

INTERNATIONAL MARKETING: THE HISTORY AND IMPACT OF A FIELD

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to examine the birth of international marketing as an organized and legitimized discipline in the United States by tracing the history and contribution of international marketing thought to marketing. The nature and content of the field is analyzed as it has emerged in the literature in the United States. The extent of intellectual exchange between marketing and international marketing is analyzed. It is argued that, despite some significant contributions to marketing thought and practice, the field of international marketing has not reached its fullest potential in this respect. The future challenges for the development and impact of this field are also presented.

INTRODUCTION

Once again international business and international marketing have gained considerable attention in the popular and academic press. Business publications as well as general appeal dailies all publish pieces on the importance and ways of internationalizing businesses. Colleges and universities are implementing new programs in order to better integrate international business into the curriculum. As much as this emphasis on globalization seems to be the manifestation of a new trend, international marketing thought has a long history in the United States.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the history and contribution of international marketing thought to marketing. More specifically, we analyze the nature and content of the field of international marketing as it emerged in the literature in the United States, and draw some generalizations with respect to its impact on marketing thought and literature.

Given the multitude of terms that are employed to describe business activities outside of domestic boundaries, it is essential to define the terminology used in this article. *International marketing* is generally thought of as being concerned with exploitation of a domestic production base and marketing focus in foreign markets. *Comparative marketing*, on the other hand, emphasizes differences between markets resulting from variations in environmental factors and attempts to classify and understand foreign environments and marketing practices. *Multinational marketing* implies a more company-specific context where the dimensions of coordination and control regarding a corporation's global marketing efforts are considered within a geocentric framework. Throughout this paper, the term "international marketing" is used to identify all marketing activities other than domestic marketing. As such, comparative marketing and multinational marketing are both treated within the scope of international marketing since the difference between the terms is not that of basic tools and techniques, but perspectives.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE: THE FOUNDATION OF INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Tracing the origin and evolution of world trade through the ages is analogous to tracing the beginnings and development of civilization. "In fact," claims Polyanyi (1957), "civilizations, so much seemed evident,

had been born from man's commercial instincts" (p.15). The ancestry of the multinational company can well be traced to the Egyptian, Babylonian, Greek and Phoenician merchants who traded wool, spices, coral, jewelry, pearls and slaves nearly 6,000 years ago (Phatak 1971). Curiously enough, the international and interregional trading of antiquity did not depend solely upon markets, but had a philosophy and history of its own based on "the principle of a politically neutral meeting place." (Polanyi 1957, p.51). The port of trade was a meeting place of foreign traders, though not necessarily on the coast, but often on a great river or at the intersection of a desert and a mountain. Their major function being to guarantee neutrality and safety, the ports continued to flourish as the social, political and commercial foci in the Eastern Mediterranean, Pacific and Guinea coasts. Greek trading colonies such as Carthage, Corinth, Miletus, Rhodes, Syracuse and Tyre developed reaching their pinnacle around the sixth century B.C., and the system of "global" trade kept its intensity for the next 300 years until the rise of the first Greek and Roman empires.

From about 150 B.C. until about 500 A.D., the Roman Republic (later Empire) dominated the scene. Despite their contempt toward business and businessmen, the Romans did appreciate their value in financing military expeditions and "marketing" the loot acquired in wars. Hence, under the protection of the Roman Empire (such as safety from pirates, building of fine roads), the "world trade" flourished to a large extent. With the fall of the Empire and the beginnings of European feudalism, the "world" trade became almost impossible.

For a long period, until the beginnings of the Crusades in 1095, Europe did not foster any developments in trading activities. Starting around 1200, however, international trade became rejuvenated with increased foreign transactions between countries. Genoa, Venice, Florence, and Pisa city-states served as supply depots for the Crusades. Money economy replaced barter economy, a new form of merchant class started to evolve, banks and financial institutions that charged interest on loaned money (despite the church doctrine) came onto the scene. In northern European cities, the merchants realized the importance of enlarging and protecting their trade and formed societies, guilds and leagues to serve their interests. Organizations such as the Hanseatic League became super powers as they acquired incredible monopoly and political influences in international trade and local governments. These guilds perhaps can be regarded as the true ancestors of today's multinational corporations.

The league had to make cities pay their dues; lend arms to members in distress, capture pirates; judge claims in countless suits for damages; compel the King of England to pay for masses to be sung for the souls of merchants flung into the sea by Englishmen; sue the King of France for goods ruined by his troops; manipulate the elections of the kings of Denmark... (Bucklin 1972, p. 177).

The end of the Middle Ages saw the growth of some commercial organizations known as "commenda." The commenda consisted of temporary contractual agreements between the financier who provided the capital and stayed at home, and the merchant traveller who went abroad and did the trading. These merchants, in effect, performed the functions of today's export management companies or export merchants depending on whether or not they took title to the traded goods. The discovery of America in 1492, the voyage of Vasco di Gama and the three-year voyage of Magellan all set the scene for the emergence of powerful nation-states which were based on commercial (rather than military) exploitation. This era saw the birth of mercantilism which led to the growth of colonialism. Spain, England, Belgium and Holland became the dominant colonial powers lessening the importance of the guilds. Firms like the British India Company, The Hudson Bay Company, the Levant Company and the Dutch East India Company controlled and manipulated the masses for their own trade interests. The colonial monopolies dominated the world trade until the end of the eighteenth century.

The mercantilist doctrine which had laid the foundation of the modern-day type of trade barriers, production quotas, subsidies and price regulation collapsed by the emergence of the Industrial Revolution and, hence, the beginning of the free-trade era. The nineteenth century saw the birth of new technology, especially in England, and the factory system replaced cottage industry throughout Europe.

As a consequence of the new system, the nations and governments changed their protectionist attitudes to free-trade between nations. "Laissez-faire" movement gained support from philosophers like John Locke and classical economists such as Adam Smith. To supplement Smith's view of division of labor and specialization, David Ricardo developed "the doctrine of comparative advantage to explain the origin of international trade and to provide the basis for a sound policy in trade among nations." (Alderson 1957, p. 344)

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the world trade tripled. Trade patterns changed which brought about the beginnings of direct investments by the industrialized nations in their colonies such as Africa, Latin America and Asia. Since the factories of Europe needed raw materials, the importance of colonies as sources of raw materials was realized more and more. Some writers view these colonial parent-subsidiary relationship as marking the beginnings of today's multinationals (Phatak 1971).

The rapid growth of international business in the fifties is generally believed to be a consequence of three major forces: environmental forces, technological trends and the growth process of the business enterprise (Robock, Simmonds and Zwick 1977). An expansionist world economy, improved inter-nation framework (especially after World War II) and the aggressive economic development goals adopted by many nations all contributed to the acceleration of world trade.

In the technological environment, the explosion came after the World War II when a multitude of new products and processes shaped the demand patterns at the same time creating new business opportunities. Starting during the post-World War II period, the U.S. showed a tremendous technological superiority taking over the leadership from Europe which had lost its traditional dominance after two severe world wars. The management and marketing as well as production technology developed tremendously in the U.S. alerting the businessmen to the opportunities promised in foreign markets--both as markets and sources of raw material.

During the last few decades, however, Western Europe and Japan have been continuously striving toward closing the technology gap by borrowing from U.S. technology and research-intensive industries. These efforts, in turn, have resulted in the increase of foreign direct investment by European and Japanese firms in the U.S. Finally, the growth in size and resources of the business enterprise in recent decades has had substantial impact on the volume and pattern of international trade. With increased financial, technological and managerial capabilities, many firms extended their operations beyond the domestic markets since they were willing to take the additional risk of international operations.

It was not until the 1950s that business practitioners and academics began to develop an increased interest in the issues involved in "going international."

THE "BIRTH" OF A FIELD: INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

At the outset we would like to note that international marketing thought is as old as the first days of international and inter-regional trade, as evidenced by that very trade activity. This paper attempts to examine the birth of international marketing as an organized and legitimized discipline in the United States. The emergence of international marketing as a new area of marketing thought can perhaps be evaluated as another revisionary reaction of marketing discipline to an ever-shrinking world with an increasingly multinational environment.

As observed from the previous section on history of global trade, the roots of international marketing can be traced back to the times immemorial. It is equally difficult to identify an exact time period when international marketing thought gained significant momentum in the U.S. International marketing thought seems to have developed through the merging of two distinct intellectual perspectives

and bodies of knowledge as their attention crossed on the same phenomenon. Namely, those who were interested in international trade (mostly economists) and the marketing discipline, which initially exhibited a domestic focus, both contributed to what is today regarded as international marketing knowledge. There also seems to be at least a rough correspondence between these two sources of influence and what can be considered as the "beginning" of international marketing thought in the U.S.

In the relatively short history of international marketing as a field, any effort to go back further than 1950's inevitably falls into the realm of other disciplines such as political science, economic geography, history, international relations and international and political economics. For example, in the late nineteenth century a substantial contribution to the thought and literature of international marketing was made by four optimistic and liberal minded economists who made "opportunistic" use of marketing phenomena to support their liberal views based on the doctrines of laissez-faire and classical economic theory (Assael 1978). Among these were Atkinson, Wells and the Farquhar brothers who refused to view marketing as distribution to home market alone and who maintained that a valid understanding of marketing could only be gained by incorporating the crucial role of international trade. Dedicated followers of Smith and Ricardo, these economists strongly believed in the classical doctrine of comparative advantage.

Along these lines Atkinson, Wells and the Farquhars constantly sought factual evidence to promote the effective use of this doctrine via international specialization and division of labor through the freedom of international marketing. Had these economists been more precise and less ambiguous in their treatment of marketing, and had they been able to conceive marketing as a subject apart from political economics, perhaps they would have accelerated the tempo and changed the nature of the development of marketing and international marketing (Assael 1978). The first book bearing the title World Marketing by V. D. Collins (1935) appeared during these early years dominated by the works of the pioneers who had come from non-marketing backgrounds.

Two factors seem to be responsible for the interests of the early contributors in international marketing: education and experience. A substantial number of the early pioneers had a very strong interest and knowledge in economic theory. Inevitably, exposure to macro and international economic thought triggered the questioning minds of these scholars, and initiated attempts to assess the possibilities of expanding the scope of marketing thought beyond the U.S. borders. So popular and indispensable was the knowledge of economic theory that, for example, Paul Nystrom showed considerable efforts to master the discipline at a rather mature stage of his life.

In addition, the experience as private entrepreneurs or government officials as well as travelers abroad might have increased the interest of these early scholars in foreign matters. Arthur Farquhar, for example, was particularly concerned about the effect of international trade restrictions on iron, steel and metal products partly because his company produced farm equipment. Simon Litman studied at the School of Political Science, Paris, and also in Munich and Zurich before he went to Berkeley where he later taught a course entitled "Techniques of Trade and Commerce". Until his retirement in 1946, he wrote a number of articles in the field of international trade. James E. Fisk, whose career was terminated by an untimely death, also wrote in the area of foreign commerce, his main contribution is entitled of International Commerce Policies. From the Harvard group, Melvin T. Copeland, an economist and specialist in the cotton industry, taught economic history and economic resources of Europe at Harvard, and spent a year abroad as a Travelling Fellow. Theodore N. Beckman's extensive knowledge and interest in international trade is very conspicuous, especially in his book Wholesaling (1937) where the origin of this institution is directly paralleled with that of international trade.

Despite the interest of pioneers of marketing in foreign trade, it was not until 1935 that a book actually titled World Marketing by V.D. Collins appeared. Influenced by the growing recognition of environments and their relationship to the development of marketing, Collins tried to explain the requirements for successful business abroad as well as the necessity of being informed of the world environment. Typical to most pioneer works, the book is highly descriptive and detailed as evidenced

by topics such as preparing for the foreign sales trip which promises voyages to "far-distant lands of romance, adventures and profit" (Collins 1935, p.262).

In tracing the emergence of the field of international marketing, one cannot help but note the similarities with the development of marketing during the early decades of the twentieth century. Prior to an established structure and pattern of research, scientific inquiry in marketing consisted primarily of observation, investigation and description. The widespread agreement about the elements and principles of marketing came as a result of the originally factual and graphic explorations. A very similar pattern of development is observed in international marketing. The original writings in this literature mainly dealt with international economics through collections of readings and texts that were highly export oriented.

With an increasing volume of foreign business and foreign investments, coupled with a surging demand abroad for American technology, however, the popularity of the subject also increased in the 50s. It was about this time that the individuals who came from the marketing "camp" with a domestic marketing perspective started contributing to international marketing thought. A group of marketing professors from a few eastern and mid-western universities were soon convinced about the importance of understanding the scope of marketing in foreign settings. In fact, J. Boddewyn (1970), one of the forerunners of comparative marketing, claims that the formal beginning of the field is marked by the publication of Harbison and Myer's Management in the Industrial World in 1959 where it was pointed out "a large number of countries could be compared intelligently around a few key themes" (p. 2).

Praiseworthy also are the efforts of the AMA which, since 1957, has vigorously expanded its activity in the international marketing field. Among other things, the AMA's activities included publication of an International Marketing Newsletter, exchange of marketing delegates with the Soviet Union and the establishment of AMA-initiated International Marketing Federation of all professional marketing associations.

During the years following these attempts, literature on international marketing showed a steady increase. Initially, a series of lengthy studies dealing with marketing in different countries appeared. Again with the support of the AMA, R. Bartel's Comparative Marketing: Wholesaling in Fifteen Countries was published in 1963. The book, which emerged as a result of the cooperation of both Americans and other nationals, is an expeditious undertaking. In the same year, A.O. Stanley published his Handbook of International Marketing. Most of the works until this period were comparative in nature. In fact, Cox (1965) was credited with the belief that comparative analysis in marketing "is one of the great frontiers of marketing thought" (Bartels 1976, p. 213).

Just around this period (mid 60s), however, the literature was changing from a comparative to a multinational approach. Bartels (1976) explains this transition from comparative to multinational works as a trend of moving from "international trade" to "international marketing." He credits Kramer (1964) for having caught this trend with his book International Marketing. Soon after, J. Fayerweather, in International Marketing (1965), introduced a managerial orientation to global marketing by using some concepts from the domestic marketing literature. In the same year Hess and Cateora published International Marketing which mainly focused on the environmental characteristics of world markets.

During the 1960s, when a large volume of literature was being published, two approaches for analyzing and organizing comparative marketing became popular (Fayerweather, Boddewyn and Engberg 1966). In the vertical analysis the emphasis is on the uniqueness and differences of a single country's environment and, as such, is similar to area studies. This approach yielded many articles with "Marketing in..." titles. The horizontal approach, on the other hand, focused on the functional areas studied particular marketing activities and institutions (e.g., retailing, pricing, etc.) in different countries and handled simultaneously several national markets in a truly comparative manner. Bartel's Wholesaling in Fifteen Countries (1963) is a good example of this approach.

A study of the development of the field of international marketing is not complete without referring to one phenomenon which has significantly influenced the global environment since the late 1950s: the multinational company. The relatively abrupt transformation in the attitude of many U.S. corporations, followed by a wave of internationalization among European companies, and finally the tremendous growth in the volume of Japanese foreign business all contributed to the increase in the magnitude of international business and the number of multinational companies. Keegan's (1974) Multinational Marketing Management is one of the pioneer works which reflect this trend in international trade. The book focuses on the nature of world market environment and tools available for international growth and expansion of multinational companies.

One debate which has significantly affected the literature in international marketing, and one that still preserves its currency concerns the ability to standardize various marketing variables across different countries. From the early works such as Buzzell's (1968) "Can Multinational Marketing be Standardized" to the more recent article by Levitt (1983) on "Globalization of Markets," many have explored the possibilities of exploiting scale efficiencies in marketing activities without challenging the uniqueness of indigenous markets. The impact of this debate is reflected in the literature as existing textbooks were revised and new ones were written to address the issue. For example, Keegan's previously discussed Multinational Marketing Management (1974, 1980, 1984) textbook was subsequently revised and published with a new title, Global Marketing Management (1989), to reflect the emerging debate. Similarly, most new textbooks have since devoted considerable space to the standardization/adaptation issue and examined it within the context of various marketing mix elements (see, for example, Cateora 1993; Terpstra and Sarathy 1991; Czinkota and Ronkainen 1993).

With the ever-accelerating pace of world events with which global business and its institutions have to cope, the field of international marketing is being presented with the challenge of revising and expanding its scope in order to accommodate and explain these developments. The major structural shifts in the world economy, the multitude of legal and political changes, and the realization that this evolution is not likely to lull in pace or variety all require that international marketing thought produce knowledge which facilitates firms' management of their international marketing operations in a very dynamic environment. Clearly, a shift is required a from static examination of different markets to a flexible adjustment of significant variables and predictions about future environments. Examples of such a shift are already evidenced in the content of recent manuscripts and textbooks which emphasize the emerging opportunities and threats in international marketing that have been precipitated by the disintegration of the Soviet Block. The new world order and its marketing implications are discussed from regional and global perspectives.

EXCHANGE BETWEEN MARKETING AND INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

Earlier in this paper it was suggested that the international marketing thought was influenced by two sources: the international trade perspective and the domestic marketing literature. The current account of what is known about international marketing (such as international marketing textbooks) implies that the intellectual exchange has been most intense between marketing and international marketing. A cursory examination of most textbooks in the area reveals that the contributions of international trade literature hardly constitutes a chapter in most international marketing textbooks.

Another revealing observation is that both marketing and international marketing have benefitted from the exchange between them. One advantage for the marketing discipline has been the extension of its "spatial dimension," which is one of the measures of the scope and character of a discipline (Bartels 1970). Another gain for marketing has been the expansion of marketing's interdisciplinary nature. This, in turn, is related to the ability of the discipline in "conceptualizing, formulating and thinking about marketing problems rather than providing marketing information" alone (Kelley and Lazer 1967, p. 710).

A third area of contribution of international marketing thought to marketing concerns the teaching of business and marketing courses which have been inevitably broadened to adopt a geocentric approach in order to equip the future business executives and academicians with the mentality of a "world philosophy." A considerable amount of effort has been expended, especially after the second half of the 1960s, towards improving programs of international studies. International Business Workshop of New York University, American Marketing Association and the World Affairs are only a few of the organizations which have fostered the movement. Today, many more institutions, in addition to the federal government through its CIBER programs, are pursuing similar efforts.

Despite the above contributions, the influence of the field of international marketing to marketing literature seems to be less significant than that in the opposite direction. First, with one notable exception, marketing scholars continue to ignore integration of the international dimension of marketing into their knowledge creation and dissemination process. In comparing recent marketing textbooks with the earlier ones, one quickly notices that not much has evolved in terms of recognizing the necessity of a global approach. One possible explanation for such resistance to change is that the principles of marketing are truly generalizable to the global marketplace and that the emerging knowledge on international markets has not necessitated revisions. An alternative, and a stronger explanation, is that the field of international marketing is still dominated by the knowledge generated through domestic experiences. There is some evidence to support this argument. First, claims that marketing is strictly a North American phenomenon are not rare. Dholakia et. al., (1980), for example, argued that due to its success for the American business, the marketing management technology as developed in the U.S. was readily offered for application world-wide without much concern about its universal feasibility. A review of Moyer and Hollander's (1968) selected studies and their annotated bibliography supports this view by demonstrating that marketing was a popular remedy to be exported to the developing countries. The latter work clearly argued that this "dominant paradigm" is far from claiming universal validity.

Furthermore, a review of most international marketing textbooks indicates that the majority of the content is devoted to explicating nuances in the application of "domestic" marketing principles to other country-markets with different socio-cultural, economic, and political settings. The challenge implied here is to be able to figure out the nature and the degree of modifications required in the existing marketing programs or technology.

A similar observation can be made by examining the contents and organization of a typical marketing principles textbook. The negligible influence international marketing knowledge has had on marketing knowledge is obvious by the fact that international marketing is invariably presented in a single (and generally last) chapter as one of the special applications of marketing principles. As a result, international marketing is included in, but not necessarily integrated into, the marketing knowledge. There are a few refreshing exceptions to this trend. One is a recent marketing principles book by Semenik and Bamossy (1993) whose orientation is clearly spelled out even in its title: Principles of Marketing- A Global Perspective. Another example is the seventh edition of Contemporary Marketing (Boone and Kurtz 1992) where the authors claim to have attempted to make their book "the first global text for basic marketing classes." Both of these examples demonstrate sparse pioneering efforts in integrating the basic marketing knowledge with a treatment of the global issues and challenges related to each area of marketing, chapter by chapter. As increasing number of marketing scholars recognize the inevitably interrelated nature of domestic and international marketing, we are likely to see more integrative efforts in the area.

The above discussions lead us to believe that despite certain significant contributions to marketing, international marketing has yet to accomplish its fullest potential in this respect. Ironically, then, what is intended in this paper to be the history of international marketing is probably nothing more than a glimpse of a very short and recent past.

FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

The development of international marketing thought and its increased contribution to marketing will most likely depend on its own theoretical development and focus. With respect to theoretical development, there have been two opposing views. One view criticizes the field for "having moved too hastily from a descriptive approach to a prescriptive without adequately exhausting the former area." (Ferrell et. al. 1979, p. 247) The opposing camp claims that since its inception, the study of marketing has been "over-descriptive, non-comparative and non-managerial" without any managerial implications and models for multinational marketing mix decisions (Anderson, Luqmani and Quraeshi 1979, p. 342).

It is probably true that the international marketing literature continues to be mostly descriptive in nature. Lack of universally generalizable marketing theories and the relatively scarce attempts to test major marketing theories in the international domain are testimonies to the descriptive focus of the discipline. The criticism that international marketing has too quickly evolved into a prescriptive stage is likely to be the consequence of transfer of techniques from the marketing literature in an attempt to guide managerial decisions in the international arena.

In terms of its content, the international marketing literature seems to have maintained its focus on a number of topics over time. One such topic concerns macro-economic issues such as global recessions, inflation, political movements such as widespread national policies of self-sufficiency and protectionism, technological developments such as the speedy erosion of the "technological gap" as well as consideration of new product developments to decrease reliance on depleting energy sources. Along these lines research on marketing and economic development has enjoyed popular attention to such levels that special conferences on the subject are being organized regularly and very recently a formal organization of "Marketing and Development" has been established. Despite the continuing attention on these policy related issues, however, most of the current literature in international marketing continues to display a managerial focus. Studies with a relatively more "theoretical" inclination tend to be conducted in the area of consumer behavior.

To sum, international marketing is a relatively new term describing an age-old area of business. The nature and approach of this field is highly interdisciplinary, which is partly responsible for its sensitivity to the environment in which it takes place. The success and acceptance of the field as a science will likely depend upon the ability of its tools and techniques to explain, predict and control the volatile and complex environment which hosts the international business phenomena. The current focus on solving marketing management problems, however, indicate that development of international marketing theories with acceptable levels of explanatory and predictive power are not to be expected in the short-run.

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