
To the Young and the Restless Marketing Academic Aspirant: Musings on the Publishing Game

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ABSTRACT:

In this “thought piece”, the author reflects on academic publishing in the realm of marketing. In the process, he offers tips and suggestions to aid the potential as well as the neophyte scholars in marketing in their publishing endeavours.

Introduction

At the outset, I wish to emphasize that this is my “thought piece” and it is partially based on elements of invited talks that I gave to largely academic audiences at several locations on the globe during the 2007-2011 period.¹ Further, while I could provide a few citations anywhere I mention a name or a term in this paper, in the interest of not marring the flow or readability, I shall refrain from doing that. The interested reader can always contact me for further information on anything mentioned in this paper. Having said that, I will, in all humility, readily and willingly admit that my thoughts have been triggered, influenced and even shaped by the minds of the academic communities around the world and their collective body of work reflected in extant literatures, and I thank all of them.

We are in the eleventh year of the new millennium in a world beset by indications of impending economic peril and I wonder if marketing continues to be Drucker’s Economic Engine of a society. That may well be a question for all marketers to ponder. Be that as it may, through all my mental meanderings, two points appear to be still valid in the 21st century.

First, interestingly enough, marketing continues to be the pidgin discipline that it has been since its inception as a field worthy of serious academic inquiry at the beginning of the last century. In addition to the usual infusion from other social sciences and select hard sciences, in recent times, it has allowed percolation by new terms from the internet-era (e.g., e-W-O-M, metrosexual, mocial² etc.), impact from blogs, YouTube, Facebook, MySpace, & Twitter, and meaningful influence from evolutionary psychology as well as “greening & sustainability” areas. Even more recently, research in neurology, neuroendocrinology, and genetics appear to be aiding the formation of what is now termed “biomarketing”.

Second, the principal source of advancement of marketing knowledge, viz. the publishing game, is alive and well and every marketing doctoral student as well as the neophyte marketing academic seems to continue to dream of being immortalized repeatedly in the annals of our academic outlets. The purpose of this article is to dwell on this second aspect.

Specifically, I shall try to capture my thoughts on this game, cull out the ones high on relevant salience with respect to this game, and present them candidly in a concrete and hopefully cogent manner bereft of obfuscation. At this juncture, it would be fair to warn the reader that I will be calling a spade a spade in the rest of this “thought piece.”

A qualitative factor analysis of these thoughts in my mind yields three principal factors on which the overwhelming majority of these thoughts seem to load. The first factor pertains to the rules of this game, and I will call it the **Norms** of the game. The second factor relates to the success or failure in playing this game. More specifically, it pertains to success/failure probability of scoring journal hits, and I will call it **Journal Hit Success/Failure**. The third factor deals with areas of research of particular relevance and telling importance to human civilization in the 21st century, and I will call it **Research Ballparks** where the game may be played. Perhaps, we marketers should pay particular attention to these areas if we want to make a difference that would matter to life on earth. In the rest of the paper, I will elucidate these factors and the aspects that load on them.

Norms

I am not sure if there are any rules in the publishing game although we have all heard of unwritten rules such “you must have both quality & quantity in your publication record”, “you must have at least five or six publications by the time you come up for tenure & promotion” etc. In our anti-halcyon doctoral days, we have also heard of undefined pronouncements like, “we expect doctoral level quality”, “we are grooming you to write good papers” and the like. To this day, I am unable to comprehend the meaning of these cryptic statements although they all sounded ominous at that time. I personally do not believe that there are any inflexible rules as such but there definitely are “standards” that anyone can follow to the best possible extent; hence, my use of the term “norms”. A norm not only sounds less threatening than a rule but also better captures the characteristics of the publishing game.

The “Publish or Perish” Dictum

From all accounts, the “Publish or Perish” dictum in business disciplines gathered greater momentum in its spread across academic institutions in the 1970s. In the late 1980s and through the 1990s, this dictum rivaled the kadzu³ in prolific spreading, and at the end of the first decade of this century, even online teaching schools were beginning to expect publications from their mostly unseen faculty. At best, the publication record is used as a specific measure to assess one’s performance in the research component as well as a general measure of one’s academic potential. At worst, it is used as a Machiavellian ploy on academic productivity (or the lack of it) to deny tenure, promotion, merit-raise etc. In short, the ineluctable conclusion is that this dictum is alive and kicking in the 21st century.

Conducting Research Vs. Writing Papers

I suspect that most academics know the difference between deciding to do research and deciding to write papers. However, very few seem to offer evidence of having comprehended the difference. It is entirely possible that in the vast majority of cases, practical constraints in following an ideal state and the dire need to survive in the brutal early years in academia compel one to follow the latter instead of the more noble former strategy. In any case, in the former strategy, one may research for years and get one dataset and one paper. The underlying philosophy here is, "I shall research an important topic(s) and papers may follow that." This type of effort, at best, may result in a breakthrough. At worst, it will still constitute a commendable endeavor(s). Despite such likely positive outcomes, it appears that very few researchers in the social sciences have the moral fortitude to follow this rather idealistic approach. Actually, Jacob Jacoby alluded to this in as early as 1976 in a piece in the *Journal of Consumer Research* two years after its inception in 1974. Unfortunately, most of us are beset by survival if not self-aggrandizement considerations and they deviate if not preclude us from treading this noble path. Lest the reader gets the wrong impression that this observation is unique to the social sciences, allow me to point out that this tendency and practice of accumulating papers (especially via the strategy of slicing it thinner) is alive and well even in the physical sciences and even more so in the applied physical sciences (e.g., engineering).

Writing papers for the sake of accumulating them will only bring about pseudo-recognition as an academic albeit it may fetch tenure, promotion, or a merit raise by the force of numbers. Examples in this genre' in marketing include papers that test the clearly obvious or test what is already known, papers on needless replications, "splitting hairs on technicality" type of papers even when one realizes that it borders on yielding useless information, papers utilizing needless methodological or technical sophistication as though marketing is hard-core engineering, and papers exhibiting insignificant incremental novelty. Will anyone miss such work or will posterity care about it? The answer is, most likely, a resounding "no".

In the 21st century, given the ever increasing "clutter" and mind boggling "volume" on the internet on pretty much any topic, this idea of accumulating more and more papers may not augur well for an academic other than in adding to the existing hillocks of work that no one seems to read much less care about. But then, given the reality of the "publish or perish" dictum, one must publish, and that poses a dilemma. The way to resolve it in the 21st century would be the adoption of a balanced approach and not an idealistic approach. Two possibilities come into play in this context.

Possibility One

Some schools albeit not from among the ones that tout themselves as primarily research institutions have abolished "tenure". Some others are seriously considering the obliteration of the institution of "tenure". In these cases, the marketing academic may be able to follow the "do research first and papers will follow" type of approach. Needless to say, a convincing

case will have to be made for the importance of the research being carried out without a guarantee of a steady supply of papers.

Possibility Two

In the remaining cases which constitute the vast majority at this point in time, the marketing academic would do well to follow the adage *charity begins at home*. In other words, one should ensure that one has enough articles as a means to an end (e.g., tenure, promotion, merit raise etc.) and then focus on doing true research with the noble aim of significantly advancing extant knowledge and for making the world a better place for human residence. While the idea of making this world a better place has always been relevant in the past as well, it has even greater relevance in this century.

Longer Paper = Better Research?

During my tenure as department chair and even before that, I have seen colleagues indulging in odious comparative analysis on who has published longer papers resulting in “deeper” research and claiming superior intellectual achievement based on their relatively longer papers. Without knocking down longer papers, I must point out that history of science provides ample evidence on the lasting impact of shorter works as well as corroboration that it is not the length but the key ideas and findings in a paper that lend it true lasting value. Even a research note in a reputable outlet may have greater impact than an article that is ten times longer in less reputable outlets. In short, it is not the length but the “net” content of a paper that imparts lasting value to extant knowledge.

However, from a pragmatic stance on the current academic culture, it may not be a good idea to write an extremely short paper that borders on being terse or looks akin to an “op-ed” unless such a paper packs a knockout punch. That may not always be possible as it is not easy to come up with stellar central ideas every time. Further, there are two other realities to take into account in the 21st century.

First, as mentioned earlier, there already exists considerable information clutter in electronic media and it is increasing all the time. Second, the attention span exhibited by humankind has been steadily decreasing. In the last millennium, this shortening attention span was attributed only to children but in the internet-mocial era, we have all been affected by it. This calls for a compromise in the approach and the reasonable conclusion is the adoption of a balanced approach.

Lengthy papers may have detail but they bring about a greater activation of the primacy-recency effect in focus on the part of the reader. The existing information clutter only exacerbates this effect. On the other hand, the shorter variety may, in general, be more in tune with the current internet-mocial culture, but it may not win the respect of some in academia. To a particular academic, that “some” may be salient especially if that “some” has some say on the career of that academic. Therefore, by and large, it would be prudent to write papers of what I call “acceptable” length.

But what is “acceptable”? A paper that has an interesting “hook” to evoke the interest of the targeted audience and then flows well enough to sustain that interest to the very end would be deemed a paper of acceptable length. Such a paper would not let the primacy-recency effect to come into play as the interest of the reader would be continuous. The flow of the paper would be such that it will be found lucid and will not necessitate repeated readings. Even if there is a tad obfuscation strewn here and there, it will be seen of acceptable length so long as that obfuscation is interesting to the reader. Now, whether or not that paper gets a final “nod” toward publication will further depend on the saliency of the issues raised in the paper as well as the “contribution to length” ratio as perceived by the reader(s). But then, a paper of “acceptable” length makes this estimation easier for a reader.

The Enigmatic “Saliency”

Academics, by and large, would wish to conduct research in “important” areas. Although affinity toward a certain area will ultimately determine one’s choice of topic, the initial choice set, in most cases, would consist of areas perceived to be important. To be important, a topic has to capture “importance”. But what is it? By and large, to the neophyte doctoral student, an important topic or a topic worthy of further academic inquiry is one that his/her advisor deems as one. While this may not always be incorrect, it behooves the student to investigate and form his/her own opinion in this regard but not necessarily express it with affected conviction until graduation (silence may be golden!). In any case, such an independent investigation to arrive at important topics consists of two steps. First, one has to get to the land of “importance” via *the seemingly obvious way* where important topics can be readily seen. Granted, this perspective is relative but this is an individual level investigation that will be specific to the individual and so the general relativity is irrelevant. Then, one has to get to the mine of “importance” through *the gap analysis way* to unearth worthwhile research projects.

The Seemingly Obvious Way

This way becomes visible from a serious consideration of “hot areas”, the bandwagon effect, and “niche areas”. From the number of publications in the literature and the number of researchers involved in them, one can discern if an area is a “hot” or a “niche” area. In the beginning, obviously, both numbers will be small. A topic (the first publication) can grow into an area but all topics start small. While some, like the concept of “behavioral expectations”, may prove to be fleetingly ephemeral, the vast majority will endure for a while and then eventually go into oblivion for all practical purposes, although in every field there may be the odd “sleeper” or two (e.g., the use of classical conditioning in marketing contexts).

However, some select ones will exhibit great potential for growth and with the right mix of researchers and publications in premier outlets, they will begin to be viewed as “hot” areas. Typically, people would tend to flock in these areas to do their research (or use the “hot” techniques). In other words, a *bandwagon* effect will ensue in any of these areas until the positive differential utility derived from doing research (or using that technique) becomes null

or negative owing to saturation in both the number of publications and researchers involved in such efforts.

Some other very select ones will show only a fairly steady increment in the number of publications but not necessarily in the number of researchers involved in such areas. These become the “niche areas.” The origin of the word “niche” is in the French word niche’(knee-shay) which refers to the projected spaces at various points on a winding staircase in medieval castles. Residents of the castle could sit by a lamp in any of these projected spaces which offered a view to the outside. In effect, niche’ refers to a “quiet corner”. Based on this, as we all know, niche-marketing refers to operating in a quiet corner (exclusive small segment), with practically no competition but with steady income (profit) and abundant customer goodwill to the niche-marketer which in itself can be an impediment to potential competitors.

At any chronological point, there will be a fairly widespread belief in the academic community on what areas are “hot” and what are established “niche areas”. Prima facie, a hot area will be seen as important. Further, the distinction between “it’s hot because it’s important” and “it’s important because it’s hot” can become blurred.

Examples of “hot” areas (including “hot” methodological techniques) at various times in the past include involvement, the assessment & application of the theory of reasoned action, application of conjoint analysis, perceived control, JIT, customer satisfaction and loyalty, the use of LISREL, branding aspects (brand equity, brand personality etc.), the assessment and application of the theory of planned behavior, relationship marketing, priming, framing, regulatory focus, supply chain aspects, and the technology acceptance model, among a host of others.

In like fashion, an established niche area will also, prima facie, be seen as important. By and large, assessments, critiques, and refinements of specialized quantitative techniques (e.g., conjoint analysis; LISREL) have largely been niche-areas as the pre-requisite qualifications to even enter into this arena can be daunting to the non-quantitatively oriented researcher. In this millennium, the application of evolutionary psychology in marketing has become a noteworthy niche area.

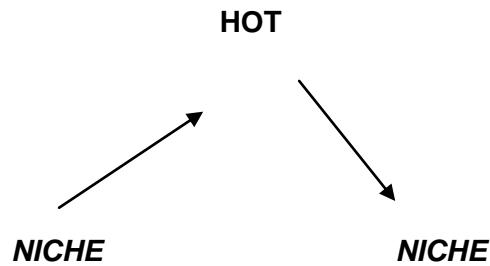
Further, all areas undergo transition. Based on my scans of the literatures as well as editorial experience, I present four examples in this regard in Figure 1. As seen in Figure 1a, “relationship marketing” started out as a niche area which rapidly became hot but then fell back to being a niche pretty much at the same original level of activity. Figure 1b shows a similar transitional path for “involvement” but the niche fell to a lower than the original level of activity (possibly owing to a reduction of research interest).

Structural equation modeling, at least the use of it, rose to a hot status rapidly and appears to have leveled off at the same level as shown in Figure 1c. Actually, it continues to be hot only in usage. Currently its use is as ubiquitous as the PC used by researchers in the social

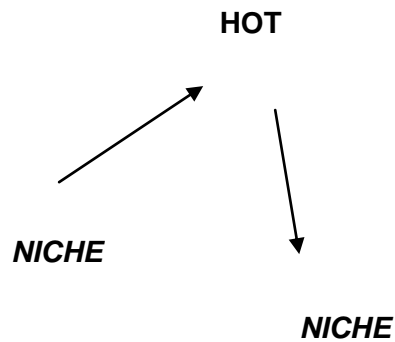
sciences! Finally, Figure 1d shows that the use of evolutionary psychology elements in marketing continues to be a niche, although its size has become bigger.

Figure 1: Examples of Transition

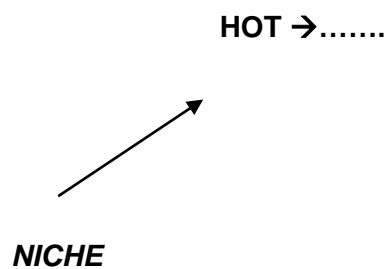
a. Relationship Marketing



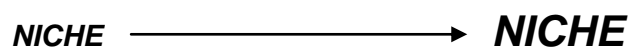
b. Involvement



c. Use of Structural Equation Modeling in Marketing



d. Use of Evolutionary Psychology in Marketing



The Gap Analysis Way

Once the individual areas of interest are found, a gap analysis can be undertaken to arrive at specific topics for research in a given area. This analysis can vary from the simplest to the truly elaborate. In its simplest form, it is nothing more than perusing the “limitations” section as well as any explicit exhortation (call) to fellow researchers for further/future research in any article that catches the fancy of the researcher. One should bear in mind that all “limitations” are “opportunities” for further research. In any case, this will yield a researchable topic(s).

The elaborate kind of analysis can consist of listing more or all articles pertaining to that area for such perusal and doing a comparative analysis on the “limitations” and “calls for future research”. This will most likely lend greater accuracy in unearthing a topic(s) that is truly worthy of further research and one that may have a greater potential for getting published.

Journal Hit Success/Failure

The likelihood of getting a journal hit is captured by the joint probability $P(J \cap R)$ which is the product of the marginal probability $P(J)$ and the conditional probability $P(R/J)$, where J =Picking the right Journal and R =Writing the right article for it. It must be noted that “R” is considerably more important than “J”.

Before embarking on estimating these probabilities, it will help if you ask yourself, “Have I read the journal?”, “Have I read a sufficient number of articles published therein to declare that I am familiar with their type?”, and, “Do I feel comfortable with their type and style?”. If the answer is negative to even one of these questions, then that raises a red flag to the endeavor.

Assuming that the answers are all in the affirmative, “J” can be understood by asking yourself, “Is the journal right for me?” and honestly contemplating on the fit of your topic and type of work (e.g., empirical, conceptual, case-study, critique etc.) with the stated scope of the journal, your aims or reasons (e.g., “I want a quick hit”, “I want to publish in the top tier” etc.) for doing the paper, and the expectations of your institution (what do they consider a good hit, an acceptable hit, or a poor hit?).

“R” can be understood by asking the even more important question, “Am I right for the journal?” and even more honestly contemplating on the “fit” between your capabilities & expertise and the expectations of the journal in this regard, as well as the parity of the quality of your piece with what is normally published in that journal.

The initial subjective probability estimate for R can be refined by considering the following aspects with respect to your paper:

Incremental Novelty

It is common knowledge that radical (new to the world) innovations are FEW and FAR BETWEEN and all editors are aware of this. However, there may be an expectation of salient incremental novelty or the “net contribution” to extant knowledge. Of course, replications constitute an exception in this regard as a replication by definition is not new per se. However, even a replication can be creatively presented by first and foremost, making a convincing case for a need for such replication and providing at least a minor extension or two, or a new twist to that replication.

Contribution to Length Ratio

An assessment of the ratio of the contribution to the length of the manuscript must also be made and it should seem satisfactory. When in doubt, reduce the length by getting rid of repetitious writing, unnecessary detail, peripheral citations, and reducing the number of tables and figures, among other possibilities.

Conceptual Vs. Empirical

In its strictest form, a conceptual article essentially presents a new concept or a new perspective. Introducing a new perspective or a new theory possibly along with new terms following a constructive assessment of extant research but *sans* primary data collection has historically been the main form of a conceptual piece; such a work could use secondary data purely for illustrative or substantiating purposes. Other forms including review articles, pure critiques, and inventories of findings and potential topics for further research based on lacunae found in extant research also fall in this genre’.

In general, within the realm of social sciences, it is relatively harder (but not impossible) to publish a conceptual *vis a vis* an empirical piece particularly if it only exhibits marginal incremental novelty and the author(s) is not well known. Teaming up with a well known author(s) may enhance the likelihood of publication. A conceptual piece that presents a radical departure from existing way of thinking in a convincing manner has a higher likelihood of finding a publishing home but even here, co-authoring that piece with at least a relatively better known person will work much better.

Student Vs. Non-Student Data

Authors continue to make professional apologies for using student samples and provide citations in support of their decisions. However, I have never viewed this issue as something so critical. Indeed, purely from a statistical standpoint, a student sample is a non-probability (“convenience”) sample. But so is any sample resulting from a captive set. Mall-intercept samples which are widely used are not probability samples but this use has received far less criticism than the use of student samples. In any case, the pros and cons of probability and non-probability sampling and the implications for sampling error estimation etc. have been well known for decades and so there is little need to re-visit those issues.

Further, I have heard complaints regarding the external validity of conclusions drawn in studies that have used student samples. First, we should realize that students are also customers and so long as the products/services/contexts used are relevant to the student population(s), the external validity should not be a particular issue. Second, there is considerable variation in the consumption behaviors of even students. A quick scan of the parking lots in any university will reveal that, by and large, students drive better and more expensive cars than the faculty! This bears credence to the fact that there probably are at least as many upscale student consumers as there are in any other population. Third, given that external validity refers to the extent of “generalizability” across segments and contexts, no single study can claim to have achieved satisfactory external validity regardless of the type of sampling procedure used.

In short, in my view, a student sample should suffice for theory/technique testing and so long as that is made clear in a paper no further professional apology is called for. In all other papers, it would be a good idea to address the issue of external validity no matter what sample is used.

Methodological Sophistication or Soundness

Given the plethora of software packages that have become increasingly user- friendly over the years, it is now easier than ever to employ complex techniques for analysis. For instance, in the past, the use of LISREL gave a paper a certain differential advantage in terms of technical sophistication. That is no longer the case as the use of LISREL is, justifiably or not, rampant across social sciences. Therefore, in current times, it seems more important to determine whether the use of complex techniques is justified in a certain research project especially if simpler techniques may suffice. If you need to pull a nail out of the wall, then you don't need complex contraption; the back of the hammer will do just fine.

Actually, it is even more important to check if the use of a technique, simple or complex, is appropriate in a certain situation. One should check if too many assumptions are being violated. After all, knowingly violating an assumption and providing a justification for it would generally be more acceptable than violating an assumption without even being aware that such a violation has occurred. Designs and techniques are there for our use but they should be employed appropriately and justifiably. In other words, methodological soundness (starting with sampling) is more important than technical sophistication. In marketing studies, it is even more important to be able to draw reasonable and convincing conclusions from a study and translate them into actionable recommendations. And that can be achieved more through methodological soundness than technical sophistication.

Focusing on methodological soundness from the start in any project could help in unearthing potential limitations and in thinking of ways to eliminate them thereby precluding the need to have an unsightly list of limitations at the end of the manuscript. When reviewers see far too many limitations acknowledged by the authors, they may be complimentary of the honesty displayed but they may also recommend that the authors return to square one and start afresh. Of course, one could present limitations as opportunities for future research and

hope for reviewer benevolence but there is a limit to this aspect. A reviewer could say, “Why don’t you do it yourself instead of exhorting fellow researchers to carry on with your incomplete work?”

Style Guidelines & Proofing

Assuming that you have decided to submit to a certain outlet, there are two tasks that must be performed. First, you must ensure absolutely that you have followed the submission guidelines [particularly the citation & reference format and the writing style] as stipulated by that outlet. Most reviewers for any outlet will be familiar with the guidelines of that outlet. Consequently, when they see significant and consistent deviations from the stipulated guidelines, some of the “sticklers” and the “not so benevolent” could get the impression that the authors are disrespectful toward the outlet or worse, that the submitted piece is a “rejected” article from another outlet and that the authors were too lazy to rectify the style in compliance with the current outlet. In other words, the review process can commence with a negative bias and it won’t augur well for the authors.

Second, it will be a good idea to don the proof-reader’s glasses and carefully peruse the final draft and also, where feasible, get it read by a trusted colleague or two. For authors from non-English speaking countries, in general, it will be an excellent idea to get it copy-edited by a professional. For authors living and working in countries where the de-facto official language is English, it may be worthwhile to get the manuscript read by an academic colleague from a country with English as its official language.

For instance, India is a case in point. While English is the de-facto official language, it is also entrenched in every other Indian language to such an extent that virtually no one speaks his/her mother-tongue without a half of it being English. Most speak a mixture of two or even three languages with English being one of them. This is seen even in programs (including news analysis) on TV. In short, the educated Indian will, by and large, have a good command of bookish English but he/she may not be sufficiently familiar with the appropriate style or use of idiomatic English in vogue in the U.S or the UK. This is probably because they do not think exclusively in English; they could think in a mixture of languages and write in English.

Actually, this is even more pronounced in the non-English speaking countries in Europe. The writing may be grammatically correct but the reader can quickly discern this “think in one and write in another” reality. Of course, this can convert to “think in one and write in the same” if one lives and works long enough in a country with a non-dubious official language.

Networking

There may be other aspects that may impinge on the foregoing probability estimates that I have not covered here. Further, it is a fact of life that there is always that random element that can come into play in anything we do and we will typically have little control over it. Since academic publishing is just a game albeit a salient one within the larger game of life,

that random element can hinder any endeavor in such a game. By the same token, however, it can serendipitously help. Given this reality, I do believe that “networking” within the academic as well as the relevant industry communities can aid in either direction. It can alleviate “hindrance” and/or promote “help”.

Research Ballparks

If one shines the 21st century light on marketing, especially consumer behavior, three key areas covering the realities of this century become visible. These are Aging, Leisure, and Culture and their particular importance cannot be over emphasized.

Aging

The area that stands out most is “aging”. People are living longer, period. Needless to say, this increased longevity has tremendous implications for marketing.

Culture

The area that stands out next is “culture”. Most societies around the world are rapidly becoming multicultural in composition and new cultural subsets are evolving faster than ever. This adds further excitement to research in marketing, consumer behavior in particular.

Leisure

“Leisure” is the third area on the scene. By and large, “leisure” goes hand in hand with “aging” and the retired folk obviously have more leisure. For the non-retired, however, in the recent decades, leisure has become a precious commodity. In fact, these folk always seem to have less and less of it! In any case, the important consequence of this occurrence is that people have become far more selective in how they use this valuable resource. While this obviously has direct and significant implications for the transportation, travel, tourism, & hospitality sectors, there are indirect but clear implications for the rest of the sectors.

Further, if one shines the 21st century light on the entire world, then two other areas become visible. One is the terrestrial environment and the other is the notion of happiness.

Terrestrial Environment

Enveloping and pervading all three of the above key areas is “terrestrial environment”. In other words, it automatically and heavily impacts all three key areas of aging, culture, and leisure. It would be a cliché to say, “If you don’t care about the environment, then you are on the verge of losing it all.” All implications for marketing in this regard are self-evident and there is little need for me to dwell on them. The all pervasive impact of the environment

makes potential research projects more complex and therefore more challenging. However, from a positive perspective, that makes the research process more exciting.

Happiness

Everyone strives for happiness. It is important to realize that while one may not always be cognizant of its soothing presence, one will readily feel its absence! A wise philosopher once advised that if you are not hungry, you have protection against the elements, and you have no bodily pain, then you are at “100% happiness”. The implication of this advice is that any time you try to get more than this “100%”, you will pay a price!

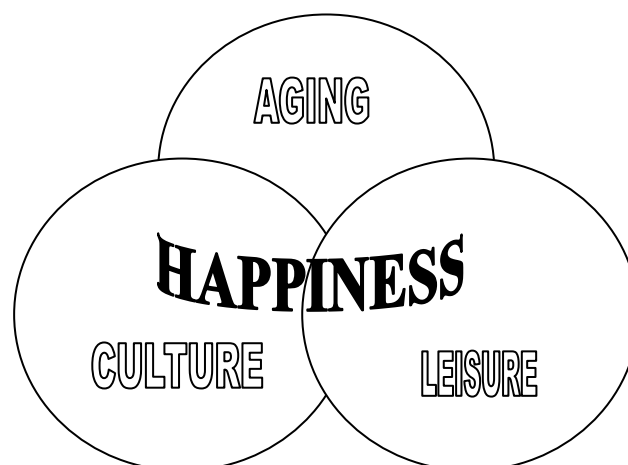
However, the vast majority of humans have always wanted more than this definition of happiness as evidenced by their attitudes, intentions, expectations, and actions, and human history is riddled with the “price” paid. Be that as it may, this pursuit of happiness continues and the hope is that the people of the 21st century will endeavor to achieve happiness more intelligently than in the past. Actually, there is a dire need for it now if a potential doom is to be avoided. In fact, just as the “C” is at the center of the marketing mix (or the 4, 5, 6, or the 7 Ps), human happiness is at the very core of it all and has the potential to influence the entire 21st century scene. It is important to realize that a conscious consideration of “Are you happy?” and “Are others happy?” will open up connections to the “not for profit” sector, “corporate sponsorship”, “emotions”, and facets of “altruism”.

The inclusion of the roles of terrestrial environment and happiness results in a configuration that I call the 21st century research *smorgasbord* (Figure 2).

Figure 2: The 21st Century Research Smorgasbord

ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT



ENVIRONMENT

ENVIRONMENT

Figure 2 shows the three key areas of aging, culture, and leisure as intersecting circles but perhaps, more realistically, they could be viewed as intersecting spheres. While each of these three key areas is a fertile research ground by itself, the sub-areas formed by the intersections of these areas may be of even greater importance as they cover all other aspects of the 21st century realities. Consequently, they will likely be even richer in potential research projects. Further, a consideration of the pervasive influence of the environment will add to the reality, the richness, and the complexity of potential projects. Finally, if the achievement -and sustenance of- human happiness is seen as the ultimate goal in what we do in marketing, then that realization will cast any research project in new light.

It is important to realize -and emphasize- that each of these areas encompasses other sub-areas and they, in turn, subsume even smaller areas, and so on. For example, the area of “environment” covers “greening”, “sustainability” etc. and they can be broken down to “pollution”, “solar power”, “water resources” etc., which can be further split into “solar powered cars”, “solar powered homes”, “bottled water versus faucet water purifiers”, and the like. Similarly, “aging” encompasses a huge portion of “medical marketing” and all its ramifications including the online ethical drug business.

If the 21st century marketer gazes and contemplates on just one section or one intersecting section in Figure 2, research ideas will spring forth in his/her mind. The only impediment that can come into play to thwart this possibility is a bridled imagination.

In closing, I wrote this article purely for some possible benefit to the potential and the neophyte researchers in marketing. However, I would be remiss if I do not remind the reader that this piece ultimately constitutes the musings of only one academic marketer viz. yours truly. But then, perhaps, this would encourage other senior marketing academics to share their experiences and views on where marketing is headed (or ought to head, more importantly) primarily for the benefit of the young and the restless among us.

Endnotes

1. The first invited talk titled, “Publish or Perish: How to not only survive but also thrive” was at the 2007 Annual Conference of the Korean Academy of Marketing Science, Seoul, Korea. The second invited talk titled, “Hot Topics for the New Millennium Marketer” was in the same year at Yonsei University, Seoul National University, and Sookmyung Women’s University, all in Seoul, Korea. Updated versions of these talks were given at Peking University, China, in 2008 and at the Vienna School of Business & Economics, Vienna, Austria, in 2011.
2. This term refers to the mobile, social and local forms of communication mix and underscores the worldwide phenomenon of billions of people performing some combination of logging onto social networks and downloading mobile applications.
3. This pretty and lush green creeper was brought to the US southeast from Japan during the last century to prevent soil erosion. Unfortunately, over time, its extreme prolific nature was not viewed kindly by the public and it was declared a weed. In any case, it continues to thrive in the US southeast.