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**TOWARD THE GENERAL THEORY OF MARKETING:
THE STATE OF THE ART AND ONE MORE APPROACH**

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In this paper the author has reviewed in brief advances and obstacles met on the way of the marketing thought to construct the general theory of marketing. The attention, in considerable part, is focused on understanding general theory of marketing in Russia. Based on analysis of the most important works, made by Western scholars in the field of marketing, the conclusions highlighting a huge work as well as its incompleteness is made. The original classification schemes designed by well-known Western marketing scholars are estimated as the approaches to the general theory of marketing only. The hypotheses concerning a need to use a deductive approach supported by positive instruments of Marxist political economy was formulated. The author has made the conclusion the kit of tools for designing the general theory of marketing is to be added by an analytical knowledge extracted from exact sciences. Finally, a holistic model of emphatically-communicative approach to building general theory of marketing, applicable, to the author's opinion, to putting in order partial marketing theories (sub-theories) and arranging well-focused theoretical studies in this field of marketing science.

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Introduction

Attempts to create the general theory of marketing have a history of more than three quarters of a century and are directly connected to another, already sacral question of the mid-late 1940s [*Converse*]: Is marketing a science? The most accessible source in Russia summing up several decades of this discussion is the well known work of Michael Sarena translated into Russian [*Сарен*] which, in turn, carries the beginning of this discussion on a more active level to 1948 [*Alderson & Cox, R.; Brown*]. The fact a set of fundamental works of marketing thought is translated into Russian is highlighted especially due to one of goals of the present paper: to show interests as well as possibilities of Russian marketing community to get easy to fundamental marketing works, be well-informed, and make their own conclusions. In our opinion, a couple of questions, — “Is marketing a science?” and “The general theory of marketing, does it exist?” — closely connected together cannot be attributed to pure scholasticism in any way. Quite the contrary, they have methodological value as the marketing empirics today has become an integral part of not only business, but also of the socio-political life of the modern society. This fact, in our opinion, indicates the presence of general laws and patterns that governs the society movement in various social subsystems. Just as there is a place for development of the general theory of systems that was initiated by the works of A.A.Bogdanova [*Богданов*] and L.Von Bertalanfi [*Берталанфи*], there is a place for the general theory of marketing. The latter we see as a special scientific and logical methodological concept of behavioral research of the subjects that constitute marketing systems and subsystems which, in turn, form a phenomenon of the global marketing environment [*Черенков, 2003a*]. Understanding the importance of this methodological task, especially under conditions of intensive development of the paradigm of the new marketing theory which relies on the marketing logic of the service dominant [*Vargo & Lusch*], there is a danger to lose the important groundwork of the past. For that very reason, we decided to refresh our past experience [*Черенков, 2003b*] that had not received, to author’s regret, the expected response in due time.

The “General Theory” of Marketing in Russia with Short References to the Western Thought

As of today, we rather modestly evaluate the Russian experiences of creation of the general theory of marketing as exclusively nominal and short-term, and, in effect imperceptible and even inadequate to the seman-

tics of the term «the general theory»; or, as natural scientists put it: existing somewhere at the level of statistical error. We make this statement and we consider it well-grounded, in spite of imprudently optimistic statements of obvious dilettantes in the marketing theory. For example, « the General theory of marketing is *in details developed in the works of domestic [our italics — V.Ch.] and foreign scholars (M.P.Afanasev, M.D.Valovaya, I.N.Gerchikova, E.P.Golubkov, E.N.Golubkova, V.E.Gordin, V.E.Demidov, P.S.Zavyalov, A.I.Kovalev, V.V.Vojtenko, A.N.Romanov, R.A.Farkhutdinov, V.E.Hrutsky, N.D, Eriashvilly, A.J.Udanov, T.Ambler, I.Ansoff, A.Weisman, M. Vitte, F.Kotler, ^a.Lamben, Lettau, M. McDonald, E.Dihtl, X.Hershgen, X. Shwalbe, J. Evans, B.Berman, etc.) and was created based on the experience of industrial production [our italics — V.Ch.] [Степанова]. Also, it does not contain any serious analysis of features of such specific area, as physical training and sports, which belongs, more than half of it, to the services area. ». This quotation travelling from one web-site to another (Internet domain .ru) and quoted, according to the most conservative estimates, in dozens of abstracts of thesis [e.g., Ананин, Бурлюкина] comes, apparently, from the only one source. We find it necessary to cite this quotation unmodified [Панкрухина]: “the general theory of marketing in details developed in the works of foreign scholars and translated in our country (Berman, B., Kotler, Ph., Lettau, G., Evans, J.R. and others) was created based on the experience of the developed free market countries and *is not adapted to modern domestic conditions* Also, it does not contain practically anything that can seriously analyze neither special features of the *transition period*, nor such delicate area as *education*» [our italics — V.Ch.]. The link traced herein between the said “general theory” and the “transition period” as well as the “education” in Russia seems to us doubtful and farfetched. Besides, the names of honorable marketing scholars are used not as real references but for a false fundamentality of the study.*

To be honest, there is almost nothing in the contemporary marketing theory not touched by the Guru of Marketing, Dr. Ph.Kotler mentioned above in the list of sources for the general theory of marketing. To tell the trust, Dr. Kotler had made some important notes concerning the nature of marketing could be applied to the general theory of marketing. For example, he with co-author [Kotler & Levy, 1969a] Kotler and Levy suggested to conceptualize marketing not as exchange but as a “universal process” and, a bit later, argued [Kotler & Levy, 1969b] that the “crux of marketing lies in a *general idea of exchange* rather than the narrower thesis of market transactions”. And, may be the most important statement for the future stem in the theory development is hidden here [ibid.]: “Exchange involves two (or

more) parties..., but organizations, individuals, and groups also market brands *non-reciprocally* [*our italics* — **V.Ch.**]. This inequality between parties of any exchange on the market is explained not only by differences in their market power, but rather a heterogeneity in the distribution of product and market (marketing) information between them. This heterogeneity is one of very important contributions to the emerging and maintaining of competitive advantage discovered in the frame of the theory of resource advantage [*Hodgson*], further developed as a theory of competition by Shelby Hunt and Robert Morgan [*& Morgan*] and, later, proposed and applied by Shelby Hunt to the building of the general theory of marketing [*Hunt, 2002, Ch.9.*].

We shall notice, that the scholars mentioned above have each made (in due time and in their countries) a contribution to the development of marketing. Certainly, by virtue of a much greater maturity of such social and economic phenomenon as marketing in the countries with free market economy, the contribution to the theory of marketing from foreign scholars (especially, those from American and Scandinavian schools of marketing) is substantially bigger. At the same time we shall notice, to save space and time, that the list of the distinguished scholars in the specified author's abstracts is more likely a tribute to a strange tradition, since their relation to the general theory of marketing, for the majority of them, is farfetched. For example, one of the most interesting scholars from the London school, Tim Ambler only cites Robert Bartels in one of the chapters (“Views of Elephant”) of the collective monograph “The Service-Dominant Logic of Marketing: Dialog, Debate, and Directions” [*Ambler, p.286*] concerning an opportunity to base the general theory of marketing on a new service paradigm, characteristic for the modern globalized world where commodities are treated only as means of carrying the services that represent true, or purified, value to the consumer.

Even, in the primary source of this "estimation" of the condition of the general theory of marketing [*Панкрухина*], although more reliable than in the dissertations of the cited above authors, the conclusion is not quite correct (especially in regards to translated books), and the statement, that the general theory of marketing “*is not adapted to modern domestic conditions*” [*our italics* — **V.Ch.**], provokes us to think again of what a general theory actually is. Therefore, for example, using the same logic, it would be necessary to reproach Albert Einstein that the general theory of relativity is not adapted to the conditions of Russia or China. We think that it is the general problem of social science in modern Russia. The essence of this problem is in certain negligence (and sometimes in misunderstanding) of the importance of methodology of any scientific research. Especially it

applies to such high matter as the general theory in any body of knowledge.

So, after publishing (with a delay of approximately 15 years) of the most fundamental works, devoted to the problems of development (*sic!*) of the general theory of marketing, accomplished by Jagdish Sheth with co-authors [*Sheth et all*] and Shelby Hunt [*Hunt, 2002*] where at a level of the highest academic standards, with full observance of historical and logic unity (obviously mentioned practically by all domestic dissertators!), scrupulously examine an enormous (probably, the fullest) array of the marketing literature relevant to the declared problem (almost 600 sources in the first work and about 700 in the second). Nevertheless, with good reason, the book of 1998 comes only to an optimistic appeal [*Sheth et all, p.202*]: “We hope our colleagues and future scholars will take up this challenge [*To create the general theory of marketing — В.Ч.*]. We also hope that the voyage through the history of marketing thought presented in this book will whet their appetites for development of a general theory of marketing”. Finally, the Hunt’s monograph [*Hunt, 2002*] is less optimistic. Acknowledging various contributions to the development of marketing theory, especially by the theory of resource advantages that includes the general theory of competition and key concepts of Alderson’s functionalistic theory, Shelby Hunt very cautiously names the last chapter of his monograph [*ibid., Ch.9.*], — ”Toward a general theory of marketing”, — explaining his decision to use such title for the chapter by the following [*ibid., p.285*]: « Why "toward" a general theory of marketing? Because much work needs to be done to further...». Finally, manifesting the general theory of marketing is still in agendum of marketing community, a volume of collected articles by Wroe Alderson and marketing scholars commenting his works was issued in 2006 [*A Twenty-First...*]. Recording the achievements and problems on the way to the general theory of marketing, many authors [*e.g., Hunt & Arnett*] concluded that that the theory of resource advantages, or R-A theory, by accommodating and integrating key concepts of Alderson’s theory of market processes, extends Alderson’s work and is, therefore, a step toward a general theory of marketing. Note, this is *a step only* but not a theory completed.

That is why, it is strange to see, against the background of this unsolved problem of theoretical marketing, brochures published in Russia [*e.g., Пичурин; Хабаров; Гречихин*] under a “proud” title “The general theory of marketing” [true, printed in a few of hundred copies only]. In principle, the desire of these authors for some generalization of their works can be understood and even can be connected with the names of courses traditionally offered in domestic higher school such as “General Physics”,

“General Chemistry” or « General Economics”. However, taking into account the increasing varieties of «marketings», — international, global, consumer, industrial, Internet (web), non-production sphere, services, church and so on, — probably, it is very important to have a fundamental discipline that would introduce a student to the world of marketing notions, concepts and theories. In this situation *particulars* (specifics of marketing in various areas of human life activities) can complicate an understanding *of the generalities* (essence of marketing processes). In the history of marketing, attempts have constantly been made to create the general theory of marketing. It was true said [Филипп...] Phillip Kotler has taken of a firm position in this respect, in believing that in each area there should be a foundation, and idea, where exactly "commodities exchange" should form the foundation or essence of marketing. In our opinion, there is a necessity of using some uniform category as "commodities exchange" for development of the general theory of marketing. In reference to the university course mentioned above, if the standard of "Fundamentals of Marketing » available now does not apply for any reasons, there is an old foreign experience: « Basic marketing » [e.g., *McCarthy*].

As the conclusion of our overview of the state of development and understanding of the general theory of marketing in modern Russia, we will cite the following extract that attempts to represent an example of modern vision of the problem [*Казачков и Казачкова*]. « Along with the spread of marketing, its adaptation to the Russian realities, there is an increase in requirements for development of concepts, technologies and systems of formation of the general marketing, especially in connection with the further spread of IT in the economy, innovations based on the deepening of scientific and technical progress within the third world innovative wave ... The development of the general theory of marketing takes place due to the use two sides of its system in various branches and fields — creative concepts and technologies based on innovative categories. As this takes place, creative concepts imply the use of modern psychological and psychophysical methods to mould a consumer behavior motives and choices with a purpose of increasing the level of their consumer satisfaction... Hence it appears a between the general and applied marketing, — referred to marketing use in a particular field, — looks as follows: general theory of marketing ↔ paradigm of a particular industry development ↔ applied marketing. This interdependence has not only direct, but also a reverse nature”. In our opinion, this exclusively extensive citation comprises all attributes necessary to prove eclectics and misunderstandings dominating in this field of marketing theory in Russia. It’s clear, how much is still to be done by Russian scholars in this area.

Selected Pillars for Building the General Theory of Marketing Abroad

Among the authors of many serious theoretical works pretended to become pillars of the general theory of marketing we would like to mention (except of and in addition to ones mentioned above) the following works because namely these works are under consideration in contemporary articles and encyclopedically written/compiled books touching and considering issues of the general theory of marketing. Indeed, we agree with the conclusion [Hunt, Muncy & Ray] that there have been several early and, might be, the most important attempts to develop a general theory of marketing undertaken by Alderson [Alderson, 1965], Bartels [Bartels, 1968], and El-Ansary [El-Ansary, 1979].

Firstly, Alderson and Cox demanded [Alderson & Cox, p.148] that a comprehensive approach to a theory of marketing “would need to meet several tests: (1) It should give promise of serving the variety of needs that have created the current interest in marketing theory. (2) It should be able to draw in a comprehensive way upon the starting points for theory already available in the literature... (3) It should provide a consistent theoretical perspective for the study of all the major classes of significant entities in marketing”.

Then, Robert Bartels, which works could be estimated as one of three main pillars for building the general theory of marketing” had concluded about forty years ago [Bartels, 1970, p.253.]: “(1) that management behavior, incorporating both economics and social technology, is an ultimate focus of marketing theory; (2) that the roots of marketing theory are in the cultural context of society; and (3) that the structure of a theory includes components which reflect, among other things, the viewpoint of the particular theorist.” He suggested constructing a general theory of marketing as the sum of seven areas of research [*ibid.*, p.73]: (1) theory of social initiative; (2) theory of economic (market) separations; (3) theory of market roles, expectations, interactions; (4) theory of flows and systems; (5) theory of behavior constraints; (6) theory of social change and marketing evolution; and (7) theory of social control of marketing. Good classification of related to marketing activities used that time, but without an effective means to integrate them.

Finally, El-Ansary proposed that, by definition, the general theory of marketing should be the “broadest theory” explaining marketing phenomena. Besides, the general theory of marketing should be the “central theory” or metatheory above all other theories, and should “logically integrate” all other theories in marketing. As a result, again, El-Ansary did not

design a general theory of marketing, but he proposed an outline composed of sub theories based on the following fields: (1) consumer behavior, (2) organizational buyer behavior, (3) interorganizational management, (4) channel member behavior, (5) channel system behavior, (6) channel institutions, (7) micromarketing, (8) macromarketing, and (9) strategic marketing. Not too difficult to understand that an integration of the said sub-theories is the sophisticated task.

In the final analysis, basing oneself on the relevant to the main subject of the present paper outputs extracted from three relatively recent fundamental studies [*Sheth et al., 1988; Hunt, 2002; A Twenty-First...*, 2006], they could conclude: (1) the general theory of marketing attracts interests of marketing scholars; (2) combined sets of reasonable and adequate marketing sub-theories are proposed; (3) means to integrate the said sub-theories is not invented; and (4) a thesis about necessity of the general theory of marketing is accepted by the marketing community till today.

We would like to conclude this section by a couple of attempt to construct the general theory of marketing that seem to be somewhere on the periphery of marketing theory discussions. First of them is known as “Hierarchical General Theory in Marketing” [*Botzman & Konopa*] and second — “General Theory of Marketing” [*Linn*].

The work by Botzman and Konopa, where they have made an interesting comparative analysis of approaches, principles, and achievements in designing general theories in the field of natural and social sciences, permits to state that a general theory of marketing has a possibility to be designed. Studying sense and scope of the Einstein’s general theory of relativity and related partial theories, — special theory of relativity, classical Newtown’s mechanics and the set of Maxwell’s laws for electromagnetic fields, — they have proved this statement. Commenting this set of related partial theories in the frame of the general theory of relativity Gilbert Churchill said [*Churchill*] that a general theory simply represents the theory composed from partial theories being proved under specific restricting conditions. The very important to underpin our own point of view is their conclusion [*Botzman & Konopa*] that “a general theory framework could be designed to be used in the future to assemble the general theory as far as one can design partial theories”. Confirming their hierarchical approach Botzman and Konopa demonstrated examples of theoretical hierarchies not only in the field of natural but social sciences: (1) political sciences: monarchy, set of legislative, executive, and legal powers; (2) sociology: leadership, followership; (3) biology: highest and simplest forms of life; (4) organizational theory: by-product arranged structures; (5) physics: general theory of relativity; (6) theory of materials: composites, natural polymers.

Botzman and Konopa, — supporting their approach to building the core of the general theory of marketing, — have used a set of concepts formulated previously by other scholars: (1) “marketing as a total social science” [Dholakia et al.]; (2) models of marketing channels [El-Ansary]; and (3) ‘exchange’ [Cunningham]. The latter is accepted by us as the central point of the approach to be presented herein later.

Carl-Eric Linn, Sweden management consultant-freelancer, might be not so well noticeable on the background of gurus and stars of marketing theory. However, his “exchange-value approach” [Linn] seems to us as deserving consideration hereto. Having defined the marketing in a bit obsolete traditional way, — ”Marketing is a discipline uniting activities aimed at enhancing the potential for sales of goods and services.” [ibid.], — he has formulated two central suggestions of his theory. His attempt to form a general theory of marketing relates a set of existing concepts and reasoning to each other by means of the common denominator of value, the main ambition being to offer an approach close to reality. This theory starts at the undisputed objective and thus centerpoint of all commercial activities — *the transaction of selling and buying*. Taking into account that there is an exchange in center of every sell-buy transaction, we could see the exchange as a central axe of his theoretical construct. It’s very interesting to conclude that Carl-Eric Linn is using, in implicit form, nothing but the main concept of the Marxian economical theory.

Indeed, he writes [ibid] “Price and value are, in principle, the same phenomenon regarded from the opposite positions. Price is the level where the seller is willing to exchange the product for money and what he estimates a sufficient number of buyers are willing to pay. The buyer’s opinion on value in relation to price is expressed by the amount of money he/she is ready to exchange for the product. The transaction will be performed at the moment when both parties realize that they gain from it”. Let’s look at his “the dynamic model of the total transaction” (Fig. 1). By his explications, “the set-up of this pivotal model, the *Transaction Model*, has in its details been founded on theories, notions, structures and reasoning known and accepted in marketing and product development, as well as in the area of behavioural research” [ibid]. Then, — and it’s very important for our holistic marketing model (Fig. 2), — he states that the closest to the *Transaction Model* equivalent in traditional marketing is the 4P model and its successors. The both models, — “Price-Value Exchange Model” and “4P Model” (Fig. 3), — are abstract because of the artificial suggestion of absolutely perfect and exact knowledge: seller’s knowledge of cost and buyer’s knowledge of value they would like to receive as a result of exchange.

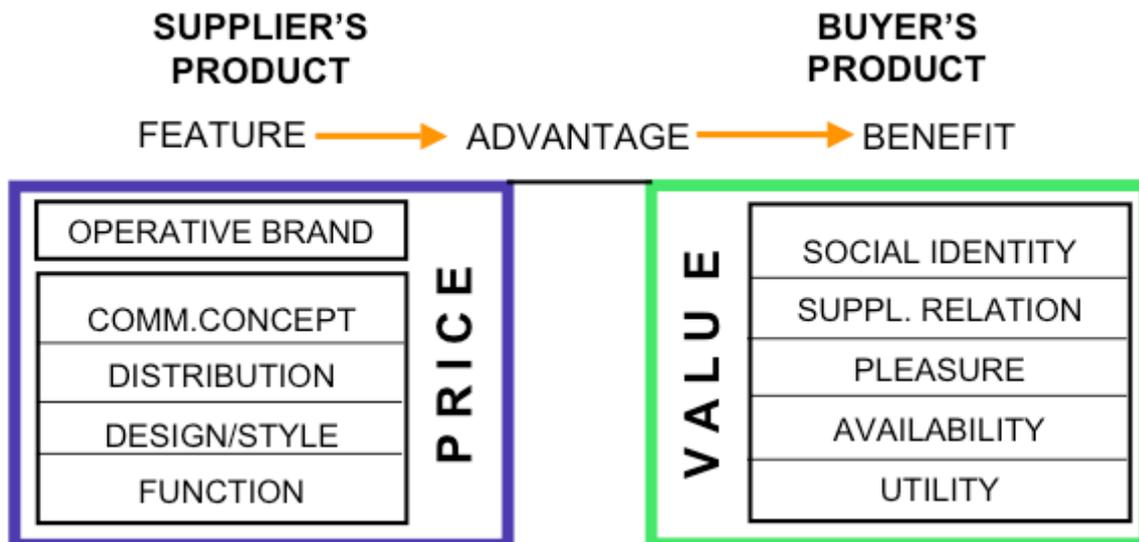


Fig.1. Price-Value Exchange Model [Linn]

For our approach to the general theory of marketing is very useful the following note concerning the Price-Value Exchange Model. Value herein is not a feature of the product involved into exchange or commercial offer, but an *opinion* or *conviction* of the buyer. And one of the most important tasks of marketing is to create the value crucial for the sales. Value may be created both through the product itself and with the help of *marketing communication*. The goal is to make the target group assess the value of the offer at the same level as, or higher, than the price asked. This paragraph has the goal to show the subjective or perceptive nature of the product cost as well as product value. Having accepted this intrinsic ambiguity of any market exchange we can make a conclusion that the marketing communication plays the dominant role in the contemporary marketing. Additional contribution to the disequilibrium between “objective” cost and value, — displayed in the “exchange cost”, — is due to the brand nature of the product exchanged. In my opinion, the main merit of Linn’s approach is tied with two following items: (1) exchange is explicitly conserved in the very centre of his general theory of marketing; (2) intrinsic two-fold perceived nature of “value-cost” exchange is formulated; (3) brand as an amplifier of “value-cost” exchange disequilibrium is stated; (4) particular attention to marketing communication is paid; (5) an implicit using of the Marxian economical theory, — involving a sort of dialectics, — is done. There is neither rational nor willing to get to the main goal of the present paper to repeat ABC of Marxian political economy. However, taking into account this strange neglect not only from Western economists but from the side of domestic ones (belonging to the new generation mainly culti-

vated on “Economics”) we have decided to pay an attention to this item in the next section.

Foundations of Emphatically-Communicative Approach to Constructing a General Theory of Marketing

Speaking about the general theory of marketing and taking into account how this term borrowed by Russian economists from the Western economical thought they have, at first, to understand what is understood as simply a “general theory”. This question is arisen due to the said above misusing of the term “general theory of marketing” by a few of Russian academics. Their small and printed in restricted numbers of copies textbooks could be better named as “basic marketing” or even “marketing for beginners”.

For the case of any branch of economic science to understand better what does it mean a “general theory”, they could make a reference to the most known and well-spread work written by the English economist John Maynard Keynes [*Keynes*] — The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money. In the very beginning of his work he wrote [*ibid*, p.3]: "I have called this book the General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, placing the emphasis on the prefix *general*... [*italics made by me* — *V.Ch.*] I shall argue that the postulates of the classical theory are applicable to a special case only and not to the general case...". The main sense hold by this classical quotation is focused, to mine mind, on following two points: first, the importance to have the general theory; second, a general theory postulate is to be applicable to special cases. In spite of the fact this statement was not focused on the marketing theory, this fundamental approach should be considered in attempts to construct any general theory. Therefore, building the general theory of marketing presumes to search for such generalities where from special or marginal cases could be derived.

Presented herein empathically-communicative approach to the general theory of marketing is terminologically stemmed from two very interrelated sources: (1) the division of periods in the marketing evolution according to Ambler-Styles [*Ambler & Styles*], where the contemporary period is named as “Empathy” [*ibid*, p.8] due to the fact the relationship marketing [*Gronroos; Gummesson*], — in Russia firstly developed by Saint-Petersburg school of marketing [*Багдеев и др.; Куц; Маркетинг взаимодействия...*]; and (2) the contemporary dominance of the broaden concept of integrated marketing communication [*Schultz & Kitchen; Percy*]. The latter is understood in the light of serious transformation of the marketing-mix paradigm [*Van Walterschoot & Van den Bulte*] distorted toward the hypertrophy of communicative element (in terms of the classical

McCarthy’s paradigm [*McCarthy*] — “Promotion”). Visual display of the said hypertrophy is presented on the Figs.2a. & 2b., where the shift from a descriptive to the communicative 4P-model of marketing mix is presented.

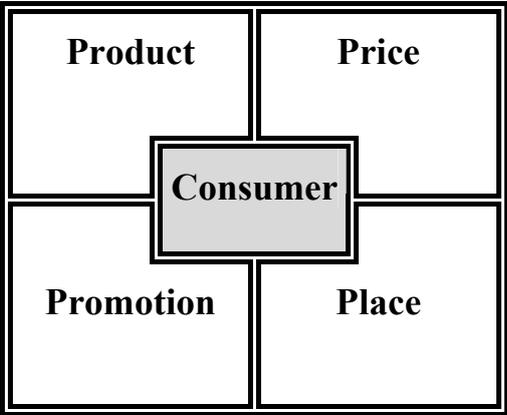


Fig.2a. Descriptive 4P-model of marketing mix

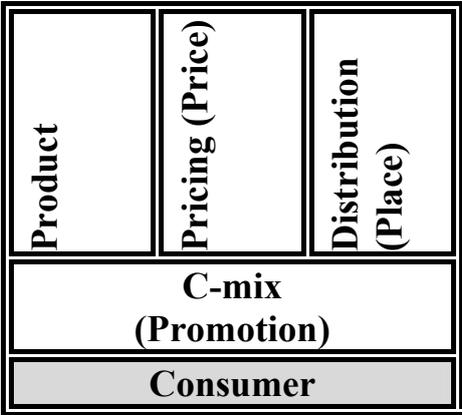


Fig.2b. Communicative 4P-model of marketing mix

Then, as for many marketing scholars our approach genetically comprises an exchange that is actually understood by the majority of the "marketing community » as the basic and initial category of marketing. Our previously carried out the brief analysis of the history of the development of the general theory of marketing [*Черенков, 2003b*] allows us to make several conclusions. First, no one among marketing experts makes statements about basic impossibility of the existence of the general theory of marketing. Moreover, Tom a couple of them [*Botzman & Konopa*] optimistically consider that such theory should be created much quicker than that it was in the field of the natural sciences. Secondly, the center of our attention is an exchange, be it the exchange in the “price — value” interface or constantly repeated exchange of any sort (where the subject of an exchange could be represented by products, finances, and information or any combination of them due to triple and duplex nature of marketing channels) that constitutes the basis of the marketing relationship. Thirdly, a significant part of theoretical constructs is based on various aspects of strategic core resources and competencies. Finally, in all approaches considered herein, in full or in part, in the explicit or implicit form, but there is a concept of relationship marketing.

Today, there are no evidences, in any explicit form, that the item of definition of the main and initial category of marketing is found in the center of attention for Russian marketing scholars. This is in spite of the fact, that in the Soviet time Russian economists paid huge attention to such methodological questions of the economic theory or, — better to name

things as they are, the political economy [*Радченко*]. At the same time searching for (according to Marx) of the “economic cellule” or as it could be put in modern terms — “genome of marketing”, is an important problem in the development of any theory. Let’s remind one of Marx’s statements [*Marx, p.174*]: “It is one of the chief failings of classical political economy that it has never succeeded, by means of its analysis of commodities, and in particular of their value, in discovering the form of value which in fact turns value into exchange-value”. This statement remains valid till our days.

One of neo-Marxists [*Dunayevskaya*], almost in the course of our thoughts, wrote: “Marx... criticized classical political economy for mistaking the apparent equality reigning in the commodity market for an inherent equality. The laws of exchange, Marx contended, could give this appearance of equality only because value, which regulates exchange, is materialized human labor. ... To understand the nature of capitalist production, it is therefore necessary, Marx contended, to leave the sphere of exchange and enter the sphere of production. There it would be found that the dual nature of commodities — their use-value and value — merely reflects the dual nature of labor — concrete and abstract labor — embodied in them.” We have inserted an adverb “almost” above, because our task is reversed — to leave the sphere of production and enter the sphere of exchange or, more correctly, to integrate all three spheres of the Marxist political economy (production, exchange, and consumption). This is because a “marketing loop”, where a consumer is to be its initial and final point of one marketing cycle, could be commenced in any of three spheres mentioned above. However, the market or market place, — where sellers and buyers are to meet each other, where the sell-purchase transaction should be made, — is the room where (at the highest level of marketing abstraction) two signals, — represented by a real seller’s marketing mix and a virtual or “statistical” buyer’s marketing mix [*Черенков, 2002*], — are to be compared and an output as a function of cross-correlation between the said signals serves to make purchasing decisions for a statistically significant part of loyal consumers and prospects.

It’s a good place to put one might be expected question — why these rather well-known Marxist just cited theses are by-passed or missed by the Western marketing community? In our opinion, there are two reasons. Firstly, there are some traditions of the Western higher school in the field of teaching in economics. Indeed, any of Western text-books on “Economics” is open from the chapter “Market”. On the contrary, *Das Kapital*, Vol I, as well as domestic text-books on “Political Economy of Capitalism” [*e.g., Брегель*] were open from the chapter “Commodity”. Secondly, the

ideological output from the Marxist economical theory (especially, concerning the class struggle) and the well-known long-term “capitalism-communism” confrontation have averted Western marketing community from this in many places rational theory. Using one lovely by Marx idiom they could say — in condemning the ideological and political aspects of Marxist theory, “they have splashed out a child with the dirty water”.

This disregard of rational items Marxist economical theory looks especially strange in the light of the fact that Marxist theory was factually derived from thoughts of many great thinkers of our civilization. The dual nature of a commodity was clearly recognized by Aristotle and developed in Ricardo’s labor theory of value. For the purpose of the present paper it’s necessary to highlight that Marx in his economical theory achieves (at least) two objectives: (1) Distinguish between simple commodity production (C-M-C’) and capitalist production (M-C-M’) since the latter requires the product to be a commodity and therefore express itself as money, and through this expression must go through the process of metamorphosis. Looking attentively at the Linn’s Price-Value Exchange Model (See Fig.1), they could found this dual nature of a commodity that was laid (*suspect it was made implicitly* — **V.Ch.**) into the base of this model.

Any text-book on the marketing theory begins usually with the definition of marketing and some of its categories, such as, “needs, wants, demands, products, goods, services, exchange, values, cost, satisfaction, transaction, marketing and market” [Kotler, 1991, pp.4–10] or « utility, exchange, production, sale, market, marketing, buyer, marketing-mix» [Boone & Kurtz, pp.6–26]. We shall not bring here to extra attention the question of cultural borrowings and the origin of the Russian version of the marketing terminological paradigm, because it is clear that fundamental Phillip Kotler's text-books [Kotler, 1991; Kotler, 1986] served as “Gogol’s overcoat” for practically all modern Russian marketing scholars and academics. Leaving alone, recently studied [Черенков и др.], the theoretical question concerning the item of an adequacy of the Russian terminology paradigm to its (mainly if not absolutely) English sources we have to mention only that any marketing scholar, having begun from choosing the definition of marketing (among not less than thousand) risks losing the adequacy in searching for the essence of the defined object.

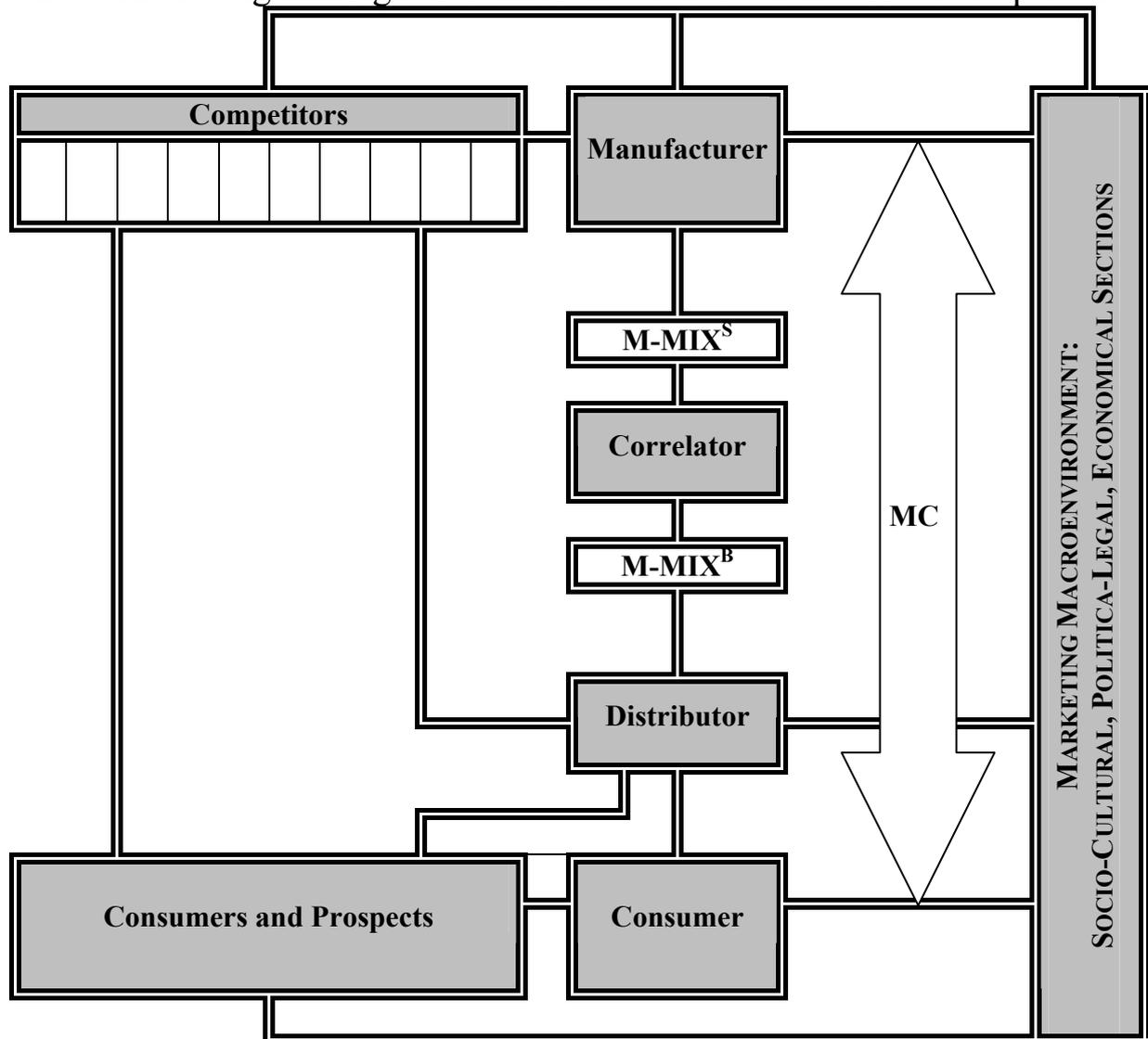
In our opinion, revealing the main and initial category of marketing requires, first of all, a reference to the place and value of an exchange in the system of marketing relations. We use for this purpose the methodological approach of the Marxist school of political economy for defining the “mystery of marketing” (the term constructed by analogy with Marxian “mystery of surplus-value” [Маркс, с.354]). The commodity representing

the main subject of any marketing activity, is a product of labor and, as it is known, every time proves its social value only during an exchange. Hence, the exchange transforming a product of labor into a commodity can be considered as the main and initial premise for the development of any marketing activity. To be more exact, we have to say not any or casual exchange but a regularly repeated exchange we mean in this context (when the corresponding transaction is done and should be repeated) and name it as the *effective marketing exchange*.

When developing our interdisciplinary approach to the development of the general theory of marketing, we use among the prerequisites of this theory a communicative approach which is most suitable for description, systematization, solution and forecasting of many regularities, and also technologies of modern globalizing marketing. Continuing the topic of effective marketing exchange as the main and initial category of marketing, we can define one, perhaps, most general phenomenon for marketing: establishing effective, or operating, communications between the manufacturer/seller and the buyer. We shall consider such communication effective, if it appears for the seller (in Marx's terms) as the famous metamorphosis C-M and, accordingly, for the buyer M-C. In other words, establishing effective communications, requires commodity to be recognized (adopted) by the market. The only way to prove such recognition is a regularly repeating or recurrent act of sale-purchase.

In order not to overload this paper with formal calculations and logic-graphic schemes made earlier and easy available [Черенков, 2003b], we stress only the main qualitative conclusions. We state that consumer behavior is adequately described by the model of matched marketing filter equivalent to the model of image recognition by a human being used in cognitive psychology [Best]. The generality of our approach, in our opinion, is also proved by the generality of formal mathematical apparatus available in the theory of matched filtration used for formalizing radar signals [Cook & Bernfeld]. With help of this apparatus the buyer's decision making is represented as a binary functions (0 or 1) which magnitude depends on whether the cross-correlation signal pass over the stated threshold or not. The said cross-correlation signal has inputs presented by virtual and real marketing mixes formed, respectively, by the seller (manufacturer, distributor) and by the "statistical buyer". [Черенков, 2003b] Two already tested assumptions are put in the basis of this proof. First, the time of change of uncontrollable marketing variables (institutional impacts included) is so much more than the time of comparison between the said marketing mix signals, that these variables can be considered as constants for the time of analysis as minimum. Secondly, special features of the hu-

man being “head neurocomputer” are such that it demonstrates all features described for associative memory devices. So, the content of any part of one of marketing mix signals defines the address of the associated part of



LEGEND: **M-MIX^S** — first incoming signal representing the real Seller’s marketing mix; “real” because this signal is defined by the core sections (4P) of corresponding marketing plan and could be tactically adjusted by Manufacturer’s marketing managers; **M-MIX^B** — second incoming signal representing the virtual or “statistical” Buyer’s marketing mix; “statistical” because this signal is represented by a set of “needs, wants, and expectations of loyal consumers and prospects” revealed by a corresponding Distributor and due to Distributor’s marketing research has a statistical nature — and by the essence of the matter this second signal represents an averaged “product image” in 4P-format; all double connective lines are duplex, i.e., bidirectional from the point of view of information flows; **MC** — marketing channel.

Fig.3. Holistic explanatory model of the empathically-communicative approach to creating the general theory of marketing

another of marketing mix signals to be correlated. It solves the question of arranging the order of recognition and correlation between the separate

marketing mix components and subcomponents, represented by the said marketing mix signals. Whatever sequence we address these components or subcomponents of the seller's real marketing mix, each of them will be unequivocally correlated only with the corresponding component or subcomponent of the buyer's virtual (statistical) marketing mix. This model of cross-correlation for two marketing mixes looks similar to the perceptron principal block-scheme [*Rosenblatt*]. Due to the said above, it can be used as the model of establishing effective exchange (communications) depending on the frequency of positive buyer's decisions. Moreover, this correlation model receiving the signals representing buyer's and seller's marketing mixes (respectively, adjusted signal and statistical filter) can act as a comprehensive self-sufficient model that reflects main provisions (we shall name it so) being in the very center of the empathically-communicative approach to the general theory of marketing.

Conclusions

As it was stated above the marketing as a whole, — scrutinized from the point of view of the sophisticated tissue of various business/society relationships, — is to be understood as a philosophy of business as well as a set of technologies of business. Therefore, a philosophy of science approach to marketing theory should be acceptable. However, the all-embracing analysis of the marketing theory etiology, made by the brilliant marketing theorists of American school of marketing quoted herein [*e.g., Alderson, 1965; El-Ansary, 1979; Sheth et al., 1988; Hunt, 2002; A Twenty-First...*, 2009], produces proofs that existing till today shortcomings of the general theory of marketing can be attributed to their misperceptions of the fundamental nature of theoretical constructions. Keeping in mind that any self-consistent theory must contain a systematically related set of statements, including some law-like generalizations, that should be empirically testable, they could conclude that such theory is to increase scientific understanding through a systematized structure capable of explaining and predicting marketing phenomena.

In spite of the fact that the author did not set the task here of presenting the completed results of the development of the general theory of marketing, it is possible to draw certain conclusions based on theoretical research. Estimating the results presented herein it's useful to confront them with Figs.1-3 having a meaningful part of information and serving to economize time and printing space.

First, we see the general theory of marketing as empathically-communicative one which corresponds to the basic characteristics of mod-

ern marketing which we understand as relational marketing. This theory has, probably, to find its corroboration on B2B-markets. However, taking into account the fact the Manufacturer (Seller) has a direct contact with a Distributor (See Fig. 3) the latter could be estimated as an aggregate Buyer. So, situations of B2C-market are available for this approach too. Then, living today in the contemporary information society, we shall note that more and more popular concept of service dominant by Vargo-Lash not only does not contradict to our suggestions, but fits them. Namely the mutual empathy allows institutional and corporative subjects of market, — considered as suppliers/consumers of services transferred by products, — to move from sporadic marketing exchanges to effective ones or from case-by-case communications to effective marketing communications. In turn, effective marketing communications in full compliance with the theory of interactions allow to construct business networks. And to make stable and effective portfolio of relations for a focal company. Thus, our accepted assumptions allow us to exercise a transition from the abstract (exchange) to the concrete (business-network) within the limits of the general theory of marketing.

Secondly, we see the general theory of marketing as empathic on B2C market. No one of exchanges in the balance model of “the price-value” can be made without a mutual gain (even the imagined one, but still a gain) of the seller and the buyer. Statistically perceived target market gives as a result the buyer’s virtual marketing-mix which, in turn, predetermines market behavior of institutional buyers (for example, distributors, consignees). We offered and validated from the point of view of the modern cognitive psychology a model of marketing mix correlation (of the perceptron-type). This model allows us to understand the minimizing mechanism of marketing distances between real and virtual marketing mix “signals” and how purchase decision making mechanism works. Taking into consideration the direct contact of retail network points (mediated by wholesale parts of the distribution channels) with individual buyers and their both formal, and informal studying, we finally accept empathy in this market also.

As a result we see an opportunity to construct a holistic picture of marketing activities (a marketing universe) all the richness of which in any transformed form (which is noticeable when considering methods/forms of international business operations) can be reduced to the same effective marketing exchanges. Naturally, the author presented may be 101st trial to offer its own approach to the general theory of marketing. The work is not completed. However, involving interdisciplinary knowledge (from technical sciences) and forgotten for a time Marxist luggage cleared from ideological contamination produces hopes.

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