The Power(/Knowledge) of Marketing

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Abstract

Mainstream marketing scholars and to a large extent marketing historians argue that marketing turned into a managerial discourse when the marketing concept was launched toward the end of the 1950’s. We contend that this standpoint is based on a too limited understanding of managerialism and power, which has been characteristic of much of management studies. In this paper we show that the marketing discipline clearly contained managerial schools or articulations from the 1910’s on. Some of these were more implicitly managerial, and others were explicitly so. Our analysis shows that marketing has promoted and has been based on different conceptualizations of power at different points in time. Accordingly, our analysis not only makes clear that the marketing discipline has been based on a notion of power from its very early days and thus has always been a managerial discourse, it also displays how the power base of marketing has changed. In addition to this we argue that the managerialism of marketing has been of a certain kind already from the outset: marketing has promoted a clear managerial rationality that has been contingent on the power promoted. We will explicate this rationality, which we call ‘customerism’.

In a first section we make a Foucault-inspired distinction between three types of power that we use to analyze marketing discourse: sovereign power, disciplinary power and pastoral power. We then move on to describe the managerialism of marketing at different points in time and analyze it through our power framework. Lastly our conclusions and contributions are put forward.

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**Introduction**

Mainstream marketing scholars (Keith 1960; Levitt 1960; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Webster 1992) and to a large extent marketing historians (e.g. Bartels 1962; Jones and Shaw 2002) argue that marketing turned into a managerial discourse when the marketing concept was launched toward the end of the 1950’s. We contend that this standpoint is based on a too limited understanding of managerialism and power, which has been characteristic of much of management studies (Clegg et al. 2006). In this paper we show that the marketing discipline clearly contained managerial schools or articulations from the 1910’s on. Some of these were more implicitly managerial, and others were explicitly so. Our analysis shows that marketing has promoted and has been based on different conceptualizations of power at different points in time. Accordingly, our analysis not only makes clear that the marketing discipline has been based on a notion of power from its very early days and thus has always been a managerial discourse, it also displays how the power base of marketing has changed. In addition to this we argue that the managerialism of marketing has been of a certain kind already from the outset: marketing has promoted a clear managerial rationality that has been contingent on the power promoted. We will explicate this rationality, which we call ‘customerism’.

The paper is structured as follows. In the first section, based on Foucault (1977; 1981), we make a distinction between three types of power that we use to analyze marketing discourse: sovereign power, disciplinary power and pastoral power. We then move on to describe the managerialism of marketing at different points in time and analyze it through our power framework. Lastly our conclusions and contributions are put forward.

**Power**

In this section we make a distinction between sovereign power, disciplinary power and pastoral power. Our framework is inspired by the work on power by Michel Foucault (1977; 1981).
Sovereign power

Clegg et al. (2006) argue that those conceptualizations of power that were most influential prior to Foucault’s period of influence draw on the Hobbesian sovereign – and agency-orientated – conceptualizations of power. Central to this notion of power is that power holders have power over those who lack power and, consequently, that power is in the hands of certain people or institutions. An examination following such a conceptualization of power focuses on the ‘what’ of power; for example what people in the name of power do against their will or the shift of power from one power holder to another.

Lukes (1974) distinguishes between three types of sovereign power. Lukes’s (1974:15 and 11-12, emphasis taken away) first dimension of power ‘involves a focus on behavior in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests’ formalized as: ‘A has power over B to the extent that A can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do’. Lukes’s (1974) second dimension of power focuses on non-decision-making and particularly on how limiting the scope of the decision-making process through ‘reinforcing [certain] social and political values and institutional practices’ (Bachrach and Baratz 1962, quoted in Lukes 1974:16) enables to control the agenda in situations of overt conflict. The third dimension of power that Lukes discusses includes covert use of power and the role that social structures and socialization have for action. Through controlling the socialization process, Lukes (1974) argues that power holders wield power over the formation of identities in societies. Accordingly, Lukes’s framework of power emphasizes agency: through different means, individual or collective actors have power over other individuals or collectives. As we will see this characteristic – together with his materialist ontology and positivistic epistemology – differentiates Lukes’s conceptualization of power from Foucault’s.

Power/knowledge

Foucault (1977; 1981; Burrell 1988) rejects treating power as a commodity or as coupled to an agency. Rather, he argues that, from the enlightenment onwards, i.e. during modernity, power has taken discursive shape – power is invested in discourse. The discourses that power is embedded in are forms of knowledge. Foucault thus postulates a break with positivistic
epistemology and materialist ontology, which is a defining feature for modernist social and behavioural sciences. Foucault argues that scientific knowledge (e.g. psychology) is the example *par excellence* of discourses invested with power. Foucault (1977; 1981) stipulates a close coupling between power and knowledge/truth and therefore prefers not to speak about power and knowledge but rather about *power/knowledge* in order to emphasize the interrelatedness between the two. This fundamental re-conceptualization turns ‘scientific’ discourse, academic marketing in the case of this paper, into the very object of study not the ending result of the study.

In Foucault’s view, the discourses and the power/knowledge that the social and behavioural sciences produce not only represent the world but also produce the world: they are performative. And since the object of knowledge of these sciences is the human being, they explicitly or implicitly seek to shape the subjectivity of people by fabricating certain subject positions. When studying discourses of ‘truth’ Foucault thus did not focus on what was true and what was not. Rather he focused on what possibilities ‘truth’ gave to people in constructing the social world and what effects ‘truth’ had on to the social world and particularly on the subjectivity of the people acting in this world (Foucault 1977; 1981; 1985). The behavioural and social sciences seen from this perspective are thus not bodies of ‘abstracted theories and explanations, but…intellectual technolog[ies]…way[s] of making visible and intelligible certain features of persons, their conducts, and their relations with one another’ (Rose 1996:10-11).

**Technologies and practices**

What is inherent to regimes of power/knowledge is not only subject positions, but also technologies and practices for producing subjectivity. It is a central aim of our analysis to articulate the most important such technologies and practices that marketing promotes at different periods in time. Following Rose (1996) we define these types of technologies as *human* technologies. We understand (human) technologies in management discourse as detailed, often standardized examinations and methods (customer satisfaction measurement models, work place attitude schemes, profit sharing but also ‘softer devices’ such as corporate culturalism, mentoring, career development discussion, etc.) that promote a certain type of control of human behaviour. In marketing, these technologies are often not in themselves
framed as control devices by those who promote and use them but rather as neutral tools for ‘getting the job done’. Technologies presuppose certain assumptions about human beings. These assumptions build on knowledge that is considered true, which infuses the technologies with power.

Practices are less detailed prescriptions regarding how things should be done or descriptions regarding how things should be acted upon, thought and felt about, but they work in the same way as technologies. The distinction between practices and technologies is rather blurred. Practices may be produced by and may produce technologies, but practices may also lack a ‘technological foundation’. In such cases they may be regarded as specifications of broader ideals (Hasselbladh and Kallinkos 2000). The technologies of the self that are inherent in most other technologies and practices are the confession and the examination (Foucault 1977; 1997; Townley 1998) which will be discussed in relation to pastoral and disciplinary power below.

*Pastoral power as opposed to disciplinary power*

As we pointed out above, forms of power/knowledge differ from sovereign power in several ways. But there also exist more specific differences between the two distinct forms of power/knowledge, pastoral power and disciplinary power. Firstly, the pastor wields power over a collective of people rather than over a land or an organization. Pastoral power is thus based on a conceptualization of human beings as unique subjects with specific needs and wants and not as objects. Secondly, the pastor gathers together, guides and leads this collective. The object of pastoral power is thus the management of people by the pastor, who manages through her/his inner qualities which are superior to the inner qualities of the flock. Thirdly, in line with the religious metaphor, the objective of this power is to secure individual ‘salvation’ in the present world. Salvation takes on worldly meanings such as richness, health and self-fulfilment. Accordingly, Foucault (2000a) argues that pastoral power operates through a constant kindness vis-à-vis it subjects rather than a constant submission. This means that pastoral power is always dependent on an implicit or explicit ethic since the kindness it promotes has to be qualified. Therefore pastoral power is instrumental: through making people believe in a value system and through giving them rewards that are in compliance with it (and thus their beliefs), pastoral power will make people reproduce the rationality of the
value system. In this way people are being governed without noticing it. Contemporary liberal and conservative governmental discourse has been analyzed as a form of pastoral power (see Dean 1995; 1999; Hodgson 2002; Rose 1996; 1999). These forms of government which have been named ‘advanced liberal government’ and ‘neoliberal government’ foster the attainment of specific goals and values, such as health, richness, status and position, which thus become the object and aim of management informed by pastoral power. Such value builds up the normative ethos summarized in the nodal point of liberalism: freedom. Pastoral power in liberal discourse thus becomes a management of free people and their freedom through their freedom (Rose 1999).

Finally, pastoral power is dependent upon knowing the individuals’ innermost thoughts in order to direct and lead them. In order to accomplish this, pastoral power depends upon the production of technologies and practices for making individuals talk about themselves and their innermost thoughts: it is dependent on confessional techniques. That is why modern social and behavioural sciences, quasi-sciences and expertise’s have been given the role of developing such techniques. Obvious examples include psychoanalysis and counselling in the discourse of psychology (Rose 1996; 1999), self-assessment in Total Quality Management discourse and customer perceived quality measurement techniques in marketing (Skålén and Fougère 2007). Through the outwardly confessional speech that these technologies stimulate it is possible to provide the kindness that the pastor – through the mediation of ethics such as liberalism and conservatism – believes is appropriate for his flock. But the technologies also become means of control since the pastor can know and decide if the sheep will be happy or not by continuing to live the same way they do. The type of freedom that liberal and conservative discourse of government promotes, for example, is not an unconditional freedom. Rather, it is a freedom that promotes integration into a particular liberal society: it is not anarchy. It fosters healthy and working subjects that can realize their freedom and themselves through consumption, physical exercise and education – not unhealthy and unproductive subjects dependent on welfare services. This type of discourse thus fosters ‘active’ rather than passive subjects (see Dean 1995; Rose 1999). As Rose (1999: 4) argues, ‘when it comes to governing human beings, to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed. To govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and utilize it for one’s own objectives’. Thus by acting on her/his flock the pastor can change it and thereby provide salvation and happiness to the people.
But the confessing subject will also act on her/himself. When speaking about themselves they will reveal to themselves what types of persons they are ‘since the speaking subject is the subject of the statement’ (Foucault 1985, quoted in Covaleski et al. 1998: 297) and if they are not satisfied, a satisfaction that is defined by the pastor informed by an external ethic, they will try to change themselves. Change is manifested in the speech through avowal. Confessional speech will thus not only serve as a device of control for who the person is but also as an indicator for who s/he becomes. Through series of confessions and avowals the person will move from one subject position to another. Discourses of pastoral power encourage such confessions and avowals. In this paper we examine if and to what extent marketing has become such a discourse.

Pastoral power is thus a power that defines identity from the inside out (Covaleski et al., 1998). Foucault (1977; 2000a) differentiated it from another form of power/knowledge: disciplinary power. The distinction between these two kinds of power is, however, far from clear-cut in Foucault’s work even though some distinct differences can be noted. Disciplinary power is a micro power that targets individuals, while pastoral power focuses on the collective or on the individual as a part of the collective. The operation of disciplinary power is dependent on the norm, which is embedded in different types of discourse and disciplines; scientific, quasi-scientific and expertise (Dean 1995; 1999; Rose 1999). The practices and technologies promoted by these types of discourse function as examinations, which Foucault (1977) sees as the ‘technology of the self’ associated with individuation through objectification (Foucault 1977; 2000a; see also Covaleski et al. 1998). Through examinations, people’s actions become visible and detectable and thus known objectively, ‘exemplified by the employee’s reduction to a final score as, for example, graphic rating scales, or overall scores at an assessment center’ (Townley 1993:535). As an effect examinations also reveal gaps between actuality and possibility, between the person’s present state and the norm. This enables management and intervention of people by themselves or others and fosters a movement towards the norm. By closing these gaps between the actual self and the ideal self the person becomes subjectified.

In this paper we explicate what practices and technologies marketing research have produced for accomplishing subjectification through acting upon people’s actions and we do not focus on the result of such processes. This means that we look upon technologies such as targeting, customer perceived quality, segmentation, etc. from a completely different angle compared to
mainstream marketing. Rather than contributing to developing these technologies as is the focus in mainstream marketing research we focus on what type of managerialism it presupposes and thus the possibilities it gives to people in constructing themselves as workers or managers. This also implies a position in which forms of knowledge do not determine the subjectivity of people: we do not intend to determine whether marketing discourse ‘actually’ fixates a particular subjectivity. Rather, we aim to pinpoint the type of subjectivity that marketing discourse attributes to managers and personnel and how – through what technologies and practices – this is meant to be done.

Analysis

In this section we will focus on the type of managerialism that marketing has promoted and the power that has dominated articulations of marketing at different periods in time. We will do this by drawing on the distinction between sovereign power, pastoral power and disciplinary power as outlined above. Based on previous studies of the marketing discipline and its managerialism we make a distinction between: 1) the marketing thought articulated before the launch of the marketing concept in the late 1950’s; 2) the tradition of research labeled marketing management structured by the marketing concept; and 3) service management which emerged in marketing at the end of 1970’s. Marketing management and service management changed and elaborated on previous articulations of the managerialism of marketing and also marked changes in the type of power promoted by marketing.

A disciplinary project

In mainstream academic marketing discourse it is often believed that marketing thought before marketing management was descriptive and non managerialistic (see Keith 1960; Levitt 1960; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Webster 1992). A surface reading of marketing research before 1950 will support this claim. The functional, institutional and commodity approaches which were central articulations of marketing discourse back then focused on describing their objects of study. An explicit managerialism in academic marketing discourse is thus hard to detect from a literal reading of the mainstream back then. However, a less literal reading reveals a different picture: both mainstream texts from the three approaches and some texts inspired by scientific management can be considered, implicitly and in some cases explicitly,
as managerial, and the link between these texts and what was later to be labeled marketing management can be seen as quite clear.

If the mainstream texts of the three dominating approaches in early marketing research are read less literally it is certainly possible to argue that they promote a certain kind of normativity that can be used to further managerialism. Describing marketing institutions, functions and commodities certainly satisfies a managerial interest rather than a worker interest. By describing central marketing phenomena on an aggregated level, the three early schools provided managers with an overview of them and served the purpose to inform managerial action and decision-making. But it can also be argued that they provided practices for the managers to describe and analyze their own organizations including their environment by drawing on them: they fuelled certain types of examinations. Describing and examining the reality, whether it is on the macro, the meso or the micro level, is an act of objectification and objectifications create norms: for example, the marketing functions that an organization should have become the underlying text of such descriptions. It can thus be maintained that this ‘descriptive’ approach to marketing promotes disciplinary power, which is dependent upon the norm in order to operate and be effective (Foucault 1977). But not only upon the norm though: equally important is that it is a ‘true’ norm, that is, a norm that is legitimated by scientific, pseudo-scientific or expert discourse (see Rose 1996). To a large extent, academic marketing discourse was providing such norms from the beginning. When the ‘true’ norm has been established through description with a scientific flavour it becomes natural to compare the actual design of the particular department, organization or organizational field with the norm. Such comparisons will reveal gaps between actuality and ideal. Disciplinary power is precisely aimed at closing such gaps between the factual and the norm (Foucault 1977). When these gaps have been made visible to managers it is very likely that they try to change the status quo. This might include introducing new forms of work routines that in the end might affect the subjectivity of workers. We thus believe that it is more adequate to portray this research as providing examinations which managers could use to further their managerialistic agendas rather then seeing it as merely descriptive.

The three early schools largely developed in parallel, and could not really be considered articulations of marketing as a whole but rather isolated articulations of different parts of the problem. It can be argued that none of the three schools really had the potential to become hegemonic within the emerging marketing discourse. One reason why the three traditional
The types of technologies that were recommended for studying and controlling the salesmen can be seen as examinations, the technology of the self that Foucault (1977) associated with disciplinary power and thus individuation through objectification. The control practices that were recommended included setting sales quotas, training, compensations, stimulating practices, supervisions and evaluations that were technified through using concealed microphones and mystery shoppers, the recording of salesmen’s travelling times and the measurement of their foot travels with pedometers. These technologies were aimed to establish norms for how and who the salesman should be, compare actual working salesmen with these norms and change them and their subjectivity in accordance with the norm. The scientific management project in marketing was explicitly aimed to direct a ‘mental revolution’ for the salesmen and the sales managers (Hoyt 1929:21). It is thus a managerial project based on disciplinary power. It is also possible to find manifestations of sovereign
power in early marketing discourse even though we would argue that the discourse on scientific selling signifies a shift of emphasis from sovereign power to disciplinary power.

Hoyt (1929[1912]: 10-11) articulated two sales manager subject positions: the ‘old fashioned’ that believed in securing results through his own ‘sheer force’ and ‘brute strength’ and the ‘new’ type that believed in ‘method’, that is in the scientific management method. We would argue that the former, ‘outdated’ type of sales manager relies on sovereign power and the latter type on disciplinary power. This argument is possible to make if the two types of power are related to the two types of subject positions along a few central dimensions that differentiate sovereign power from disciplinary power. We also think that the argument can be made since this scientific management articulation can account for changes in the general structure of power in managerial marketing discourse at the time.

As discussed above, central to the sovereign theory of power is that power is in the hands of someone while disciplinary power is embedded in discourse. The statement about the ‘old-fashioned’ type of sales manager can be interpreted as though it is the sales manager that has power (of the ‘sovereign’ type) over the salesman. It can also be argued that the subject position of the ‘new’ sales manager was articulated as relying on the power/knowledge embedded in scientific management in order to control the salesman. Furthermore, the ‘new’ sales manager can be seen as normalized by the power/knowledge of scientific management, since s/he valued the rationality of these kinds of control technologies.

A second distinction between sovereign power and disciplinary power is that the former is advocated upon issues of overt conflict and is accordingly dependent on its visibility in order to have effect but allows those over whom it is exercised to remain in the shades. The latter imposes a principle of compulsory visibility to those who are objectified by and subjected to it but is in itself invisible. Foucault makes this point very clearly in *Discipline and Punish*:

> It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection. And the examination is the technique by which power…instead of imposing its mark on its subjects [as sovereign power do], holds them in a mechanism of objectification.

(Foucault, 1977:187)
The articulation of the subject position of the ‘old fashioned’ sales manager presupposes that there is an overt conflict between the manager and the salesman. By the manager using his ‘brute strength’ and ‘sheer force’ his power will become visible to each and everyone and this visibility is in fact the raison d'être for his use of power since force and strength must be visible in order to exist and have effect. Through imposing his mark, the sales manager will be able to lead. The ‘new’ sales manager on the other hand uses the power/knowledge embedded in technologies imported from scientific management. These technologies are seldom made visible in themselves. In fact the technologies associated with scientific management are defined by their invisibility, e.g. concealed microphones and mystery shoppers. The power of the disciplinary practices themselves, such as training, compensating and setting sales quotas are also invisible: they are never framed as forms of power.

The third and last distinction between sovereign and disciplinary power that we use to position the two subject positions in relation to each other has to do with the means and effects of power. Sovereign power operates through coercion and makes people do things against their will: it is repressive. Disciplinary power operates through examinations embedded in discourse and subjectifies: it can repress and empower. The defining feature of Hoyt’s ‘old’ sales manager is that he relies on force in order to get the salesman to do what he wants. It is thus possible to see him as an expression of sovereign power. But why does he have to rely on force? The answer to this question we find in the view that Hoyt believes that this type of manager has of salesmen – and perhaps employees in general – as obstructing, opposing and battling the will of the manager. Therefore, the sales manager has to use coercion in order to control them. The ‘fashionable’ sales manager on the other hand relies on the disciplinary power of scientific management. The technologies of this power do not only repress but also empower. Attaining sales quotas for the salesman for instance might imply repression by being demanded to work harder then s/he originally planned to. But it may also empower the salesman with prestige and bonuses. Furthermore, working hard may mean developing a ‘selling attitude’, which empowers the salesman in her/his professional role. But why does the ‘new’ sales manager rely on the examinations embedded in scientific management discourse rather than coercion? Again, we must deduct the answer from the implicit view of the salesman that informs the subject position of the ‘new’ sales manager. This subject position posits salesmen not as explicitly obstructive but rather as idle, unenterprising and passive. By gathering information about the very details of the salesman’s physical and mental expressions it will be possible to control and direct her/him through
detailed instructions – compare the classic description of Schmidt in Taylor (1911). This objectification of the salesman that these technologies of control are designed to produce may eventually result in a salesman that is framed by, and takes for granted the scientific discourse on selling, thus behaving in accordance with it without noticing it.

It is thus plausible to interpret Hoyt’s ‘old’ sales manager as an expression of sovereign power and his ‘new’ sales manager as an expression of disciplinary power. But it is also possible to treat the former as an expression of the general managerialistic marketing discourse that went out of fashion in both academic and practicing quarters during the 1930’s when the scientific discourse on selling started to dominate (Cochoy 1998; Fligstein 1990). The subject positions that have been the object of our analysis thus have implications for managerial marketing discourse in general and not only selling discourse. It is thus our view that there was a turning point in the foundation of the managerialism of marketing when scientific management was imported into it in the 1910’s and 20’s. Accordingly we can argue that the managerialism of marketing during the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s was founded on a disciplinary conceptualization of power even though it would be exaggerated to argue that sovereign power ceased to exist. In fact it is quite possible to interpret the scientific selling discourse and some of its practices as relying on sovereign power and not only disciplinary power. In the scientific selling discourse as well as in scientific management, the manager subject position can and should force people to do what the management orders them to do even if this is against their will. A particular example would be the practice of using sales quotas. By referring to them the sales manager can force the salesman to work longer hours in order to fulfill his sales quotas by threatening with negative economic consequences if refusing. But the sovereign power in scientific selling is framed by and legitimated through ‘truth’ and thus power/knowledge. We thus contend not only that marketing discourse was managerialistic at a time when mainstream versions of its history believed it was anti-managerial (see Keith 1960; Kotler 1967; Levitt 1960; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Webster 1992) but also that marketing experienced a turning point in its managerialism at this time.

This turning point was largely brought about by the ‘scientific approach’ to sales management. In this approach the customer became more central than in previous articulations, paving the way for ‘customerism’. Indeed, it became part of the mission of sales management to assess consumer and customer needs through valid methods of market research and to train salespeople to be ‘customer-interested’ - i.e. to use results of market
research in their selling practice, and to not rely chiefly on ‘selling skills’ in order to persuade by ‘petty means’ but rather to try to find out what customers need before going about the sale itself. This is how a customer-driven governmental rationality came to characterize the dominant articulation of selling.

*An ethical project*

Through the launch of the marketing concept in the marketing management, marketing was turned into a unified managerialistic discourse. Even though the managerialism of customer orientation had been present in the earlier period it was articulated in a more forceful and rhetorically convincing way during marketing management and diffused in marketing discourse. However, the technologies developed to turn the marketing concept and its ‘customerism’ into practice – primarily market segmentation, targeting and the concept of the marketing mix – did not have the inbuilt capacity to control employees extensively. Rather, they emphasized how to regulate the relationship between the market and the organization. We would even argue that the technologies associated with the marketing concept had less potential to control employees than the technologies associated with scientific selling. Marketing management thus elaborated on the ethics of managerial marketing but failed to develop technologies for realizing it. However, we see the elaboration on customerism that was introduced during that period as managerial marketing discourse moving away from promoting disciplinary power to promoting a neoliberal form of pastoral power. We will now explicate this argument.

Pastoral power is dependent on economics and the role it gives to the population and organizations in creating wealth and progress. The formation of marketing as an academic discipline was very much influenced by economics but different discourses of economics suggest particular and somewhat contradicting governmental rationalities. The functional and the commodity approaches to marketing were influenced by the German historical school of economics which was articulated as a reaction to classical liberal economics. The latter was among other things accused for being unable to address the poverty that the industrialization gave rise to and therefore the former granted state intervention a more significant role in the economy compared to classical economics. On the other hand it is possible to argue that marketing management and earlier managerial articulations of marketing – customeristic
articulations of marketing in general – were more influenced by classical liberal economics. The central idea of the customerism of the marketing concept, for example, is precisely that organizations should produce what the free market ‘orders’ them to produce. One prime goal for the marketing academia during the marketing management period thus became to develop the practices and the technologies that allowed organizations to collect information about the market and thus was not anymore to describe the functions, institutions and commodities characterizing it. Accordingly, articulating the marketing concept is dependent on the existence of a free market and is at the same time supportive of the idea of a free market. The marketing concept is thus supportive of the idea that people are able to realize their freedom in the market place and thus that the market is a good system for distributing and creating health, wealth and status. This formula is very clearly articulated by Kotler in one of his articles on broadening the marketing concept.

The core concern for marketing is that of producing desired responses in free individuals by the judicious creation and offering of values. The marketer is attempting to get value from the market through offering value to it. The marketer’s problem is to create attractive values. Value is completely subjective and exists in the eyes of the beholding market. Marketers must understand the market in order to be effective in creating value. This is the essential meaning of the marketing concept.

(Kotler 1972:50)

Marketing management thus presupposes and promotes a liberal and customeristic governmental ethic. In addition, we would argue that marketing management discourse presupposes that organizations should be managed in accordance with this liberal customeristic ethic. The pioneers of marketing management all emphasized this. McKitterick (1957: 78) for example argued that ‘the marketing function’ has to be ‘skilful in conceiving and then making the business do what suits the interests of the customer’, Levitt (1960: 56) argued ‘that the entire corporation must be viewed as a customer-creating and customer-satisfying organism’ and Keith (1960: 37) that (customer-driven) ‘marketing permeates the entire organization’. As we have argued previously, however, the technologies promoted in marketing management discourse were not really designed to achieve this. Therefore we argue that marketing management and the articulation of the marketing concept turned marketing into a definite customeristic ethical project but that its managerial technologies were not founded on this ethic and were thus not able to turn the marketing concept into
practice. Therefore marketing management did not turn marketing into a pastoral project but it prepared for such a shift.

*A pastoral project*

The elaboration, institutionalization and hegemonization of customeristic ethics in marketing discourse accomplished in the marketing management period informed the pastoral project that managerial marketing was turned into in-service management. The pioneers of service management argued that service industries had not integrated marketing into their management because mainstream marketing offered no guidance, terminology or practical rules that were clearly relevant to services. The main reason given for this was that services differ from products. Most importantly for the managerialism of service management, consumption and production of services take place simultaneously (Shostack 1977). These lead service management scholars in the beginning of the 1980’s to launch the cardinal idea that customer perceived quality in service organizations is a function not only of what is offered in the market. It is equally important to consider how this is done by the employees in the service encounter (see previous chapter and Grönroos 1984). This profound insight repositioned the object of the managerialism of marketing from focusing on producing rules for informing decisions about product, price, place and promotion to manufacturing the ‘right’ employees.

The articulation of service management was nevertheless dependent in a fundamental way on the customerism that marketing management had articulated and manifested. This is seldom acknowledged by service management scholars who usually position service management as being in sharp contrast to marketing management. One important reason behind this is that service management scholars have sought to institutionalize and legitimize their own discipline (see Berry and Parasuraman 1993; Brown et al. 1994; Grönroos 1994). As we see it, service management scholars have been involved in a ‘discursive war’ aimed to give service management a position as the hegemonic managerial marketing discourse. The prime ‘enemy’ has been marketing management which, in line with Shostack’s (1977) argument, is believed to be lacking approaches for managing service firms. But this ‘war’ has really been fought in a Don Quichottian way since the ‘enemy’ has never really fought back: maybe the marketing management elite (Phillip Kotler, Theodore Levitt, Shelby D. Hunt among others)
never really have felt the ‘threat’ or maybe they have not understood what the ‘fight’ was about in the first place since the goal of promoting customerism has been shared by service management and marketing management scholars. The critical judgment of marketing management in service management discourse must be seen as what Marion (2006; see also Hackley 2003), in his analysis of marketing ideology, has called the ‘rhetoric of a project’: service management scholars depreciate the discourse of marketing management despite the characteristics that their work shares with it in order to legitimize and make a space for pursuing their own agenda – and of course their own research careers and articles. For it is indeed the case that service management discourse is founded on the customerism of the marketing concept. It takes this rationality for granted.

This is not to say, however, that service management did not problematize marketing management and further the rationality of customerism. Service management discourse, as opposed to marketing management discourse is more focused on managing the ‘human factor’. In service management discourse, every organizational member needs, according to the ‘part-time marketer’ subject position, to be controlled in depth. In order to manage the ‘how’ of services and thus the service worker, several measurement and control technologies were developed which embody the governmental rationality of service management. One important such technology is the gap-model presented in chapter six (see also Skålén and Fougère 2007). Others include corporate culturalism, team work, customer relationship management, customer satisfaction measurement, cognitive maps, empowerment, personnel development discussion, mentoring and coaching. Models such as these are not usually perceived as control technologies within marketing itself, but controlling the personnel is really their final objective. By analyzing the process of developing the gap-model, which embodies the general spirit and rationality of service management, we will claim that service management discourse is founded on pastoral power and that the disciplinary power and sovereign power that it also fosters are recast to serve bio-political aims.

In developing the gap model Parasuraman et al. (1985) made 12 focus groups interviews with American service firms representing four service categories – retail banking, credit card provision, securities brokerage, and product repair and maintenance – and carried out 14 personal interviews with executives of the firms (three or four from each firm). The aim of the interviews was to derive so called ‘general quality determinants’ able to explain variances in service quality across organizations. The result was the generation of five quality
determinants (see Parasuraman et al. 1985; 1988; 1994): reliability, responsiveness, empathy, assurance and tangibles. Parasuraman and his colleagues position their research as positivistic/functionalistic and thus argue that they generate knowledge that is general, objective and adequately describes the material reality. Accordingly they see the quality determinants as general, meaning that they are allegedly able to explain variances in service quality for all organizations regardless of trade, national culture, etc. Even though alternative technologies for measuring customer perceived service quality have been introduced the procedure for generating knowledge applied by Parasuraman et al. (1985) has been considered as legitimate for generating scientific truth since the gap-model has been widely accepted within the field. This may seem a bit surprising since the sample from a strict positivistic point of view must be considered as far too limited and culturally biased to generalize from. However, if one considers how the bulk of the research within mainstream marketing is conducted it must be concluded that it suffers from similar problems: limited US-based samples are claimed to explain variances for the factor focused across the globe. It is quite telling that this problem is virtually never reflected upon in mainstream marketing. Here, we will analyze the implications of this research style from a power/knowledge perspective.

Since inductive methods were used for developing the gap-model, the gap-model and particularly the five ‘general’ quality determinants that are at its foundation can be considered to be a product of the dominating US social and economic ontology at a particular time in history, namely the early 1980’s. At this time Ronald Reagan was president of the USA. His presidency is known for drastic cuts in welfare programs, a general dismantling of the already limited (at least to European standards) welfare state, a heavier reliance on the deregulated market economy and on governing the population through civil society. Reagan’s politics is usually considered as relying on neoliberalism for regulating the economy and neo-conservatism for regulating the social. The American freedom rhetoric was emphasized during this period. This ‘liberal’ type of freedom is a very specific type. It is not about the simple idea of freedom meaning that people can do whatever they want. Rather, it is a freedom that is a product of liberal and conservative ethics (Dean 1995; 1999; Rose 1996; 1999). It is thus a governed and controlled freedom, a governmentality (Foucault 2000b). As Rose (1999) has shown, ‘advanced’ liberal governmentality fosters ‘productive’ and ‘active’ citizens that contribute to economic performance as defined by liberalism. ‘Productive’ may mean healthy, socially competent, emotionally stable, intelligent and/or good-looking workers all dependent on trade; and ‘active’ means that they see themselves as enterprising selves. In
compensation for being productive and active, workers are paid a salary, which they are expected to use in order to realize their ‘freedom’ through acts of consumption in a liberal society. Since the market economy is regulated by liberal economic discourse consumption is also defined by liberal values. Citizens are thus both governed by and through freedom.

This type of freedom has strong traditions in the US and the gap-model was developed at a time when it really was emphasized. We thus think that the gap-model – and indeed service management discourse in general since the gap-model encapsulates its spirit – can be pictured as a form of advanced liberal ethic for the service sector – and if we should believe some service management scholars as a management ethos for all organizations (Grönroos 2007; Vargo and Lusch 2004) – and not as a scientific truth. (Service) workers who are empathetic, reliable, responsive and who express assurance are valued by an advanced liberal society and those workers are accordingly valued by the organizations that typically exist in such a society. Thus, by behaving in the way promoted by service management, workers are accepted and rewarded and are in turn enabled to pursue their freedom which makes them more integrated in society. For free persons constitute the core in liberal societies. Basing the management of people in accordance with the quality determinants of the gap-model implies managing them through and by their freedom. The process of generating the quality determinants provides our first argument that the gap-model is based on a neoliberal version of pastoral power. But this argument is not sufficient for claiming that the gap-model promotes and is embedded in pastoral power. In order to be able to demonstrate that, we also need to show that how it intends to manage people follows the scheme of pastoral power.

Managing with the gap-model does not mean that the ‘general’ quality determinants should be maximized for each individual service worker. Rather, the level of expressiveness that is demanded of the employees by a particular organization and even departments has to be established through using the gap-model. Parasuraman et al. (1988) developed a questionnaire making the five quality determinants operative. The questionnaire consists of 22 items. The same questions are used to measure customer expectations and perceptions about the service delivery that they have experienced. The question that operationalizes empathy for example thus measures if the personnel expresses too much or too little empathy during the service encounter. Suggestions are then given on how to change the workers’ behaviours so that their service delivery accords with customers demands. Thus, the aim of the gap-model is to fine tune people’s expressed feelings and values in accordance with neoliberal discourse. For it is
indeed the case that the gap-model targets subjectivity. Four of the five quality determinants are central human characteristics. By fine tuning their empathy the persons will get positive feedback, increase their ability of being promoted, earn more money, get more prestige and have a better position. This makes them freer by being more integrated in the liberal society and makes them more apt to fulfil there dreams and hopes. This also serves the organization and the economy as a whole and thus contributes to govern the service worker.

The gap-model also fosters a management from ‘the inside out’ and self-regulation, central features of pastoral power. Through asking the customers how they perceive the service delivery and by basing these questions upon personnel characteristics of the service workers, the gap-model makes the innermost feelings known to the manager (that is, the pastor) and the service workers themselves. This gives impetus for the pastor/manager to change his flock of service workers so that their subjectivities accord better with the demands of their particular customers, or if the expectations are already in line with the perceptions of the customers, to reproduce their behaviours. But this also shows to the service workers themselves who they are and who they should be thus giving impetus to self-regulation. By displaying gaps the gap-model fosters confessions and thus people avowing to themselves and their managers who they are and how they should be: ‘I am like this but I should be like that’. This not only gives further impetus to the change of subjectivity from the inside out by fostering people to becoming more or less emphatic and responsible. But it also serves as a means for checking when people have changed themselves since the persons are the subjects of their avowals. When this process operates for a long time a collective common culture informed by service management values is aimed to be developed. Corporate culture stimulates self-referential and reflexive government by people reflecting themselves and who they are in the common values (Clegg et al. 2002). Empirical research within (Gebhart et al. 2006) and outside (Covaleski et al. 1998) marketing have shown that corporate cultures can be effective in accomplishing the intended result, i.e. a more or less responsive, empathetic and/or adaptable employee.

Marketing is thus redefined as pastoral power in service management. Rather than about management forcing unwanted subjectivities upon free people who are likely to resist, it is about changing people in line with their free will. For marketing conceptualizes humans as free. This is not unique to marketing. It is a conceptualization of human beings that it shares with other academic disciplines informed by neoliberalism, the most prominent example being psychology (Rose 1999). But conceptualizing employees as free is really an oxymoron.
The theory of identity underlying modernistic social science is historically contingent and a product of Western liberal and conservative values. In Western societies’ institutions, such as schools, hospitals, jails, kindergartens, examples abound showing that the prime aim is to develop this free identity that modernistic social science takes for granted. The ‘liberal-free’ person is thus not a ‘genuinely free’ person, but rather a programmed, normalized person. S/he is a product of the social. A free person is not outside society; rather, those who are inside society are by definition free. What marketing thus intends to do to people is to control them more thoroughly by embedding them more deeply in the neoliberal society. This serves the persons’ personal goals of becoming free individuals by learning to play the citizen game better, thereby gaining status, money and esteem so that they can do more things within the boundaries of the regulated society. But this also serves the goals of the organizations and the society at large which in return will have hard-working and docile bodies that fulfil the goals of political economy through constantly striving for economic profitability. Managerial marketing is thus primarily an ethic that fosters management of freedom, through freedom – not a science.

We thus would argue that service management promotes pastoral power. But this does not imply that service management does not promote disciplinary and sovereign power also. In service management they have been rearticulated to serve bio-political aims. The gap-model for example can be seen as promoting disciplinary power. Through the measurement of customer expectations, norms are set up for employee behaviour. By also measuring perceptions of service delivery, the norm can be compared with actual behaviour. This makes possible the corrections of human beings in accordance with the norm. The gap-model thus functions as an examination, aiming to individuate the service worker through objectification. It thus subjectifies from the outside in as well as from the inside out. But this subjectification through objectification is framed by the rationality of liberalism. It is also possible to see expressions of sovereign power in service management. The executives are for example the ones granted with the power to change organizations in line with service management prerogatives. But since these prerogatives are a function of neoliberal ethics, the sovereign power is also framed by liberalism.
Conclusions and contributions

In this paper we have analyzed marketing theory as a form of power. We have shown that marketing was based on a certain type of power and promoted power and thus was managerial already at a time which today tends to be seen in retrospect by mainstream marketing scholars as descriptive and anti-managerial. We have also shown that the power of marketing has emphasized different types of power at different point in times. As we have argued it is not a replacement though but rather a shift of emphasis. Based on this analysis we have been able to position marketing’s managerialism more clearly: 1) as based on disciplinary power in the first period; 2) as an ethic in marketing management; and 3) as a form of neo-liberal pastoral power in service management. Seeing power as being the foundational concept of marketing research in this way rearticulates and positions marketing more clearly as a managerial discourse rather than a positivistic science and thus contributes to Critical Marketing Research, especially that which is meant to examine the managerialism of marketing, along Alvesson and Willmott’s (1996) and Morgan’s (2003) suggestions. Lastly, we have argued that the power of marketing promotes customerism and that this managerial rationality has been articulated as an effect of the power base of marketing (see Skålén et al. 2006).

References


