Macromarketing as Agorology: Macromarketing Theory and the Study of the Agora

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Twenty-five years of conceptual and empirical research in macromarketing can be synthesized in three fundamental, complementary principles: that markets are systems, that markets are heterogeneous, and the actions of market participants have consequences far beyond the boundaries of firms. Together, these principal findings form the foundation of a theory of macromarketing. The authors argue that macromarketing, in contrast to micromarketing and microeconomics, is uniquely positioned to address many market-related questions of the coming century.

Keywords: *marketing theory; externalities; markets; systems; agorology*

For more than thirty years, macromarketing scholars have met to discuss the effects of markets and marketing systems on society, and the effects of society on markets and marketing systems. Their accumulated wisdom finds its home in the collected papers of the meetings of the Macromarketing Society and in the first twenty-five volumes of the *Journal of Macromarketing*. Early work in the *Journal of Macromarketing* laid out the basic tenets of macromarketing (Nason and White 1981; Dowling 1983; Dixon 1984; Monieson 1987; Hunt 1989), culminating in a ten-year review of macromarketing research in Meade and Nason's (1991) "Toward a Unified Theory of Macromarketing: A Systems Theoretic Approach." Much of the hard work of the subsequent fifteen years has focused on empirical issues in macromarketing, leaving general theory questions to the side. Now, with the distance of time, it is appropriate to reflect on this body of work and to ask, again, "From the diligent work of many does a set of principal findings emerge that can serve as the foundation for a theory of macromarketing?"

This article argues that, yes, indeed, a set of principal findings of macromarketing has emerged from the conceptual and empirical work of macromarketing scholars. Furthermore, it will argue that the scope of that which has been accomplished, and of that which remains, is best captured by the term *agorology*.

Since its inception, macromarketing scholarship is firmly embedded in the wide-ranging studies of the ancient and modern agora, making macromarketing *agorology*, or the study of the agora. Often the term *agora* is used as a synonym for "market," but the agora was much more than just a commercial center, just as the study of macromarketing is more than just the study of exchange relationships. "In its simplest form the agora was a large open square reserved for public functions. Here large numbers of citizens could congregate for a variety of activities: assemblies, elections, festivals, athletic contests, parades, markets, and the like. . . . As such, the Greek agora is the predecessor of the fora of imperial Rome and the great piazzas and squares of the capitals of Europe. Administrative, legislative, judicial, commercial, social and religious activities all took place in and around the area and made the agora the heart of an ancient city" (Camp 1986, 14). The various activities of the ancient agora, like those studied by the contemporary macromarketer, were symbiotic, and historians and archeologists of the ancient agora realize—as do macromarketers—that the activities and actors of the marketplace cannot be understood fully without also understanding the interdependence of markets and marketing systems with other dimensions of civic life. Furthermore, for the macromarketer, the meaning of the agora is as much allegorical as it is archeological, as was first pointed out by Dixon (1995) in his study of the structure and life of the Greek agora. It is the contention of this article that macromarketing is the study of the agora, across cultures and through time, and that a theory of macromarketing is, in its truest sense, a theory of the agora.

A theory is a set of principles or propositions that comply with the following conditions. First, the propositions must be couched in terms of exactly defined concepts, and they must be consistent with each other. Second, they must be such that from them the existing generalizations can be derived. Finally, they must show the way to future generalizations and expand the scope of knowledge (Timasheff 1967). As a restatement of macromarketing as agorology, or a theory of the agora, this article hopes to accomplish these

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three goals. First, it will define macromarketing as the study of the marketplace (hence, agorology) and compare and contrast it with other contemporary academic disciplines interested in markets, namely, micromarketing and microeconomics. Second, it will lay out three principal findings of macromarketing, each with its own tradition, built on the research of macromarketers. Finally, it will discuss a research agenda for which the authors believe macromarketing is uniquely qualified to address. The work here is by no means exhaustive, but the authors hope it is sufficiently complete to demonstrate that the question of whether there exists a coherent framework of macromarketing can, and should, be answered in the affirmative.

DEFINING MACROMARKETING

Macromarketing is the study of the impact of society on marketing systems and the impact of marketing systems on society (Hunt 1981). It takes as it primary unit of analysis the market or marketing system, rather than the firm or the individual customer. While it is often seen as a subdiscipline of marketing, defined in this way, it is actually a broader conception of marketing activities than much of contemporary marketing, which can be seen as a subset of macromarketing. This article serves as a summary of the principal findings of macromarketing and will compare and contrast these findings with those of similar (but distinct) academic disciplines.

How is macromarketing distinct from more orthodox views of marketing? According to the American Marketing Association (AMA 2005), "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" (http://www.marketingpower.com). Prior to 2005, the AMA defined marketing as "the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, ideas and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals." For purposes of distinction, we will refer to this, by either definition, as the marketing of the firm, or micromarketing.

While the old and new AMA definitions differ in language and intent, they express a handful of common traits that distinguish micromarketing from macromarketing. First, both the old and new definitions express a managerial orientation. Macromarketing, by contrast, tends to emphasize social, cultural, or policy orientations. Second, both definitions focus on exchange, or transaction, to the exclusion of the broader marketing system. Macromarketing focuses on the marketplace, as a whole, placing more emphasis on systems of transactions than on individual exchanges. Third, the basic unit of analysis in marketing is the firm or customer. The unit of analysis in macromarketing is the market and/or the marketing system. Finally, both definitions express a fundamental reality of marketing: "marketing" is what the AMA says it is. For intellectual and historic reasons, macromarketing now lies largely outside this intellectual tradition. The implications of these differences will be discussed below.

While marketing in general owes much to the theoretical work of microeconomics, macromarketing as a study of the agora is distinct from neoclassical economics, as well. Microeconomics, or the study of the firm, begins with an assumption of homogenous, downward sloping demand and markets moving toward points of natural equilibrium. Marketing in general, and macromarketing in particular, is distinct from this tradition in three important ways. First, among marketers (macro- and micro-) there is a widespread belief that the environments of marketing are changing quickly and that technology, in particular, is moving market events at an increasingly rapid pace. This calls into question whether any sort of equilibrium can ever be reached and, therefore, whether any theory that contemplates a state of equilibrium is useful. Second, despite the debt that micromarketing owes to neoclassical economic theory, it appears that the latter is not up to the intellectual task of characterizing competition in a realistic or useful way. As we know, there have been criticisms of the "unreality" of neoclassical economics for years (cf. Hirsch 1980; Hodgson 2001; Mason 1995), both from within the discipline of economics and from without.[1] This leads to the third intellectual distinction. Among marketing scholars, there is a widely held, but largely unacknowledged, discomfort with the results of *normative* aspects of neoclassical economic theory of competition. While we eagerly embrace neoclassical economic theory's conclusion of the superiority of markets governed by competition, we find it difficult to accept its theoretical companion—that *only perfect* competition leads to the optimum allocation of society's resources. Taken to its logical extreme, neoclassical economic theory leads to the conclusion that marketers are in the business of creating and maintaining market imperfections. From this perspective, the normative goal of the marketing concept, market segmentation, becomes price discrimination under a fancier name and brand equity the outcome of the exercise of monopoly power. This is further supported by the fact that the essence of perfect competition is powerlessness in the market. But marketing managers seek to create and exercise power in the markets they serve.

Macromarketing, by contrast, starts with Fisk's (1974) definition of markets, "the provisioning system of society." While markets are the best provisioning system for a society, they exist in a natural state of heterogeneity of demand, operate efficiently when they offer appropriate solutions to meet this heterogeneity, but it must be recognized that optimizing behavior by some can have suboptimal consequences for others. From this perspective, the scope of macromarketing goes beyond the *market*, as that term is defined by micromarketing and microeconomics, to the *agora*. Fisk's definition is, in effect, a definition of the modern agora.

Macromarketing explicitly considers institutional constraints on behavior that inhibit market efficiency. Because macromarketing is seen through its points of contrast to micromarketing and microeconomics, an explicit set of principal constructs is necessary to define macromarketing in its own terms, by its standards, and for what it sees as the greater good. This is incumbent on any discipline of study and certainly on the study of the marketplace.

AGOROLOGY AND THE FOUNDATIONS OF MACROMARKETING THEORY

Macromarketing, as a discipline of scientists of the market and marketing systems, has existed for thirty years. The work of these scholars has been substantial. But is there a theory? Timasheff (1967) argued that "by accumulated efforts of men of science specializing in a particular discipline, a large number of generalizations of various types are formulated. Scientists then feel the need of unifying the scattered results they have thus far attained. Unification is tentatively achieved by constructing a theory" (p. 10). Alderson (1957) concurred, "Theory is a set of propositions which are consistent among themselves and which are relevant to some aspect of the factual world. Some theorists are more concerned about consistency and others about relevance, but both are essential to theory in an empirical science" (p. 5). What we offer here is not a claim that macromarketing is a science or even that it has a unifying theory but, rather, we claim that there are a set of generalized findings that can serve as the set of propositions necessary for theory development.

The process of theory development in macromarketing begins with a statement of three empirical foundations that emerge from a quarter-century of macromarketing scholarship: first, markets are systems; second, markets are heterogeneous; and third, the choices and actions of market actors have consequences far beyond themselves or their firms. These findings are internally consistent and grounded in twenty-five years of macromarketing observation, and set firmly in the broadened context of Fisk's expanded view of the market, which we have chosen to call the agora.

Around each of these three principal findings of macromarketing, a tradition of thought has developed. We call these the systems tradition, the antecedent heterogeneity tradition, and the consequentialist tradition. These principles of macromarketing are complementary, and many macromarketing studies recognize all three. Let us examine each, in kind.

Principal Finding 1: The Agora Is a Complex System

Hitchins (1992) said, "A system is a collection of interrelated entities such that both the collection and the interrelationships together reduce the local entropy." We often refer to this entropy as "transactions costs," and, like marketing, macromarketing recognizes that, in the right cultural context, markets move to their most efficient (if not optimum) forms, for some (if not all) market actors.

In the case of macromarketing, the complex system of interest is the marketplace as a provisioning system. Originally, macromarketing spoke of these systems in terms of trade flows (Layton 1981a, 1981b) and as the exchange subsystem of larger social systems (Dixon 1984). Later, Meade and Nason (1991) brought the formal language of systems theory to macromarketing. At its core, though, these ideas found their basis in Alderson's notion of markets as transvections, Cox's (1965) descriptions of the flows of goods and services through economies, and Slater's (1956, 1958) insights into marketing systems and structures.

The systems perspective is a major point of difference between macromarketing and micromarketing. While macromarketing sees the marketing system as the basic unit of interest, micromarketing focuses on the dyadic transaction of the buyer and the seller, either as an event (pre-2005 AMA definition) or as a relationship (post-2005). This distinctive approach to marketing was evident as far back as Fisk's (1967) text incorporating systems as the framework for understanding marketing practice. His approach did not achieve market acceptance, and the managerial, or 4Ps approach, became nearly ubiquitous. Transactions require two parties—buyers and sellers—and the science of marketing is built on understanding these relational transactions. Excluded from this, however, are the effects and consequences of transactions on other parties and institutions within the system. While Kotler (2002) alluded to this under the rubric of the societal marketing concept, the substance of the position has never been integrated into the canon. Macromarketing, on the other hand, is interested in the flow of trade through the series of transactions in channels of distribution, and the internal and external relationships within and across the trade flows, what Alderson (1965) called the "transvections" of the provisioning system. This transvection/transaction distinction lies at the heart of the macro/micro distinction in marketing.

Trade flows can be measured in a number of ways. The classical approach to macromarketing used input/output matrices to measure the effects of trade within and between market sectors (Arndt 1981; Dixon 1991; Layton 1981a, 1981b; 1989; Reidenbach and Oliva 1983; Slater 1956, 1958; Tuninga 1992). This approach allows us to observe the impact of dollars spent on economic development, channel relationships, and/or government policy on the broader economic system. Similarly, macromarketers have approached the question of market systems by comparing two or more marketing systems to identify causes of success or failure (Barksdale and Anderson 1982a, 1982b; Dahringer and Hilger 1985; Kaynak 1985; Olsen and Granzin 1990; Sybrandy and Tuninga 1991). This approach had been instrumental in isolating the effects of channel structure, competition, public policy, and consumer attitudes toward markets on the flow of products and the development of markets. Finally, macromarketers have used historic and contemporary analysis to examine the effects of time and circumstance on the structure of provisioning systems. Studies of the ancient agora (Dixon 1995), trade in the Han dynasty (Kaufman 1987), the failure of rice markets in the Ivory Coast (Etgar 1983), economic development in Venezuela (Dominguez and Vanmarcke 1987) and Guatemala (Ortiz-Buonofina 1987, 1992), and the structural changes in an economy (Mittelstaedt and Stassen 1994) follow in this vein.

Three basic postulates are common to all systems theories (Skyttner 2001), including a provisioning systems theory of the marketplace. First, the behavior of each element in a system has an effect on the behavior of the whole. Second, the behavior of the elements of the system and their effects on the whole are interdependent. Third, however subgroups of the elements are formed, all have an effect on the behavior of the whole, and none has an independent effect. From twenty-five years of research on macromarketing, we know these things to be true for marketing systems.

Market systems are made up of firms and their channel members, competitors, regulatory and policy bodies, and the vagaries of consumers. Each has an impact on the others. For example, shopping hour regulation affects how, as well as when, firms compete (Ingene 1986), and resale price maintenance prohibitions improve competition and consumer welfare (R. A. Mittelstaedt 1986). Government intervention into rice distribution channels in the Ivory Coast created unnecessary disruptions in the system (Etgar 1983), while policy promotion in Mexico and India improved food marketing (Dahringer and Hilger 1985). Competition and industrial concentration affect how much firms spend on advertising (Hovland and Lancaster 1985) but, at the same time, can serve as a barriers to new competition (Redmond 1989). Economic development can affect the structure of marketing channels, and at the same time channels can affect the nature of economic development (Olsen and Granzin 1990). In addition, while technology is a necessary antecedent to market structure (Funkhouser 1984), changes in technology will affect the nature and structure of distribution (Mittelstaedt and Stassen 1994).

The implications of these lessons for marketing systems are important. First, marketing systems are dynamic. Actions cause reactions, which themselves cause further reactions. Second, the behavior of any market actor cannot be understood except in the context of the marketplace. Third, returns to choices are nonlinear. Combined these mean that the costs and benefits of any action can only be fully understood at the system level. As such, macromarketers know that while firms serve as the basis of wealth creation in societies (Falkenberg 1996), antitrust regulation can temper the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few market participants at the expense of others (Dickinson 2003).

It should be noted that these are points of distinction between macromarketing and micromarketing. While macromarketing focuses on the interdependencies among and between elements of the marketing infrastructure of a society, micromarketing's ability to appreciate interdependencies is limited to the cross product elasticities of price and promotion. While macromarketing recognizes the interdependence of elements in the marketing system, micromarketing focuses on interpersonal comparisons and secondary preferences. While macromarketing celebrates the lack of independence of any system element, micromarketing relies on the assumption of atomistic individualism, where preferences are assumed to be exogenous and immutable to change by the system. The implicit assumption in micromarketing is that marketers do not create needs; rather, they only satisfy needs as they exist, and the market is the sum of individual consumer needs as they exist. Macromarketing, like most systems approaches, begins with the assumption that the whole is not equal to the sum of the parts (it may be greater; it may be less). Micromarketing, on the other hand, relies on a transactions theory that says the whole must be equal to the sum of the parts. In short, micromarketing assumes that marketing is a zero-sum game, microeconomics implicitly assumes that it is a negative-sum game (to the extent marketing creates monopoly power it is responsible for "dead weight"), while macromarketing begins with the postulate that marketing may be a positive- or negative-sum game.

Of all the insights of systems theory in marketing systems that distinguish macromarketing from micromarketing, two stand out as most important: that differences in the success or failure of marketing systems depend on the initial conditions of markets and that all actions of market participants (firms, channels, institutions, and consumers) have unintended consequences that must be accounted for when judging the success or failure of a marketing system (Klein 1977). These are referred to as antecedents and consequences, and they serve as the basis of the second and third principles.

Principal Finding 2: The Structure of Agora Is Heterogeneous

Flowing from the notion that markets are complex systems is the recognition that wants and needs differ in the marketplace. It is from the diversity of needs that the varieties of product offerings in the marketplace stem. On this point, micromarketing and macromarketing agree, and it is this starting point that distinguishes both from mircoeconomics (Mittelstaedt and Mittelstaedt 2004). Edward Chamberlin's (1939) theory of monopolistic competition and Wroe Alderson's (1957) discussions of formation and persistence of groups, and competition for differential advantage, serve as the basis of our understanding of heterogeneity of demand.

While traditional marketing recognizes heterogeneity in the marketing place, it views heterogeneity simultaneously as an opportunity for profit and as a problem to be managed. In the first case, marketing has developed sophisticated technologies of product design and promotion to capitalize on heterogeneous demand. In the second case, it has developed the necessary technology (segmentation) to divide up heterogeneous markets into small, homogeneous groups of consumers that can be served and managed. In its extreme form, customer relationship management technologies seek to reduce the segment to a single individual. Marketing thus takes markets as a "given" and either adapts itself to the markets as they exist or adapts the market to its own exigencies (through promotion and the like). These are important concerns, but transactional in orientation.

Conversely, macromarketing is focused on questions of what constitutes heterogeneity and on "why" and "how" heterogeneity exists. Put another way, macromarketing emphasizes the antecedents of heterogeneity in its research. Antecedents to heterogeneity include most aspects of culture, such as social norms, political structure, geography, and technological change, among others. These vary from location to location, and over time, and explanations as to why this is the case are of interest to scholars of the agora. For example, while marketplaces have existed for millennia, are there fundamental differences between their character in ancient Greece and in the contemporary global economy?

Scholars in this "antecedent heterogeneity tradition" argue that market structures and marketing systems reflect the environmental conditions from which they emerge. From this perspective, the activities of the agora can best be understood by examining the cultural, political, and geographic milieu in which they operate. Twenty-five years of macromarketing research identify three basic classes of determinants of (or antecedents to) heterogeneity: formal antecedents, informal antecedents, and philosophical antecedents.

Formal antecedents are those that are codified in the legal and regulatory structures of nations or markets. Much research in macromarketing has been devoted to understanding these factors and their role in shaping the structure and flows of markets and marketing systems. For example, Carman (1982) found that property rights are a necessary antecedent to proper market functions, although their effect can be to restrict competition. Similarly, Harris and Carman (1983) developed a typology of market failures and linked these failures to public policy decisions. Hollander (1984) found that sumptuary controls affect price, distribution, and allocation of products in markets, while Mittelstaedt and Stassen (1991) found that the sales tax on mail order, unlike the general sales tax, is incompletely shifted to the consumer and, as a result, the location decisions of mail-order firms are affected. In particular, understanding formal antecedents has been important to the development of market economies in developing and transition economies (Cordell 1993; Carman and Dominguez 2001; Dahab, Gentry, and Sohi 1996; Dholakia and Dholakia 1982; Kumcu and Kumcu 1987; Taylor and Omura 1995), and in circumstances of globalization (Hill and Dhanda 2004).

Informal antecedents are cultural, ethnic, and religious factors that shape market systems. Researchers have found that ethnic communities can serve as the basis for market structure (Speece 1990); that religious belief and organizations can shape and control nonmarket institutions, which in turn affect when, where, and how exchange occurs (J. D. Mittelstaedt 2002); and that the culture of consumption can be so strong that it overcomes changes in the marketplace (Goldman, Krider, and Ramaswami 1999).

Philosophical antecedents are those factors that shape perceptions of the role of markets and marketing systems in people's lives, directly or indirectly. Kilbourne, McDonagh, and Prothero (1997) referred to these as the dominant social paradigm and included beliefs in possessive individualism, economic liberalism, and technological optimism. It would also include such fundamental beliefs as those in anthropocentrism, competition, and atomism. Beyond these, the antecedents could include ethical antecedents to market beliefs (Dixon 1982), altruism versus self-interest (Carman 1992), as well as the philosophical predispositions of capitalism itself (Kilbourne 2004).

Principal Finding 3: Macromarketing Specifically Recognizes That the Choices of Agora Participants Have Consequences Far Beyond Themselves, for Better or for Worse

Sometimes, perhaps always, markets that seemingly work well produce unexpected results for participants. Because markets are embedded in a network of social relationships, the agora, marketing transactions can produce negative or positive outcomes called for transaction participants, as well as third parties. A marketing system consequence is an effect of a purchase or use decision by one set of parties on others who did not have a choice and whose interests were not taken into account. These effects may be positive or negative. These consequences have been dealt with in two ways: as economic externalities and as social consequences.

Mundt (1993) defined externalities as the uncalculated costs and/or benefits of exchange. Much of the work of macromarketers during the past twenty-five years has been devoted to calculating the uncalculated. Cadeaux (2000) added to this traditional notion of externalities when he discussed the external benefits of consumption, which he argued were more than just the obverse of negative market externalities. Combined, this perspective draws our attention to the economic costs and benefits external to almost all market transactions.

In a market system, externalities are not fully reflected in prices. Air pollution from a factory would be an example of a negative externality that would not likely be reflected in the price of the products of the factory in question. A positive externality could arise from widespread application of a flu vaccine; even those who were not vaccinated would enjoy a lessened probability of contracting the disease. Note that a person who does not buy the vaccination service but is protected from the disease is, in effect, a "free rider" whose benefit is not reflected in a market transaction.

Because these costs are not reflected in market prices, the market will supply too much of a good or service that yields negative externalities and too little of those that yield positive externalities. This situation encourages many to advocate regulation as a remedy—such as banning activities that produce negative externalities (e.g., a ban on smoking in public places to control the effects of secondary smoke) or taxing activities that provide negative externalities to, in effect, raise their price and reduce their attractiveness in the marketplace (e.g., taxation of alcoholic beverages to reduce drunk driving). Schemes that subsidize market transactions are often justified by their supporters as encouraging activities that produce positive externalities, as with the claims that a facility for a major professional sports team will benefit the entire community—even those who never attend a game. Similarly, subsidizing public transportation reduces pollution and traffic, even for those who never ride the bus or subway. Many economists prefer various schemes that internalize the costs or benefits of externalities over regulation, taxation, or subsidization.

Second, complementing the largely economic externalities of exchange are what Nason (1989) called the social consequences of marketing. "A social consequence of a market transaction, as used here, is any unforeseen effect, positive or negative, experienced by parties to the transaction or any effect, foreseen or not, experienced by others not party to the transaction" (p. 242). The notion of social consequences differs from the idea of externalities in its focus on the unanticipated, rather than the uncalculated. The distinction is important because consequences to marketing actions might well be calculable, if anticipated. Alternatively, externalities might be foreseen, but not calculated. How a firm or regulatory body manages the consequences of marketing actions will be different in these two circumstances. In addition, unforeseen social consequences can be felt by parties to the transaction, while externalities, per se, are by definition external to the transaction and its parties. Nason's analysis identifies three types of social consequences of interest to us here. First, there are unforeseen effects on the parties to the transactions, what Harris and Carman (1983) called *internalities*. These are caused largely by imperfect information: firms attempt to manage these through conditional clauses in contracts. Second, there are foreseeable effects on individuals and institutions not party to the transaction. These are a form of externalities, in that those not party to the transaction reap the benefit or pay the cost without any title rights to approve, reject, or amend the transaction. Regulation serves as one mechanism to give voice to those not party to transactions in these cases. Finally, there are unforeseen effects on those not party to the transaction. Nason says these are the most difficult to deal with because they can only be assessed in hindsight. Examples would include cases where the macro effects come from the aggregation of micro actions (e.g., the general weakening of antibiotics for all because of the excessive use of them by some) or the adoption of new technology that leaves nonadopters behind when channels adjust to the new technology (e.g., charging customers more to use tellers in banks or to buy plane tickets off-line). Combined with more orthodox notions of "externalities," this consequentialist tradition of macromarketing is interested in the intended and unintended consequences of market transactions and transvections on the totality of the marketing system.

During the past twenty-five years, macromarketers have focused on three important questions in their work on consequences: (1) What are the standards by which consequences of market activities should be judged? (2) How do we best measure consequences? and (3) What are the positive and negative consequences of marketing systems, whether intended or unintended?

Before examining each of these questions, in order, it is useful to consider some of the difficulties involved in this area of research. First, incorporating the true costs of a product in its price is exceedingly complex in the best of circumstances. This is best reflected in the costing of resources expended in the production process. Traditional marketing makes no distinction between stock and flow resources in its costing structure. Stock resources are those that exist in fixed quantities but can be expended at any rate desired. Flow resources can only be used at the rate in which they are received, but the supply is unlimited. Were full resource accounting used, products based on stock resources should increase steadily in price, while products based on flow resources would remain stable for long periods or decrease with advancing technology. Macromarketers have long been interested in this costing dimension of market systems and its effect on prices. Whether oil, for example, is priced as a flow or stock resource affects almost every aspect of modern life.

In addition to the difficulties of identifying and measuring costs, the notion of the agora makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine who is, and therefore who is not, part of the total complex of exchanges that make up the provisioning system. Expanding the focus to include the total marketing system for any product or class of products blurs the traditional distinctions between first, second, and third parties. In fact, many participants in the agora play multiple social roles; they may be both first, second, and third parties, each of which has potentially conflicting interests. For example, cigarette company executives may also be the parents of teenage children and worry whether their children are smoking behind their backs.

Furthermore, the remedies for externalities, regulation for negatives and subsidies for positives, produce another set of actors with vested interests in the continuance of the remedies. For example, banning smoking from restaurants and bars, to eliminate the negative externality of secondhand smoke, favors some firms over others. Obviously, the favored firms become advocates for continuance of the ban, while those who are disadvantaged fight the ban. In a similar vein, gasohol (a mixture of 90 percent gasoline and 10 percent ethyl alcohol) has been subsidized as a product with positive externalities (pollution reduction and decreased dependence on "foreign" oil). Corn farmers, farm organizations, politicians with large farm constituencies, small towns with distilleries, and agribusiness corporations are among those with a vested interest in the "success" of the product and the continuance of the publicly funded subsidies. In other words, the issues of externalities and other consequences, positive and negative, often create their own advocacy groups, and research in these areas may be perceived as politically motivated.

Finally, some unintended consequences are so all-encompassing, or systemic, that they really cannot be measured. For example, it appears neither possible nor useful to calculate costs and benefits of cultural change that results from innovation. And yet, these are often the topics of greatest importance. Similarly, there are few if any mechanisms to assign the cost to nature–as a title holder–from productivity rooted in extraction processes. It is in this context that macromarketing scholars have studied and debated what should be measured as a consequence, how they should be measured, and what they mean for the provisioning system of society.

Standards. Before one can calculate the social costs or benefits of business, agreement must be reached on what constitutes an externality or social consequence. Different perspectives include and exclude various effects, and the normative standards of externalities have been debated in the pages of the *Journal of Macromarketing*. Harris and Carman (1986) set forth a typology of market failures due to regulation; the definition of "failure" was implied but nonetheless set a standard for the breadth of externalities examined. Vann and Kumcu (1995) argued that consequences should be measured by two standards: efficiency and distributive justice. Especially in developing countries, bad policy choices can promote efficient marketing systems with devastating effects on distributive justice, or vice versa, whereas good public policy promotes both. Rittenburg and Parthasarathy (1997) argued that ethical considerations should define success or failure of policy, while Prothero and Fitchett (2000) weighed in on the side of the environment and environmental sustainability. These standards are largely complementary, where the debate has not been which should be used but rather which should be emphasized. Combined, though, they have created a large set of consequences to calculate.

Measures. The second major set of contributions within the consequentialist tradition deals with the question of how consequences are measured. It is here that macromarketing sees the greatest variety of perspectives on questions of marketing and society. Four basic approaches have been used: the economic, historical, consumer welfare, and qualitative/critical approaches.

The economic approach to measuring externalities works from the premise that consequences are best understood in terms of economic costs and benefits. Dahringer (1983) and Klein (1986) used reverse channel mapping and backward channel integration measures to assess the effects of channels of distribution on economic development. Sybrandy, Pirog, and Tuninga (1991) used similar methods to measure the final economic output of distribution systems. In this same vein, Mullen (1993) and Mullen, Doney, and Becker (1996) used analysis of imports and exports to show that international trade raises aggregate economic activity and satisfies basic human needs.

The historical approach uses methods of historic analysis to understand the effects of marketing on society and society on marketing. Of particular note in this school are studies of how the introductions of new products change the underlying mechanisms of marketing itself. Petty (1995) found that the introduction of the bicycle to a mass audience in the 1890s created dramatic changes in the advertising process by introducing posters and magazine advertisements. Tedlow (1997) used a similar approach to examine the economic, social, and marketing systems effects of the introduction of the mass-marketed Kodak camera, opening up a previously privileged activity, photography, to the general population. Witkowski (1996) examined images of exchange in art to explore the social and moral role of buying and selling in nineteenth-century America. This approach operates from the premise that historic data and circumstance are the best tools for understanding the social and economic consequences of marketing activities.

The effects of marketing systems can be measured in terms of their impact on consumer welfare as well. This approach is best exemplified by the body of research called quality of life (QOL). Some see QOL in objective terms (cf, Dixon and Polyakov 1997; Peterson and Malhotra 1997; Shultz 1997), while others see QOL as subjective (Ahuvia and Friedman 1998). Sirgy and his colleagues (Lee and Sirgy 2004; Sirgy, Hansen, and Littlefield 1994; Sirgy et al. 1991) have drawn the connection between these two issues, linking well-being of consumers with overall life satisfaction.

The economic, historic, and consumer welfare approaches share a common view that at least some consequences, positive or negative, can be measured quantitatively. More recently, however, qualitative/critical techniques have been used to understand the social externalities of marketing systems. Crockett and Wallendorf (1998) examined the social implications of school dress codes, showing how they shift, rather than eliminate, the social problems they are intended to solve. Jamison (1999) examined the impact of trade on local communities, drawing very different conclusions about the impact of tourism in Kenya on Kenyans than would be suggested by the economic approach of Mullen and his colleagues (Mullen 1993; Mullen, Doney, and Becker 1996). Similarly, Phillips, Alexander, and Shaw (2005) used trade and consumer publication accounts to understand the effects of self-service groceries on the promotion of shoplifting.

Consequences. Once standards and measures are established, the third substantive issue of interest to the consequentialist tradition can be considered–the effects of marketing decisions. The effects of marketing systems can be classified in a two-by-two matrix. Along one dimension are positive versus negative effects. Along the second dimension are intended versus unintended effects. Given these dimensions, consequences can be classified as intended and positive. Examples of these would be social marketing programs (e.g., Dholakia 1984) and the benefits of marketing as a tool for economic development (Hosley and Wee 1988; Joy and Ross 1989; Mullen, Doney, and Becker 1996; Nason, Dholakia, and McLeavey 1987). At the same time, however, intentional policy on marketing systems may have negative effects, such as promotion of the intended misuse of products (Timmerman and Reid 1984), the effects of overcommercializing social causes (Polonsky and Wood 2001), or the effect of promotion on nontargeted but nonetheless reached consumers (Redmond 2005). Alternatively, marketing systems can have unintended positive effects on society, such as the price and selection benefits derived by those not party to an exchange (Cadeaux 2000). The unintended effects of marketing systems can be negative, as well, such as the effects of infant formula promotion on women's health (Gilly and Graham 1988), postconsumption waste (Uusitalo 1982), deforestation (Harvey 1995), and the marginalization of vulnerable consumers (Hill and Stephens 1997). In a similar vein, the effects of social and legal systems can curb the effectiveness of the market, including the effect of litigation on product offerings (Morgan and Stoltman 1992), social pressure to curb advertising (Solow 2001), or the concern over personal identity on the flow of marketing information (Zwick and Dholakia 2004).

BUILDING ON MACROMARKETING THEORY

Through their foundations in the antecedent, systems, and consequentialist traditions, macromarketing scholars are uniquely positioned to ask many important questions, the answers to which have broad social impact. Four examples follow.

First, why do some marketing systems raise the general welfare, while others do not? The answer could lie in differences in initial conditions, across cultural settings or across time. Alternatively, it could be dysfunction within the elements of the marketing system, itself. Improving the QOL through markets as provisioning systems requires answers to these questions. Much work has been done in this area, already, as evidenced above. The antecedent tradition offers insights into the initial conditions necessary for markets to succeed. Scholars of the systems tradition have offered important insights into how markets are best structured to raise the general welfare of consumers and citizens. Important QOL research is being done to measure the outcomes of market structure. Those working on issues of externalities are weighing the social costs and benefits of marketing systems. Much more needs to be done, but the last quarter century has borne much fruit in this area.

Second, are marketing systems a condition for, or a consequence of, economic development? The development perspective in macromarketing argues it is a precondition, while the critical school argues that marketing systems are the inevitable consequence. The ability of markets to improve the lives of people depends on the answer. Are negative externalities indications of marketing system failures, or are they the unavoidable consequences of efficient systems working as they were intended? Comparing and contrasting the principles underlying each perspective may shed light on common ground, to the benefit of developing and emerging economies and their citizens.

Third, what is the role of markets and marketing systems in the post-9/11 world? The events of September 11 reshaped relations among nations, perceptions of safety and security, the importance of trade relative to security, and the role of markets and marketing systems to provide for the needs of producers and consumers alike. In short, 9/11 reshaped the formal, informal, and philosophical antecedents of global and local markets, affected regulation of markets and the manner in which firms compete, and exposed severe negative externalities of both excluding entire countries from the market, as well as subpopulations within Western economies. Given all this, the silence of marketing scholarship in considering the implications of 9/11 on markets, marketers, consumers, or marketing systems is deafening. To the best of our knowledge, only two articles have been published in the marketing literature on the effects of September 11 on any aspect of marketing (Flicker and Gardner 2002; Lee, Hong, and Lee 2003). September 11 raised numerous questions about how and for whom markets operate, questions that macromarketing is best prepared to address. The limited work in this area reflects the limited capabilities of micromarketing to address critical marketing issues related to 9/11.

The systemic effects of 9/11 on how markets provide for the needs of people are much broader—and deeper—than can be noticed by observing dyadic transactions. Terrorism is both a determinant and a consequence of patterns of globalization, and its effects can only be understood in this context. September 11 raised transactions costs by increasing friction at boarders. This is because the same mechanisms that expedited trade across borders prior to 9/11 allowed for the free flow of terror. Furthermore, September 11 changed the parameters of the debate between trade and security, lowering the benefits of the former and raising the costs of the latter. It established as axiomatic that trade and security can only be treated as trade-offs. Finally, the consequent tightening of borders among the wealthiest countries of the world has impaired the ability of every nation in the world to use the provisioning technology of markets to improve the lives of their citizens.

What impact will 9/11 have on the meaning, function, and pattern of markets and marketing systems? What is the relationship between markets and violence? Can markets play a positive role in improving the lives of people or reducing the attractiveness of terror as a career option? What effect will new security measures have on the efficient operation of markets? These are important questions that must be addressed; macromarketing theory provides a more useful framework for considering these questions than any other discipline of which the authors are aware.

Finally, are marketing systems environmentally sustainable, or are they doomed to collapse under their own weight? The consequentialist tradition takes a dim view of the future of marketing systems, unless the external costs can be incorporated into the prices we pay and it questions the ability of microeconomics and micromarketing to address the problems adequately. This requires distinguishing between market failures and the failure of markets to exist as each requires a different policy solution (Sagoff 1988). How do we do this? It can only be done within the context of the systems in which markets are embedded and in ways that appeal to the values held by consumers and citizens antecedent to market activity.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Markets are systems. They have antecedents, which vary across cultures and across time. The activities of the marketplace have consequences well beyond the buyers and sellers in an exchange, and these become the antecedents for future exchange. This is the domain of macromarketing.

Can marketing address questions of systemic importance, like those raised above? As long as it is narrowly defined as "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships," the answer is "no." The focus of micromarketing is too narrow, too static, and lacks the ability to get its prices right, except for immediate buyers and sellers. Macromarketing, on the other hand, argues that we can best understand the functions of marketing when we understand its role in society.

When we look at market exchange in the context of the entire system of the agora, including antecedents and consequences, our ability to understand the role of markets in society is greatly expanded. Transactions make the most sense when we understand their circumstances. From this perspective, the study of marketing—of the actors and their actions in the provisioning system of society—is the study of the agora. Twenty-five years of conceptual and empirical work have provided us with a framework for a theory of macromarketing. The research agenda for the next twenty-five years needs to be turning these principal findings of marketing behavior into a theory of the agora.

The purpose of this article is to offer a concise statement of macromarketing scholarship. These findings can serve as principles of macromarketing, in their own right, rather than as an apology to micromarketing. Macromarketing has at its core a strong and vibrant framework, capable of explaining marketing activities and systems to the benefit of marketing managers, but to the benefit of public policy officials and civic leaders as well. Much good work has been done. Much more lies ahead if macromarketing scholars stay committed to the concept that our true area of study is the modern agora.

NOTE

1. Few have been as devastating as that of Kenneth Boulding at the 1982 macromarketing meeting in Boulder, Colorado, when he described neoclassical economic theory as "the celestial mechanics of a nonexistent universe."

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