toward different ends. Perhaps inevitably, a variety of definitions of marketing have emerged and evolved. Any -academic at least- consensus on defining marketing appears to be of comparatively recent vintage. Crosier (1975) reviewed over fifty existing definitions of marketing, which he consolidated into three major groups; marketing as a process,
marketing as a concept or philosophy of business and marketing as an orientation. The process
definition of marketing reflects that marketing is concerned with the relationships between buyers
and sellers within the process of exchange of economic products and services. This definition of
marketing as a process is also known as the classical or narrow definition of marketing. In
delineating marketing as a process, perhaps the definition most widely accepted by academics and
marketing managers originated with the American Marketing Association:

"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
organisational goals" (Ferrel & Lucas, 1987: 17).

Marketing has, quite distinctly, been described as a business function and also as a business
philosophy (Baker, 1993; Brown, 1987; Bernard, 1987). As an example of the latter, consider for
instance Baker (1989) defining marketing as:

"Marketing is a very simple philosophy which requires producers to start with the identification
and specification of consumer needs and the mobilise their companies' assets and resources to
achieve a mutually satisfying exchange relationship from which both parties derive the benefits
they are seeking" (Baker, 1989: 3).

As well as the management philosophy of marketing, Kotler (1997) stresses its social side:
"Marketing is a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they
need and want through creating, offering, and exchanging products of value with others" (Kotler,
1997: 14).

Despite the convergent nature of such definitions, the marked lack of consensus among the various
authors remains. One could venture for explanations in that:

- By contrast to most other disciplines, notably the physical sciences and in some cases the
  behavioural sciences, marketing has no recognised central theoretical basis (Halbert, 1965).
Marketing is a multidimensional phenomenon, combining the philosophy of business as well as its practice (Baker, 1983).

The classical (process) definition of marketing clearly provides that marketing is managed within the marketing departments in the various business organisations, as it is concerned with the physical movement of economic goods and services. However, some of the shortcomings of approaching marketing as a process in the classical sense include:

- An overvaluation of the role of the physical distribution and of the marketing channels.
- The omission of government and nonprofit organisations.
- Inadequate emphasis being ascribed in the importance of the procedure of Exchange between buyers and sellers.
- The marketing environment of the organisation is not considered.

The broader, modern definition of describing marketing as a process allows for escaping several pitfalls associated with the classical definition. In terms of the broader definition, the organisation achieves its goals by satisfying its customers. Later in this study the modern definition of marketing (marketing concept) will be examined in greater detail.

2.2. Background To The Marketing Concept

The origins of marketing can be found in the process of people's exchange of one good for another. Before the Industrial Revolution, exchanges of goods were limited, as people did not have many items to trade. An early framework on the evolution of marketing since the industrial revolution is Keith's (1960). According to him, there are three distinct central stages; the production era, the sales era and the marketing era. This framework has been widely accepted for a number of years, and is presented in several introductory marketing textbooks. Far from being an alternative definition of marketing, the marketing concept is "a way of thinking- a management philosophy guiding an organisation's overall activities [affecting] all the efforts of the organisation, not just its marketing activities" (Dibb et al., 1992: 13). Recently, the marketing concept has become the way of thinking where the customer is located at the centre. This constitutes a radical
departure from Henry Ford's marketing philosophy in the early 1900s, epitomised by his famous "the customers can have any colour car they want as long as it is black". Before the evolution of the American economy into a consumer society in the 1950s, marketing was primarily seen in the terms of selling, and the focal point for companies was products, not customers. Emerging first in the General Electric Company in 1952, the marketing concept has been consistently redefined over the past four decades. The landmark General Electric Company annual report announcing a new management philosophy stated that:

"[The concept]... introduces the marketing man at the beginning rather than at the end of the production cycle and integrates marketing into each phase of business. Thus, marketing, through its studies and research, will establish for the engineer, the design and manufacturing man, what the customer wants in a given product, what price he is willing to pay, and where and when it will be wanted. Marketing will have the authority in product planning, production scheduling and inventory control, as well as in sales distribution and servicing for the product" (O'Leary & Iredale, 1976: 146.).

This radical step in the business world led various authors to further indulge in the marketing concept and consequently academic literature has gained new terms and views. The earliest response to business action was from Peter Drucker (1954) suggesting that the purpose of business should be to create and retain satisfied customers. Felton (1959: 55) stressed the importance of integration and coordination of all the marketing functions, defining the marketing concept as "a corporate state of mind that insists on the integration and coordination of all the marketing functions, which, in turn, are melded with all other corporate functions, for the basic purpose of producing maximum long-range corporate profits." Keith's (1960) article still remains one of the significant commentaries as to the application of the marketing concept in practice. Keith (1960) described the changing attitudes on marketing as the marketing revolution, stressing that the business world now accepted the idea that the consumer, not the company, is at the centre. He examined the evolution of the Pillsbury Company in four stages, from production oriented to sales oriented, moving on to a marketing oriented state, the latter based on the idea
that "marketing begins and ends with consumers". Finally, the fourth stage of this marketing revolution is marketing control which aims that marketing will become the basic motivating force for the entire corporation -from finance to sales and to production- to satisfy the needs and desires of the consumer.

Due to its highlighting of the sharp contrast between selling and marketing concepts, Levitt's 'Marketing Myopia' (1960) made a big contribution to the marketing literature.

"The difference between marketing and selling is more than semantic. Selling focuses on the needs of seller, marketing on the needs of buyer. Selling is preoccupied with the seller's need to convert his product into cash; marketing with the idea of satisfying the needs of the customer by means of the product and the whole cluster of things associated with creating, delivering and finally consuming it" (Levitt, 1960: 50).

Levitt (1960) underscored that the reason for the demise of many failing or declining industries was their product, rather than customer orientation. "The history of every dead and dying 'growth' industry shows a self-deceiving cycle of bountiful expansion and undetected decay". For Levitt, the presence of the following four conditions would usually guarantee this outcome:

1- The belief that growth is assured by an expansion and a more affluent population.
2- The belief that there is no competitive substitute for the industry's major product.
3- Too much faith in mass production and in the advantages of rapidly declining unit costs as output rises.
4- Preoccupation with a product that lends itself to carefully controlled scientific experimentation, improvement, and manufacturing cost reduction.

Finally, Levitt (1960) stress that management must think of itself as a customer creating and customer satisfying organisation and must drive the company into this environment to become customer oriented.
The discussion on the marketing concept was first broadened by Marketing Staff of the Ohio State University (1965). They formulated a definition of marketing as:

"The process in a society by which the demand structure for economic goods and services is anticipated or enlarged and satisfied through the conception, promotion, exchange and physical distribution of such goods and services" (Marketing Staff of the Ohio State University, 1965: 43).

This stands in contrast to the American Marketing Association's definition of marketing as "the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producer to consumer or user" (Hunt, 1976: 17). The Marketing Staff of the Ohio State University suggested marketing to be a social process rather than a set of business activities, as AMA defined.

2.3. Broadening The Scope Of Marketing

Kotler and Levy (1969a) initiated a new dimension suggesting that the marketing concept must be broadened to include nonbusiness organisations (for instance churches, police departments, museums and public schools), as they too have products and consumers and they already employed some marketing tools. Therefore; "All organisations must develop appropriate products to serve their sundry consuming groups and must use modern tools of communication to reach their consuming publics. The business heritage of marketing provides a useful set of concepts for guiding all organisations"(Kotler & Levy, 1969: 15). Nonbusiness organisations are involved with marketing, and "the choice facing those who manage nonbusiness organisations is not whether to market or not to market, for no organisation can avoid marketing. The choice is whether do it well or poorly, and on this necessity the case for organisational marketing is basically founded"(Kotler & Levy, 1969a: 15).

In addition to broadening the range of organisations for which marketing is relevant, they also suggested that the concepts of products and consumers must be broadened. In his discussion of the changing boundaries of marketing Lazer (1969) denoted that these now extend beyond the profit motive, involving ethics, values, responsibilities and marketing-government relationships.
He posed the question "What are the boundaries of marketing in modern society?" to which he suggested that we need to know that "what is required is a broader perception and definition of marketing than has hitherto been the case-one that recognises marketing's societal dimensions and perceives of marketing as more than just a technology of the firm" (Lazer, 1969: 9).

On the broadening the concept of marketing, Kotler & Levy (1969a) were initially censured on a number of counts: Marketing must be "deepened" as well as broadened (Enis; 1973: 62). Furthermore, "not all exchanges are marketing exchanges; marketing will cover only the resolving of the economics needs and wants in society... [therefore] marketing will not include exchanges in noneconomic areas where participants are non-marketing institutions such as churches, welfare agencies, and cultural agencies" (Arndt, 1978: 101). It is also possible to maintain that the marketing concept would result in the shifting of focus away from the product, design, development and manufacture and would not let the companies be successful on product innovation (Bennet & Cooper, 1981). Moreover, "the marketing concept is not applicable to two broad classes of producers because of the personal values and social norms that characterise the production process. These two types of producers are the 'artists' and the 'ideologists' " (Hirschman, 1983: 46).

Naturally, Kotler and Levy (1969b) responded vigorously to subsequent criticism, taking issue first with Luck (1969). Luck (1969) had proposed that marketing must be limited to those business processes and activities that ultimately result in a market transaction. Kotler & Levy (1969b) ascribed a new form of myopia to Luck (1969), suggesting that "the crux of marketing lies in a general idea of exchange rather than the narrower thesis of market transactions... [whilst] exchange involves two (or more) parties who voluntarily agree to enter into a 'trading' relationship" (Kotler & Levy, 1969b). Other scholars rallying in support of Kotler & Levy (1969b) include Lavidge (1970) who insisted that "the areas in which marketing people can, and must, be of service to society have broadened. In addition marketing's functions have been broadened. Marketing no longer can be defined adequately in terms of the activities involved in buying, selling, and transporting goods and services"(Lavidge, 1970: 27).
In addition, Lavidge (1970) stated his belief that marketing people have not only the opportunity but also a "responsibility" to serve society (Lavidge, 1970). As such responsibilities he propagated:

- the reduction of marketing abuses and upgrading standards
- to help in mitigating and ultimately eliminating the effects of poverty
- to aid in improving the marketing of social and cultural services
- to develop international marketing institutions which will contribute to improved utilisation and distribution of the world's resources and, to world peace.

Ferber (1970) also agreed on the broadening of the marketing concept saying that integration and diversification are the key words of marketing and that marketing will ultimately diversify into the social and the public policy fields.

Kotler & Zaltman (1971) later repeated the arguments on "social marketing". Their description of social marketing states that it is the "design, implementation, and control of programs calculated to influence the acceptability of social ideas and involving considerations of product planning, pricing, communication, distribution, and marketing research" (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971: 5).

In the same issue of the Journal of Marketing where Kotler's and Zaltman's (1971) work had appeared, a number of other articles examined the relationship of marketing to social marketing and environmental management. Marketing tools and planning were applied to the fund-raising campaign of a national charity (Mindak & Bybee, 1971), aspects of the health service (Zaltman & Vertinsky, 1971), population problems (Farley & Leavitt, 1971), and recycling solid wastes (Zikmund & Stanton, 1971).

Bartels (1974) departure suggested a distinct broadening of the scope of marketing practice and therefore of "the concept of marketing, with the term of social marketing designating the application of marketing techniques to nonmarketing fields" (Bartels, 1974: 75).
The proliferation of new ideas on the issues led Luck (1974) to express his "personal confusion regarding the meaning of 'social marketing' [and his] uncomfortable feeling about the identity of marketing" (Luck, 1974: 70). However, the brimming process continued unabated with Hunt (1976) identifying the micro/macro, profit/nonprofit sector and positive/normative dimensions of marketing, whilst contrasting that if marketing is to be restricted to only profit/micro/normative dimensions, then in his opinion marketing is not a science.

In the meantime, Kotler (1972) restated his original ideas as a "generic" concept of marketing, pointing out that the core concept of marketing is the transaction. As a transaction Kotler defines almost any exchange of the values occurring not only between buyers and sellers or organisations and clients, but also between any two parties. In fact, "the things-of-values need not be limited to goods, services, and money; they include other resources such as time, energy, and feelings" (Kotler, 1972: 65). In the same article he also categorised the marketing activities in the light of broadening of marketing; "Generic marketing further implies the marketing activity can be classed according to target market (marketing directed to supporters, employees, suppliers, agents, consumers, general public, special public, government, and competitors); the product (goods, services, organisations, person, places, and ideas) and the marketer (business, political, social, religious, cultural, and knowledge organisations" (Kotler, 1972: 54).

Herein the evolution of what was later to become one of the most influential sects in the contemporary evaluation of the marketing concept continues by further advancing marketing within the context of exchange theory. Having first described marketing as an exchange (Kotler & Levy, 1969a), the authors continued broadening the concept of marketing by proposing that in that sense buyers are marketers too (Kotler & Levy, 1973)For Bagozzi (1975), social marketing, as a subset of the generic concept of marketing should in fact approach the creation and resolution of exchanges in social relationships with greater precision. He points to what in his opinion is a misdirected focus by marketers on, primarily, the direct transfers of tangible entities between two parties. In an extended discussion on the
various types of exchanges, Bagozzi highlights a number of aspects indicative of the multidimensional nature of the actual marketing exchanges, where not only more than two parties may participate, but in addition there also is ample evidence to suggest that their character is rather indirect in that they involve intangible and symbolic aspects as well. Hence the meaning of exchange should not be limited within exchanges of market value but it should actually incorporate any type of social exchange. In fact Bagozzi has gone as far as to suggest in his conclusion that "exchange is a central concept in marketing" whose usefulness could extend as serving as "the foundation for that elusive 'general theory of marketing'" (Bagozzi, 1975: 42).

Within the foundations of the preceding analysis of exchanges, Pandya & Dholakia (1992), have pointed out that the economic structure of contemporary societies can be captured in four types of institutions; households, private firms, public enterprises and government institutions. Trades and transfers are exchanges and could take one of three principal forms; market exchange, reciprocal exchange and redistributive exchange. The institutional framework, based on the political economy approach, presents an embedded view of exchange where households, private firms, public enterprises and government institutions are linked by reciprocal, redistributive and market exchanges. Clearly therefore, societies with a different and changing mix of institutions will have different patterns of exchange, which supports the view that the meaning of the exchange is inherently and inevitably different in each society.

Nichel's (1974) empirical study on the conceptual conflicts of marketing targeted 100 marketing professors obtaining a response rate of 74%. His results showed 95% of the respondents believing that the scope of marketing should be broadened to include nonbusiness organisations, 93% of them as agreeing that marketing is not concerned solely with economic goods and services, whilst 83% of the educators believed that activities other than those whose ultimate result is a market transaction should be included in the domain of marketing. Recapitulating, it was the reorganisation of the General Electric Company in the early 1950s that sparked off a corporate business philosophy later to become known as the marketing concept.
Its definition, limitations, implements and general understanding of it was to last well into the early 1970s. Because the marketing concept was understood in different ways, its application was far from smooth, whilst it confused both managers and educators. The marketing concept has been heavily criticised since its early 1950s appearance, and it is unlikely that it will remain entirely uncontroversial. Some of its critics believe that it has been so widely misunderstood that it not only needs to be radically reviewed but that also "it is... time that we relearn the marketing concept" (Houston, 1986: 81). Despite whatever weaknesses however, it made managers realise that selling is different than marketing, that customer wants and needs must be the focus point, and that organisations should try to provide goods and services that satisfy customers' needs through a co-ordinated set of activities and integrated efforts that lead the organisation to achieve its goals.

3. THE MARKETING CONCEPT

3.1. Definition Of The Marketing Concept

The marketing concept is fundamentally a business philosophy that includes customer orientation and integrated organisation activities in achieving organisations' goals. The marketing concept leads an organisation to achieve its goals by providing for customer satisfaction. Many authors have defined the marketing concept in different ways, but perhaps the one, which is widely recognised, has that,

"The marketing concept holds that the key achieving organisational goals consists of being more effective than competitors in integrating marketing activities toward determining and satisfying the needs and wants of target markets"(Kotler, 1997: 19).

The marketing concept is based on four main pillars; market focus, customer orientation, coordinated marketing and profitability. Market Focus: Before companies concentrate on customer satisfaction, they must find the target market in which they can operate and achieve what they want. Companies may essentially not operate in each market and satisfy all different needs. Therefore, defining the target market is the first step of applying and implementing the marketing concept.
Customer Orientation: Most of the organisations have apparently failed to implement the marketing concept, for their understanding of it remains essentially the making a product that they believe customers need. Product-oriented companies fail to ask customers what they want and need. What a General Motors executive said on the issue some years ago constitutes a prime example in understanding the way that product-oriented companies operate; "How can the public know what kind of car they want until we have invented it?" McKitterick, a former president of General Electric, explains how companies must see that "the principal task of the marketing function in a management concept is not so much to be skilful in making the customer do what suits the interests of the business as to be skilful in conceiving and then making the business do what suits the interests of the customer" (McKitterick, 1957: 79).

Coordinated Marketing: Coordinated marketing means that marketing functions such as product management, sales, marketing research, advertising must be integrated among themselves, and also that the marketing function must be integrated with the other functions of the organisation in order to enhance the organisation's total effectiveness. Coordinated marketing stresses that all functions of the organisations must work like in one body. This may only be executed successfully when the executives of the organisation understand the importance of this notion and can make it work in the organisation.

Profitability: The marketing concept means not only satisfying customers but also achieving the goals of the organisation that would allow it to stay in business in the long-term. The aim of the company is not to make money; it is to find a profitable way to satisfy customers. The way achieve this aim is by focusing on profit rather than sales-volume.

Here the four pillars of the marketing concept have been summarised. Implementation of the marketing concept however is a complicated process. It involves identification of the target market, ascertaining what customers want and need, creating the right products and achieving organisational goals. This may only succeed if all functions within the organisation work harmoniously together and if the organisations' management and employees believe and observe
this philosophy in the process of leading the organisation to achieve its goals. According to Kotler (1991) however, very few companies have successfully implemented the marketing concept. "Most companies have not arrived at full marketing maturity. They think they have marketing because they have a marketing vice-president, product managers, a salesforce, advertising budgets, and so on. But a marketing department does not assure a market-oriented company" (Kotler, 1991: 22).

3. 2. Critics Of The Marketing Concept
The marketing concept has been criticised on the following grounds;

1- The marketing concept discourages product innovation; Perhaps the most widely criticised aspect of the marketing concept is the suggestion that organisations must be customer oriented to effect new products meeting customers' needs and wants. Buyer models implicitly assumed in the marketing concept have been based on the basis of rational decision making hypothesis (Dickinson et al., 1986), in particular that;

a- Consumers have goals/wants to satisfy which have low cost for them,
b- The wants and needs of consumers can be identified by researchers from how people say and express their goals.

Kaldor (1971) says that customers do not always know their needs and cannot be always rational in the sense of their future needs. He also claims that the marketing concept is an inadequate prescription for marketing strategy, because it ignores the creative abilities of organisations. Houston has suggested that "rather than describing marketing concept as an 'inadequate prescription' it would be better to describe it as an 'incomplete prescription'. The marketing concept focuses the marketer's attention on the customer but does not tell the marketer to disregard his/her unique capabilities and resources when deciding how to serve the customer's needs and wants best" (Houston, 1986: 86).
It has been argued that the marketing concept discourages major product innovation (Taubert, 1974) leading organisations away from major product innovation towards low risk product changes (Bennett & Cooper, 1981). In fact Bennett & Cooper blame the marketing concept in the sense that "the marketing concept has diverted our attention from the product and its manufacture; instead we have focused our strategy on responses to market wants and have become preoccupied with advertising, selling and promotion" (Bennett & Cooper, 1981: 52). Houston's understanding however is somewhat different: "The marketing concept does not urge us to depend solely on marketing research (customer surveys) for guidance in new product research... the marketing concept does not consist of advertising, selling, and promotion. It is willingness to recognise and understand the customer's needs and wants, and a willingness to adjust any of marketing mix elements, including product, to satisfy those needs and wants" (Houston, 1986: 86).

In a previous article on the same issue, Bennett & Cooper (1979) argued that the marketing concept will result in the killing of new products. In order to encourage significant product innovation they propose "the product value concept" in their second article.

"The product value concept is a business orientation that recognises that product value is the key to profits. It stresses competing on the basis of customer need satisfaction with superior, higher value products. Value depends on the customer's perception of the product attributes, which are largely a function of the firm's technological, design and manufacturing strengths and skills"(Bennett & Cooper, 1981: 59).

Bennet & Cooper (1979, 1981) also argue that "technology push" models has given way to "market pull models" that used to provide little encouragement for technological discoveries, inventions or significant breakthroughs. They maintain that market pull models constitute the antithesis of the technology push model. Riesz (1980) agrees that the shift from "science pushes" to "market pull" can have negative effects on the corporate strategy of the firms and the public policy of the governments.
In contrast to Bennett & Cooper, (1979, 1981) and Riesz (1980) arguments, Kiel (1984) states that the defence of marketing is based on three main arguments: "Firstly, marketing pull and technological push are not opposing, mutually exclusive paths to innovation. These concepts have become strawmen built upon a misunderstanding of the nature and roles of science and technology. Secondly, considerable empirical evidence on the innovation process proves that market-related forces are the primary influence on technological innovation. Thirdly, the view of the marketing concept put forward by its detractors is overly simplistic" (Kiel, 1984: 8).

In addition, Kiel (1984) proposes that the marketing concept can work in conjunction with R&D efforts to produce innovation. He enlists support for his argument from an empirical study claiming market related forces to be the primary influence on innovation.

"In summary the way to achieve "technology-marketing magic" at the firm level is through integrating research and development activities as part of overall corporate planning, undertaking appropriate market feasibility studies at the earliest possible time, and developing rapport between the marketing and research and development functions" (Kiel, 1984: 12).

Some empirical studies support such claims that the marketing concept can work successfully on new product planning (Hise, 1965; Lusch et al., 1976; Souder, 1981; Gupta et al., 1985; Gupta et al., 1986; Wilson & Ghingold, 1987). Lawton & Parasuman (1980) in fact have proposed that there is no evidence to support that the adaptation of the marketing concept should influence new product planning. Recently Kodama (1992) has stressed that it is "the market [that] drives the R & D agenda, not the other way around" (Kodama, 1992: 71). He has also pointed out that companies that rely on a technology strategy that no longer works in a such a fast changing environment, can not be successful in the longer term, because a single breakthrough technology focuses on the R & D effort too narrowly and ignores the possibilities of combining technologies. Therefore, companies need to have both the breakthrough and the "technology fusion" approaches in their technology strategies.
2- The marketing concept failed in implementation: Barksdale & Darden's survey of Fortune's Directory of the 500 Largest Corporations has found that "the majority of executives and educators believe that the marketing concept is a powerful and viable idea that has influenced management philosophy and thought, but relatively few companies are able to implement the concept and make it operational on a day-to-day basis" (Barksdale & Darden, 1971: 36). Perhaps the principal reason for this failure results as a result of the fiercely competitive environment where most companies have to operate nowadays according to Sachs & Benson (1978). The authors point that on the basis of the assumptions of the marketing concept, firms should play strictly passive roles in transactional processes. This passivity is illustrated by Drucker (1974) as reaching the extreme where the aim of marketing is "to make selling superfluous" and get to know the consumer so well that "the product or service fits him and sells itself" (Drucker, 1974: 64-65). For Sachs & Benson, few products can sell themselves, and a variety of active elements are employed to boost sales. Even in the work of the warmest advocates of the marketing concept such as Levitt (1962), this distinct failure to adhere to the basic principles of the marketing concept is visible. This ambiguity between theory and practice is also pronounced in the proliferation imitative or "parity" products, another active manifestation of business rivalry. Other issues where Sachs and Benson (1978) have spotted ambiguities between theory and practice include the role of profitability and welfare concerns. Indeed Sachs and Benson (1978) call for the summarily rejection of the marketing concept, not only because a firm can not adhere faithfully to the marketing concept and still compete effectively in the contemporary business environment, but also because of the marketing concept "like an astute politician is grandly vague" (Sachs and Benson, 1978: 74). Today -as opposed to the early 1950s- the demands of marketing are for specifics and marketing, akin to production needs to present practical and pragmatic solutions and demonstrable evidence of efficiency and effectiveness. For instance "as of now the marketing concept contributes little to an explanation if demand functions" (Sachs and Benson, 1978: 74), which is perhaps hardly surprising, given that its first principles are the rationality of man and utilitarianism. Perhaps these assorted concerns led Gordon (1986) to propose a new orientation; "The marketing concept can no longer be considered
an appropriate means for achieving sustainable growth. It must be now be replaced by a new orientation - the competitive concept" (Gordon; 1986, p.32).

On the other hand, a good deal of authors asserts that the marketing concept has by and large been implemented and adopted successfully. McNamara's (1972) empirical evidence, on the basis of a survey that includes 1,492 companies selected from the 21 manufacturing industry classifications in Dun and Bradstreet's 1969 Million Dollar Directory, "supports the hypothesis that consumer goods companies have tended to adopt and implement the marketing concept to a greater degree than industrial goods companies... Supporters of the marketing concept have emphasised that the concept applies to business of any size" (McNamara, 1972: 56-57). Other empirical studies supporting that the marketing concept has been adopted and implemented successfully include Hise (1965), Lusch et al. (1976), Souder (1981), Gupta et al. (1985), and Gupta et al. (1986), Wilson & Ghingold (1987), Edget & Thwaites (1990), Narver & Slater (1990) and Hooley et al. (1990).

Investigating possible reasons for the failure to apply and implement the marketing concept, McGee & Spiro (1988) claim that managers have misused the marketing concept by emphasising only marketing research over other functions, whilst they have heavily focused on short-term profits. Parasuman (1981) also emphasises that reasons for declines on product innovation may have roots in a marked lack of understanding and application of the marketing concept. Webster's (1981) research among the top management of 21 corporations shows that the acceptance of the marketing concept as a management philosophy is still incomplete. Houston (1986), Webster (1988) and Lichtenthal & Wilson (1992) also agree that the marketing concept needs a better prescription for its implementation.

3- The concept fails to recognise a business social responsibility to the consumer: Bell & Emory (1971) say that although the marketing concept requires that customer needs and wants must be the focus point of all marketing action, customer satisfaction conflicts with profit which is the basic operational goal of business. "The propose of customer orientation is to improve the firm's selling
effectiveness. Providing customer satisfaction is a means to achieving a company profit objective and does not imply protection of customer welfare" (Bell & Emory, 1971: 39). They argue that profit must be a consequence of satisfying customer's needs and wants and they construct a revised view of the marketing concept that will assume that the first objective of companies is to assume more responsibility for consumer welfare. Feldman (1971) also argue that the marketing concept emphasises material consumption and ignores social responsibility such as environmental protection and social satisfaction. Dawson (1969) states that the "marketing concept is not adequate to help business retain healthy ecological balance with an environment characterised by an increasing shift from sensitive values to human, social and moral values" (Dawson, 1969: 37).

Therefore the marketing concept is "outmoded", because its application has caused the manufacturing of some products which are major threats in the society such as cigarettes, guns and armaments. He proposed the "human concept" that can consider the human and environmental issues whilst providing profit.

In a competitive environment, profit is the most important goal for the survival of corporations and for the achievement of their long-term goals. The marketing concept proposes that consumer satisfaction is meant to achieve long-run profits through satisfying customers.

In addition to the critics above, Star (1989) points that "people get exposed to a great deal of marketing effort that is not intended for them, and so they get irritated, frustrated, or mad" (Star, 1989: 152). Marketing programs generate three partially overlapping consumer groups: the market segment, the program target and the program audience. While a well-conceived marketing program (segment, target and audience) certainly provides satisfaction to some consumers, mismatched clusters of these three may distract and frustrate other consumers.

We believe that the following statement will respond all the critics of the marketing concept.

"The marketing concept is a managerial prescription relating to the attainment of an entry's goals. For certain well-defined but restrictive market conditions and for exchange determined goals
which are not product related, the marketing concept is a prescription showing how an entity can achieve this goals most efficiently. The marketing concept states that an entity achieves its own exchange determined goals most efficiently through a thorough understanding of potential exchange partners and their needs and wants, through a thorough understanding of the cost associated with satisfying those needs and wants, and then designing, producing, and offering products in light of this understanding" (Houston, 1986: 8).

4. CONCLUSION

To date, there is a marked lack of consensus on a single definition of marketing and by consequence, a comprehensive single general theory of marketing has remained an elusive task. Marketing is depicted as a process, a business function and a business philosophy. Perhaps this inherent vagueness and ambiguity comes as a result of the fact that marketing has been practised and studied for many different reasons. Often, its dimensions have been broadened to the extend that social and ethical concepts have been invariably included.

The marketing concept is best described as a business philosophy that has customer orientation at its core and strives to integrate and coordinate an organisation's activities to this end. This is a radical departure from earlier business aims of expanding production, increasing efficiency and maximising sales on what was available for production. Perhaps the evolution of marketing on this path has been due to changing patterns in demand and in competition. Advocates of the marketing concept stress that failure to become customer oriented has led many a firm -if not whole sectors- to its death. The marketing concept has been broadened within the framework of the exchange process. Moreover, it has been extended outside business organisations to incorporate social and ethical issues as well. One critical observation in this broadening of marketing however must be made with regard to social marketing in particular. Social marketing dilutes the notion of consumer centredness. As a result, in practice, market orientation favours a narrow concept of marketing.
Critics however have underscored that the marketing concept remains vague and non-scientific. Concerns that it leads to declines in product innovation and breakthroughs remain a point of contention. Perhaps one of the strongest and persistent criticisms of the marketing concept arises as a result of its inherent inapplicability in the face of competition, where many firms feel compelled to adopt a number of practices such as product imitation, line extension and active sales techniques, which for some authors stand in direct violation to the principles of the marketing concept, making it innately redundant.

REFERENCES


