

Marketing myopia – critique flashcard



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Critique "Marketing Myopia" Marketing Myopia is an article written in 1960 by Theodore Levitt. Levitt was a marketing professor at Harvard who has published many articles on the subject. This article; however, is no doubt his claim to fame as it has been extremely well read over the years. This is due in large part to the consumer oriented approach to marketing that he argues for. Though common knowledge to the marketers of today, making the customer the first priority in business would have been easily overlooked during this era of production, selling, and basic marketing approaches to business.

This article contends that the businesses of the day are extremely short-sighted when it comes to the true focus and associated advantages of marketing. He illustrates that a firm's inability to elaborate on their given industry will result in lack of readiness towards competition and other threats when they arise. This is achieved by taking a step back and embracing a meta-industry that encompasses the firm's current industry vision. Failure to broaden the scope of said firm may result in a lack of innovation.

Further, if a company is not aware of this loftier industry vision it is more likely that the innovation will come from external sources and not within the unexpanded industry itself. Levitt utilizes many examples: The railroads' inability to place themselves in the "transportation" industry; the movie industry not identifying with the "entertainment business"; and period relevant examples in the petroleum, automobile, and electronics industries. He talks at length about missed opportunities due to this narrow view of industry.

He delineates the success of businesses whose focus on customer value lead to identification of needs not necessarily in their traditional realm. On the whole, Levitt's argument is very insightful for its time. The ideas that he has put forth carry on today and some, such as delivering customer value, are spoken about in the same terminology. The modern educated business person would take all of this for granted. Perhaps thinking that Levitt is extremely longwinded in explaining a seemingly "understood" ideology. His overtly argumentative style may be somewhat irritating to this person but may have been necessary to incite debate and change at the time it was written. The small list of references and lack of primary data inferred from this article takes away from the validity of the argument. Revolutionary as it may be, I'm certain that further data had to be gathered before this premise became widely accepted. Adding to this was the use of language such as "my opinion", or "I doubt it!". Debate still surrounds the validity of qualitative information explains Dr. Kim Lemky professor at UNBSJ. This remains true even in this time of computer aided software designed for structuring such data (Veal, 2005).

Is this information applicable today? Can this information be extrapolated to include the quick ups and downs of today's product life cycles? I believe so. Even though the flow of information throughout our world is quicker and more widespread than Levitt may have thought possible, the basic business processes and structures still exist. There is still growth and decay in product lifecycles, albeit with widely varying influences. Though, to current standards, the customer focus he envisions is still not mature. Today,

companies embrace entire value networks up and down the production-distribution chain.

The stakeholders that marketers appeal to envelope the natural world as shown by efforts towards sustainable and accountable practices. Levitt provides generalizations in the electronics field about engineers lacking vision. At present, many electronic firms are perceived as some of the most visionary companies in existence. There is also an evolving trend in technology fields that says "The customer doesn't know what they want. It is up to the firm to show them and advance expectations" (Duvall, 1995). Apple computer has shown a trend in this direction. This has the nifty side effect of keeping them ahead of the competition.

The fundamentals remain; however, that needs are beneath the wants that are created. The forces have always been there. Levitt is just an important cog in the unraveling of their explanation. Levitt obviously intended this article to change the minds of the business leaders and educators of his time. In terms of an appeal to change, this article was lacking in decisiveness and balance. The article could have been structured so as to make better use of the contextual information and to make his logic easier to follow. Initially, the focus was on broadening industry perspective.

Only after the examples did he translate that clearly into a customer focused firm. In reading Levitt's long but singularly focused article one cannot help but look for possible trickery within its text. Would not three examples have sufficed instead of many more? In regards to balance, there are many viewpoints given where explanation of related contingencies would have

allowed the reader to feel less bombarded. Moreover, allowances could have been included for factors in the external company environment. He also posed a few dichotomous, all or nothing, type questions which makes the reader feel forced to conform.

He spoke of production and marketing focuses as if there is no place for anything but the extremes. Marketing Myopia will continue to be an important paper throughout the progression of our understanding of market forces. The need to determine what is valuable to the customer is being utilized more than ever. The relevance is shocking. The arguments may not have been ideally designed but the fact that this theory was obvious to Theodore Levitt at this early time in the evolution of marketing only serves to exemplify the importance of this topic.

Indeed, the knowledge he has passed on will lead us even further into the future. As he puts it, " Unless the leader knows where they are going, any road will take them there. " References Duvall, M. , (1995) A study of software management: The state of practice in the United States and Japan. Journal of Systems and Software. Volume 31, Issue 2. Levitt, T. (2004,), Marketing Myopia, Harvard Business Review, July-August. Veal, A. J. (2005), Business Research Methods: A Managerial Approach, Pearson Addison-Wesley, South Melbourne.