

Paul Dulaney Converse: Pioneer Marketing Scholar and Historian of Marketing Thought

Laura Farlow Dix, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

The scholarly career of Paul Dulaney Converse (1889-1968) spanned over fifty years as an academic. Converse's professional career constituted a bridge from the nascent beginnings of a new academic area of academic inquiry to the present highly organized and respected study of a well-established field of academic interest (Huegy 1958). This paper investigates the contributions made by Converse to the literature on the history of marketing thought.

The scholarly career of Paul Dulaney Converse (1889-1968) spanned over fifty years as an academic, thirty-three as a member of the faculty of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Converse's professional career constituted a bridge from the nascent beginnings of a new area of academic inquiry to the present highly organized and well-established field of academic interest (Huegy 1958).

Converse is acknowledged as a pioneer in the field of marketing and a brief biography written by Harvey W. Huegy was included in the *Pioneers in Marketing* series published in the *Journal of Marketing*. The American Marketing Association has established an award in his name for outstanding contributions to the theory or science of marketing. The award recipients are selected by a national jury of scholars and are presented at a symposium every four years.

Converse impacted many areas of the development of marketing thought. As a scholar he was actively engaged in research and training of future marketing scholars and practitioners at the University of Illinois. However, his influence spanned the nation with his involvement in national marketing organizations and writing of several widely published early textbooks on marketing. Converse's influence was also felt worldwide as he taught marketing courses in Europe under the auspices of the Ford Foundation. This wide range of influence makes the study of Converse important and contributes to the heritage of all current and future marketing scholars.

In this paper, the contributions made by Converse to the literature on the history of marketing thought are explored. Converse may have been one of the first historians of marketing thought as he published the article "The First Decade of Marketing Literature" in 1933, several

years before the formation of the American Marketing Association.

The paper begins with background information on Converse presented as a context for his scholarly contributions. This includes biographical data such as his education, career and professional association that's may have influenced his view of marketing thought. Next an overview of the historical research method used to gather data for this research project is presented. This is followed by Converse's contributions to the literature on the history of marketing thought. Finally, the contributions of Converse to the history of marketing thought are summarized in the conclusions.

Background

Paul Dulaney Converse was born in Morristown, Tennessee in 1889, the son of Rev. James B. and Almeda Dulaney Converse. After graduating as valedictorian of his high school class in 1907, he entered Washington and Lee University in the fall of 1909. Washington and Lee University was the only college in the area offering work in economics and commerce (Converse 1957).

Converse worked as a student instructor in commerce and economics, political science, and economic history from 1912 to 1915. He received his B.A. in 1914 and continued graduate work at Columbia University during the summer of 1914 and the University of Wisconsin during the summers of 1915 and 1916. At Wisconsin he had the opportunity to attend a seminar by Ralph Starr Butler (Huegy 1958).

Converse moved to the University of Pittsburgh in 1915 as an instructor and received promotions to professor. He also served as department head while at Pittsburgh. Converse served as an examiner with the Federal Trade Commission from 1917 to 1919 before returning to Pittsburgh.

In 1924 Converse came to the University of Illinois as Associate Professor of Business Organization and Operation. He led the marketing department at Illinois and was in charge of the Ph.D. program in Business for many years. In 1934 Converse served as a special expert for the Federal Trade Commission and as economist in charge of fieldwork and summary of the milk investigation. Converse also worked for the U.S. Department of Commerce in 1944.

After Converse retired in 1957, he held visiting appointments at the universities of Utah, Oregon, Texas, and Colorado. In 1959-60 Converse lectured on marketing at the Fontainebleau (France) School of Business and the Institute of European Administration Affairs in Palermo, Italy.

Converse was an active member of the National Association of Teachers of Marketing and Advertising (NATMA) and served as president of the organization in 1931. He continued his service the marketing academy by serving as middle-western VP of the American Marketing Association (AMA). In 1946 the AMA honored Converse by establishing in his name an award for contributions to marketing thought.

As a scholar and writer Converse's career was amazingly and continuously productive. He first published some short articles at age 13 in the *Practical Farmer* (Converse 1957). In 1921 he published his first general marketing text, *Marketing Methods and Policies*. The book *Elements of Marketing* published in 1930 and subsequently revised in six editions, was among the leading college textbooks in the field for several decades.

Much of Converse's research centered upon studies of trade movements. These studies contributed to the extension of Reilly's Law of retail gravitation. Converse contributed to a wide variety of journals on a wider variety of topics and his bibliographic record includes over 85 books, monographs and journal articles in addition to numerous book reviews and trade paper citations.

One area of research and the focus of this paper is Converse's contribution to the history of marketing thought literature. Several of his publications in this area have been identified and analyzed using the critical historical research method. This method and the analysis of sources are described in the next section.

Research Method

Historical research is the critical investigation of investigation of events, developments, and experiences of the past, the careful weighing of evidence of the validity of sources of information on the past, and the interpretation of the weighed evidence (Kerlinger 1986). Many times, historians face a mass of information that is complicated, conflicting, incomplete, unreliable, and inconclusive. Use of historical investigation techniques is necessary to disentangle the evidence.

The process of historical investigation was first formalized by the nineteenth century German historian Ranke. It involves assembling the evidence, internal and external criticism, and synthesis or organizing the credible evidence into a logical and meaningful account (Nevett 1991). These four steps detailed below are followed in conducting the research for this paper.

Assembling the Evidence

The data collected for this research is taken from articles and monographs published by Converse. During his career he published multiple articles relating to the history of marketing thought. These articles included a review of textbooks published in the first ten years (Converse 1931), an account of early teachers of marketing (Converse 1959) and their organization (Converse 1952), and a summary of developments in the science of marketing and marketing theory (Converse 1945, 1951).

The selected articles were identified by reviewing Converse's bibliography contained in his curriculum vitae and scanning marketing journals published during his career.

Document Criticism

The historical researcher pays critical attention to the source from which the data is gathered for use during the research process. The source documents must first be analyzed for genuineness and validity. This is referred to as external criticism. The researcher must determine the authenticity of the document as well as whether the author of the document would have been in a position to create a factual account of the situation presented in the document.

The second form of critical analysis, internal criticism, is preoccupied with the content of the source or document and its meaning. The researcher must seek the true meaning and value of the content of the sources of data. Testing the credibility of sources is often done by comparing it with other available evidence.

Each of the documents selected for analysis is subjected to these forms of criticism. As the documents are published, the authorship is assumed to be genuine. However, each document is reviewed for factual credibility and the interpretation of meaning.

Synthesis of Evidence

Once the data sources are deemed credible, the researcher must assemble and report the results of the research in a logical order. Historical data can be presented in a chronological order, topical order or a combination of both.

Converse contributed to the literature on the history of marketing thought in several topical areas. Therefore the review of his research on marketing thought is organized by topic.

Contributions to the History of Marketing Thought

Converse published several articles relating to the history of marketing thought. In this section these articles are identified and analyzed according to the method prescribed in the previous section. The first article summarizes early marketing textbooks. The next articles are relevant to the early teaching of marketing and the

formation of the AMA. Lastly, the articles presented review the significant advancements in the science or theory of marketing.

Textbooks

The first article identified for this study is "The First Decade of Marketing Literature" published in 1933. In this article Converse attempted to review and summarize the early books on marketing. It is interesting to note the periodization scheme used by Converse to organize the literature. Converse identified the pioneer period to consist of 1915-1917 and contained the first books on modern marketing available for use as teaching materials. The intermediate period (1918-1920) contained books that had been planned prior to the War (WWI). The third or modern period began in 1921. This period was characterized by a great increase in marketing research. Converse claimed that the books published during this period had a broader content and a wider basis of factual information than those of earlier periods. Of course this period contained the introduction of his book *Marketing Methods and Policies*.

Converse notes the proliferation of textbooks after 1924, but as that begins his second decade of marketing literature they are not covered as part of this article. This article is important to the history of marketing thought literature because of its timing in the 1930's. This predates the formation of the AMA in 1937 and Bartel's dissertation reviewing the early textbooks of marketing.

As a marketing teacher and textbook author himself, it is logical to believe that Converse would have been aware of textbooks available at the time. However, as noted by editor of the NATMA-Bulletin, Nathanael H. Engle, there were many additional publications not included by Converse in his study.

Early Marketing Teachers

The second article selected for this study is not authored by Converse but does cite a study that he conducted of the early records of the curricula at the University of Illinois. H.H. Maynard (1941) published an update to his original article "Early Teachers of Marketing" after receiving a letter from Converse. While the results of Converse study did not compel Maynard to change his ascertain that the first university course in marketing was taught as the University of Michigan by Dr. E.D. Jones in 1902, he did acknowledge that George M. Fisk taught a marketing course in the second semester of 1902 at Illinois. Additionally, Simon Litman began teaching marketing at the University of California some months later (Litman 1950).

All of these conclusions were drawn from reviewing the course bulletins available from the universities. The problem lies in the interpretation of a "marketing" course. Most courses were offered under the titles commercial policy and distribution of farm products.

Converse (1959) later published literature containing his conclusions on early marketing teachers as part of the monograph "The beginning of Marketing Thought in the United States." This monograph is discussed further at the end of this section.

Marketing Associations

In a research note, Converse (1952) felt compelled to correct statement made in a previous article by Robert Bartels (1951). Converse took issue with Bartels statement about the formation of the AMA coming from a nucleus of marketing students meeting in the American Economic Association.

Converse recounted his recollections of the association with the National Association of Teachers of Advertising. This was a parallel movement to the roundtable discussions at the American Economic Association. Converse was a participant in both organizations serving as a discussant in the roundtable meetings (Lyon et al. 1927) and president of NATMA in 1931. Therefore it is possible that Converse recollections of the events surrounding the formation may be accurate. Additionally, this account is substantiated by Agnew (1937).

Marketing as a Science

Converse published several articles chronicling the development of marketing as a science. The first of these in 1945 presented the results of a survey made of marketing scholars. This respondent group was primarily made up of men who entered the field of marketing as teachers or researchers in the years prior to 1925. The respondents were asked to rate a variety of subjects relevant to the development of the field of marketing. This rating of importance to the development of the marketing discipline included rating the fields of knowledge from which marketing scholars were indebted, the importance of various professional associations and periodicals, and books and reports published on the topics of marketing.

Converse interjected his personal comments on the findings with those of the respondents in the conclusions of the research article. This exploratory study covered a wide variety of material and made an attempt to stimulate further research in the development of marketing as a study or science.

Converse presented a paper at the 1949 marketing symposium at the University of Illinois summarizing the developments of marketing theory over fifty years (Converse 1951). In this paper he summarizes the major topics associated with marketing including demand, prices, rent, operating efficiency, and fair competition. In this lengthy chapter Converse recounts hypotheses, theories, laws, and techniques developed during the past fifty years of marketing thought progress. Defining a science as an organized body of knowledge, or branch of knowledge dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically

arranged, Converse concludes by declaring that marketing can rightfully be called a science.

Marketing Thought

Converse combined and summarized much of his prior research on the beginning of marketing thought in the 1959 monograph "The Beginning of Marketing Thought in the United States." In this monograph, published while he taught graduate classes at the University of Texas, Converse included the material he used to teach his course.

The majority of the material was based upon prior studies conducted by Converse and others. However, Converse held the belief that a contemporary should record his knowledge about the marketing pioneers and their personalities (p. vii.). These personal reminiscences of Converse about the pioneer scholars are interjected with the data about each of them. Converse notes that some information was deleted on the advice of critics who think this type of study should be entirely objective.

Conclusions

Converse contributed a variety of research to the literature on the history of marketing thought. His research covered early textbooks, university courses, professional associations, and the material encompassed in the field of marketing. His final monograph "The Beginning of Marketing Thought in the United States" summarized much of the information presented in earlier articles. However, the earlier articles provide much richer content and provided a foundation for further research into the development of marketing thought.

The rating technique used to measure the importance or influence of early contributions to the marketing literature was also used to identify the original recipients of the Paul D. Converse award for outstanding contributions to the science of marketing.

The breadth of material recorded by Converse on the development of marketing thought continues to stimulate research by current marketing history scholars. As a pioneer scholar, Converse recorded the developments as they happened. Realizing that these contributions are from his perspective does not diminish the importance of his contributions.

Summary

This paper reviews to contributions of Paul Dulaney Converse to the literature on the history of marketing thought. Using the critical historical method to identify and authenticate the contributions of Converse to the literature, a broad variety of articles were found.

The breadth of material included a review of early teaching of marketing, the formation of early marketing associations, and the development of topical material within the field of marketing. As a pioneer in the academic field of marketing, Converse recorded the history we now study to understand the beginnings of marketing thought.

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