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Alan R. Andreasen

Despite the long history and increasing interest in nonprofit and social marketing, the managerial and pedagogical issues that arise in these noncommercial contexts are treated as unique cases in an intellectual environment dominated by commercial issues and applications. Its literature and basic textbooks allot only a few paragraphs or pages to nonprofit and social marketing. This essay posits the radical idea that this implicit taxonomy has the relationship upside down. The author argues that nonprofit and social marketing represent the most complex and difficult contexts in which marketing activities are carried out and that the appropriate classification of commercial applications is (only) one simplified variety of this complexity, principally the sales of products and services.

Keywords: nonprofit marketing, social marketing, broadening marketing, marketing theory, macromarketing

In a seminal essay in *Journal of Marketing* in 1969, Philip Kotler and Sidney Levy set out a powerful case for broadening the field of marketing. They point out that "every organization performs marketing-like activities whether or not they are recognized as such," and "marketing is a pervasive activity that goes considerably beyond the selling of toothpaste, soap and steel" (Kotler and Levy 1969, p. 11). Forty years ago, they anticipated "a great opportunity for marketing people to expand their thinking to apply their skills to an increasingly interesting range of social activity" (p. 10). Indeed, there have been a wide range of examples of such rethinking in recent essays and in books on nonprofit and social marketing, including many coauthored by Kotler. These approaches adapt commercial marketing frameworks and insights, often in imaginative ways.

However, the current situation mimics one on the commercial side recently highlighted by Vargo and Lusch (2004), who argue that, for years, services marketing was viewed as a special case in a field dominated by product marketing. They propose a fundamental rethinking of the entire field that incorporates both domains according to what they describe as a "service-dominant logic of marketing." They argue that services are the dominant paradigm and that products are only vehicles for delivering services.

The impact of this essay on the field has been considerable. In a preface to a 2006 collection of 31 essays on the topic, former *Journal of Marketing* editor Ruth Bolton argues that it confirms that the marketing discipline is "in the midst of a change in the content and boundaries" (Lusch and Vargo 2006, p. xi). Vargo and Lusch recognize nonprofit and social marketing as applications of service logic. Their original emphasis focused on the free enterprise system, in which "the firm primarily knows whether it is making better value propositions from the feedback it receives from the marketplace in terms of firm financial performance" (Vargo and Lusch 2008, p. 3). However, they now argue that their approach, "with its core notions that (1) service is the fundamental basis of exchange, (2) service is exchanged for service, and (3) the customer is always the co-creator of value,... is especially compatible with social and nonprofit marketing" (p. 6).

The American Marketing Association has also recognized the need to be more inclusive of the societal impacts of marketing, updating its own definition of the field in 2007–2008 to reflect this belief. Previous definitions treated marketing solely as an action verb describing activities that managers carried out to achieve organizational objectives. Building in part on the work of Wilkie and Moore (1999, 2003), the new definition accommodates nonprofit and social marketing and recognizes that marketing has important impacts on society both positively through its role in generating satisfying commercial transactions and negatively through its potential to deceive and distort social norms and values (Gundlach and Wilkie 2009). The current AMA definition is as follows:

> Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, marketers, and society at large.

However, both new approaches to describing the fundamental nature of the field still meet the kinds of headwinds that were present 40 years ago (Luck 1969). Nonprofit and social marketing scholars find that a wide range of marketing academics, researchers, and practitioners continue to have a "business bias." This mind-set is evident in writings

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about the nature of the field by marketing's intellectual leaders. For example, in a 1999 essay "Charting New Directions for Marketing," George Day and David Montgomery ask, "How do *firms* relate to their *markets*?" (Day and Montgomery 1999, p. 3, emphasis added). In a 2004 volume explicitly focused on *Rethinking Marketing*, Håkansson and Prenkert state that "the outcome of the *business* exchange activity is the services rendered and the goal of *business* activity is the potential services buried in the innermost recesses of the included resource" (pp. 91–92, emphasis added). In a 2009 essay on marketing's domain, definition, and fundamental issues, Varadarajan states,

> At the broadest level, marketing strategy can be defined as an organization's integrated pattern of decisions that specify its crucial choices concerning products, markets, marketing activities and marketing resources in the creation and communication and/or delivery of *products* that offer value to customers in exchanges with the organization and thereby enables the organization to achieve objectives. Chief among the issues that are fundamental to strategic marketing as a field of study are the question of how the marketing strategy of *business* is influenced by demand side factors and supply side factors. (p. 1, emphasis added)

Textbooks in the field also reflect the dominance of a business mind-set in their chapter structure and allocation of space. Traditional chapters focus on products, services, business-to-business marketing, retailing, and supply chain management as areas of application. Social applications appear from time to time as imaginative examples—particularly of communication strategies—or to illustrate the use of appeals to powerful emotions. The topics of nonprofit and social marketing typically are allocated one or two pages that acknowledge the existence and relevance of the area but treat it as one reflecting a special—and minor—application of commercial concepts and tools.

The Social-Dominant Logic[1]

The current essay takes advantage of the willingness of the marketing profession to think again about the nature of the field and its outer boundaries, arguing that the field has not yet adequately responded to Kotler, Levy, and Zaltman's urgings 40 years ago to broaden to encompass nonprofit and social marketing. The major proposition advanced here is that nonprofit and social marketing do not comprise a special (and minor) set of marketing applications. Rather, marketing, in both commercial and social settings, is ultimately about influencing behaviors, whether these behaviors are consumer purchases or people taking up more healthful lifestyles. More critically, it proposes that the managerial challenges that nonprofit and social marketing managers face are significantly more complex than those faced in the commercial sector. Such managers typically must simultaneously promote sales (e.g., Goodwill clothing, charity T-shirts, opera attendance), corporate support, volunteering, individual giving and grants, and contracts from foundations and government agencies. The targets of each of these marketing challenges respond to different and often unique tactics and strategies and are evaluated in terms of different outcomes. Given that, it is proposed that commercial marketing should be viewed as a simplified, special type of marketing management with only one broad primary objective: maximizing sales. Therefore, nonprofit and social marketing comprise not minor applications of commercial concepts and tools but rather the most complex of cases; commercial marketing is the special, narrower application. As with Vargo and Lusch's (2008) argument, the field has its classifications and subclassifications backward (Peattie and Peattie 2003).

The challenges implied by this argument are only suggested here. They are of four types:

1. Marketers must devise analytic frameworks that accommodate both social and commercial contexts.
2. Target audience research should consider a range of behaviors as desired outcomes—not just sales—and aim to identify commonalities and differences among them.
3. Marketing teaching and textbook writing should begin with the broadest social context and move forward to consider unique applications in social and commercial settings.
4. Marketing ethics and public policy arguments should comprise a range of market and social settings—not merely commercial ones.

Growth of Multiple Sector Interest

Kotler and Levy's 1969 attempt to expand marketing's domain was initially not met with total equanimity within a scholarly community, in which many believed that marketing was only a commercial activity—and this mind-set has remained. Luck (1974, p. 71) said that the Kotler–Levy essay fostered "anarchy in [marketing] terminology, [which] is intolerable." Confusion was indeed evident in the early years. For example, although Kotler and Zaltman (1971) propose the term "social marketing" for a special set of nonprofit marketing activities, other authors such as Lazer and Kelley (1973) use the term "social marketing" to include marketing's social impacts—both good and bad. Even today, social marketing is regularly confused with social *network* marketing.

However, nonprofit and social marketing are no longer controversial topics for marketing scholarship and research, though, in general, they are perceived as special cases attracting scholars outside the field's mainstream.[2] However, Wilkie and Moore (2003, p. 140) are optimistic:

> In contrast to earlier treatments of marketing as an economic distribution system for goods and services, there is now more attention given to strategies and practices involved in effectively managing marketing-related programs, whether those are in social marketing settings, self-regulatory settings or a gamut of practices in the private sector.

In the current essay, I propose carrying this idea further to effect a fundamental reordering of these settings in terms of intellectual dominance.

[1]One of the reviewers suggested this felicitous term.

[2]The terms "social marketing" and "nonprofit marketing" are treated here as substitutes for each other. In other papers, I have distinguished social marketing as marketing approaches to influence problematic social behaviors and nonprofit marketing as a more comprehensive term involving all the marketing activities in which a nonprofit organization might be involved, including fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and sales of merchandise or services.

Implications of Reordered Marketing

The central premise of this argument is that, while the marketing field recognizes the broadened concept, it still treats it as a special case, not unlike services marketing was once thought of as a special case in the dominant world of product marketing. Furthermore, just as Vargo and Lusch show that much is to be gained by treating services marketing as the dominant paradigm, there are similar possibilities inherent in considering nonprofit and social marketing as the dominant form of marketing and commercial marketing as a specialized, simplified case. Both sectors have behavioral goals. Commercial marketers seek sales. Nonprofit and social marketers sometimes seek sales (though not always) and have myriad other audience behaviors they must optimize. In the commercial marketplace, a company offers a value proposition in the form of concrete goods or services, and the target customer accepts it and makes a payment to the marketer rather than to a competitor (Bagozzi 1975). The attractiveness of its value propositions thereby fuels the company's growth and stockholder satisfaction. Signals in the form of output measures (e.g., advertisements placed, products shipped, public relations events held) are clear, as are measures of accomplishment in sales, market share, and return on marketing expenditures.

There are innumerable variations on this simple paradigm, including the involvement of third and fourth parties, delays in payments, and promises of future delivery of goods and services (e.g., subscriptions). In addition, currently, commercial marketers use strategies and incur added costs that do not generate immediate sales but seek to secure lifetime customers (Venkatesan and Kumar 2004).

Commercial transactions also occur in the nonprofit and social marketing worlds. Goodwill Industries sells used clothing, and the Girl Scouts sell cookies. Nonprofit hospitals and the YMCA offer services, and arts organizations provide exhibits and concerts in return for audience fees. However, virtually all such organizations do not survive on such revenues and must rely on donations, grants, and volunteer help to break even and potentially grow (Letts, Ryan, and Grossman 1999). To the extent that revenue-generating value propositions (e.g., good concerts, great cookies, good hospital care) are directly determinative of indirect kinds of support, it could be argued that optimization models from private-sector contexts could provide a reasonably good fit in nonprofit and social marketing settings (e.g., Hanssens 1980).

However, reliance on commercial transactions and hoping that they send sufficient signals to other necessary support agents is problematic. For example, Chinman and Wandersman's (1999) study of the benefits and costs of volunteering to volunteers indicates that normative and social benefits are relatively more important than commercial gains. It is also the case that the very transactions that are central to a nonprofit and social marketer's mission are different and much more complex than in the commercial world. They can do the following:

- Offer chances to spend money but offer no concrete product or service in return (e.g., charitable giving),
- Propose specific actions (e.g., eating less, exercising more) but offer no products or services and expect no payment from the target audience,
- Propose that people *stop* certain activities (e.g., eating fattening foods, using illegal drugs, paying for illicit sex) or continue *inaction* (e.g., not smoking) but offer no goods or services for doing so and do not expect payment in return, and
- Propose actions that mostly impose costs on target audiences (expenses and annoyance) for benefits that are mainly for third parties or some vague collectivity such as society (e.g., recycling programs).

Identifying the ways such marketing efforts work—and how to optimize strategies—is further handicapped in that sometimes there are no *visible* responses to the marketer's efforts (e.g., not doing drugs) or effects may take many years to become evident (e.g., antiobesity programs). Even when immediate behaviors can be observed, behavioral changes are often the result of the marketing efforts of many different programs and initiatives, and therefore unique impacts are difficult to trace to specific marketers, compounding the difficulty of modeling cause-and-effect linkages. Target audiences are often unaware or unable to articulate which marketer caused what outcome.

As a result, nonprofit and social marketers routinely pay attention to other signals about whether they are progressing toward desired outcomes. Often, these are in the form of internal measures of outputs and external measures of contacts rather than behavioral changes. Table 1 sets out in broad terms some of the differences across sectors in the three zones of the value chain, which Wei-Skellern et al. (2007, p. 332) identify in *Entrepreneurship in the Social Sector*. These authors distinguish three zones for analyzing progress: (1) progress in internal administration (amassing inputs, carrying out activities, and creating deliverable outputs); (2) progress in visible and short-term external results (sales, volunteer support, donations); and (3) the final objective, progress in achieving program impacts (return on investment, fewer smoking-related deaths). Table 2 offers additional differences in marketing challenges between sectors that need to be accommodated as the field reorders its classifications (Andreasen and Kotler 2007, pp. 22–24). The tables highlight the following fundamental differences in the nature of the "transactions" involved in nonprofit and social marketing (compared with commercial marketing) that have important implications for effective marketing management:

- Performance signals in terms of financial returns come from multiple sources—sales (sometimes), individual and corporate donations, grants from foundations, fees from contracts with government agencies, and proceeds from corporate cause-marketing programs.
- Important performance signals also come in nonfinancial forms in volunteered labor (e.g., workers, board members), the provision of free physical resources (e.g., computers, software, space, vehicles, furniture), and free advice (e.g., pro bono consulting, legal aid, and accounting).
- Competition between organizations is not just over behavioral outcomes, as in the private sector, but over the resources needed to achieve such outcomes (e.g., grants, contracts, partnerships, volunteer support).

Table 1. Three Zones of the Value Chain: Commercial and Social/Nonprofit Marketing

Level	Commercial Marketing	Social/Nonprofit Marketing
Internal		
1. Inputs	Organizational budgets Staffing Internal support	Organizational budgets Volunteers Donations Corporate support
2. Activities	Strategy creation and execution	Strategy creation and execution
3. Internal outputs	Sales campaigns	Behavior change campaigns Fundraising campaigns Volunteering events Corporate development
External		
4. Results management	Sales	Behavior changes Volunteer retention Donation levels/loyalty Corporate collaboration
5. Impacts	Profits/return on investment	Social change Nonprofit/social program growth

Table 2. Other Differences Between Commercial and Social/Nonprofit Marketing

Feature	Commercial Marketing	Social/Nonprofit Marketing
Primary target audiences	Customers	Downstream people with problem behaviors
Secondary target audiences	Supply chain members Media	Upstream enablers Media Volunteers Donors Corporate partners
Expectations	Modest	Substantial
Budgets	Substantial	Minimal
Tactical freedom	Few limits	Close public scrutiny
Characteristics of key behaviors	Often low involvement Audience indifferent or positive	Often high involvement Audience indifferent or opposed
Limits on offerings	Few	Often considerable
Target audience benefits	Obvious Immediate or near term	Not obvious Far in the future

- "Market" signals that could guide donors and other sources of financial and nonfinancial help are often impossible to discern because of the presence of one or all of the characteristics noted previously—namely:
  - Target audience "ignorance" of which marketer was influencing them,
  - Success claims by many players seeking the same social outcome,
  - Difficulty in identifying the point at which a "sale" has actually taken place (e.g., if a marketer is promoting nonsmoking to a teenager who does not yet smoke, when can he or she claim success [a "sale"]?), and
  - Long delays for social effects to appear (e.g., twenty-first-century decreases in strokes and heart attacks that may be the result of high blood pressure campaigns during the 1980s).

To compound matters further, many of the result signals rise or fall due to factors outside the nonprofit organization's control. Donations and grants depend partly on the state of the general economy and/or the stock market. The nature of support is sometimes governed not by performance indicators but by the terms of donor wills and trusts or by the personal preferences of major benefactors, foundation executives, and/or their board members. When federal and local government contracts or grants are involved, success is often influenced by political considerations rather than program performance. Collectively, this means that success in the nonprofit and social marketing world is often difficult to identify and link to marketer efforts. This makes it difficult to model the nonprofit and social marketing system to discover optimum strategies—though several scholars have tried (Ansari, Siddarth, and Weinberg 1996; Mottner and Ford 2005; Steinberg and Weisbrod 2005).[3]

Tackling the Nonprofit Marketing Management Challenge

In his classic 1975 and 1978 essays, Richard Bagozzi recognizes these challenges. He notes that marketing exchanges can include "*exchanges* created and resolved in *social* relationships" (Bagozzi 1975, p. 38, emphasis in the original) and that exchanges "may [yield] monetary gains or losses, social rewards (e.g., approval, praise, and status) or social punishments (e.g., prejudice, discrimination, ostracism)" (Bagozzi 1978, p. 538). Although Bagozzi's approach is only suggestive, he is optimistic about stretching the field's purview (Bagozzi 1975, p. 39): "Marketers can make contributions to other areas that contain social exchanges by providing theories and techniques for the understanding and control of such transactions.... Marketing is a general function of universal applicability."

Responding to this challenge means that we must develop marketing management models that explicitly incorporate multiway exchanges in which commercial exchanges of products/services for (eventual) cash is only a special case and commercial outcomes are only one of many impacts necessary for survival and growth. Such modeling should regard commercial contexts as special cases in which the relevant transactions and their indicia are relatively clear and relatively simple. In contrast, nonprofit and social marketing environments require the most complex models.

Implicit in the proposed reordering is the need to deepen our understanding of the potential responses to marketing strategies and tactics of a range of target audiences. As a beginning, I would argue that we should resist routinely using the terms "customer" or "consumer" to describe the person we are trying to influence. In my view, the term "target audience" is a more generic label for those we want to influence to buy products, patronize services, donate, exercise, recycle, partner, and volunteer. Second, although it is reasonable to adopt Vargo and Lusch's terminology of "value propositions," it should be recognized that the value to target audiences is not always embedded in a specific product or service. Two of the important challenges going forward are to develop a more robust understanding of what a *value proposition* comprises for smokers, the obese, corporate partners, donors, volunteers, and so on, and to understand how to balance them in a portfolio of offerings.

Exchange theory is still viable as a central construct (Rothschild 1999). However, as we move forward, it is important to develop a taxonomy that characterizes classes of behavior that marketers seek to influence in any exchange in any sector. These behaviors could be described in traditional private sector terms, such as "impulse buying," "high involvement purchases," or "brand loyalty behavior" (Zaichkowsky 1986). However, a broadened taxonomy that could accommodate both sectors would be to categorize marketing's behavioral objectives as follows:

- *Start* a behavior: buy a new product, fly an airline's new route, volunteer, donate, give blood for the first time, take up exercise, get a child immunized, or start using an insecticide-treated bednet to prevent malaria (Bagozzi and Warshaw 1990; Polivy and Herman 2002; Schoeneman and Curry 1990; Verplanken and Faes 1999; Verplanken and Wood 2006).
- *Switch* a behavior: change from one brand to another, buy a more expensive product or service rather than the bargain option, eat less fat, start using a condom for sex, or use the stairs instead of an elevator to get exercise.
- *Stop* a behavior: stop buying a specific a product or service such as a fat-laden food, give up drug use, stop abusing a girlfriend, or quit downloading copyrighted material (Kotler and Levy 1971).
- *Not start* a behavior: avoid pornography websites, do not attend sexist movies, do not smoke, do not take up drugs, or do not pollute streams or roadsides.
- *Continue* a behavior: remain brand loyal, continue exercising. give blood or donate annually, never smoke (again), or keep up a corporate partnership;
- *Increase* a behavior: buy more products, go to movies more often, eat more healthy foods, exercise or volunteer more, or donate larger sums.
- *Decrease* a behavior: eat fewer fries, surf the web less, or play fewer computer games.

A fundamental question is to determine whether the behaviors relevant to the social sector are conceptually similar to those in the private sector in each of the preceding categories. To what extent can private-sector approaches to stopping or switching a purchase behavior be applied to a social sector behavior? Alternatively, what can we learn about influencing social behaviors that can offer new insights into how a marketer might sell more products and services?

I would argue that posing such basic, generic questions can lead to a deepening of our understanding of both domains. If we are to fully integrate nonprofit and commercial marketing in teaching, modeling, and research, we need to deepen our understanding of how and where insights can—and cannot—generalize across sectors. I believe that this is such a fundamental question that it should engage marketing scholars for the next decade.

[3]Debora Thompson points out that private-sector chief executive officers and marketers also sometimes make strategic and tactical choices according to personal biases and preferences rather than on sound logic.

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