Marketing and Supply Chain Integration – Evolution and Emergence?

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Abstract

The key hypothesis of this article is that marketing practice does not evolve independently within its domains, but concurrently responding to developments of the social-economic environment and other management fields – especially that of supply chain management. This article suggests that marketing and supply chain practices have actually co-evolved. Deriving from the study of ecology, the concept of co-evolution denotes the fact that evolutionary changes in one species are a response to changes in other species with which they ecologically interacts, i.e. in the same community. The co-evolution between marketing practices and supply chain practices becomes more apparent and interdependent especially when the economy transforms from production- and sales-orientation towards marketing- and service-dominated. This co-evolution happens consequently as firms integrate their key functions to compete in the business environment with a set of adapted management practices. This article discusses the concept of the co-evolution of marketing and supply chain practice and develops the argument for more research in this area. Specifically, to understand and develop typologies of marketing and supply chain practice and the contextual factors involved.

Keywords: Management practice, marketing, supply chain management, co-evolution

Introduction

The practice of management evolved as the capitalist philosophy and industrialisation of society developed firstly in terms of goods manufacturing, and latterly with the dominance of the service sector (Keith, 1960; Bell, 1974; Kerr, 1996; Nahm and Vondrembse, 2002; Bosshart, 2004; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This has been accompanied by the development of markets and the increasing sophistication of buyers. Management and marketing practices have concurrently developed in order to provide better ways of managing the emerging complexity and to provide managers with tools and techniques to improve the practice of management (Clegg et al. 2005).

The key hypothesis of this article is that marketing practice does not evolve independently within its domains, but concurrently responding to developments in other management fields, as well as the social-economic environment (Brady and Davis, 1993). According to Murray et al. (2002), the type of marketing carried out and how it is managed, organised and delivered changes and reshapes itself as the firm co-evolves with its marketplace. However the development of management thinking is fragmented with overlapping fields of research (Whitley, 1988). This may provide alternative or competing, but not overarching or comprehensive, explanations of phenomena. The process is imperfect and competition and change drives a search for improvement.

In the marketing domain the original 4Ps concept is now accompanied by more comprehensive explanations such as the interaction model and relationship marketing which have developed alongside changes in buyer type, size and power, technological innovations and the increasing complexity and demands of business life (Ford, 1997). Marketing and logistics/supply chain practice are mutually dependant; one does not occur in isolation from the other, but alignment may be imperfect and change as externalities develop. If marketing is to realise its potential contribution to the organisation's marketplace and financial performance, it must connect to three core business processes, i.e., product development, supply chain management and customer relationship management (Morash and Lynch, 2002). Thus, to fully understand how marketing practice evolves, we need to extend our frame of analysis from merely the marketing domain to incorporate other management practices, especially those related to the supply chain due to the proximity of marketing with the fulfilment of logistical and service needs.

Evolution of management practice is an ongoing process. The concept of evolution has encouraged scientists to try to analyse various trends and predict the future development of societies. Therefore, this article suggests studying marketing practice by understanding its "co-evolution" with supply chain management practices, building on the application of the concept in the area of strategic management (Penrose, 1952) and in the domain of marketing (Lambkin and Day, 1989). The language of business is redolent with biological terms such as the product life cycle, competition, market niche, which provides a framework to assist conceptual understanding.

Originating from the field of ecology, co-evolution denotes the fact that evolutionary changes in one species are a response to changes in other species, with which it ecologically interacts, i.e. in the same community (Strickberger, 1990). The notion of the "species" from the ecology field is the metaphor for "marketing practices" and "supply chain practices" in this article. Using this lens to view management practices, this article attempts to demonstrate the existence of a new phenomenon, i.e., the co-evolution of marketing and supply chain practices, sometimes referred to as demand chain management, and discusses its implications for research.

Co-evolution as a frame of analysis

In biology, evolution is the change in the heritable traits of a population over successive generations. The two basic mechanisms that produce evolutionary change are natural selection and genetic drift.

- Natural selection is the process by which individual organisms with favourable traits are more likely to survive and reproduce. In management practice terms, natural selection suggests that efficient/effective practices are more likely to survive and develop in a firm.
- Genetic drift describes changes in the genetic pattern from one generation to the next due to sampling variance. In management practice terms, it is possible to observe the variations of a particular management practice, or the drifting apart of a management practice into two divergent practices (Abrahamson, 1996; Gibson and Tesone, 2001).

In addition to the above two basic mechanisms, other mechanisms of evolution which can be used to explain the evolution of management practices are heredity, variation, adaptation, recombination, speciation and extinction, and devolution (Ehrlich and Raven, 1964; Norgaard, 1984; Stickberger, 1990; Collarelli and Dettmann, 2003)

- Heredity - the DNA of parents determines the DNA of their offspring. This can be regarded as the administrative heritage of a firm, which somehow retains its culture, attitudes and values even when the firm adopts alternative practices.
- Variation – random mutations are permanent, transmissible changes to the genetic material of a cell, and can be caused by "copying errors" in the genetic material during cell division. In other words, mutation of a management practice may occur when there is a copying error of a particular practice, or when management practices are substantially changed by merger with another business.
- Adaptation - through the process of natural selection, organisms become better adapted to their environments. Note that adaptation is context-sensitive; a trait that increases fitness in one environment may decrease it in another. Adaptation helps to explain how changes in the environment influence management practices.
- Recombination - breaks up gene combinations that have been successful in previous generations, and hence challenges selection. In management practice terms, recombination involves breaking up of the firm’s DNA (administrative heritage or culture) and recombines them into a new set of practices. This is close to the concept of reengineering and restructuring.
- Speciation - is the process by which new biological species arise. Speciation can be seen as the emergence of a new best practice from a particular firm or research.
- Extinction - is the disappearance of species (i.e. gene pools). The moment of extinction generally occurs at the death of the last individual of that species. In reality, a management practice might not become extinct, but it can be replaced by another practice while some of its elements still remain in a firm.

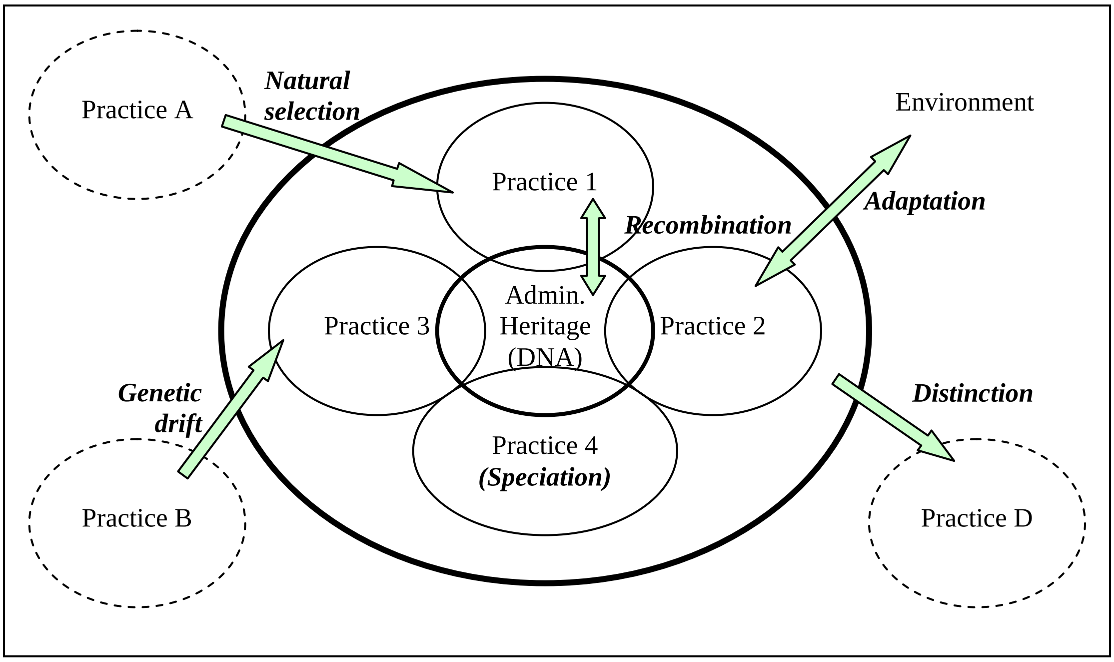

Figure 1: Concepts of management practice evolution

The concepts of evolution, when viewed from the management practice perspective, can be summarised in the following figure 1. The external circle represents a firm, which consists of various management practices and a core DNA or administrative heritage. A firm's management practices can be influenced by natural selection, adaptation and generic drift. Within a firm, a new practice can be generated via the process of speciation, or several practices can be recombined, to become less or more distinct. With this framework, we can explain the evolution of a particular management practice.

When we consider evolution of a management practice in relation to another practice, we refer to the process of co-evolution. Co-evolution was originally proposed in the field of ecology, for example referring to the joint evolution of butterflies and flowering plants (Ehrlich and Raven, 1964). Co-evolution denotes the fact that evolutionary changes in one species are a response to changes in other species, with which it interacts (Strickberger, 1990).

Literature review

Using the above framework, a brief review covering marketing and supply chain literature is conducted to (1) describe the evolution of marketing and supply chain theory and practice and how they have co-evolved within the social and business environment (summarised in Table 1), and (2) to extract any discussion and evidence about the co-evolution of marketing practices and supply chain practices (depicted in Figure 1).

Evolution of marketing theory and practice

Marketing is originally founded as a branch of applied economics devoted to the study of distribution channels (Kotler, 1972). Marketing theory has been largely influenced by the idea of "exchange," i.e., marketing is the offering and wanting of something due to relative scarcity and the need for reciprocal returns (Levy, 2002). At a more operational level, marketing is typically seen as the task of creating, promoting, and advertising goods and services to consumers and businesses (Kotler, 1972), which is heavily focusing on demand creation (Juttner et al., 2006).

During the 1960s, Levitt (1960) commented that marketing seldom got the kind of active and continuing support for development that other corporate functions received. There were few systematic corporate efforts to create marketing innovations. All were either random occurrences in the bigger stream of scientific experimentation and change that characterized the age, or were the accidental offspring of some facilitating development or necessity. This suggests that marketing practices during this time evolved randomly without deliberate guidance and that most marketing innovations have been unsolicited, unplanned, accidental, and have originated from outside the central core of the industries in which they have ultimately prospered (Levitt, 1960).

In the late 1960s Kotler published the first edition of “Marketing Management” that marked the evolution of scientific rigour in the discipline of marketing. Kotler broadened the scope of marketing from selling, advertising and market research positioning marketing as a science and stressed that the role of marketing is to “fulfil needs profitably.” Kotler gave credence to the belief that marketing management is not simply the effort of specialists to produce marketing collateral, but an axiom constituting the driving force behind the achievement of an organisation-wide marketing driven customer orientation. Consequently, marketing literature has developed concepts such as the 4Ps and market segmentation to support marketing decision-making. Eventually, marketing became an accepted discipline and one of the most important subjects in the field of management studies, as well as one of the most powerful functions in business organisations.

Latterly the work of the Contemporary Marketing Practice (CMP) group provides more insight into the diversity of marketing practices and how different marketing and management practices interact in reality (Lindgreen et al., 2000). This framework is based on management practice and explains the inter-relationship of transactional and relational marketing activities. Hence it can be seen that these can vary with the type of firm (Coviello, Brodie, Brookes and Palmer, 2003) and the business environment (Pels and Brodie, 2001, Palmer and Pels, 2004).

Evolution of supply chain theory and practice

Originally part of marketing, purchasing and logistics (distribution) was developed in the second half of the twentieth century to support marketing (Rogers, 2004). The emerging distinction between these two functions can be explained by “genetic drift” as marketing and logistics gradually become two different subject areas in addition to production management.

The application of scientific management to the research of production, logistics and operations management resulted in two distinct fields; operations research and management science. These two fields have contributed to the improvement of production, inventory and logistics operations. As a result, production and operation management emerged as a subject area combining the operations of purchasing, logistics and production.

Over the past three decades much of the logistics management literature has been devoted to reducing inventory and improving service (Oliver and Webber, 1982; Jones and Riley, 1985; Houlihan, 1985; Snowdon, 1988). Changes in the balance of supplier/buyer power and deeper insight into inventory management and a more challenging business environment led to the development of the supply chain concept during the 1980s. Supply chain management (SCM) has been widely defined as the integration of business processes from end user through to original suppliers that provide products, services and information that add value for customers (Cooper et al., 1997). This definition reveals that the logic of supply chain management was predominantly concerned with the production and distribution of physical goods. The definition also reveals a shift to the emergence of a new practice (speciation), i.e., to view the unit of competition as a chain of suppliers and buyers or a network instead of the individual firm.

Integration is the key principle of SCM as industries have to overcome the phenomenon of industry dynamic - the amplification and oscillation of customer demand up the chain of sellers and buyers (Forrester, 1958). Amplified demand is not true demand and therefore it creates excessive inventory, costs and unnecessary capacity. As firms react to amplified demand independently, they are confused by inaccurate information feedback and 'irrational' order behaviour (Sterman, 1989; Lee et al., 1997). This problem triggered the need for information sharing and decision coordination within a business organisation and also between suppliers and customers, i.e., the concept of supply chain integration.

The concepts of supply chain management have also evolved around the shift from a manufacturing to consumer focus. When a nation begins industrialising, it builds up its manufacturing capability - first from cottage or guild production, and later with simple forms of mass production. For example, Fordism contributed to the manufacturing-based economy by the application of the mass production of standardised products to gain economy of scale (Clegg et al, 2005). The efficiency of manufacturing was further enhanced by the principle of labour division, or Taylorism (Clegg et al, 2005). Later, driven by customer needs for lower cost and greater variety, concepts such as lean, just-in-time, and flexible manufacturing have been applied. However, in recent years as firms have become more market-oriented and manufacturing is no longer seen as a core competence, outsourcing of manufacturing has become a popular strategy.

Supply chain management has also evolved from the "inside-out" view to the "outside-in" view. During the last decade much research has been dedicated to the emergence of demand chain management (or market-drive supply chain, value chain management, customer-centric supply chain), which "put the customer first." Similar to marketing, supply chain management has gradually achieved strategic importance. Supply chain management is now being widely recognised as an essential competitive capability. It being imperative to ensure the strategic balance of supply and demand based on firm-wide objectives, and more particularly, its support by a systems approach that places a premium on the fast transfer and accessibility of information across barriers. This new concept views the supply chain as an entity rather than relegating fragmented responsibility for various segments of the supply chain to functional areas such as purchasing, manufacturing, distribution and sales. One of the implications of this conceptualisation of the supply chain is that marketing could become integrated as part of a demand chain.

Co-evolution of marketing and supply chain practices

The above two sections describe briefly the evolution of marketing and supply chain theory and practice. At the beginning marketing as a field emerged from applied economics. Purchasing and distribution were then part of the marketing function. The marketing function gained more strategic importance in the next stage and became an important discipline. During this stage, there was gradual increase in specialisation, which saw the development of purchasing, inbound logistics, production, physical distribution, and marketing departments in many business organisations. Also, as customers demanded product variety and cost efficiency, the notion of customer-orientation, relationship and value management have become dominant as management theories and practices. However, to deliver value to customers and to maintain relationships with them requires coordination between marketing and other operational functions, which has always been a problematic area. During the 1980s, supply chain management was introduced. SCM focuses on the integration of various activities and information flows within and across suppliers and customers. During the last two decades, many large business organisations have expended great efforts to integrate different business functions, now extending this to integration with marketing as well as beyond the firm to key customers and suppliers.

Variation is valuable in areas such as segmentation and market research, but often perceived as a burden to the supply chain (Mather, 1995; Vorkurka and Lummus, 1998). As product variants increase predictions about the future become problematic, a fundamental notion derived from evolutionary theory. The large number of variables, interactions, and environmental contingencies inherent in biological and social systems preclude precise prediction (Colarelli and Dettmann 2003). Thus, traditional marketing research has a spotty record of predicting what consumers will buy (Zangwill, 1992, 1993). Some marketers, however, use research strategies that are driven by variation, a type of guided evolution. Rather than trying to predict what consumers want through extensive consumer surveys and focus groups, they introduce variations of a product into the market and wait to see what consumers choose. Based on the feedback from sales, firms learn what consumers really want, and then they revise their products accordingly. This marketing practice selects variations by consequences rather than by predictions. It affects supply chain practice because it increases product variants, the complexity of production and logistics planning and coordination of decisions and information among supply chain members. This drives the need for information and process integration across supply chain members and reshapes their relationship structures.

As supply chain becomes more strategically important, planning processes within a firm become more integrated. One of the most critical evolutions of planning practice is the concept of collaborative planning. Within the firm, sales and operations planning (S&OP) is a critical process that allows collaborative planning between marketing and operations (purchasing, manufacturing, and logistics). Marketing planning (new product launch, promotion campaign, pricing, etc) cannot be carried out in isolation without dialogue with supply chain planning on a frequent basis. The S&OP process is a consequence of combining marketing and operations planning in order to response to today's business environment. It involves the recombination of planning practices within a firm, as well as adaptation to the marketplace.

Extending beyond the firm's boundaries, nowadays we see the practice of cross-functional and cross-boundary initiatives such as key account management, category management, collaborative planning (such as Efficient Consumer Response - ECR and Collaborative Planning, Forecast and Replenishment - CPFR). These initiatives involve joint business planning at corporate levels between buyers and sellers. Without close integration between the marketing and supply chain functions within a firm, such programs would not be successful. Thus customers, marketers and supply chains are working closely together, each attempting to influence and adapt to each other's practices, in a concerted and coordinated manner.

Co-evolution trait	**Literature lens: evidences in theory and practice**	**Literature results**
Natural selection	Favourable practices are more likely to be used for a long time	• Marketing management increases importance in firms • Relationship marketing instead of transactional marketing, etc.
Heredity	Some practices have always been used – administrative heritage, organisational culture or DNA	• The management practice in a particular nation, etc. • The idea of "exchange" in marketing literature inherited from economics (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) • The inherited views of the firm, the market, value proposition have also restricted the co-creation of experience in the market forum (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004)
Generic drift	A practice drifts to become two or more practices	• Physical distribution from marketing become physical distribution & logistics management •
Adaptation	Current practice increases in fitness as it adjusts to the environment	• Market-orientation in the marketing literature, which is affecting (and affected by) market-driven supply chain in the supply chain literature, both aim at improving service and value delivery •
Generic variation	A practice varies in some aspects as compared with another similar practice	• Marketing creates variation in consumer products and advertising (Colarelli and Dettmann, 2003) and this variation increases complexity, and explains the need for different practices in a supply chain (Mather, 1995; Vorkurka and Lummus, 1998).
Recombination	Several practices are restructured or reengineered to a combination of new practice	• Marketing research that incorporates psychological mechanisms is an evidence of co-evolution between marketing with the consumers (Colarelli and Dettmann, 2003) • Firms re-segment (and organise) their markets by combining product, geography, demographic, life styles, etc., which influence how an organisation (both marketing and supply chain) is structured, where it is located, where is the supply sources, and etc.
Speciation	Development of a new practice	• Relationship marketing and e-marketing emerged • Supply chain management emerged (Houlihan, 1985; Jones and Riley, 1985)
Extinction	Disappearance of a practice	• Management fads (Abrahamson, 1996; Gibson and Tesone, 2001)

Table 1: Co-evolution of marketing practices and supply chain practices with the environment

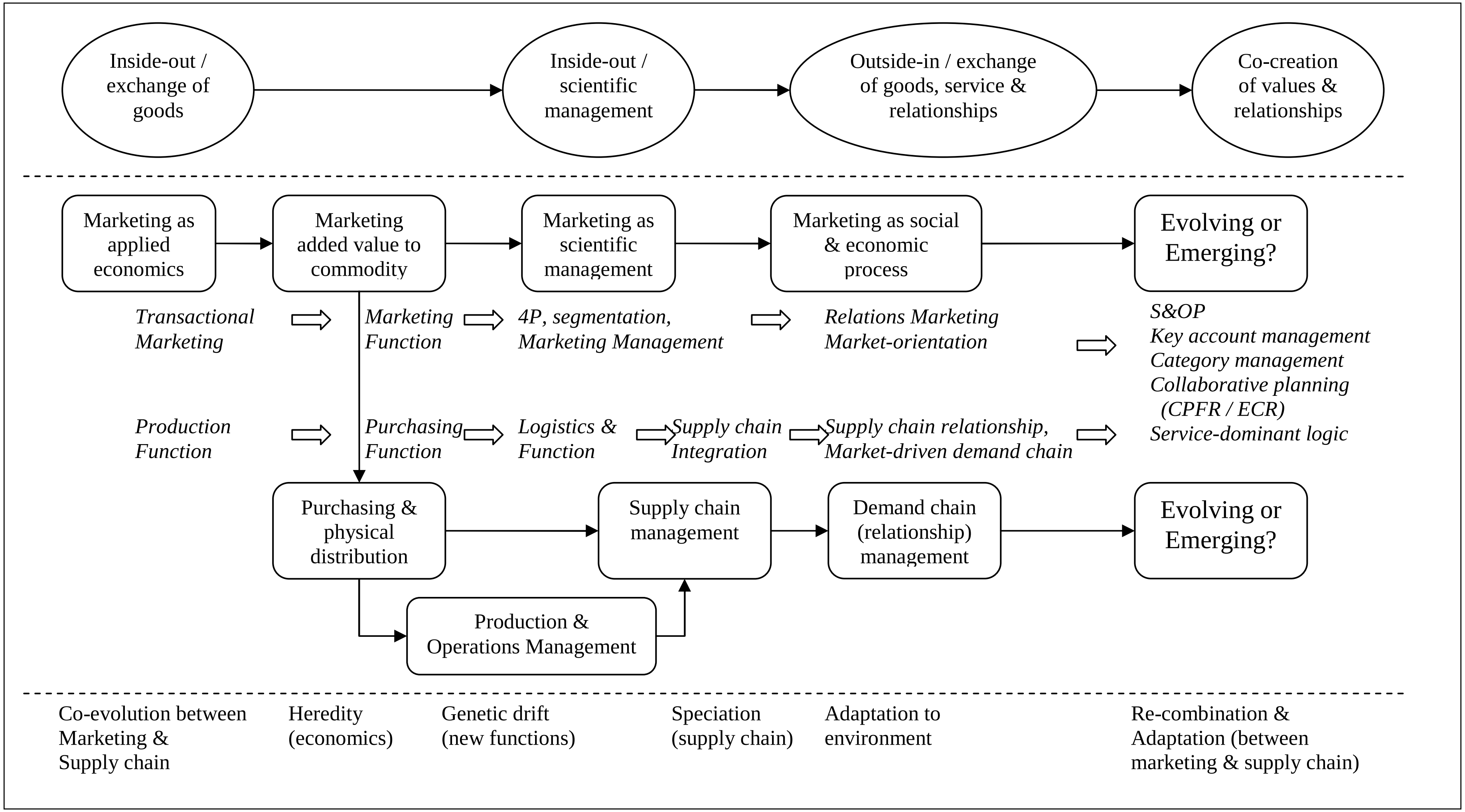

Figure 1: Co-evolution of marketing practices with supply chain management practices

This interdependency between marketing and supply chain is increasing in practice and attracting more academic attention. Recent work by Sanger and Tochtermann (2007) comments on the lack of integration between the two disciplines and the possibilities for net improvements in profitability by better and integrated management.

Thus, the supply chain needs to extend the scope of its processes to integrate across organisational borders (Mejra and Wisner, 2001). For most supply chains a balance exists between customer requirements and supply chain capabilities. When marketing activities strain the supply chain's ability to meet demand, additional costs are incurred (Vorkurka and Lummus, 1998). To address this the supply chain research community has suggested the concept of demand chain management, which attempts to integrate demand creation (marketing) and demand fulfilment (supply chain) processes (Heikkila, 2002; de Treville et al, 2004).

Implication for marketing and supply chain research

As illustrated by Figure 1, marketing and supply chain practices have emerged from the economic literature and then drifted into two different areas due to increasing specialisation. However as these two practices adapt themselves to the changing social-economic environment, they become more interdependent. Thus, marketing and supply chain practices have co-evolved and created management practices (such as S&OP, key account management, category management, CPFR, etc.) which involve both marketing and supply chain managers. With this emerging trend firms will begin re-combining some of these two practices into a coherent whole, meaning that marketing and supply chain practices have to adapt to each other while adapting to the changing business environment. This trend leads to at least four implications for marketing and supply chain research.

Implication 1 - both marketing and supply chain are moving towards an "outside-in" (co-creation) view. In the traditional concept of the process of value creation, consumers are "outside the firm" and the market enables value exchange and extraction. Today, informed, networked, empowered and active consumers are increasingly co-creating value with firms. The interaction between the firm and the consumer is becoming the locus of value creation and value extraction. As value shifts from products, to services and experiences, the market becomes a forum for conversation and interactions between consumers and firms. Products can be commoditized but co-creation experiences cannot be (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Therefore, research has to consider the interaction of various stakeholders in order to better understand the phenomenon of co-creation.

Implication 2 - co-evolution of marketing and supply chain practices means integration between demand creation and demand fulfilment. As the primary purpose of firms is to make profits, two very essential activities needing effective management practices are demand creation (marketing) and demand fulfilment (supply chain management). The creation of demand is achieved by marketing activity, reflected in marketing spending. Procter and Gamble alone accounts for USD7.9 billions of marketing spend in global media. The creation of demand has to be supported by the fulfilment of demand. Demand fulfilment has been traditionally the role for logistic, production and purchasing activities. These activities are now put together as supply chain management. Some of the successful firms today such as Wal-Mart and Procter & Gamble are supported by advanced supply chain management. Morash and Lynch (2002) suggest how supply chain and marketing can be integrated to assist multinationals to succeed in international business – with different combinations of supply chain and marketing strategies being required together with cross functional processes forming the basis of integrated activity (Srivastava et al. 1999). The need for integrating demand creation and demand fulfilment very much supports the need for research on demand chain management.

Implication 3 - the need for managing a portfolio of management practices. Management practices are more than the attributes of the top manager; they are part of organizational structure and behaviour of the firm, typically evolving slowly over time even as managers come and go (Bloom and van Reenen, 2005). New practices of management are created, adopted and replaced quicker then before. Practices of management from different functions and firms are also getting more and more interdependent. Instead, what seems to be lacking is the building of theory that explains the evolution of management practice. What practitioners are struggling with today is the uncoordinated evolution of new management practices in different functional departments and related firms. In other words, firms need to deliberately and carefully manage their portfolios of management practices as firstly, even a local firm today may soon be competing in a global environment. Somehow firms need to create better practices of management faster in order to stay ahead in the competition. Thus, firms can manage their portfolio of management practices by the selective creation, adoption, adaptation or blending of management practices. The question is how such research can be conducted if firms have not explicitly identified their portfolios of management practices.

Implication 4 - research on management practice needs theory development. Management is what managers are seen to do. So, observation is prior to theorizing. Practice invoked theory; theory in turn illuminates practice. For theory to be relevant it must relate to and guide practice. The practice of management needs theoretical explanation so that effective solutions to managerial problems can be prescribed. New ideas must supersede what has gone before and replace the existing conventional wisdom. Observing the evolution of management practices needs time and access to business firms. Furthermore, while new practices have been adopted the old practices do not necessarily disappear, but they might be embedded into the new practices.

Conclusion

This article suggests that marketing and supply chain practices are co-evolving. Originating from the study of ecology, the concept of co-evolution denotes the fact that evolutionary changes in one species are a response to changes in other species with which it interacts. In earlier times marketing became more distinct from other functional areas such as purchasing and logistics with which it was originally associated. The co-evolution of marketing and supply chain practices becomes more apparent and interdependent as the economy transforms from production- and sales-orientation towards marketing- and service-dominated (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This co-evolution happens as firms integrate their key functions and develop a set of management practices to compete more effectively.

As business practice evolve from an “inside-out” to an “outside-in” and “co-creation” view, marketing and supply chain practices have to be re-combined to adapt to the changing social-economical environment. Therefore the firm or network management practices should be researched from a portfolio rather than functional perspective. It may be fruitful to use “co-evolution theory” as a framework of analysis to study how firms manage their portfolio of marketing, supply chain and other practices. This is consistent with the IMP perspective that views firms as being within a network of relationships, the practices we discuss being a finer grained analysis of those relationships.

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