

MARKETING IN SCIENCES AND IN THE POLISH SCIENCE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

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Purpose: The article explores marketing's place among disciplines, contributing to the debate on its scientific status, especially in Poland, by consolidating various perspectives.

Design/methodology/approach: The research uses a literature review methodology (desk research) to gather opinions from scientists. It analyzes marketing's status as a science, its affiliation with various fields, and its place in the scientific classification system, emphasizing discrepancies between its legal status and treatment in literature.

Findings: The analysis discusses trends and debates on marketing as a science in Poland, recognizing it as a science per classical definitions but noting its absence in the official science classification. The article also explores whether marketing should be a sub-discipline of management or a separate discipline within economic sciences.

Research limitations/implications: The article is based on the analysis of available literary sources, thus its findings are dependent on the availability, timeliness, and representativeness of the examined publications.

Practical implications: The article emphasizes the need for scientific reflection on marketing, especially given administrative decisions marginalizing the field within science and economics education. Practically, this calls for promoting marketing as a crucial area of knowledge in both academic and business contexts.

Originality/value: The paper contributes to the discussion on the scientific status and classification of marketing, offering a comprehensive review of different perspectives and identifying key areas of contention. It is addressed to both academics and practitioners interested in the theoretical and practical aspects of marketing.

Keywords: Marketing, marketing management, scientific discipline, interdisciplinarity, science classification.

Category of the paper: literature review, general review.

1. Introduction

Marketing integrates theoretical reflection with practical application, attracting both academics and practitioners (Oczachowski, 2010, p. 65). Practitioners seek effective solutions in economics and management, addressing market challenges, customer relationships, brand management, social impact, and digital transformation. The discussion on marketing's place in science should begin with assessing its recognition as an independent discipline and its alignment with existing classifications. Given the principle of scientific verifiability, establishing marketing's scientific status is crucial to distinguishing it from speculation while maintaining its practical relevance.

2. Is marketing a science? Discussion

Marketing has influenced consumers for over a century, yet its status as a scientific discipline remains debated (Niestrój in: Altkorn, 1997; Kaczmarczyk, 2016). While definitions focus on practice and its variations, marketing lacks a clear, universally accepted definition, hindering its recognition as a science. Scientific validity requires testable theories, which is challenging for marketing due to its practical orientation.

Popper argues that science explains phenomena, and in marketing, functional and intentional explanations are particularly relevant, as it examines consumer motivations and behaviors shaped by social interactions (Strawiński, 2011, p. 324). While Popper emphasizes falsifiability in natural sciences, social sciences, including marketing, must adapt to specific temporal and spatial conditions (Woleński, 2022). Kuhn defines science as an evolving process of knowledge accumulation through dominant paradigms that undergo revolutionary shifts (Kuhn, 1968). Marketing has long been dominated by the applied paradigm, where managers use the marketing mix to manipulate tools for competitive advantage, influence purchasing behavior, and increase profitability (Kamiński, 2017, p. 30). Alternatively, the macromarketing paradigm focuses on systemic analysis of growth and change in the digital economy, business networks, and socio-environmental impact (Kamiński, 2017, p. 30; Kaczmarczyk, 2016). Marketing is also considered a multiparadigmatic science, integrating social and postmodernist approaches (Żabiński, 2000; Mazurek-Łopacińska, Sobocińska, 2013; Sagan, 2016). Thus, marketing can be recognized as a science under classical definitions.

Marketing is recognized as a science based on social and historical criteria, as it meets institutional and academic standards through publications, conferences, and scientific hierarchies, and is acknowledged by both theorists and practitioners (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 217; Sułkowski, 2004). It employs interdisciplinary research methods from

social, humanities, and natural sciences. Oczachowski (2010, p. 67) emphasizes that while marketing does not formulate universal laws, it aligns with modern scientific trends by integrating diverse methodologies, making it an interdisciplinary field. Żabiński (2005, p. 6) classifies marketing as an applied science with a distinct research subject separate from microeconomics and management studies, encompassing mature local paradigms that foster new concepts (e.g., service, global, and territorial marketing), indicating its dynamic development and links to microeconomic, psychological, and broader social science theories. Mantura (2015, p. 12) also defines marketing as an applied science, with marketing engineering as its core achievement – bridging theory and practice with both cognitive (theory-building) and practical (action-optimization) goals. Marketing evolves through methodological advancements and research tools, with engineering surpassing theory in development. According to research by the Polish Scientific Society of Marketing (PNTM), 93.3% of Polish marketing scholars consider marketing science to include both positive and normative knowledge, while 61.8% believe that marketing education should focus on enhancing practical applications and developing applied marketing skills, confirming its dual theoretical and practical nature.

Opponents argue that marketing is a collection of practical tools rather than a science. Figiel (2006, p. 36) and Karwowski (1998, p. V) view marketing as a practical activity without theoretical foundations. Dietl (2004, p. 16) contends that marketing is not a scientific discipline because it lacks a unified theory, original research methods, and a clearly defined subject scope. Instead, marketing should be seen as a pragmatic activity that draws on knowledge from various fields such as economics, psychology, and sociology, with marketing publications categorized within disciplines like economic psychology, microeconomics, or sociology (Dietl, 2004, p. 17).

The definitions of the American Marketing Association (AMA) have evolved from practical ones (1935) to broader social contexts (2013), reflecting the development of marketing thought. Polish researchers attempt to bridge theory and practice, but there is a discrepancy between academics and practitioners (Mazur, 2010, p. 25). Additionally, there are systematized yet broad approaches to marketing in four dimensions: as a philosophy of action, a process, a function within the enterprise, and a set of action tools (Mruk, Pilarczyk, Słowińska, 2012, p. 19).

In summary, marketing is recognized as a science because it meets institutional and social criteria, including its presence in academic discourse, scientific publications, organized conferences, and academic degrees and hierarchies. As an applied science, marketing fulfills the criteria required to be considered a distinct discipline, with a well-defined area of study. However, the lack of a unified theory and unique research methods generates controversy among some scholars. As a social science, marketing is not as universal as natural sciences and must be adapted to the specific conditions and contexts in which organizations and their audiences operate. Marketing, as an interdisciplinary science, develops through the integration

of various approaches and paradigms, drawing from the contributions of social, humanistic, and natural sciences, which proves its interdisciplinarity. Nonetheless, a minority view among researchers still holds that marketing is merely a practice using scientific methods or a collection of practical experiences, rather than a fully developed theoretical concept.

3. Marketing in the fields and disciplines

Since marketing is considered a science, further discussion should focus on identifying which scientific field it belongs to and where it fits within the structure of scientific disciplines. A scientific field is a broad area encompassing various scientific disciplines, which in turn consist of subdisciplines focused on narrower research topics (Sudoł, 2014, p. 23). A scientific discipline, on the other hand, is a distinct part of science, recognized as a fundamental unit of classification based on its subject matter and research objectives (Krzyżanowski, 1994, p. 44).

There is no consensus among researchers regarding the position of marketing within the scientific field. On one hand, marketing is recognized and advocated to be classified as a distinct discipline, on par with fields such as economics, finance, or management and quality studies (Kamiński, 2016). It is suggested that "the evolving discipline of marketing science requires urgent definition" (Kaczmarczyk, 2016, p. 103). On the other hand, according to the current scientific classification in Poland, marketing is described as "a relatively young subdiscipline of management sciences" (Wiśniewski, 2016) and "a part of management sciences, i.e., a subdiscipline" (Sudoł, 2016a, p. 164), considered one of the specialties within the scientific discipline of management (Lenik, 2014) and "one of the fastest-growing subdisciplines" (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 216). Marketing, alongside Human Resource Management (HRM), accounting, and quality management, is categorized as a subdiscipline of management and quality studies (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 21). A similar view is presented by Kaczmarczyk (2015, p. 207), who argues that marketing management is one of the globally recognized concepts for managing an entire company, alongside methods such as management by objectives, TQM, process management, or knowledge management. Some authors use terms such as "marketing management" or "management of marketing" while avoiding the word "marketing", which clearly indicates the perception of marketing as a subdiscipline within management and quality studies and its practical understanding through the lens of management functions.

Sudoł views marketing as a subdiscipline of management sciences (2016a, p. 164), presenting two perspectives: a broad one, where marketing encompasses all social processes between suppliers and consumers, and a narrow one, focusing on the sale of goods or services. He rejects the broader perspective and treats marketing as a management function, analogous

to planning, motivating, organizing, and controlling, thereby considering marketing a concept of management.

A different perspective is presented by Żabiński (2005, p. 8), who distinguishes between marketing theory and marketing management. Marketing management, a subdiscipline, focuses on enterprise-level strategies and demand influence. In contrast, marketing theory examines the broader market system, studying interactions among producers, intermediaries, and customers, aligning more with economics. While marketing theory is analytical-descriptive, marketing management is application-oriented.

Since the early 20th century, marketing evolved within economics, initially focusing on goods distribution and exchange institutions. Over time, it became an independent discipline, integrating insights from various fields (Oczachowski, 2010, p. 65). While some scholars, such as Żabiński (2005, p. 6), still consider marketing part of economics, it is increasingly seen as separate due to its interdisciplinary role in understanding market behavior (Dudzik, 2010, p. 59). As economics became more practical, Nobel-winning works increasingly overlapped with marketing (Dudzik, 2010, p. 74). Żabiński argues that marketing belongs to economics as it applies market theories to value creation (Żabiński, 2005, p. 6). Marketing's focus shifted from economic contexts to managerial decision-making by the 1960s (Mazur, 2010, p. 21), and by the late 20th century, it expanded into social processes, attracting scholars from various fields (Mazur, 2010, p. 21).

According to the results obtained by the Polish Scientific Society of Marketing (PNTM), 68% of Polish scholars believe that marketing and management are two areas of knowledge with overlapping aspects, while 24% of respondents think that the knowledge within the field of management encompasses all the knowledge from the field of marketing (PNTM, 2018). At the same time, 51.6% of respondents believe that marketing should be a subdiscipline within the discipline of management sciences, 30.7% would consider marketing as an independent scientific discipline within economics, and 7.1% as a subdiscipline within economics.

If a subdiscipline should fit within a discipline, discrepancies between management and marketing are evident. Management is defined as "a social discipline that makes organizations the object of analysis" (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 82), while marketing extends beyond the organization, examining relationships between market participants. Marketing involves generalized knowledge of decision-making principles within company-market interactions (Rosa, 2016). According to Niestrój, marketing includes identifying and analyzing external market signals, forecasting trends, and developing strategies adapted to market changes, considering external factors and interactions (Niestrój in: Altkorn, 1997, p. 26). Marketing ideas extend beyond sales, influencing human resources management (personal marketing) and quality management (customer orientation) (Khedher, 2014, p. 29; Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 186).

It should be noted that among researchers, there is also no agreement regarding the classification of management (currently perceived as superior to marketing) within the framework of scientific disciplines. Moreover, the scope of management science is not clearly defined, and the concept of management itself has not yet been uniformly specified (Sudoł, 2018, p. 100). It has been postulated that management science should be recognized as an independent field of study (Sudoł, 2016b, p. 8), on par with social sciences, to which management is currently assigned, or, for example, the field of humanities.

The distinction between practical and theoretical approaches in management and quality studies reflects the field's current state, balancing practical achievements with theoretical development. Both aspects of marketing are emphasized in literature, highlighting the role of theory in guiding practice and the application of marketing concepts to improve strategies in dynamic markets. Theory provides essential concepts to identify key actions and rational directions (Rosa, 2016), while marketing practice involves applying methods and techniques (Sztucki, 1992, p. 40). The marketing mix, an instrumental approach, is widely discussed in the literature (McCarthy, 1960; Kotler, 1994; Rosa, 2016).

The paradigms of marketing in management and quality studies shape how scholars perceive and analyze phenomena (Grochmal, 2013, p. 87). Kuhn defines them as widely accepted frameworks for solving scholarly problems (Kuhn, 1968, p. 12). Sudoł (2014, p. 23) views paradigms as core scientific assertions forming the basis for further research. While some scholars argue management and quality sciences are pre-paradigmatic (Płoszajski, 1985, p. 33), most consider them multi-paradigmatic, integrating diverse methodologies from economics, sociology, and psychology (Sułkowski, 2015, p. 123).

Marketing, as part of management and quality studies, is also understood as a discipline composed of multiple paradigms (Szumilak, 2005). The dominant paradigm in marketing (NFS - neo-positivist-functional-systemic) is based on tangible products, objective data, and one-way mass communication. Alternative paradigms emphasize symbolic products, subjective interpretations, and interactive, individualized communication with feedback loops. The key difference lies in the approach to the product, communication, and the relationship with the customer (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 220).

Marketing's strength lies in its epistemological and methodological pluralism, which may blur its subdiscipline identity (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 221). It uses an eclectic, interdisciplinary approach, drawing from economics, sociology, and anthropology. The division between theory and practice and the role of the researcher versus practitioner remain debated, leading to ongoing reflection. Limiting marketing to marketing management excludes contemporary aspects and reduces future research possibilities, narrowing its scope and diminishing interdisciplinarity (Sułkowski, 2016; Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021, p. 103).

4. Marketing in the science classification system

Despite being recognized as a science by most academics, marketing is not listed among scientific disciplines in the Polish system of science classification. Initially, it appeared in proposals as a subdiscipline (Sudoł, 2014, p. 31), but was ultimately replaced by marketing management (Belz, 2019). The current division of fields is based on the classification adopted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and was developed with input from various academic and governmental bodies. The subdiscipline of marketing management is classified within the field of management and quality studies, under the social sciences, which confirms the dominant managerial approach to marketing. In the proposed classification of subdisciplines in management and quality studies v. 2.0 (Belz et al., 2019), found on the website of the Committee for the Science of Organization and Management of the Polish Academy of Sciences, marketing management is placed at the functional level within the practical stream, although literature indicates its strategic nature in the context of businesses and organizations. Marketing is described as: the philosophy of business management (McNamara, 1972), the philosophy of doing business and operating enterprises (Mruk, 1994), the concept of action according to market rules (Rydel, 1996), an organization's strategic approach to the market (Niestrój in: Altkorn, 1997), more than just the coordinated use of instruments – it is a distinct philosophy of managing a company or organization (Karwowski, 1998), the philosophy of business (Kotler, 1999). The literature clearly distinguishes and defines the scopes of strategic marketing – general, long-term actions such as target market selection, defining the company's mission, operational philosophy, and higher objectives – and operational marketing – detailed, short-term planning, subordinate goal analysis, specifying elements of the marketing mix (Rosa, 2016).

The omission of marketing from the theoretical stream disregards over 100 years of research contributions, which include both positive knowledge about the relationships between organizations and the market, as well as normative knowledge regarding the principles of effective market actions (Niestrój in: Altkorn, 1997, p. 19). The development of marketing as an academic discipline began in the early 20th century in the United States, with the first marketing lectures appearing in 1905 (Dietl, 1985, p. 13; Rosa, 2016, p. 23). After World War II, marketing became established as a scientific discourse (Kotler, 2005b, pp. 114-116) and reached European academia in the 1960s (Daszkowska, 2015).

In the classification of sciences by the National Science Centre (NCN 2022), which serves as the basis for the qualification and evaluation of research projects, marketing is classified under the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts (HS) section, specifically in panel HS4 – Individuals, institutions, markets: economics, finance, management, demography, social and economic geography, urban studies. It is listed as one of the subtopics within panel HS4_08: Behavioral economics, consumption and consumer behavior, marketing. This classification

aligns with the view of marketing's focus in economic terms (e.g., Żabiński, 2005, Dudzik, 2010) and deviates from the prevailing perception of marketing as a subdiscipline of management and quality studies (e.g., Kamiński, 2016; Kaczmarczyk, 2016; Sudół, 2014; Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021).

The classification of marketing varies by country. In the United States, according to the JEL (Journal of Economic Literature) system used by the American Economic Association, marketing is included in group M, alongside accounting and human resource management, with the M3 subgroup specifically distinguishing it from advertising. Notably, there is a clear separation between marketing and advertising, even though many marketing target audiences consider these terms synonymous (Al-Noorachi, 2014, p. 11). In the OECD classification, marketing is not listed. Within the field of Social Sciences (Category 5), under group 5.2 Economics and Business, marketing is covered by 5.2.c Business and Management.

5. Summary

Marketing is considered a science (a view shared by most authors), but it does not appear in Polish scientific classifications: neither in the state classification nor in the scientific classification of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN). In the NCN classification, marketing is listed alongside behavioral economics, which contrasts with the prevailing recent perception of marketing as a subdiscipline of management and quality studies, or as marketing management. Due to the practical and useful nature of the solutions it offers, marketing is commonly viewed as a set of tools aimed at achieving market goals, with its scientific nature still questioned by researchers, despite its over 100-year legacy and meeting the conditions that would be considered sufficient for other fields to be classified as sciences. Marketing operates within the academic sphere: publicly funded research is conducted that clearly falls within the scope of marketing, scientific societies (e.g., PNTM) are active, conferences are organized, publications are issued, and marketing knowledge is passed on to students. However, those conducting research and publishing results are not recognized as marketing scientists, because according to the current classification, which is used for awarding academic titles, marketing does not appear.

Reflection on the scientific identity and interdisciplinary nature of marketing is essential, especially amid profound changes in social sciences (Gorynia, 2019; Oczachowski, 2010). The boundaries between disciplines are shifting, fostering integration, new fields, and cross-disciplinary influences, particularly in management sciences, which merge sociology, psychology, mathematics, and IT to generate innovative concepts (Sudół, 2016a). The interdisciplinarity of management sciences, including marketing, will intensify, blurring distinctions and challenging academic structures (Sułkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021).

Despite ongoing debate about marketing's scientific classification, its core principles—satisfying customers while ensuring profitable sales—are widely accepted (Altkorn, 1995). Rooted in market adaptation, marketing theory is empirical and interdisciplinary, with observation as a key research method (Marcinkiewicz, 2011; Dudzik, 2010). However, reducing marketing to advertising and communication trivializes its role, and administrative decisions further marginalize it within economics education (Dudzik, 2010). A 2018 study by the Polish Scientific Marketing Society found that most scholars view marketing as both theoretical and practical, with over 60% supporting applied business education (PNTM, 2018). Marketing courses exist in higher education, but they focus mainly on tools and practical applications.

Restricting marketing to management sciences narrows its interdisciplinary scope, emphasizing strategic and operational tasks while overlooking its broader theoretical framework, which aligns more closely with economics. A multidisciplinary approach—including economics, psychology, and sociology—is crucial for understanding consumer behavior and market dynamics. Marketing's expanding scope supports the argument for recognizing it as a distinct discipline or closely linking it with economics (Żabiński, 2005).

The development of marketing as a scientific discipline has involved both theoretical and practical aspects, emphasizing its interdisciplinary nature. Contemporary approaches show that marketing extends beyond management, supporting its classification as a distinct discipline or closely related to economics. This is confirmed by its inclusion in the NCN (National Science Centre) classification of 2022, alongside behavioral economics, consumption, and consumer behavior. Although marketing's evolving nature may challenge its identity, it also demonstrates the dynamic growth of the field (Sulkowski, Lenart-Gansiniec, 2021). Marketing management is one of the fastest-growing subdisciplines within management and quality studies.

In the author's humble opinion, considering the validity of the discussion on the marketing identity and interdisciplinarity, with increasingly evident trends to blending of scientific disciplines, perhaps the possibility of uniting disciplines (since their borders are blending) should also be discussed, instead of fragmenting them. Omitting much of marketing's output by limiting it to marketing management is detrimental to researchers dealing with the “economic” part of marketing issues, such as consumer behavior. Furthermore, dividing marketing into the part influenced by managers (marketing management) and the part concerning its effects on the market (behavioral economics) seems like an artificial complication. Management and quality studies, as well as economics and finance, are separate disciplines within the field of social sciences in the Polish classification, which makes it difficult to assign research results to a discipline, thus complicating funding acquisition and seeking research results. Meanwhile, due to the lack of consensus among scientists themselves, the discussion “where should marketing be in the structure of sciences?” remains open.

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