

Polarization of Marketing Theory: Fueling the Quest for Scientific Marketing Truth

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Editorial

Arguably, there is an evident condition of polarized controversies in marketing theory, where two extreme ends are trying to pull the arguments towards their outlier point without giving much room for meeting in middle points [1,2].

This article aims to examine how this currently evident polarization of marketing theory controversies can be a barrier/or a stimulus to reaching the ultimate objective of scientific marketing truth. The problem tackled by this article and hopefully by a subsequent stream of conceptual and empirical research is to bridge the theoretical gap of identifying the most influential polar points and their implications to having a plausible scientific marketing truth.

It's still highly unclear whether marketing theory in its persistent and militant quest for scientific marketing truth needs to reach one of the polarized extremes or a point in between or actually needs to keep the light of argument shed on the essence of the sought truths of marketing as a science.

The polarization of marketing theory can be characterized by three important features of philosophical argumentation. First, it's highly semantic-dominated meaning that there are highly raised arguments concerning generic and operational definitions of many marketing constructs. This has created a semantic jungle, where it became really difficult to come to terms with an exclusive and inclusive essence of any advanced, newly coined or even some basic marketing terms and jargons. Second, Many polarized controversies can be easily classified as census seeking i.e. they strive to bring all or at least most marketing scholars to hold and support polarized extreme ends. This has kept such controversies from acknowledging the values of their counter extremes and let alone the value of the argument itself. Third, most of these controversies are polarized based on belief-held rather than facts-found grounds, which in turn, reflect more the ideologies of researchers than the factual evidence of their research. This should be expected to result in a strong commitment to extremes based on pre-held dispositions even if it's contradicted by objective empiricism [1,3-5]. So it can be claimed that the above scientific substantiation features of polarization of marketing theory are favoring that one extreme should fulfill a swift victory over the other. By this token, where does this take the quest for scientific marketing truth?, In other words, does it create shortcuts to scientific marketing truth or does it lead marketing thought astray from that much lucrative and appealing scientific mandate?

With a view toward answering these critical and legitimate queries, it might be wise to first understand the pillars of scientific marketing truth which stands as a main ultimate end of marketing theory. This article argues that scientific marketing truth must comply with five main pillars [6,7]: 1) rigor referring to adopting a logical and systematic methodological process, 2) verifiability referring to transparency of empirical evidence and research activities, 3) replicability referring to feasibility of repeating the research process in different contexts, 4) building up referring to compliance with a state of the art marketing knowledge in triggering and extending research endeavors., and 5) problem solving, referring to its dedication to fulfilling relevance &

action ability of marketing thought. On the other hand, it could be useful if a number of high profiled polarizations of marketing theory are exhibited to demonstrate their very serious implications to reaching scientific marketing truth. This article proposes to single out ten polarized controversies that are currently hotly debated in marketing thought [1-3,5].

Transformational (revolutionary) versus foundational (confirmatory) marketing:

1. Dogmatic (ideological) versus pragmatic (factual) marketing.
2. Contextual (situational) versus universal (ubiquitous) marketing
3. Global (world class) versus local (cross cultural) marketing.
4. Economic optimizer (profit oriented) versus social friendly (welfare oriented) marketing.
5. Customer driven (well being driven) versus company driven (satisfaction driven) marketing.
6. Strategic (long term oriented) versus tactical (quick wins oriented) marketing.
7. Quantitative (generalization) versus qualitative (depth) marketing.
8. Real (physical) versus virtual (digital) marketing.
9. Customized (individualistic) versus mass (collectivistic) marketing.

To conclude, this article proposes a tentative answer to such crucial and complicated question, nevertheless, this answer are far from final and definitely requires substantial conceptual and empirical refines. The answer is built on the talking of whether the pillars of scientific marketing truth would benefit more from settling each polarized controversy to one extreme point, compromising each polarization to a middle point claiming that both extremes are needed or sparking a permanent fire that guarantee that the polarization argument perpetuates for its own sake. Ultimately the final position of this article is that tentatively sparking and sustaining the argument would be the road map for an effective quest to a scientific marketing truth that serve as true credential of marketing as a science, which taking a middle or an extreme point along the polars of marketing theory would simply bring

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an end to a potentially promising path to find a valuable marketing truth.

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