Marketing, Government and Governmentality

Per Skålén
per.skalen@kau.se
Lecturer / Researcher

Markus Fellesson
markus.fellesson@kau.se
Senior Lecturer / Researcher
Karlstad University
The Service Research Center
SE-65188
Karlstad, Sweden

Martin Fougère
martin.fougere@hanken.fi
Lecturer/Researcher
The Swedish School of Economics and Business Administration
P.O. Box 478, FIN-00101
Helsinki, Finland

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Abstract
Informed by Foucault’s concept of governmentality, this paper provides a critical reading of the marketing discourse. Based on reviews of the history of marketing scholarship we identify three periods - ‘early marketing thought’ (c. 1900-1960), ‘marketing management’ (c. 1950-1985) and ‘service marketing’ (c. 1975-present) – on which we base our analysis on in the paper. For these three periods respectively we focus on analyzing what marketing seeks to govern, how marketing governs and who we become when governed by marketing. We find that customer orientation has become the dominant governmental regime in marketing – it has embedded the marketing discourse deeper and deeper as time has gone by. The paper contributes to the critical analysis of managerial discourses broadly defined, and to the critical analysis of marketing in particular.

Key words: Foucault, Governmentality, Marketing, History.
Introduction

Critical examinations of managerial discourse have become a hallmark of contemporary management studies. A critical perspective has also been applied in sub-disciplines of management studies such as accounting and general management. As opposed to these management disciplines, marketing has been far less influenced by the critical turn in management studies. The major reason to this is, according to Morgan (2003) and Burton (2001), marketing’s emphasis on positivism, performativity and scientism, the relative lack of interest in the development of theory and the reluctance to take up the theoretical challenge represented by the emergence of postmodernism. However, critical examinations of marketing discourse should be pivotal since it is a management discipline with huge effect on the construction of organizations, as stated by Brownlie et al. (1999:6) who argue that marketing’s ‘ideas and rhetoric have been widely used to legitimize change in organizations in the public and private sector.’ A critical discussion of key theoretical formulations and the effect such formulations might have on people and organizations would thus contribute not only to the reformulation of marketing theory, but also to management studies in general (Alvesson and Willmott, 1996).

In the present paper we conceptualize marketing as a management discipline and put emphasis on how marketing governs individuals and organizations. Our critical reading of the marketing discourse is informed by Foucault’s concept of governmentality (Foucault, 2000a;b see also Dean 1995; 1999; Rose, 1999). In particular we analyze the marketing discourse based on Dean’s analytical scheme, which makes us ask three questions: what does marketing seek to govern, how does marketing govern and who do we become when we are governed by marketing (Dean, 1995; 1999)?

A central argument in the present paper, which is especially articulated in the analysis, is that marketing as a governmental discourse stimulates managers and employees to look upon organizations from the standpoint of the customer: that is to be customer orientated subjects. Throughout the discussion we will argue – in contrast to what often is stated within the marketing discourse itself – that there has been no paradigmatic shift of focus in marketing research. Rather, we explicate that the customer orientated logic has been embedded deeper and deeper in the marketing discourse and that this has contributed to legitimize the customer orientated organization and the particular governmental regimes needed to accomplish this aim.

The paper opens with a short review regarding previous critical marketing research. The second section outlines our Foucauldian framework with a focus on governmentality and government. In section three the description and the analysis are made – we describe how the customer orientated logic has evolved within the marketing discipline which is analyzed utilizing Dean’s scheme. In the fourth section we reflect upon how deep the customer orientated logic has embedded the marketing discourse and how marketing fosters self-regulation. In the final section we put forward our conclusion and avenues for further research.

Critical marketing research

Analyses of the marketing discourse with a critical edge are scarce. In fact, it would be misleading to talk of critical marketing as a coherent field of research. However,
there exists some analysis of marketing discourse which deserves to be labeled critical. Brown (1995, 1998) seeks to broaden the discipline of marketing by taking up a general postmodern approach in his research. The focus is on a criticism of the prevalent positivistic paradigm in marketing. Still, Morgan (2003:118) believes 'it is a limited sort of critique by virtue of its seeming unwillingness to engage with anything about the economic organization of markets and marketing or the social and ecological impacts of mass consumerism'.

However, some more overtly critical analysis of marketing discourses deserves attention. Part of this research outlines avenues for critical marketing research based on the critical theory of the Frankfurt School and/or Foucauldian approaches (Alvesson 1994; Alvesson and Willmott, 1996; Burton, 2001; Morgan, 2003). There also exist a few critical analyses of marketing discourse and empirical responses to such discourse. For instance, Hackley (2003) has analyzed popular marketing textbooks in order to mark out a typology of the ideological influence that is enabled and mobilized by marketing strategies. Hackley’s paper is surely a contribution to the more overtly critical perspectives on marketing, but it does not focus on governmentality and its distinctive associated problematic, which makes it somewhat inappropriate to build on for the sake of the present paper. A few papers, however, have analyzed marketing discourse and practice by drawing on Foucault. Hodgson (2002) and Knights and Sturdy (1997:159) have focused on how marketing contributes to transform ‘the individuals into particular kinds of consumer subjects’. These papers have commonalities with the present paper in their approach but diverge in the object of study - they focus on the consumer as opposed to the intra-organizational locus here. Skålén and Fougère (2004), on the other hand, have studied how service management, and more specifically a perceived customer quality survey technology labeled the gap-model, tends to subjectify and normalize organizations and their workforce, an important input for the present paper. Apart from Skålén’s and Fougère’s work the present paper explicitly or implicitly draws on analyses of governmentality in general sociology (Dean, 1995; 1999; Rose, 1999) and organization studies (Clegg et al, 2002).

**Government, Governmentality and the Subject**
The term governmentality has no really unequivocal definition in Foucault’s work. But a body of literature has emerged that has engaged with interpreting and elaborating the concept (e.g. Dean, 1995; 1999; Rose, 1999). According to Dean (1999:2), ‘the term governmentality seeks to distinguish the particular mentalities of arts and regimes of government and administration that have emerged since ‘early modern’ Europe, while the term government is used as a more general term for any calculated direction of human conduct’. Foucault (2000a) defined government as the ‘conduct of conduct’. Government, to Foucault, is more or less calculated activities aimed at shaping people’s thoughts, actions and emotions. However, it is not an outside force that governs people. Central to Foucauldian analysis of government is rather that people engage in ‘self-regulating’ activities stimulated by the regimes of truth that they are embedded in (Foucault, 2000b). Marketing, for example, helps employee understand how to handle the encounter with customers. Government can be understood as ‘reflexive self-control, [and creates] situation[s] in which external sources of surveillance become unnecessary’ (Clegg et al., 2002:318). The study of government in a Foucauldian manner thus has a clear moral dimension, ‘if morality is understood as the attempt to make oneself accountable for one’s own actions, or as
a practice in which human beings take their own conduct to be the subject to self-regulation’ (Dean, 1999:11). Governmentality, on the other hand, usually has two meanings. The first refers to ‘specific modes of government which have emerged in modern societies’ and the second, which is emphasized in the present paper, concerns ‘the analysis of the mentality of government, of the collective and taken-for-granted systems of thought and practice which underpin attempts to govern society’ (Hodgson, 2002:320 and 321). It is important to note that in order for a practice or discourse to qualify as a part of governmentality it has to be a collective feature and not open to question. We believe that part of the marketing discourse has such features.

Based on reviews of the history of marketing scholarship (Morgan, 2003; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Webster, 1992), we identify three periods - ‘early marketing thought’ (c. 1900-1960), ‘marketing management’ (c. 1950-1985) and ‘service marketing’ (c. 1975-present) – which are described in the paper. Our governmentality analysis of these three periods is built on the analytical scheme presented by Dean (1995; 1999) who makes us focus on the following three dimensions:

1. ‘First, [governmentality] involves ontology, concerned with what [marketing] seek to act upon, the governed or ethical substance’ (Dean, 1999:17, emphasis in original). In this paper we conceptualize marketing as a management discipline and accordingly focus on the intra-organizational processes of government that marketing contributes to stimulate. From this perspective we argue that marketing seek to contribute to making managers and employees perceive their organization from the standpoint of the customer. In the analysis we seek to track the roots of this orientation in the period we label early marketing thought and describe how it has embedded the marketing discourse deeper and deeper during marketing management and service management. We thus argue that customer orientation develops from being one perspective among others in early marketing thought to be the lodestar for the design of every aspect of organizations in service management.

2. ‘Second, [governmentality] involves ascetics, concerned with how [marketing in our case] governs this substance, the governing or ethical work’ (Dean 1999:17, emphasis in original). Marketing discourse thus seeks to instil customer orientation into organizational members. How this is accomplished and what technologies are used differs extensively between the three time periods analyzed in this paper. The major reason to this is, as indicated above, that the focus on customer orientation was less articulated in the early days of marketing scholarship and more articulated towards the end. In the early days of marketing thought customer orientation is said to be developed by loosely referring to technologies within scientific management, starting with the selling function and then embedding the customer orientation deeper in the organization, by affecting other functions. Since the advent of service management, on the other hand, technologies for the measurement of customer perceived service quality have been developed that facilitate the production of the normalized customer-orientated employee (Skålén and Fougère, 2004).

3. ‘Third, [governmentality] involves deontology, concerned with who we are when we are governed [by marketing]...our “mode of subjectification”, or the governable or ethical subject’ (Dean 1999:17, emphasis added). What subjectivity marketing offer to people is a major focus in the paper. In critical management studies Foucauldian
analysis of subjectivity has been associated with the concept disciplinary power. This type of power manifests itself through discourses and techniques of control and makes people behave and think in a distinctive manner (Foucault, 1977; 2000a). Knights and Willmott (1989:554) have made explicit how Foucault defines subjectivity: ‘Rejecting the essentialist view of human nature, subjectivity is understood as a product of disciplinary mechanisms, techniques of surveillance and power/knowledge strategies’. By means of the subjection caused by the disciplinary discourse, people are thus constituted as subjects (Foucault, 1977; 1981; 1986; 2000a). Foucauldian analyses of subjectivity have been taken up as critical analyses of marketing discourse. For example, Skålén and Fougère (2004:24), in their study the gap model, an important customer survey technology within service management, argue that the latter ‘has an extensive effect on the subjugation of people and thus on the production of subjectivity while at the same time reproducing human beings as objects of service management knowledge’. In a similar vein, Townley (1993:537) argues that ‘HRM practices function to constitute the individual in a particular manner through tying him or her to a changed sense of self or identity’. In the present paper we will analyze how the development of marketing discourse provides employees with a distinct subjectivity that makes them governable in a particular customer-orientated way.

Analyzing the governmentality of the marketing discourse

In this section the description and analysis of marketing discourse are intertwined. As stated above, the history of marketing is divided into three periods – early marketing thought, marketing management and service management. For these three periods respectively, following Dean (1995), we focus on analyzing what marketing seek to govern, how marketing governs and who we become when we are governed by marketing.

Early marketing thought (c. 1900-1960)

Since the marketing discipline was just born in the early twentieth century, it was more or less looking for its identity at the time, so there were many competing approaches to marketing then. It is important to note that it originally dealt mostly with farm products – in that respect the discipline evolved much as the society it was born into, since the main focus changed from agriculture to industry and then service. Concern for the consumer and the customer were present quite early on – the citizen as consumer was even perceived as one the main audiences of this scholarship (Bartels, 1962).

Marketing scholars (Webster, 1992; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) present this period as characterized by a more descriptive than prescriptive or managerial approach. One has to say that all is relative. The concern for efficiency was quite present already, and the consumer / customer approach is definitely visible, albeit not as explicitly as later. That is why saying that there has been a ‘paradigm shift’ between this period and the ‘marketing management’ period is, in our opinion, highly exaggerated. This period was also much more contested than marketing scholars (e.g. Webster, 1992) suggest. As any young discipline, marketing was looking for its way at the time. The managerial perspective was to become the dominant one as a result of the competition between different early perspectives; it did not come out of the blue, rather it was already present, at least implicitly, in many studies.
What is being governed (ontology)?
It is not clear who the audience actually was early on in marketing, nor was marketing unified in terms of what/who was the object of its knowledge – and thus subject to this knowledge. Marketing’s ‘governmental’ project was thus not that well defined. There were three main approaches to marketing between around 1910 and the 1930’s: a ‘commodity’ approach that studied the processes involved in the marketing of products, an ‘institutional’ approach that described the wholesale and retail institutions, and a ‘functional’ approach that focused on marketing functions and activities (Bartels, 1962). These three approaches more or less constituted what was appropriate in mainstream marketing scholarship until the 1930’s. However, there were already then certain ‘unorthodox’ studies that were to become the bases for the further evolution of marketing - such as e.g. White’s (1927) very managerial proposal of a ‘scientific marketing management’, offering guidance to the companies’ marketing by drawing on Taylor’s scientific principles of management. In the 1930’s, some major changes already happened, with much more focus on non-agricultural and manufactured goods within ‘commodity marketing’ (Breyer, 1931; Comish, 1935) and, more importantly, an interest in the consumer that went far beyond the study of buying motives to consider the consumers as the driving force of the economy (Phillips, 1938). This special concern for the consumer became more or less the rule already in the early 1940’s, when it was coupled with an emphasis on the management of marketing (see especially Alexander et al., 1940).

The main audience for marketing originally was claimed to be the general public, as a central concern was to ‘clarify misconceptions held among the public’ (Bartels, 1962, 39). It was not rare for marketing authors to raise issues of general societal interest in their writings: for instance, Clark (1922) defended advertising for its ‘educational value’ (Bartels, 1962, 170). It is thus quite understandable that marketing showed a growing interest in consumers, an interest that eventually led (in the 1950’s) to the belief that ‘marketing has represented a viewpoint introduced into business that has made [concepts such as “The consumer is King”] practical’ (Bartels, 1962, 209).

The people who have thus been most subject to the need to satisfy customers early on have been salespeople – as the marketing orientation has not affected the whole management that much (or that deeply) early on. One of the main driving forces for a changing conceptualization of ‘salesmanship’ was the economic crisis in the 1930’s, which strongly questioned the naïve sales philosophies – contending that aggressive salespeople would be successful - that had taken shape during the preceding period of prosperity.

How is government achieved (ascetics)?
First, the marketing discipline started challenging widely-held notions, such as that holding that ‘selling cannot be taught’, as early as the late 1910’s (Whitehead, 1917). However, many of those training programs and textbooks remained more concerned with salesmanship as the persuading of the customer to accept the salesman’s viewpoint and purchase the goods (see especially Ivey, 1925; 1937). Scholars more clearly positioned within marketing took issue with that idea that selling would lie in imposing the salesman’s will over the customer: Jones and Comyns (1918), for instance, held the view that selling should be viewed as a ‘warm, man-to-man affair’ (Bartels, 1962, 88). They treated the salesman as an employee, ‘a unit of the selling
organization’ (ibid.). At the core of the discussion about the nature of selling as fundamentally a matter of persuasion or as a more balanced man-to-man process in which the whole organization is represented was a contrast between views of salesmanship as an ‘art’ – Douglas (1919, 4) writing about ‘the methods of artistic persuasion’ – and ‘scientific’ conceptions of selling. The scientific perspective progressively gained ground to become the dominant one when the 1930’s economic crisis was claimed to make it necessary to act in a more rational way.

The introduction of notions and practices from scientific management into marketing already in the late 1920’s has especially contributed to set up new productive methods of dealing with the selling jobs. These methods have entailed ‘setting sales quotas, and [...] training, compensating, stimulating, supervising, and evaluating the performance of salesmen’ (Bartels, 1962, 204). Generally speaking, the marketing claim to scientific knowledge that became significant in the 1930’s has contributed not only to salespeople believing in these new methods as appropriate and contributing to an optimization of their work, but also to managers and executives accepting more and more marketing notions as legitimate and well suited for their work. However, the marketing discourse – mainly expressed through ‘the marketing concept’ introduced for the first time in the late 40’s (American Marketing Association, 1948) – was not strongly established and institutionalized enough at the time; it was not yet embedded ‘deep’ enough in the organization.

**Who do we become (deontology)?**

As written above, in the first half of the twentieth century, the jobs that can be understood to have been very deeply affected by marketing’s emergence as a scientific field mainly concerned salespeople. An extreme – but telling - example of the new scientific approach on selling was Canfield’s (1940; 1947) methods for studying the salesman’s function: ‘he used concealed microphones, he had investigators posing as buyers, he recorded salesmen’s traveling time, and he measured their foot travels with pedometers’ (Bartels, 1962, 92) (!). The new rational discourse on the optimization of the selling performances – through ‘training, compensating, stimulating, supervising and evaluating the performances’ (cf. above) – made salespeople more accountable for their performances and thus more competitive, both in the sense that they presumably improved their productivity quantity-wise and that, more importantly, they became more inclined to compete with others and seek to be better than them in understanding and caring for the customer.

Salespeople thus became ‘heroes of the business world’ (ibid., 85), not only because they were competitive, but also because there was a sense that their selling products was for the common good. Indeed, being a good salesman was not anymore a matter of ‘one’s ability to sell goods to people who did not need them’; on the contrary, it became a matter of one’s ‘ability to sell goods at a profit for the mutual benefit of buyers and sellers’ (ibid., 90). Salespeople had become ‘customer-interested’, and since they were also more and more considered as employees well integrated within the organization, the idea of a general ‘customer orientation’ for the organization was implicitly present.

In the 1950’s, this idea of ‘customer orientation’ or ‘consumer orientation’ became a particularly dominant way of conceiving of salespeople’s jobs. That clearly stemmed from the emergence of the ‘marketing concept’ (American Marketing Association,
1948): the idea that ‘selling and all business functions logically begin with an understanding of the market and interprets (sic) this understanding into all activities of the business’ (Bartels, 1962, 98). The notion of ‘market segmentation’ also gained circulation in the 1950’s and affected the selling function – and organizations in general - a great deal (see e.g. Meloan & Rathmell, 1960, and the ‘Marketing Management’ section in the present paper).

Marketing management (c. 1950-1985)
As argued in the previous section, marketing during its early years was a rather diverse discipline. However, in the course of the 1950s the normative and managerialistic focus of what is often referred to as marketing management became the dominant logic (Kotler, 2003; Webster, 1992). In marketing management it is not important to study and explain how marketing as a practice functions, but rather how marketing should function. Central to the establishment of marketing management was the launch of the marketing concept, which holds that the marketing orientation of the firm is of utmost importance. The marketing concept was discussed and defined in a few discipline shaping papers during the late 50’s / early 60’s (Drucker, 1954; Levitt, 1960; McKitterick, 1957). McKitterick (1957:78), for example, wrote: ‘the principal task of the marketing function in a management concept is not so much to be skillful in making the customer do what suits the interests of the business as to be skillful in conceiving and then making the business do what suits the interests of the customer’.

What is being governed (ontology)?
Marketing management was not first and foremost a reaction towards earlier marketing thought – as described in the previous section customer orientation had been present for a while. It was more of a reaction towards previous managerial perspectives. With the introduction of the marketing concept the central aim for managers became to produce products adapted to the needs of their target markets. Such a focus differed from competing managerial practices at the time. It differed, for example from the ‘production concept’, which holds that businesses should focus on high production efficiency, low costs and mass-distribution, and from the ‘selling concept’, which holds that the firm must undertake an aggressive selling and promotion effort in order to get their products sold (Levitt, 1960). The marketing concept changes the perspective from a focus on the organization’s capacity to the customers needs. Rather than producing products that suit the plant and sell them by massive promotion efforts the marketing concept upholds that the organization should produce what customers want and adapt their production facilities to suit these needs (Kotler, 2003; Levitt, 1960; Webster, 1992). As a governmental regime the marketing concept targets those involved in strategic decision making and those collecting data from the customers, e.g. managers, marketers and salespersons but not the shop floor personnel.

How is government achieved (ascetics)?
During the marketing management period, segmentation and targeting were developed in order to know the customer. The principal aim with segmentation is to divide the market into clusters of customers who share similar sets of wants. Market segments can be divided into sub-segments of different sizes, e.g. niches, local customer groups and individuals. Segmentation is, for example, based on geographic, demographic and psychographic variables. When a particular
organization has segmented the market it has to decide which ones to target. Target
decisions should be based on the attractiveness of the segment and the company’s
objectives and resources (Kotler, 1976; 2003; Smith, 1956).

Segmentation is still an active and vital field of research (see Bolton and Meyers,
2001). For our purposes it is not necessary, however, to describe this very technical
research in detail. It is more important to focus on segmentation and targeting as
governmental technologies. As such they give important inputs to the strategic
decision making regarding what should be produced, for whom and when. But it is
also evident that they are premised on the assumption that the level of interaction
between employees and customers is and should be limited and indirect – they draw
a distinctive line between the object of market research (potential consumers) and
the subject researching. The aim is to know the customer.

Who do we become (deontology)?
Implementing the marketing concept in an organization, according to its advocators,
required a change of mindset of the personnel from focusing on the needs of the
organization to focusing on the needs of the customer (Levitt, 1960; McKitterick,
1957). Compared to later developments in marketing – e.g. service management –,
we would, however, argue that the required change was limited (see Kotler, 1976).
The reason to this is that the premier technologies associated with the marketing
concept – segmentation and targeting – are merely used to gather information
regarding the customers and for taking decisions regarding what markets to focus on.
In doing this they introduce a separation between organizations and their customers,
a separation that is dismantled in service management. In service organizations, the
personnel is an important part of the offering, which not is the case in marketing
management (Grönroos, 2000). The customer orientated subject in marketing
management knows virtually everything about the segmented markets and targeted
customers. This information is an important input to the strategic decision-making in
that it is used to decide what to produce, when to produce and how to do it. But it
does not require the customer-orientated subject to adapt to certain beliefs that are in
accordance with customer demands. Adopting such a position can even be an
impediment to objective and rational decision-making. In marketing management, the
customer orientation is about knowing the customer. Marketing management
produces the customer-knowing subject.

Service management (1975-present)
The last 25 years have seen yet another noticeable shift in focus when it comes to
marketing ideals and models, and this shift has been at least as profound as the
previous described transition from institutional/social marketing to marketing
management. This second shift is most clearly articulated in service marketing and
management, where the marketing concept could be said to have been taken one
step further. The importance of finding and satisfying the customer’s needs is still
stressed as fundamental to corporate success, but this view is complemented and
elaborated on with various consequences drawn from what was initially believed to
be typical characteristics of services. A popular list includes intangibility,
heterogeneity (among different instances of the same service), inseparability (of
production and consumption), and perishability (Shostack, 1977; Zeithaml,
Parasuraman and Berry, 1985).
What is being governed (ontology)?
One important point of departure is the notion that a service is both process and outcome. How something is done is often equally important as the ending result from a customer point of view (Grönroos, 1983). Employee conduct, especially of staff with direct customer contact (cf. the expression “movement of truth”, Normann, 1984), but also of employees in supporting and/or managerial functions, then turns crucial and emerges as a central target for governance (Larsson & Bowen, 1989; Schneider & Bowen, 1985). This makes the entire staff ‘part-time marketers’ (Gummessen, 1991) and thereby it also makes them subjects to the marketing governmentality as formulated in service management.

In addition to this intra-organizational extension of the governable domain, there is also an inter-organizational expansion of the regime of marketing governance as manifested in service management practice. Originally formulated as a reaction against the prevailing goods focus of traditional marketing (Shostack, 1977), service management has evolved into a general paradigm of modern enterprise, applicable to virtually any organizational situation (Grönroos, 2000; Normann, 1984). In particular, it has been argued that the service characteristics originally drawn upon are in fact of a general nature, more or less apparent in any organizational context (Vargo & Lusch 2004; Gummesson 2002). Naturally, when ‘everybody is in services’ (Levitt, 1972), service management becomes the ‘dominant marketing logic’ (Vargo & Lusch, op.cit.) not only in traditional service companies but in organizations of all kinds.

In comparison to previous forms of regimes of marketing, the ‘governed substance’ (Dean, 1999) is thus considerably expanded both within the organization and across organizations.

How is government achieved (ascetics)?
The government regime of service management is characterized by two rhetorically contradictions yet integrated principles of control. The interest in the ‘how’ of the service is manifested in a strong concern with processes and activities, i.e. with what is actually happening during the simultaneous production and consumption of the service. Ensuring that the service process (the chain of activities that make up the service) is carried out in conformance with customer expectations is considered vital (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1993; Oliver, 1997) and there are therefore strong incentives to reduce the heterogeneity of service performance by standardization (Levitt, 1972). This in turn implies some kind of operational control and coordination of employee conduct. Direct managerial surveillance is often difficult to exercise and/or deemed inappropriate in service settings, but other managerial control methods such as evaluative customer satisfaction surveys and TQM (total quality management) are frequently utilized. The disciplinary power of such managerial techniques is well known from other studies (e.g. Alvesson & Willmott, 1996; Skålén & Fougere, 2004).

These techniques enable the operation of power over distance (Foucault, 1977; 2000a) and thereby a government that transcends the inherent idiosyncrasies of service operations, but only to a limited extent. A too heavy reliance on standardization is believed to obscure the possibilities for employees to satisfy the
customer needs (Pine, Peppers and Rogers, 1993) by hindering flexibility and responsiveness (cf. Zeithaml, Parasuraman and Berry, 1985). Instead, regimes of normative control, often promoted under the label ‘customer orientation’, are introduced, regimes that do not govern conduct directly but ‘that try to shape sculpt, mobilize and work through the choices, desires, aspirations, needs, wants and lifestyles of individuals and groups’ (Dean, 1999:12).

Fully implemented, customer orientation becomes the dominant way of thinking in the entire organization, and gives rise to a service culture characterized by a constant strive to deliver superior customer value (Edvardsson & Enquist, 2002; Schneider & Bowen, 1995). With a proper service culture, the need for other means of control diminishes, which is a good thing since the nature of many services makes them difficult to exercise them anyway. By making the creation of customer value something the organizational participants really want, not just something they are paid to provide, it is possible to allow a far reaching empowerment (cf. Dean, 1999) which makes it possible for employees to respond to various customer needs, thereby turning the intrinsic heterogeneity of services into a competitive advantage instead of a problem.

If properly achieved, the service culture will create a mentality where all participants in the organization strive for the same goal, the creation of customer value. This common strive provides the ultimate basis for the governing regime of service management.

Who do we become (deontology)?
The ideal service worker is supposed to act as an internal entrepreneur, continuously searching for new ways of creating customer value. Hence s/he must be enterprising and knowledgeable about the customer’s situation as well as about her/his own organization and its various capacities. S/he must also have the ability to develop ideas into profitable business deals, and hence balance the financial interest against those of the customer. In short, the service employee is supposed to have internalized the values of the service culture, and therefore act as an integrated yet autonomous part of the organization.

Other interests (in profits, job satisfaction or whatever) prevailing in the service organization are enrolled as they are believed to be best pursued within (and coordinated through) the frame of customer orientation. Service management thus strives for creating win-win situations, situations where differing interests can be pursued simultaneously, without infringing on each other. Another way of putting this is that any competing subjectivity is incorporated and reformulated in accordance with the service management regime.

Discussion: customer orientation, ‘depth’ and self-regulation
In this section we reflect upon our analysis by drawing on Townley’s discussion regarding ‘depth’ (Townley, 1998). But we also want to take our analysis one step further by discussing the self-regulation that marketing, customer orientation in particular, fosters.

Depth
Townley (1998) has argued that Foucauldian analyses of power, and associated concepts such as government and governmentality, should be inspired by ‘depth’ rather than ‘binary opposition’. The latter, which Townley argues has dominated analysis in organization studies and elsewhere, ‘reflects a modernist approach to knowledge...premised on the dualism of a knowing subject gaining knowledge of a known object’ (Townley, 1998:192). Analysis informed by this standpoint focuses on the opposition between constituents, such as hard and soft management practices, Taylorism and human relations, marketing management and service management, etc. The move from one field of knowledge to another is described as a paradigm shift.

If we adapt the metaphor of depth, opposition will be downplayed. Rather, such things as continuity, consistency and compatibility will be emphasized. It will for example be acknowledged that all management practices are hard and soft and that there is continuity between Taylorism and human relations. Central binary oppositions will be re-evaluated.

Previous reviews of marketing discourse (Morgan, 2003; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Webster, 2002), as discussed earlier, had been informed by opposition rather than depth. The three marketing periods have been described as paradigms incommensurable with each other. This paper has emphasized depth rather than opposition. It has displayed continuity between marketing traditions. In particular we have shown how customer orientation was present when marketing was born as a discipline, how it was developed and elaborated on in marketing management and how, fully implemented in service management, it ideally should reach every corner of the subject and the organization. To us customer orientation has become the dominant governmental regime in the marketing discourse.

If we recapitulate and reflect upon our analysis by using the metaphor of depth, it is obvious that customer orientation was merely present in the marketing discourse during early marketing thought. Customer orientation acted upon the salespeople only and the technologies for managing the salespeople in a customer orientated way was imported from scientific management. We would describe the subjectivity immanent in marketing during this period as the ‘customer-interested salesperson’.

Within the marketing management approach, however, customer orientation becomes something of a dominant logic in marketing discourse. But customer orientation due to the separation between customers and employees is not yet needed in the whole organization. Rather certain types of employees are targeted, that is the manager, the marketers and the salesperson, i.e those dealing with the marketing function in organizations. In order to create these customer-orientated subjectivities, internal technologies such as market segmentation and targeting are developed. These technologies help individuals to know the customer, they become the ‘customer-knowing subject’, but the technologies do not encourage them to internalize customer beliefs based on customer demands.

If we go on to service management, one of the fundamental aspects that characterize it is that each and everyone is the target of customer orientation – everyone has to become a part-time marketer. Customer orientation should ideally affect the whole organization. It is facilitated by technologies of standardization (such as customer
perceived quality measurement) mediated by technologies of flexibility, aimed to achieve normative control, resulting in empowered employees and a service culture. The subjectivity that service management intends to produce can best be described as the internal entrepreneur, whose thoughts, feelings and emotions are more or less determined by customer demands. Service management aims to produce the genuine normative controlled customer-orientated subject, who believes, acts and feels in accordance with customer demands and takes for granted that this is the right way to be. Such a subjectivity is more elaborated compared to the immanent subjectivity in marketing management which ideally is not genuinely determined by customer demands but rather uses information regarding customer to decide on which actions to take without necessarily believing that this is the right way to act. Our main argument is summarized in the table below.

Table 1, Marketing as governmentality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What (Ontology)</th>
<th>How (Ascetics)</th>
<th>Who (Deontology)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early marketing thought</td>
<td>Salespeople</td>
<td>Technologies from scientific management</td>
<td>The customer-interested subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing management</td>
<td>Managers, marketers, and salespeople</td>
<td>Segmentation and targeting</td>
<td>The customer-knowing subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service management</td>
<td>All organizational members have to be part-time marketer</td>
<td>Standardization and flexibility</td>
<td>The customer-determined subject, the internal entrepreneur</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To sum up, we have discussed the depth of customer orientation in marketing discourse from two perspectives. The first has focused on the amount of people customer orientation is aimed for. Here we see a development from targeting the salespeople only to applying to each and every organizational member. The second has focused on to what extent customer orientation affects those that it is aimed for. Here we see an evolution from an influence ‘on the surface’ to a situation where each and every aspect of human beings is affected in service management.

Self-regulation

In the theory section we argued that an important distinguishing feature of government in governmentality is that it has a clear moral link and stimulates self-regulation. In governmentality no outside force regulates the individual. It is arguable whether marketing has been a part of governmentality from the very start. During the period we label early marketing thought, governmental technologies were imported from scientific management. Some of them, such as direct supervision, did not encourage people to engage in self-regulating activities; rather, orders were imposed on people. On the other hand, governmental technologies such as performance appraisal probably stimulate self-regulation. In marketing management we see more emphasis on self-regulating governmental technologies. Segmentation, for example, makes the marketer target customers whose needs can be satisfied with a good profit. Segmentation thus has an inbuilt self-regulating rationale. In service management, however, marketing enters governmentality indefinitely. Here, technologies for the measurement of customer perceived quality do not only function
in order to gain information regarding customer’s needs and wants. In addition they establish norms regarding how customers want front-line employees to behave, feel and think during the service encounter. Ideally the personnel orientate themselves towards these norms by themselves.\textsuperscript{4} When a discipline has managed to develop such technologies it truly has entered governmentality (see e.g. Rose, 1999).

**Conclusions and further research**

In the introduction we argued that critical examinations of managerial discourse have become a hallmark of contemporary organizational studies but that marketing has been relatively untouched by this tradition of research. The paper has provided a critical reading of marketing as a management discourse based on Foucault’s concept governmentality. Our approach has contributed to critical perspectives on marketing by analyzing customer orientation as the basis for marketing as a governmental regime, by focusing on how this regime has been embedded deeper and deeper in the marketing discourse and by discussing how marketing has entered governmentality.

Following the predominant functionalistic, positivistic and prescriptive agenda, marketing scholars have failed to analyze the social effect that changes in marketing discourse might have had on people, organizations and the society in general. Against this background applying governmentality analysis to marketing is as such novel. In particular, our paper has provided insight into what marketing seeks to govern, how it governs and who we become when governed by marketing. Explicating the governmental rationale of marketing is as such important and opens up for a critique regarding central assumptions and concepts. When cast in an analytical frame of governmentality, seemingly neutral tools have a clear performative rationale. In our view it should be interesting to continue working in this direction, and the issue of subjectivity is especially worth taking one step further.

Applying the metaphor of depth, furthermore, opens up a new way of perceiving the history of marketing. Where previous researcher, as stated in the introduction, have perceived marketing as consisting of several different paradigms, we rather argue for continuity. To us it is possible to see how the logic of customer orientation has been present all along in marketing and that this logic has gone from being one perspective to becoming the dominant governmental logic in marketing. Consequently marketing has tried to increase its control over the working subject.

Lastly we have discussed marketing as a part of governmentality. We have argued that during early marketing thought marketing was on the threshold to governmentality, that it entered governmentality during marketing management and that it indefinitely became a part of governmentality during service management. The more and more explicit focus on self-regulating technologies in marketing discourse is important since it makes very clear that marketing is a performative discourse. Marketing does not only seek to describe reality. It seeks to act upon it and shape it. More research, particularly regarding service management as a performative discourse would be interesting.

\textsuperscript{1} It is important to note, however, that our analysis does not intend to determine whether the marketing discipline actually does fixate a customer orientated governmentality, but rather to pinpoint the type of governmentality it is intended to produce.
Dean (1995; 1999) includes a fourth dimension, that of teleology, concerned with why we govern or are governed. This aspect of government is not focused in this paper, because this issue is rather unproblematic. The final aim with marketing is to contribute to economic performance and competitive advantage.

Despite Bartels’s (1962, 208-209) claims that ‘the marketing viewpoint has been extended to every level of management and administration’ and that ‘the marketing concept [orients] not only the marketing activity but all the functions of business to marketing considerations’.

References
Hackley, C. (2003), “‘We are all Customers Now...’ Rhetorical Strategy and Ideological Control in Marketing Management Texts”, Journal Management Studies, 40 (5), 1326-52.


