

MOTIVATION AS RESOURCE ALLOCATION: MARKETING SCIENCE AND QOL

Preview of "Marketing, Ethics, and Quality of Life"

This paper is about two topics that marketing authors have neglected, motivation and resource allocation. Although the topics are pivotal to understanding marketing as an activity and to the science of marketing, resource allocation has received virtually no attention; such treatment as marketing authors have given to motivation brings little to the subject that is not available elsewhere. Significant for the present discussion, a connection between motivation and resource allocation, which is the essence of a marketing perspective on motivation, has not been developed.

Viewed from a macromarketing perspective, the marketing concept -- "Make what the customer wants to buy is a strategy for bringing producers under the influences that users experience. Agents for the ultimate user, producers are to make the goods/services that users would want to make for themselves. To give effect to this notion, producers must find a way to stand where users stand, appreciate the influences that affect users, and put technology to work to produce goods and services that make the adjustments users want to make. It is marketers' particular contribution to the productive enterprise to be the intermediaries between users and producers -- representing contexts of use to producers and then communicating back, to targeted prospects, the availability of goods and services that have been designed for their circumstances. This means that, with marketers as intermediaries, the conditions that allocate users' resources to doing whatever they do should also affect the way producers allocate their resources.

How are we to conceptualize the conditions that allocate users' resources or, more generally, that direct the expenditure of human resources? Psychologists have included directing behavior within the purview of the construct of motivation but they also speak of other constructs, mainly learning, attitude,

and schema, as having directive properties. Accordingly, it is necessary to be clear in what sense motivation is said to be directing. Under the heading of learning, psychologists study how organisms acquire information about the significance of things in their environment or, more broadly, what goes with what. In some usages, schema refers to the representation of such learning in the structure of the individual. The construct of attitude generally represents individuals' tendencies to approach or withdraw from objects, other people, or ideas. Such tendencies may be innate, or acquired by a process studied under the heading of learning. In contrast, the construct of motivation represents the contemporaneous conditions that determine value in particular circumstances or, stated otherwise, that specify what will be reinforcing (Fennell 1980). Contemporaneous conditions comprise a wide range of phenomena, personal and environmental including, but not limited to, the information individuals possess about the kinds and significance of things present in the environment, and their attitudes towards those things. What individuals value in particular circumstances is something that they believe or hope will help them to obtain a kind of outcome they desire, specifically, an outcome they would use their resources to obtain. Motivation, then, can be said to represent, in particular instances, personal and environmental systems intersecting to allocate an individual's resources

My plan for this paper is first to consider the psychological process of allocating an individual's resources, then to discuss the extent to which the domain of motivation coincides with that of resource allocation, and finally to consider the nature of marketing's role as a channel by which the conditions that allocate the resources of individuals affect the way producers allocate

Throughout, I intend "what" to mean "the kind of thing" i.e., a particular class of event/stimulus, rather than a specific representative of the class. The purview of "motivation" extends only to determining essential attributes of what is valued. Other constructs are needed to represent the conditions that determine which particular objects/events are desired in the case under study.

their resources. Intimately involved in how society allocates its resources to creating goods/services, marketing scientists affect the quality of individual lives and must ask: Are we part of a problem or part of a solution?

ALLOCATING RESOURCES

To begin, we assume that the individual has resources to allocate. organism is alive, apparently healthy, and functioning normally. Included among its resources are time, energy and physiological processes, the ability to process, store, and retrieve information and to act i.e., to use bodily movements to effect change in the relationship between the individual and environment. From consideration herein, we exclude disposing of resources not normally susceptible to voluntary control. Tasks that are susceptible to voluntary control include those that bear on individuals' staying alive and in good health, participating in various social systems, perpetuating the species, learning about, rendering predictable, and gaining control over their world, and finding rest and renewal. The process of allocating individuals' resources is mainly effected in two ways, by means of: 1) Activating change, which interrupts ongoing behavior and raises the issue of effecting some adjustment, and 2) Automated routines. We regard activating change as the more basic and examine it now in the context of a behavioral episode.

BEHAVIORAL EPISODE: CHANGE - COUNTERCHANGE(?) - LEARNING

There are different ways to cut into the behavioral stream. With resource allocation as the focus of interest, it is useful to consider a behavioral episode that begins with an activating change and that further consists of attempted counterchange and learning. Briefly, a change occurs in some aspect of the relationship between individual and environment that presents itself as a characteristic quality of consciousness signifying, minimally, Attend! Attempted counterchange may take various forms including the individual's evaluating the changed conditions and finding their nature to be such that no further

change is necessary (cf "benign reappraisal," Lazarus 1968). Otherwise, depending on whether or not the individual has experienced similar circumstances before, actions for making an adjustment may present themselves along with the interruption; if so, the individual selects one and envisages using it to make the adjustment and, judging it worth the effort, attempts to act; if performed, the individual evaluates the outcome, assessing the extent to which the desired adjustment has been achieved. In any event, learning occurs in that the out-

of performing such an act in such circumstances is stored. If the desired adjustment has not been achieved, the individual may select some other action and try again, or evaluate/reevaluate the importance (e.g., actual or potential harmfulness) of the activating conditions. Many variants of the preceding narrative may be generated by changing one's assumptions about, for example, the previous experience of the individual, the degree to which the present environment is the same as before, and the individual's information about relevant aspects of the environment. They include, significantly, cases where the individual is not able to identify what is discomfitting or, knowing that, which kinds of actions would deal with what is causing his/her discom- or knowing that, whether or not such actions are believed to be, or are in fact, possible in the immediate environment

For present purposes, however, the main point we emphasize is that individuals are equipped with a behavioral mechanism for making adjustments appropriate to their structure. A characteristic quality of consciousness interrupts behavior and remains in effect, reallocating the individual's resources -- of time, thought, and action until the interruption has been dealt with.

ACTIVATING CHANGE

A complex organism must be equipped with a mechanism that is capable of interrupting ongoing behavior in order to reallocate resources in line with changing environmental conditions. Such an interruptive process is sometimes

discussed in the context of environmental threats to life and limb but it is useful also in two other contexts: To enable the individual to avail of threatening opportunities that the environment may provide at any time, and to ensure that the individual obtains potentially relevant information available in the environment. As scientists trying to understand the interrupting process, there are different kinds of questions we may ask, including how the process: (1) Does its job so far as an experiencing individual is concerned, and (2) May be hypothesised to work i.e., including information that may not be available to the actor. It is important to keep separate the 'as lived' theoretical perspectives, since much confusion in the domain of cognition and affect and regarding motivation itself traces to failing to distinguish the two vantage points (e.g., Lazarus 1981, Zajonc 1980). Compared to other domains of psychological inquiry, the topic of interrupting ongoing behavior renders self-evident the need to address the 'as lived' perspective. A mechanism for redirecting resources from their current domain to some other could scarcely be regarded as fully explored without studying how interruption and redirection present themselves in subjective experience. Moreover, we may expect to deepen our understanding of the entire process by reflecting on what we learn in light of alternative ways in which interruption and redirection could conceivably present themselves in subjective experience.

Theoretical Perspective : Hypothesised Interrupting Mechanism

Activating change consists of two main components: a) The occurrence of significant (i.e., that may require an adjustment to be made) change in some aspect of the relationship between individual and environment, and b) A means of introducing into the individual's ongoing behavioral stream the fact that significant change has occurred. "Significant" may be defined for the species as a whole e.g., a moving object in peripheral vision and, more broadly, thing capable of producing an orienting reflex, or in relation to the circum-

stances of an individual life. More substantively, significant change may be stated as change beyond some threshold in the value or patterning of a physical variable or change in perceived self-relevance or nature of perceived self-relevance of some event.

As regards introducing the occurrence of significant change into the behavioral stream, if the species is highly adaptable its individuals need a mechanism that permits them to reflect in their own structure the threats and opportunities of their immediate environment. This means that the significance for the individual of classes of events should be registered in the individual's structure and the occurrence of an instance of a significant class should be able to divert attention to itself, overriding whatever allocation of behavioral resources is ongoing. For this to occur, we must be equipped with the capacity to carry out preattentive processing that identifies significance in environmental stimuli. The process must be such that a wide range of events can acquire the ability to interrupt. In fact, there seems to be no reason to deny, a priori, to any class of event the ability to participate in interrupting ongoing behavior. Taking over from evolution and learning by experience, it is for our institutions, specifically, science and culture, to sensitize us to the presence of whatever threats and opportunities our environment holds.

"As Lived" Perspective

How an individual whose behavior is thus being interrupted actually experiences such a process is a separate issue to which we now turn. The effective mechanism of interruption is the presence in consciousness of a characteristic emotional state comprising unpleasant affect and a cognitive component that signifies: Attend! or, This state must be ended!. Although we hypothesize that the presence of this characteristic state in consciousness is always associated with some significant change in the relationship between individual and environment, the nature of that change may not be accessible to the indivi-

dual. Accordingly, there is an asymmetry in our account of the interrupting mechanism as-lived, relative to its theoretical counterpart. Interruption is defined by the presence of its characteristic emotional state, whether or not the reason for the state's existence is accessible in consciousness

When they are accessible in consciousness, the reasons may include poor conditions for receiving sensory information so that, for example, the individual is in doubt about what letters or sounds are impinging on the sensory receptors; the sensory information may not be in question but, absent contextual information or, because of its amount and heterogeneity, the meaning may be ambiguous; meaning may be unambiguous but may conflict with existing information or with the individual's general or specific expectations (cf Berlyne's [1960] collative variables); meaning may be unambiguous but its self-relevance be in question. In such cases, to the experiencing individual the task of trying to obtain more information may overshadow the accompanying state of unpleasant affect. In other circumstances, what is salient is one's awareness of being uncomfortable, with (e.g., hunger, cold) or without (e.g., anxiety), a clear sense of the reason. Accordingly, as lived, sometimes interruption is more obviously a cognitive than an affective experience; when affect is salient, the substantive reason may or may not be readily accessible to the individual. In other words, depending on the nature of the interruption, the unpleasant affective tone, or some sensory-perceptual or cognitive task may be more salient

Daydreaming and "Instinct" as Models for Resource Allocation

It can be instructive to speculate about alternative ways in which a resource-allocating mechanism, as experienced, could have been designed. For example, it could operate by simply changing our focus of attention, as in daydreaming. A mechanism that operates by means of interruptive emotion i.e., an unmistakable quality of experience that says: "Put an end to this," is

more flexible than one that presents some substantive domain for passive attention. If the interruptive mechanism were such that it operated by presenting substantive domains in imagination, it would be of limited usefulness in circumstances where the individual's immediate task may be to obtain more information or transform existing information. In species whose behavior is largely instinctual, we can only speculate whether "instinct" operates in the manner in which we experience daydreaming, or automatized action, or yet otherwise

AUTOMATIZED ACTION

Besides interruption, resource allocation may be effected in the form of automatized behavioral routines. There are at least two reasons why we should be equipped with a mechanism that renders resource allocation automatic. The argument from efficiency states that from the point of conserving one's resour-

if there are going to be recurring instances of a broadly similar nature, it is desirable to set up a procedure that goes into effect when needed and that makes demands on focal attention only in special circumstances. The argument from efficiency receives support from more humane considerations. If the resource-allocating mechanism operates by instating unpleasant affect i.e., discomfort -- a state individuals dislike and would end, we should expect them to hope they would not need to experience it too often. In this light, automa- routines not only conserve one's resources but spare individuals from occasion-by-occasion discomfort. Once in place, routines are maintained by interrupting emotion that occurs only if the individual omits, or contemplates omitting, the automatized sequence.

Resource Allocation and Free Will

The resource-allocating processes I describe are automatic mainly in two respects: a) They bring up substantive aspects of the environment to be attended to and possibly adjusted; b) They lead to the emergence of automatized actions. Some people may be interested in the implications of these two kinds

of automaticity for the concept of "free will."

a) Activation of a Dormant System. The mere fact that individuals are equipped with a process operating outside their immediate control that automatically allocates resources to a particular substantive domain would seem to offer no challenge to the notion of "free will." Being equipped with such a process can only be advantageous to an individual conferring, as it does, the ability to do two things at once -- pursue a focal task or interest while keeping watch for significant events in one's environment. Such an automatic process helps to clarify a sense in which individuals may choose the situation in which they act, a position that some authors have emphasized in the so-called person-situation debate (e.g., Bowers 1972, Snyder 1983). Some stimulus characteristics (e.g., Berlyne's "collative" variables) that interrupt ongoing behavior probably affect in similar fashion all people, or all within a particular culture. Others (e.g., Berlyne's affective variables) are likely to be differentially effective depending on an individual's history. In the case of such affective variables, individuals may be said to "choose" the situations in which they consider acting

In contrast, the extent to which individuals are considered to have "free will" is usually an issue in circumstances where they appear to have choice. In the present context, some of these are: At the point where, upon experiencing interruption, and reevaluating the interrupting conditions, the individual decides no further attention or any action is warranted; or accepting that the conditions warrant further attention and possibly action, proceeds to consider and choose among adjustive options, eventually deciding that action is, or is not, worth its cost, or that more candidate actions must first be generated. It is clear that in making such decisions and choices we bring to bear parts of what we are -- parts of our resources of information, belief, time, of our abilities to reason, to see analogies and connections, to use converging and

diverging kinds of analysis and, from the totality of what we know and believe to select certain considerations as being relevant to the focal decision. In doing this our "freedom" is at least bounded by the limits of what we can do with what we have available within ourselves. Within those limits, two kinds of question arise: a) What does it mean to ask, whether or not, or the extent to which we are free i.e., what are some operational definitions of "freedom"? b) Are policy considerations independent of resolving debate on the existence of "free will"? Either way, is society obliged to make individuals understand that some kinds of choices or outcomes, should they become publicly known, will incur its disapproval; i.e., that it holds individuals accountable, and will express its disapproval in the form of unpleasant consequences for individuals who disregard its view of order?

b) Automatized Actions. Automatization presumably arises in a variety of ways including, as prototypical cases, imitating actions and views that the individual observes in others e.g., in one's family, circle of friends, or culture, and custom-tailoring to the circumstances of individual lives through repeated encounters. Routinized action has implications for the actor's autonomy in that, to the extent it is present in significant aspects of a life, individual is abdicating choice to unexamined contingencies. However efficient within the ecology of an individual life, the behavioral fact of automatized sequences points to the ever-present need for critical reflection as a personal and a societal imperative. It suggests we should cultivate a welcoming attitude to the sometimes irritating commentary of quirky individuals who challenge accepted ways.

MOTIVATION

Here I want to consider some implications of subsuming, under motivation, aspects of resource allocation that I have discussed above. Since motivation has usually been thought of in relation to action, my proposal is poten-

tially controversial only in respect of resource allocation that becomes mani-
in action minimally or not at all i.e., that takes the form of information
processing primarily. We may distinguish two categories of such information
processing: a) Directed to reducing ambiguity e.g., improving the quality of
sensory information, and nonautomatic processing for meaning and personal
reference, including instances where the individual, upon reappraising infor-
mation that seemed threatening initially, concludes that further resources need
not be allocated; b) Directed to generating, constructing, and judging the
relative appropriateness and costworthiness of, candidate actions.

Three lines of argument favor making motivation coextensive with resource
allocation. First, restricting motivation's scope to instances where action
is observed is arbitrary. It is defensible, if at all, only in the context of
exigencies of doing research with lower animals. Psychologically speaking,
much good stuff occurs that is not observable in the form of action. Humans
intend to act in a certain way and are prevented from doing so by events beyond
their control or ken. The intervention of nonpsychological systems to thwart
an individual's intentions does not place outside the pale of scientific inte-
rest the psychological processes that are thus cut short. Second, recurringly
over the years, psychologists have challenged motivation's right to a place
among psychology's constructs. Perhaps more often in regard to motivation than
any other, psychologists have claimed that the construct is unnecessary. Moti-
vation's susceptibility to such attacks likely traces to the influence of those
who arbitrarily propose that the question of a construct of motivation arises,
if at all, only in the context of action. The proper domain of the motivatio-
nal construct becomes visible in the context of resource allocation. Moreo-
a construct that represents the contemporaneous conditions that allocate
individuals' resources, is not readily susceptible to challenges to its existe-
Motivation may be seen as significantly implicated in the process by

which an individual monitors and adjusts the relationship between its various systems and environmental systems. Such a perspective permits us to see action in what I take to be its essential role as one means of effecting adjustments in the relationship between individual and environment. We may consider the possibilities that adjustments can be made without resorting to action and that many attempted adjustments never emerge in the form of action.

Third, for marketers, charged as we are with helping producers make what individuals would make for themselves, only a definition of motivation is appropriate that facilitates our studying human resource allocation whether manifest in action or not. Indeed, a significant aspect of our contribution may occur in regard to those instances where human resource allocation fails to emerge in the form of action. It is for us to ensure that the productive enterprise makes readily available the means of making such adjustments as individuals want to make.

MARKETING, RESOURCE ALLOCATION, AND QUALITY OF LIFE

Marketing's role derives from the fact that, a long time ago, individuals and society made certain decisions that affect how we use our resources. We decided to seek help from inanimate objects, animals, and other humans. We decided to make tools, domesticate animals, and divide up tasks among us by creating specialists. One outcome today is that producers may make things they never use or have occasion to use. Accordingly, society and business need specialists whose job it is to ensure that resources are not committed except where producers have substantial grounds for believing they are responding to characteristics of actual occasions of use. Marketers are the specialists in question. Our job is to understand the conditions that allocate human resources i.e., the conditions that result in activating change, so that appropriate means of effecting counterchange are available. It is our job to investigate and present to producers the characteristics of contexts of use so that users

may have available goods/services appropriate to the adjustments -- to the counterchanges -- they want to make.

People have resources to spend and they must and will spend them whether they live in a forest in the stone age, are marooned on Robinson's Crusoe's island, devote a lifetime to replacing light bulbs in a twentieth century New York city skyscraper, or to dancing in the corps de ballet at the Bolshoi

I invite my colleagues in marketing to consider whether, regarding the quality of life, the discipline of marketing is part of the problem or of the solution: 1) What have marketing scientists done to implement our assignment as intermediaries between users and producers, to represent resource-allocating conditions as they affect prospective users, to facilitate communicating those conditions to producers, specifically, to people with technological expertise

all with a view to ensuring that limited resources are used to best advantage in responding to the actual characteristics of contexts of use? 2) What steps have marketing scientists taken to identify the strengths and weaknesses of our present arrangements for the production of goods/services, to describe and assess other systems, to propose alternative systems, discussing in detail how they might be put into operation? As some wise person has said: If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem. What do marketing scientists point to as our contribution to the solution?

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