

# Macromarketing as a Multidimensional Concept

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*Editor's Note: Shelby Hunt's comments to follow are adapted from his 1977 Macromarketing Seminar discussion of his award winning paper, "The Nature and Scope of Marketing" which appeared in the Journal of Marketing, July 1976.*

Most of the comments and observations have been offered by participants of the Macro-Marketing Conference

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concerning my paper, "The Nature and Scope of Marketing" (Hunt 1976). Focus has been on the "three dichotomies" model: micro/macro, positive/normative, and profit sector/nonprofit sector. The following discussion of the micro/macro dichotomy summarizes objections

raised to the *Journal of Marketing* article and attempts to resolve differences.

*The micro/macro dichotomy is ambiguous. There appears to be no clear criterion for separating "micro" from "macro."*

I agree that of the three dichotomies proposed to organize the total scope of marketing, the micro/macro one is probably the most ambiguous. Drawing upon the distinction between microeconomics and macroeconomics, the original paper distinguishes between micro-marketing and macro-marketing on the basis of aggregation: *Micro* referred to the marketing activities of individual units (firms and consumers or households), while *macro* referred to a higher level of aggregation, either marketing systems or groups of consumers. However, topics like "does marketing have special social responsibilities?" would not fit the macro label on the basis of a level of aggregation criterion. Given that most marketers desire to classify topics similar to the "social responsibilities" issue as *macro*, how should the specification of *macro* be modified?

The conclusion of the conference seemed to focus on an "internalities vs. externalities" classification. That is, micro-marketing focuses on the internal marketing interests of firms, whereas macro-marketing focuses on the interests of society concerning marketing activities. Such a specification would then include topics like "social responsibilities," efficiency, productivity, and whether "the poor pay more." And this is all to the good.

However, such a specification by itself would not encompass items such as the legal aspects of marketing, comparative marketing, or power relationships in channels of distribution. None of these topics necessarily focuses on the "interests of society"; yet many marketers would like to include them under the rubric of macro because the topics are very different from *micro* issues like how do (or should) firms determine their advertising budgets. Therefore an "interests of society" criterion is not sufficient.

I propose that macro-marketing is a multi-dimensional construct and that a complete specification would (should) include the following:

Macro-marketing refers to the study of (1) marketing systems, (2) the impact and consequence of marketing systems on society, and (3) the impact and consequence of society on marketing systems.

Criterion (1) is a level of aggregation criterion which allows the inclusion of topics like comparative marketing, the institutional structure of marketing and power relationships in channels of distribution. Criterion (2) is a generalized "interests of society" criterion which brings in items like "social responsibilities" and the role of marketing in economic development. Criterion (3) recognizes that society impacts on marketing and would include topics like the legal aspects of marketing and the consequences on marketing of different political and social value systems.