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Entrepreneurship within the history of marketing

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ABSTRACT

Few scholarly articles explore the history of marketing beyond the commonly accepted origins. Even fewer studies explore the role of the entrepreneur in early markets and economies or how entrepreneurs adapted as the world economy shifted. Aside from recognizing that early forms of commercial exchange existed in the pre-industrial age, little is written about the social, historical, and anthropological constructs that contributed to the development of marketing and entrepreneurial theory or the profile of the first entrepreneurs who sought to expand commerce beyond simple exchanges within their community. We believe this to be an oversight on the part of historical scholars in marketing, entrepreneurship, and related disciplines which leaves a gap in the literature that we address by comparing and contrasting the traditional marketing perspectives with the entrepreneurial and relational perspectives across different eras. Propositions are developed in conjunction with the discussion of implications.

1. Introduction

Marketing history is inseparable from entrepreneurship history, but scholars routinely treat the topics in isolation from each other. Throughout history, entrepreneurs have often filled the role of their firm's marketing department, as entrepreneurs tend to *wear many hats* in small firms such as those of the preindustrial era and still today at the onset of many ventures (Mathias & Williams, 2018). In the following passages, we seek to revisit entrepreneurship and marketing history to illustrate how joint examination portrays a cohesive picture of the commerce's development, as the fields complement each other. Although controversial in certain regards, perhaps more so to marketing scholars than for entrepreneurship scholars, this comparison can also serve to better unite the disciplines. Specifically, we contribute to entrepreneurship and marketing history by (1) providing a critique of the current conception of marketing eras in western culture, (2) discussing history in relation to the motivation of the entrepreneur in addition to meeting consumer needs, (3) highlighting how relationships have always been central to commerce.

Theorists suggest marketing originated at the dawn of exchange and trade between parties beginning approximately 8000 years ago (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). However, few scholars attempt to elaborate on the early history of marketing and even fewer address the role of the entrepreneur in developing the craft of marketing. An exploration and explanation of what the marketing function was in the distant past is left largely to the imagination, particularly as it pertains to entrepreneurship. We believe this to be an oversight on the part of scholars in both marketing and entrepreneurship that leaves a gap in the literature in need of attention similarly to how other business disciplines have been rethought (e.g., Cummings, Bridgman, & Hassard, 2017). The effect of this is, when the history of a field of business is taught at the beginning of each semester, entrepreneurs are consistently undervalued, if they are mentioned at all. We believe that further specifying the entrepreneur's influence is an important and necessary part of our contribution and to fully understanding these eras. A full examination of all ways that entrepreneurs shaped the major historical economic eras would be worthy of several texts and is thus beyond the scope of this one paper. However, this manuscript is meant to serve as a waypoint toward the broader goal of establishing the role of the entrepreneur in marketing history by focusing on relational exchange (i.e., relationship-dependent commerce) as it existed in pre and post-industrial eras. As such, we began this historical examination as an effort to uncover how marketing history could be enriched by going beyond the traditional scope of consumer satisfaction (Savitt, 1980) by taking into account entrepreneurial motivations (see Table 1).

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Table 1
Summary of Marketing Eras.

Era	Traditional Marketing Perspective	Entrepreneurial/Relational Perspective
Preindustrial (Prior to 1870)	Exchanges were built upon social relationships and often governed by reputation and the norm of reciprocity. Exchanges occurred face to face which was conducive to relationship building in many exchanges.	Entrepreneurs were motivated to found ventures out of necessity. Salaried employment was not common at the time. Entrepreneurs understood they lacked alternative forms of employment and were obliged to refrain from deviance, as to keep a positive reputation.
Production (1870–1930)	Industrial manufacturing techniques allowed producers to operate at greater size and scale. Managers paid much attention to driving down cost and cared little for unique customer preferences. Rising incomes insured that minimally acceptable goods would be consumed, so managers shifted their focus to low cost production.	Entrepreneurs were motivated to found ventures as a means to exploit opportunities. Salaried employment became widespread and only those who perceived opportunities or market imperfections sought to become entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs began operating on increasingly large scales and shifted their focus from building relationships with end users (i.e., customers) to building relationships at a business to business level. As there were relatively few other large businesses at the time, maintaining healthy relationships with partners was key.
Sales (1930–1950)	At the onset of the depression, managers tried to cope with the tough economic climate by using hard selling tactics. Supply outpaced demand, so managers dedicated their efforts to selling products. This era came to an end once the economy recovered during the post-war boom.	As supply began to outstrip demand, entrepreneurs would have had to focus on building relationships and generating repeat business. The lack of alternative markets may have aided the development of trusting relationships. Entrepreneurs feared deterring the few customers they had. This era was brought on by the depression and lingered on a few years after WWII.
Marketing (Since 1950)	Managers turned their focus from selling products to identifying the needs of the customer.	During this era there was a resurgence in opportunity-based entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurs sought to understand customer needs as a means to identify opportunities. This entails both understanding the initial customer need as well as continual satisfaction. From this perspective the marketing and relational era are one in the same
Relationship (Since 1980)	Managers realized the need to continually satisfy the needs of the customer.	
Post Relational Age (Since 2000)	Transactions move online and social media takes center stage in marketing. Through various platforms, customers choose to opt in or opt out of digital relationships with firms. Building relationships without face to face interactions is the new challenge.	Entrepreneurship becomes a means for individuals to enact their identity. Many new entrepreneurs (e.g., craftsmen, artisans, communitarians, and etc.) start businesses knowing that they could earn more money seeking salaried employment but choose entrepreneurship as a means to express themselves.

We take an inductive historical approach and begin by exploring the factors that influenced the norms of pre-industrial[1] exchange relationships to discover similarities of the environmental and analogous factors that existed then and now. While there is some evidence of long-term relationships as being a critical component of commercial exchange in the literature (e.g., Casson & Lee, 2011; North, 1991; Ostrom, 1990), research in this regard remains largely underdeveloped. Hence we explain how the fundamentals of modern relationship exchange have always been present in human society, including the well-documented ~200 years following the Industrial Revolution when relational exchange was not widely recognized as a significant influence on commercial transactions. Our interpretation hence follows decentered theory which provides scholars the ability to develop multiple historical interpretations (Novicevic, Jones, & Carrahar, 2015). Thus, even in these post-industrial markets associated with western business, we explain why relational exchange by dedicated entrepreneurs has never been fully displaced by other marketing theories. Further, we explore the fundamental changes to the consumer markets due to the Industrial Revolution and how entrepreneurs found success by leveraged inefficiencies in both consumer and industrial markets. As such, this research addresses the contribution of the entrepreneur to the development of relationship marketing beyond what little scholarly literature is available on the topic.

In essence, it is very plausible that marketing scholars, as is also common in other disciplines, may ignore factors in historical memory from other fields whereby the acceptance of common assumptions, necessary to describe the macro environment, leads to erroneous conclusions about the smaller populations contained therein. Accordingly, we challenge the entrenched notion that marketing history can be generalized into several eras to adequately describe the evolution of marketing as a field. We contend that these eras, commonly recited in the first chapters of introductory marketing texts, fail to recognize the many different facets of the marketing function and how they affected smaller firms and entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, a large portion of marketing scholarship focuses on relationship selling, which is "the building of mutual trust within the buyer/seller dyad with a delivery of anticipated long term, value-added benefits to buyers" (Jolson, 1997, p. 76). Within the context of the marketing eras that are currently taught, much is written about how the retailer's relationship evolved with the end consumer. However, the evolution of the supply chain that served these customers is often generalized to an oversimplified transition from manual labor in a tribe or village to an industrial factory lined with smokestacks to some representation of the technological age, none of which include an adequate discussion of the role of small firms and entrepreneurs. Thus, we aim to contribute to the understanding of marketing's history by exploring the evolution of relational exchange prior to the Industrial Revolution as well as during the various marketing eras associated with western business culture.

2. Pre-industrial relational exchange

In an effort to show how relational norms have governed exchange before the commercialization of trade, we first explain the context in which traders conducted business and then explain why the factors needed for trade and exchange to be governed by relational norms have always been present. Accordingly, several scholars have recognized the governing role of relational norms throughout the history of commercial exchange (e.g., Palmatier, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 2007; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). However, few have explored these norms during the pre-industrial era. Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) offer considerable insight into the potential origins of pre-history relational exchange. The authors describe the importance of the seller (producer) and buyer (consumer) interacting directly and without intermediaries which became the catalyst for the formation of relational norms such as buyer-seller commitment. Their explanation cites the potential for bonding

[1] For the purposes of this paper, we are defining the pre-industrial period as the time between approximately 1500 to the beginning of the Industrial Revolution around 1750. We use this period as many historians have recognized this time as being characterized by increased agricultural production as well as increased populations. These factors ushered in a new era in Western Europe's societal development (e.g., Allen, 2010; Brenner, 1976) which immediately preceded the Industrial Revolution.

and understanding as the foundation for a personal relationship that extends beyond a series of transactions. Once this type of relationship is established, it is far less likely that buyers and sellers would act opportunistically out of fear of losing the rewards that come with such a connection (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). We contend that the incentives for buyers and sellers to act in each other's best interest goes beyond the preservation of personal friendships. Therefore, we discuss the environmental conditions that incentivize the formation and maintenance of exchange relationships which are long-term relationships wherein benefits are given with the expectation of receiving comparable benefits.

Before the industrial age, exchange occurred mostly in local markets where producers assumed responsibility for retailing their wares (Palmatier, 2007). In essence a large proportion of the population were entrepreneurs (Crawford, 2009). These early entrepreneurs were perhaps most similar to the necessity-based entrepreneurs found in developing economies—where high levels of self-employment persist, as the economy had not yet developed to the point of being able to sustain large, salary-paying firms (Acs, Desai, & Hessels, 2008). Entrepreneurs finding their way into self-employed due to a lack of available salaried employment is the hallmark of necessity-based entrepreneurship. As the title implies these entrepreneurs are dependent upon being self-employment to maintain their livelihood. In the preindustrial economies characterized by a prevalence of necessity entrepreneurs, intermediaries (or channel intermediaries) had not yet taken hold in Western societies (Hollander, Rassuli, Jones, & Dix, 2005).

Thus, it was left to producers to incentivize the end consumer to purchase their product from them despite other supplier options. This situation, where producer (seller) and consumer (buyer) navigate the transaction together, promotes an environment where emotional bonding is more likely to occur because each side of the dyad is more likely to understand each other which leads to greater levels of cooperation (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Furthermore, entrepreneurs lack alternative options for salaried employment and dependence upon self-employment would incentivize a long-term focus to ensure their economic sustainability. It is important to recognize that the emergence of emotional or relational sentiments on their own did not provoke or ensure continued exchange between the same producers and consumers (sans perhaps families or very close ties that represented both the supplier and buyer; Chandler, 1990). Rather, these sentiments allowed producers and consumers to enter into exchanges where the environments incentivized the development of relational-based exchange (Bartels, 1976; Bucklin, 1972).

Scholars recognize that the lack of regulation and institutionalized protections helped incentivize the need for relational exchange (Palmatier, 2007). With no legal recourse or mechanism for contract enforcement, prudent traders were incentivized to limit their exchanges to only the most trustworthy partners. However, the current literature has not yet explored how exchange actors would determine trustworthiness. Exactly how did pre-industrial buyers and sellers determine who represented a good fit for their exchange relationships? To support our deductions about the environmental influence on the development of pre-industrial exchange norms, we rely on what we know about pre-industrial villages, cities, transportation routes, and government structures.

2.1. Pre-industrial entrepreneurship in small communities

We propose that the substance and availability of information regarding exchange actors was the most important factor that enabled relational exchange in pre-industrial civilizations. To support this claim, we look to what we know about the size of most-pre-industrial villages and townships. These small towns and villages were largely involved in craft production activities, often made in response to preorders from customers with whom trusted relationships had been established. These population centers were relatively small. Most towns and villages failed to exceed 2,500 people (Schacht, 1981; Zorn, 1994) and as such most people lived and worked in close proximity of one another. This means that the majority of influential and relevant persons within the community would have access to any information needed about how each tradesman, farmer, or other producer conducted themselves (Dixon, 1981) and thus the physical proximity provided fast and efficient information exchange. In turn, consumers utilized this information to protect themselves from unscrupulous and otherwise opportunistic traders who sought to take advantage of their exchange partners. Accordingly, trustworthy producers had the incentive to continue doing honest business and treat each customer well, as their business habits would become common knowledge.

This earliest iteration of the accounting principle of "goodwill" was especially important for producers who relied on their reputation for continued business since the means of their particular production diminished the producer's mobility (i.e., farming of wheat, forging of tools). For these immobile producers, there was no option to outrun their reputation. Thus, they would have been especially sensitive to how others perceived them and would have the greatest incentive to ensure their business practices were transparent, honest, and fair to their exchange partner.

2.2. Business-to-business networks and the need for entrepreneurs

Next, we analyze the behavior of producer networks and of the distribution channels. There is work on pre-industrial consumer markets (Boss, 1886; Sampson, 1874), producers of consumer goods (Savitt 1980), and the evolution of consumer markets (DeVries, 1976; Fraser, 1981). However, very little literature has sought to explain how pre-industrial sourcing provided the necessary materials to sell products to end consumers. Farmers would need seeds, equipment, and livestock to help farm the land. Bakers would need to source wheat and other materials to bake their goods.

Guilds are one form of business-to-business self-regulation that wielded power over the members of a community by fostering shared norms between selectively admitted members, prescribing punishments for violations of these norms, and organizing collective action against those who violate the norms. For example, in the 1600s, the Wildberg Weavers' guild issued a variety of regulations limiting child labor, regulating wages, and providing a legal mechanism to sue for slanderous accusations that damaged a member's professional reputation (Ogilvie, 2004).

The same paradigm of proximal influence on stable relationships certainly applies in this pre-industrial business-to-business context as well given that, in each producer's business cycle, he or she would play the role of buyer. Having trustworthy suppliers, through which they could continuously source materials, would be of utmost benefit to pre-industrial producers who did not have the ability to continuously shop alternative suppliers in an effort to garner the best price, improved quality, or some other transactional advantage. The paucity of suppliers available to any given producer in pre-industrial society magnified the importance of establishing a reliable supply chain (Gilboy, 1932).

The division of labor allowed workers to specialize while contributing their surplus toward alleviating the needs of society in exchange for some form of compensation (Smith, 1776; Durkheim, 2014). However, as a practical matter in small, pre-industrial communities, this generally meant that competition was at a minimum. In any given community, there would only be so many bakers, tailors, and farmers from which to buy from or sell to. Opportunity recognition at the time was generally more dependent on supply and demand needs as well as generational learning (e.g., a father teaching a trade to his son; Wood, 2019). However, vocational and generational learning was valuable and thus the barriers to entry could be substantial despite inexpensive equipment in such trades. While such limited competition may appear to provide a certain amount of power to the uniquely positioned producer (Porter, 1980), we contend that there are two main factors prohibiting abuse of their position. The first is concerned with the prophylactic effect information availability in small communities has on the propensity of producers to participate in opportunistic trading practices. Second, and closely related, is that these producers also assumed the role of buyer. It is our contention that this dual role of buyer and seller in a small community, where most business activity is public knowledge, would be incentive enough for these early, pre-industrial traders and producers to engage in honest, trustworthy commercialized exchange. That is, the early entrepreneurs were similar to modern relational marketers in that they understood that their behavior in the short run would be used to judge their long-term trustworthiness (Czepiel, 1990)

2.3. Pre-industrial entrepreneurship in large population centers

Although the trade environment in a large population center differs from smaller towns or villages, we argue that relational exchange was likewise present in large, pre-industrial population centers for many of the same reasons discussed previously (cf. De Long & Shleifer, 1993). There were certainly a greater number of trade partners available, thus, it would seem relational exchange was more critical as compared to smaller townships and rural population areas. However, an intelligent trader would recognize that opportunistic trade practices are typically less profitable over time than building and nurturing long-term exchange relationships.

It appears that increased competition in conjunction with population density would generate high efficiency information exchanges. Thus, traders would strive to shore up relationships with their buyers in an effort to stave off competitors that would not be present in smaller villages. With more traders willing to serve the needs of the larger population, ensuring buyers that their interest and needs were in line with existing relational norms was a priority for producers. In other words, larger populations increased competition which increased the incentive to conduct business in a trustworthy way since (a) information about business practices would quickly be disseminated throughout larger and denser populations and (b) information about opportunistic business practices would incentivize buyers to seek out alternative producers that would be readily available in these large population centers. Therefore, we argue that incentives to conduct relational exchange were present in pre-industrial exchange. Both contexts provided buyers and sellers great incentives to trade with partners whom they knew and trusted to develop lasting exchange relationships over prolonged periods.

3. Entrepreneurship during the production era

The Industrial Revolution moved the production function from inside the home to external organizational or business ownership (Stoddard, 2017). The modern industrial firm brought about the large scale salaried and hourly employment, increases in efficiencies such as those that were advanced by Taylorism (see Wren & Bedeian, 2010), and opportunities that presented a viable alternative to entrepreneurship (Chandler, 1977; Coase, 1937). During this timeframe opportunity entrepreneurship began to replace necessity entrepreneurship as the main driver of self-employment (Acs et al., 2008). Opportunity-motivated entrepreneurship describes individuals who enter into self-employment despite having a range of alternative salaried options, do so because they perceive a market imperfection or gap in the economy that they can profitably exploit (Levie & Autio, 2008; Cohen & Winn, 2007).

This shift toward opportunity entrepreneurship is a primary characteristic of the Production Era which is commonly dated from 1870 to 1930, although it overlaps with the simple trade era and the sales era (Fullerton, 1988). Producers focused on utilizing machinery and new manufacturing systems to drive down unit cost and secure greater profits. For example, Ford's assembly line allowed for significant increases in production while simultaneously reducing costs and thus also allowing for mass consumption (Watts, 2005). Disposable incomes rose dramatically and, for a time, demand for consumer goods far outpaced supply (Porter, 1980). Since all minimally acceptable goods would be consumed, costly customization was shunned and large-scale producers manufacturing *en masse* were thought to squeeze entrepreneurs out of the market (Gilboy, 1932). Likewise, the rise of print advertising was thought by turn of the century scholars to be the end of the salesman (Spears, 1993).

3.1. The generalization of Pillsbury's approach to all of industry

This conceptualization of the production era is generally traced to the work of Robert Keith (1960) who describes the evolution of the Pillsbury Company's marketing efforts from 1872 into the 1930s. Keith described the evolution of marketing within Pillsbury as typical for most organizations of that time, without regard for variation company size. Despite a lack of evidence regarding the ability to generalize this model to other businesses, this method of marketing became the accepted story of how companies marketed immediately after the Industrial Revolution. In this model, the onset of mass production resulted in a consistent supply-side push of anything that was manufactured through the marketing channels to various intermediaries and consumers who, without fail, consumed or otherwise disposed of everything that was produced. This conceptualization of the marketing during the Production Era relegates the entrepreneur to the role of middleman in the inevitable movement of goods from factory to consumer. Instead of touting the personality traits and competencies that allowed entrepreneurs and small businesses to thrive in this new business world, scholars wrote that their primary concerns were the movement, sale, and storage of products (Palmatier, 2007; Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995).

However, we can see that entrepreneurs developed a variety of businesses to serve as intermediaries between the factory and the consumer once production capacity outpaced the sales and distribution capabilities of the producing companies. Entrepreneurs took this excess production and found new customers, new markets, and new uses for the products that would previously have gone to waste (Bartels, 1976). In this way, entrepreneurs were the saviors of the Industrial Revolution because, as Fullerton (1988) explained, the absorptive capacity of the market was insufficient to dispose of the exponentially higher production of the new era.

Our contention is that entrepreneurial ventures were incentivized during this era because of the documented tendency of firms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to seek to limit their number of suppliers and retailers (Garrison, 1935; Haring, 1940). Therefore, entrepreneurs who were willing and capable to exploit this gap in the supply chain by relieving producers of their excess production could expect a reliable inventory of goods to resell.

4. Entrepreneurship during the sales era

Most consider that the sales era is from approximately 1930–1950 (Fullerton, 1988). While opportunity entrepreneurship was the dominant vehicle, the sales era differs (from the production era) because it focused on how the organization sells the results of their production (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). During the sales era, marketing strategies were more widely adopted and developed (e.g., hard-selling, expanding advertising expenditures). This era was in response to The Great Depression (Fullerton, 1988; Stoddard, 2017). Here, experiential learning and paid internships arose with local entrepreneurs and department stores (Bacon, 1916) demonstrating a need to train sales personnel. After economic conditions continued to worsen during The Great Depression, in part due to a shrinking money supply (Friedman & Schwartz, 1963), entrepreneurs needed to rely on hard-selling marking strategies given that supply was out pacing demand[2] (i.e., the aggregate demand argument, Bernanke, 1981; 1983). At this time disposable income was limited in comparison to the production era, hence consumers were more careful with their spending.

Through a relationship marketing and relationship selling perspective, we offer some criticisms of this characterization of the sales era. Given that relationship marketing places emphasis on relational exchanges (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), captured within the relationship-marking framework, there can also exist relationship selling which focuses on building mutual trust and expects a long-term customer value due to buyer-seller relation (Jolson, 1997). Relationship selling strategies include consulting and solving problems and therefore the entrepreneur/seller becomes more of a partner with the buyer (Johnson & Grayson, 2005), both parties working in pursuit of the buyer's long-term goals rather than a one-time transactional exchange.

We propose that problem solving consultative sales approaches were present and recognized during the sales era. Although the primary focus in the distribution channel was sales, we suggest that long-term exchange relationships were significant to meet such goals. At the time, others also recognized that the customer may need to come first providing evidence of industry being consumer centric (Comyns & Jones, 1927; Tosdal, 1925). Thus, we question why the common conceptualization of this timeframe one of the hard selling and transaction-orientation (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 1995). Perhaps this is because the message has been consistently accepted rather than challenged.

Marketing experts who established the characteristics of these eras often wrote about selling strategies from the perspective of the end consumer (Keith, 1960); this is true of marketing historians as well (Jones & Monieson, 1990). Through this lens, the presence of relational marketing seems lacking and unclear as to why so many contemporary marketing scholars assume that hard-selling and questionably ethical tactics would be used during difficult economic times. We suggest this is a flawed assumption because these tactics assume that entrepreneurs had little concern for repeat business. These scholars also assume that information would not be shared and that the customer would come to expect and accept these types of business dealings. We believe that all of these assumptions ought to be challenged and that there is only arbitrary evidence to suggest that such "take it or leave it" market conditions were part of the wider marketplace.

The first issue we question pertains to the assumption that customer scarcity would motivate entrepreneurs to pursue a hard-sell strategy. Assuming relative customer ignorance as Fullerton's explanation seems odd in that sellers could not afford to lose or alienate potential customers in the 1930s (1988). It was also noted that, during that time, high-pressure selling may inhibit repeat transactions (Comyns & Jones, 1927). We posit that this also led entrepreneurs to better understand their customer and recognize them as a partner, even if it meant settling for a smaller profit margin or agreeing to buyer-centric perks like customization. Thus, a more consultative, pro-social means of transacting grew and provided the necessary incentives for entrepreneurs to act in mutually beneficial ways when working with their customers. Issues such as these have continued relevance. For example, understanding how social exchange theory and transaction cost economics (i.e., including opportunism) affect varying exchanges and how such opportunistic behaviors can be curtailed (Luo, 2007). As entrepreneurs figured out that buyers recognize these behaviors, they began to act in mutually beneficial ways to ensure commercial exchange continued.

We suggest buyers will recognize motivations of entrepreneurs and sellers such that information will accrue naturally through market interactions and intra-industry communications. When supply outpaces demand, buyers will price shop learning of competitors' pricing and terms. Thus, competitors are a great source of information and each has the incentive to be forthcoming in mutually beneficial, relationship-orientated ways and to potentially poach a buyer from one of the entrepreneur's competitors. Information travels and therefore opportunistic sellers would have had great difficulty exploiting buyers in tighter economic times.

In better economic times, channel power shifts to the producers (Shapiro & Doody, 1968), but, when demand decreases, there are fewer buyers available to meet an entrepreneurs' sales targets or even their break-even targets. Downstream partners would become more sophisticated as markets tighten to find better efficiencies. Opportunistic sales techniques between channel partners would be scrutinized and punished by redirecting business to competitors. In addition to information sharing, respect for relational norms are key to surviving the evolution of a maturing industry's distribution channel. For example, from 1900 to 1950 the automobile industry adopted (and then later abandoned) the wholesaler as a means of distribution in favor of a network of manufacturer-to-retailer franchisees (Marx, 1985). In the process, abusive channel partners were eliminated, and manufacturers formalized preferred relational norms through franchisee contracts.

We are left to speculate as to why modern marketing scholars assume that less informed buyers were the norm of the sales era. While the answers to these questions are likely beyond the scope of this paper, we suggest that it may be, at least partially, a matter of anchoring (Furnham & Boo, 2011; Hogarth & Einhorn, 1992), availability heuristics (Carroll, 1978; Schwarz et al., 1991; Wänke, Schwarz, & Bless, 1995), fundamental attribution error (Schwarz, 2006), or the bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950). Further investigation may help lead to additional conclusions about the sales era and the assumptions within.

5. Entrepreneurship in the marketing and relational age

The Marketing Era follows the Sales Era and is sometimes subdivided into the marketing company era and the marketing department era (Aherne, 2006). When subdivided as such, the marketing company era refers to specialization of the marketing functions, rather than when firms adopted a marketing-oriented philosophy. During this general era, entrepreneurs became sensitive to the fact that they could look to their customers as informants of opportunities within the environment.

By contrast, in marketing department era, marketing efforts were consolidated into one department within the firm where functional activities (e.g., advertising) resided. Here, marketers needed to determine communication between entrepreneurs and customers so that products and services were mixed to meet market demands, giving the marketing department a customer-centric focus. Most other functions within the firm (e.g., accounting) focused more on operations rather than matching entrepreneur-customer needs and therefore the marketing department had little influence over how the organization functioned. Subsequently, during the marketing company era, marketing became the engine of firm's actions. Here, marketing permeated the organization more holistically and as fundamental to most functional areas of organizations (McNair and May, 1976). Warehouse workers, for example, focused more on the customer by handling products with better care. Before this line of thinking developed, managers focused more on efficiency data, quotas, etc. and less on the end users.

Relationship marketing is less focal of the marketing literature during this era. While entrepreneurs started focusing on customers, the value of exchange relationships was less known (Gebhardt, Carpenter, & Sherry, 2006). For example, it was not until this era that prominent theories on social exchange were developed (e.g., Homans, 1958; 1962). Instead, during this era, the focus was on customer needs ahead of transactions with little focus on ex post information. We suspect this is due to a general focus on customer behavior and less focus on relationships between entrepreneurs and customers. History of these eras

[2] There is some debate on what was occurring with supply and demand during this time period. For alternative viewpoints, see Kennedy (1999) as well as Rothbard's (1972) alternative explanations of general overproduction and underconsumption.

now shows that the marketing eras were a transition period between an emphasis on selling and an emphasis on long-term relationships. However, we argue that relationships were a large part of the marketing department era. Furthermore, we believe there is little need to distinguish between these eras (i.e., the various Marketing Eras and the Relationship Market era). This is our stance as given a separation between customer needs and a continuation on customers' needs seems similar enough to merge.

The relationship-marketing era focuses on developing long-term relationships as well as entrepreneurs taking a long-term emphasis on customer needs. To do so, entrepreneurs use information about customers to secure business (Peppers & Rogers, 1993). Technological advancements in data storage during this era are useful but are only iterations of past relationship marketing developments. New technology has provided tools that were not available to entrepreneurs and salespeople of the past. However, these tools merely supplement philosophies of the past that focused on long-term customer needs and relationship marketing research that was already well-established prior to the relationship-marketing era (Fullerton, 1988; Tosdal, 1925).

During the relational marketing era the technological revolution allowed firms to gather, store, and analyze information about customers as not done before. Buzzwords such as *customer relationship management* become of fashion during this time (White, 2010) as entrepreneurs sought out competitive advantages (Rygielski, Wang, & Yen, 2002). As these tools were implemented by business owners as well as larger firms, scholars focused on the relational benefits of doing so (Peppard, 2000). As market-orientated entrepreneurs looked for customer relationship software to fulfill this need, the work of developing relationships was pushed to the forefront of marketing research and scholarship (Bose, 2002). Consequently, this period is now known for relationship-marketing (Varey, 2003). We suggest that this title developed because of technological tools and a focus on helping entrepreneurs manage long-term customer relationships. As such, we argue that relational marketing has long existed. Rather than a new fundamental sector or marketing, entrepreneurs have been using it since commercial exchanged existed.

6. Entrepreneurship in a post-relationship age

Marketing research contends we have moved beyond the relationship marketing era towards what is described as collaborative, social/mobile marketing, and holistic (Kolah, 2014; Kotler, Rackham, & Krishnaswamy, 2006; Newbery, Lean, Moizer, & Haddoud, 2018; Tsai, 2005; White, 2010). This new era of entrepreneurship is a move from opportunity entrepreneurship to identity entrepreneurship, such that individuals are opting to become entrepreneurs as a means of identity (Falck, Heblich, & Luedemann, 2012; Obschonka, Goethner, Silbereisen, & Cantner, 2012). For example, recent research demonstrates that motivations for self-employment are often tied to the entrepreneur's identity. Then, the pursuit to act on this through business endeavors helps to fulfill their identity as seen through crafting, serving the community, or inventing (Cardon, Wincent, Singh, & Drnovsek, 2009; Fauchart & Gruber, 2011; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015). Accordingly, some entrepreneurs may seek out self-employment as a social need or to connect with community member. However, the modern Post-Relationship Era of marketing presents some unique challenges and opportunities for identity entrepreneurs.

Authors have conceptualized this era in varying ways. For example, some focus on how technology and social media to help entrepreneurs stay connected to customers (Kolah, 2014; White, 2010) making marketing a continuous activity, given that customers are allowing constant access through various platforms. Here, customers opt into the relationship, allowing entrepreneurs to continually connect with opportunity to build upon the relationship. This permission-based form of marketing turns out to be the defining characteristic of this new era which extends upon lessons from the relationship marketing era.

While not all scholars recognize the importance of social networks, Kotler et al. (2006) explains that marketers must now go beyond simply focusing on the best interest of their firms and clients. Marketing must be integrated throughout the entire organization to interface and act in society's broader interest. Such conceptualizations also recognize that this new era builds upon, but does not replace, the virtues of previous marketing eras, meaning that long-term and mutually beneficial commercial exchange relationships are powerful tools to help entrepreneurs realize their own long-term goals. Hence, we ask how this evolution of the relationship-marketing era and commercial exchange will unfold and suggest that the change in habits and values of those entering the workforce will inherit the maintenance of these relationships. Technology has effectively negated the need for interpersonal exchange within the marketing channels. Different place/time communications (Berry, 2006) seem to be preferred (Reid & Reid, 2005) to in-person communication. If this is true, we are curious to know how long-term commercial exchange will be governed and how will trust be developed differently between channel partners? How will buyers know of entrepreneurs' intentions? Will the use of relationship marketing still be valuable in nurturing mutually beneficial exchanges or may social media replace such exchanges?

Considering that new entrants to the workforce have never lived without social media, it seems that trust in traditional exchanges will diminish or move towards a more digital means of trust (e.g., data protection) (Labrecque, 2014). Will entrepreneurs seek to hire employees because of their personality and ability to manage business relationships or will their ability to manage several accounts on several different social media platforms supersede the critical skills of the previous marketing eras? Moreover, are these two sets of skills competing or complementary? One possibility is that personality will only matter intra-organizationally.

The absence of interpersonal relationships for entrepreneurs seems difficult to envision, especially in the channels where buyers and sellers are fewer in number (Krafft, Goetz, Mantrala, Sotgiu, & Tillmanns, 2015). Further, identity-based entrepreneurs (e.g., communitarians) will likely create new channels for firms to authentically interact with society. We anticipate the next generations of entrepreneurs and marketers will be comfortable with inheriting distribution channels infused with digital tools. These tools are available and capable of enabling marketing managers to use them as a primary means of relationship management. Thus, relationship marketing is at a pivotal time in its lengthy history. It is impossible to predict the exact direction that relational marketing will take, but we see the possibility of long-term relationships that were built and maintained by the interpersonal interactions of boundary-spanning individuals being replaced over time by less personal digital transactions. This would suggest that they will interact with their sellers through digital platforms that reduce more personal encounters, making it difficult to see how long-term relationships built on trust will continue to exist without evolving (Lisiecka et al., 2016). Entrepreneurs' awareness of, and ability to adapt to, such trends will likely be crucial to their success in the future economy. Without the environmental cues needed for traditional trust building, it will be challenging for long-term mutually beneficial relationships to persist and, without trust, we wonder what relational constructs will be most critical to exchanges and to what extent these exchanges are inefficient due to certain obstacles. (e.g., vulnerability, opportunism, and suspicion). While some smaller communities might be able to limit such obstacles (e.g., opportunism) given that transaction were not entirely market driven, most communities would have faced such challenges.

7. Discussion

We call into question the limited treatment of entrepreneurial contributions to the various marketing eras commonly used to teach business history. Specifically, through our study of entrepreneurs we find many examples suggesting that relationships have been both the catalyst and the glue that has enabled commercial exchange for centuries, dating back to prehistory. Although the presentation of these eras may serve a purpose within other areas of marketing, such as the consumer markets, it is difficult to accept the perpetuation of this construct as representative of all of marketing during the generally accepted time periods. The field of marketing is very broad and diverse, and entrepreneurial relationship building and relational marketing has been present and pervasive throughout its history. The conceptualization of marketing eras as representative of all marketing activity that happened during a period of time is not only non-fact based, but also counterproductive to the development of the field because it encourages scholars to accept, as settled, ideas that deserve further consideration and exploration.

The eras, as traditionally presented, suggest a somewhat homogenized notion of the strategies used by sellers to secure buyers. In the production era, for example, the notion was that all companies needed to do was produce and the end consumer would line up to take advantage of the newly affordable consumer goods. In the sales era, companies simply needed to employ new promotional techniques to move the surplus of their manufactured goods. This concept is the same for the marketing eras and even the relationship-marketing era where all companies, to achieve a competitive advantage, needed to adopt relational principals. Through our re-examination of the history of commerce, we have found the traditional separation of marketing eras to be faulty.

We performed our historical examination by searching for the entrepreneur throughout each era and then considering their motivations along with environmental forces at the time. We find that many previous historians exhibited too narrow of a scope by focusing on marketing strategies and end consumers' satisfaction (Savitt, 1980). Although this makes sense given the amount of marketing research and education dedicated to the behaviors of the end consumer[3], the amount of exchange happening from the source of raw materials to the retailer and the size, scope, risk, commitment, and money being exchanged is normally different from that of the retailer marketing to the end consumer (Ingram, LaForge, Avila, Schwepker, & Williams, 2015). As a result, we suggest that entrepreneurs played a large role across various levels of transactions and relationship-based exchange existed across the supply chain throughout the history of commercial exchange.

Our contention is that the chief problem with the traditional era's model, which has gained broad acceptance across the marketing discipline, is that it focuses on marketing strategies throughout time and does not consider the entrepreneur as managing the supply chain. In locating the entrepreneur, we find that relational strategies have been present and a governing mechanism for commercial exchange since its inception thousands of years ago. From the beginning of the simple trade era, throughout modern marketing, relational, and digital eras, the need for long-term relational exchange has remained consistent and ever-present for most channel intermediaries despite vast and significant changes in technological adoptions.

Pragmatically, "entrepreneurship is not a field of research in any discipline, it is, in fact, a blossoming field that cuts across several disciplines" (Acs & Audretsch, 2006, p. 6). In the same way we have used an entrepreneurial lens to better understand marketing, the way we run our businesses, and marketing underpinnings from entrepreneurship, other disciplines may also apply entrepreneurship in a similar fashion. Entrepreneurs exist at the heart of firms and leave lasting imprints even after they have passed. Marketing like many other areas comprised within firms is heavily influenced by the entrepreneur. Furthermore, marketing exists across levels within firms (i.e., business to consumer and business to business). Considering that founders have profound and lasting effects on their firms and the fact that they often span all levels within a venture it is important for historians to situate them into their historical narratives of commerce. In pursuing this end in marketing history, we propose the following.

Proposition 1. *Firms and marketing endeavors are guided by entrepreneurs, who are motivated to maintain relationships with key customers and suppliers to ensure organizational survival.*

However, how the retailing organization interacts with the end consumer seems to have changed the most throughout the varying eras. As organizations, consumers and technology have become more sophisticated, so have the tools and strategies used by both buyers and sellers to help navigate their commercial exchanges. If, as discussed previously, the dominant focus of the marketing discipline is the end consumer, then viewing the history of marketing through that same lens (which we found is how much of the history of marketing has come to be understood) will inevitability lead to such things as the eras conceptualization of marketing.

The primary area where the relationship seemed to be altered and focused on the short term was in the retailer and end consumer context. Reasons for this included better refrigeration, transportation, the advent of radio, the printing press, and television as well as other communications channels. Marketers became increasingly more skilled at using these tools to communicate with larger, more dispersed, target markets.

However, as these markets became bigger and more dispersed and the products became less expensive and more commoditized, the need to nurture the long-term relationship became less necessary and at the same time increasingly more difficult. Thus, short term, transactional approaches became the dominant form of marketing strategy used by consumer organizations trying to interact with their target markets. To reiterate, as this transformation was occurring, the marketing discipline was becoming increasingly focused on this dynamic while, to a large degree, ignoring how organizations and entrepreneurs within the rest of the channel were communicating and interacting with each other.

The phrase "the more things change, the more they stay the same" is evident within the theme of this article. Many within the channel have adopted advanced technologies to help facilitate exchange: these adoptions have typically been used to help strengthen, not replace, the long-term relationship. The average person now receives more marketing messages in a day than ever before (Sanders, 2017). These messages are communicated through new technologies, allowing the retailing organization to stay in semi-constant contact with their market. However, consumers are now looking for ways to avoid these messages. Opting out, unsubscribing, and refusing to give personal information is common among consumers who are tired of the endless barrage of marketing communications (Donnelly, 2016). Thus, in today's digital marketing era, we predict the retailer experience and customer relationship will continue to evolve at a rapid rate while other members of the channel will continue to build and maintain strong commercial-exchange relationships in the traditional sense. That is, given the scale of purchase and smaller population of customers, relational strategies geared toward channel partners often still involve a high degree of live personal contact, rather than relying on relational strategies based on social media or other digital means. This is not to say that other marketing strategies are not used at varying places within the channel, but that relational exchange is typically the one that yields

[3] The authors of the paper analyzed the marketing department at the university where the two authors are employed. Of the seven-research faculty, five produced a dissertation relating to the end consumer. All of the required marketing classes are either completely dedicated to marketing to end consumers or have a significant portion of the course's content dedicated to them. Approximately one-half of the regularly offered marketing electives are dedicated to the end consumer while the other half are dedicated to marketing in the business-to-business context. The authors identified universities at varying levels and conducted a similar analysis. This analysis yielded comparable results. Although anecdotal and in support of the authors' beliefs, these results appear to hold true throughout the marketing discipline at institutions in higher education.

the best results for the firm and is, thus, the dominant strategy. Hence, we propose the following.

Proposition 2. *Retail outlets and technologies change rapidly overtime affecting business to consumer relational marketing strategies, while channel partnerships are slower to change making traditional relationships central in business to business marketing strategies.*

7.1. Conclusions

We conclude by noting that the paradigm of the marketing eras as accepted in most marketing histories is simply inadequate and in need of significant revision. This revision should be interdisciplinary and perhaps best left to the scholars that study the various sub-disciplines of marketing, as they will be the ones most capable of telling the story and explaining the contribution of the part to the whole for each marketing sub-discipline.

Scholars and researchers in the marketing channels, sales, retailing, consumer behavior, pricing, new product development, advertising, and other marketing sub-disciplines most assuredly have different histories throughout the development of marketing as a discipline. Each sub-discipline deserves to be explored and their lessons taught to the discipline as a whole instead of capitulating to a generalized storyline of what every transaction looked like in every market over the course of decades or even centuries.

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