An Inaugural Commentary for the Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship

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Abstract: The Author considers the rationale for the integration of entrepreneurship and marketing and how that should better inform us all as academics and practitioners. The argument is that not only are marketing and entrepreneurship fundamental business disciplines but that they are intertwined and consistent one with the other.

Marketing and entrepreneurship largely determines the fate of entrepreneurs and SMEs around the world - their success, their growth, and their profitability. And the creation of employment by SMEs is the economic engine driving the global quality of life. It is only appropriate, therefore, that a research journal be created to encourage the generation of new knowledge at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface. Although I announced that such a Journal would be launched several years ago, it was premature. My market research at the time concerning journal purchase intention yielded only lukewarm results. It is perhaps ironic in an entrepreneurship context, however, that measuring purchase intentions, much less creating a sales forecast for “new to the world” products and ventures, are fraught with inaccuracies. But we waited for the window of opportunity to open more widely in parallel with the growth of interest in the subject. David Carson and I continued to fully support the launch of this Journal, but this first issue would not exist if not for the entrepreneurial passion, extensive work, commitment and persistence of John Day and Paul Reynolds. The marketing/entrepreneurship research community must give enormous credit to them for the creation of this journal. Now to the fundamental rationale for this new publication.

Research has shown that venture capitalists often see marketing as the most highly rated success factor in new enterprises, along with the management team and financing. The recognition and evaluation of market opportunities, combined with their strategic and tactical pursuit, are at the heart of entrepreneurial success. This is indisputable.
It has also become evident that as the largest corporations downsize and reengineer, they are seeking the entrepreneurial behaviour of successful SMEs. It was widely assumed in academia, even five years ago, that SMEs just required a simplified version of the more 'sophisticated' marketing practices used by the largest companies. Now it is apparent that marketing is often fundamentally different and more successful in SMEs than in large firms. This is partly because marketing implementation is often more important to success than planning and strategy.

What some may not consider, however, is that marketing and entrepreneurship are also an integral part of the world history that has unfolded before our eyes. Numerous countries in Latin America, Asia and Europe are for the first time fully embracing the market system. Inherent in the system is a marketing philosophy and entrepreneurial spirit that has contributed to many millions of new business births.

Marketing and entrepreneurship can each be viewed as fundamental philosophies - ways of seeing and responding to the business world. Studies have shown that these orientations are intertwined and consistent with one another. Yet they are too often not combined. Overwhelmingly, marketing books today still teach planning and analysis for large corporations rather than the dynamic process which intermixes entrepreneurs’ qualitative and insightful comprehension of a marketplace with good judgment and action.

This new journal provides a refreshing and landmark change by bridging the marketing discipline with the entrepreneurship field. Marketing is treated as the externally oriented and dynamic function that it truly represents. Good marketing is inherently entrepreneurial. It is coping with uncertainty, assuming calculated risks, being proactive and offering customers attractive innovations relative to competitors. And good entrepreneurship is inherently marketing oriented. A customer focus by everyone in the enterprise is a way of life. And the implementation of marketing strategies that generate customer satisfaction is essential to survival.

'Small business', from a research perspective, is quite simply the enterprise size variable. Entrepreneurship is at least partly represented by the early stages of the business life cycle. But to begin to fully understand SMEs and entrepreneurship, we must study many related variables such as few, if any, economies of scale, severe resource constraints, a limited geographic market presence, a limited market image, little brand loyalty or market share, little specialized management expertise, decision making under even more imperfect information conditions than in larger firms, a sheer scarcity of time per major management task, and a mixture of personal, non-maximizing financial goals.
Just as a child is not a little adult, a new venture or SME is not a little Fortune 500 firm. In firms where several of these conditions exist, one could expect that the marketing function could both be viewed differently and performed differently than in larger firms.

It has been observed that, several decades ago, marketing teaching had a more entrepreneurial focus in recognition of the uncertainties inherent in coping with customer and competitive environments. But there has been very little research regarding marketing and entrepreneurship, including new ventures, since the inception of the Journal of Marketing in the 1930s. Three related bodies of literature, however, include new product research, diffusion of innovation studies, and marketing strategy writing.

The entrepreneurship field began to evolve substantially only in the 1970s, although considerable progress has been made. And then the first research meeting on marketing and entrepreneurship was held in 1982, with the first annual University of Illinois at Chicago/American Marketing Association Research Symposium on Marketing and Entrepreneurship in 1987. Thirteen volumes have appeared since then, including a major book on research opportunities for faculty and PhD students (1). An Entrepreneurial School of Marketing Thought is evolving which could fundamentally change the way we understand marketing.

This journal will be seen as an important historical contribution because it is the first to integrate the unique knowledge that interrelates entrepreneurship and marketing into a form for use by professors and students. There will be many important perspectives, conceptualizations, and outright practical and useful methods never before presented. The very concept of entrepreneurial marketing is a major contribution to marketing and entrepreneurship thought. So it is with entrepreneurial spirit and optimism that we launch this new journal!

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