

Roughing out a Sobering (?) Research Paradigmatic Schema for Marketing and other Social Phenomena Studies

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Introduction

Henrikki is (among other things) a philosophically-oriented person. Already in his early theses, there was a robust philosophical clang (Tikkanen, 1996; 1997). The licentiate's thesis ("The Network Approach in Industrial Marketing Research") and, particularly, his doctoral dissertation ("A Network Approach to Industrial Business Processes: a Theoretical and Empirical Analysis") contain ordinary empirical analyses of business marketing cases. However, it seemed to be foremost the paradigmatic positions and the philosophical orientations in which Henrikki was primarily interested. Philosophy of science issues played an influential role in his studies, revealing somewhat clearly Henrikki's strong relativist-constructivist stances at the time.

Later, Henrikki's ongoing research indicated that he was no longer a mere relativist/constructivist in his scientific orientations. Studies with "constructivist," "realist," even "positivist" spirits regularly appear in his record of publications. Henrikki is evidently a multifaceted, open-minded, non-dogmatic researcher who, instead of letting paradigms in some way, for ideological or some other reasons, restrict his research endeavors, likes to operate flexibly across paradigmatic fields and can disregard the silliest paradigmatic assumptions. He considers the paradigm to be a practicable instrument or tool rather than

deeply rooted personal weltanschauung or ideological value judgment. As a researcher, he seems to escape paradigmatic categorizations like “positivist,” “interpretivist,” or “criticist”. He is more of a paradigmatic instrumentalist or pragmatist, always prepared to play the type of paradigm game called for by each research or literary project.

To develop into a paradigmatic all-around player requires knowledge of the paradigmatic assumptions. This further requires extensive reading and the ability to grasp highly abstract, complicated, and contradictory philosophical discourses that may be oppressive and anything but clear. As a well-educated, intelligent, and experienced person with decent judgment, Henrikki undoubtedly plays paradigm games rather effortlessly. His scientific disposition has lately been developed from usual business research methodologies towards applying historical perspective and methods to business and strategy studies. This level of talent is not the case for everyone. Many novices and even more experienced researchers become agonized in trying to grasp divergent paradigmatic discussions, which at times are more likely to confuse and mystify than illuminate. To salute Henrikki’s multi-paradigmatic disposition, this paper attempts to produce a down-to-earth classification of scientific research paradigms and show that “positivist,” “interpretive/constructivist,” and “critical” paradigms can live in peaceful, commensurable, coexistence and be interwoven in some aspects. We will mainly concentrate primarily on theory of knowledge, i.e. epistemological issues. But transitory notifications about metaphysics/ontology and methodology cannot be avoided.

Research paradigm classifications in marketing and social sciences

The paradigm concept has many different meanings. Sometimes, it is just a casual alternative to theory, theoretical approach, discipline, school of thought, or method (Hassard, 1993).

Most commonly, however, paradigm refers to a particular established way of understanding the nature of science and scientific research in various philosophical orientations. Paradigms are based on rational assumptions about the broad subjective-objective continuum of ontology (the nature of reality, or idealist/nominalist vs. materialist/realist), human nature (like voluntarism vs. determinism), epistemology (grounds and types of knowledge like post-positivism vs. positivism), and methodology (the way of investigating and obtaining the experience, like idiographic vs. nomothetic) (e.g., Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Each broad set of assumptions is largely interconnected, meaning that taking a certain position on one level could automatically lead to particular positions on other levels: "...connectedness according to different ontologies, epistemologies, and models of human nature are likely to incline social scientists towards different methodologies." (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, xiii) In addition to philosophical assumptions, research paradigms rest on assumptions about the nature of society/organization (such as stability/regulation/status quo vs. social change/liberation/emancipation). Burrell and Morgan's (1979) classical sociological paradigm grouping relies on the dimensions of subjective-objective (which rests on assumptions on ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology) and stability-change (based on assumptions about the nature of society/organization) labeled as "radical humanist," "radical structuralist," "interpretive," and "functionalist."

Different paradigmatic "-isms" and paradigmatic labels have drastically increased since the 1960s and 1970s (see, e.g., Kavanagh, 1994). In marketing, discussions about research paradigms, their relationships, and their superiority have also been extensive, largely following related studies in other social sciences and philosophy. Maclaran et al. (2009), for example, bring forward among others "fallibilistic realism" (Hunt, 1984, 2002, 2003), "critical realism," (Easton, 2002), "critical pluralism," (Siegel, 1988), "critical relativism," (Anderson, 1983), "critical theoretical paradigm," (Bradshaw and Firat, 2007; McDonagh,

2002; Murray and Ozanne, 1991, 1997), “feminist paradigm,” (Bristor and Fischer, 1993, 1995; Maclaran and Catterall, 2000), “humanist paradigm,” (Monieson, 1988), “posthumanist paradigm,” (Campbell et al., 2006), “postmodern paradigm,” (Brown, 1995, 1998; Sherry, 1991) and “postcolonialist paradigm” (Jack, 2008). Different research paradigmatic approaches are now commonly categorized, much in the spirit of Burrell and Morgan, into broad and internally heterogeneous clusters labeled as “positivist paradigm,” “interpretivist/constructivist paradigm,” and “critical paradigm” (e.g., Murray and Ozanne, 1991; Maclaran et al., 2009).

Since the days of lively philosophical paradigm debates (“paradigm wars”) about three-four decades ago (during and after the rise of the so-called “interpretive/linguistic/postmodern turn”), a tranquil philosophical pluralism seems to have prevailed in current marketing and other social science discourses. Frustration and an ad nauseam type of mood reigns among the majority of business researchers about the philosophy of science. However, despite the absence of ostentatious debates and great schisms, many long-established controversies and confusions about the nature and interrelatedness of scientific research paradigms are still around. Paradigms and sub-paradigms are so heterogeneous and numerous, and descriptions of them in the vast literature corpus are so messy, that it is no wonder many scientists do not consider them significant or meaningful. However, relatively institutionalized and taken-for-granted paradigmatic divisions and related unquestioned dogmas may surprisingly and negatively affect the endeavor of social sciences by capturing people’s thinking into the “paradigmatic prisons.” Therefore, we think it is important not to sweep misleading paradigmatic assumptions under the carpet. We believe the current, still fairly entrenched and unclear paradigmatic classifications could be primarily developed by

- 1) adopting reasonable scientific-humanist thinking that leans on non-reductive/non-eliminative emergent materialism and multi-level understanding of reality,

- 2) dropping the misleading research paradigm labels and renaming, defining, and grouping them according to general scientific (marketing) research practices, and
- 3) removing the simplifying and strangling claims/suggestions that sets of ontological and epistemological assumptions have direct, compelling implications for methodological choices.

Ontology-originated confusion in the research paradigm discourse

It is more or less astounding how research paradigms, especially “positivistic” and “interpretive/constructivist” paradigms, are still contradictory and poorly defined, not only in early phase Ph.D. research plans but also in the relatively recent journal articles and books on methodology. Paradigms are still (at least implicitly) set against each other and considered as mutually exclusive lines of research, representing almost entirely different, separate worlds. Studies of paradigms are various and produce many types of knowledge/answers to a variety of research questions. But, now and then, quite commonly, the division between paradigms is justified in vague and restricted ontological/metaphysical terms and assumptions. Paradigms (e.g., positivist/realist and postpositivist/interpretative/constructivist paradigms) are claimed somehow to represent profoundly different worldviews and ideas about human nature. It is no wonder that inter-paradigm discourses may quickly turn ambiguous and frustrating, leading to logical and conceptual deadlocks.

The origins of confusion probably connect to the longstanding, polarized ontological division of reality into the materialistic, deterministic “nature” and the idealistic “culture” formed by free-willed human beings. Quite astonishingly, the division still seems to haunt contemporary research paradigm classifications. The dualistic views of science date back to the 19th century when research was divided into the materialistic natural science type (law-based

causal explanations, nomothetic) and the idealistic human science type (meaning-based understanding of special/unique human life, idiographic) (Dilthey, 1883, see also Makkreel & Rodi, 1989; Windelband, 1894/1911). Assumptions of causality in the socio-cultural (therefore, also business-/marketing-related) world have been connected to views on denying the free will and stressing the materialistic and deterministic nature of the world. In contrast, the interpretative/constructivist assumptions that deny the cause-effect type of thinking would echo the idealism, free will, and subjectivist-voluntarist nature of the world and human beings. However, causal-type assumptions do not necessarily presuppose determinism any more than interpretative approaches reflect voluntarism. There are many discussions and declarations about these issues in the literature, but no sound arguments as to why the idea of free will makes causal thinking impossible in the socio-cultural sphere of reality.

Furthermore, unconvincing arguments have been presented contending that endless interpretivism/constructivism expels the goblins of determinism. As Max Weber stated, free will, determinism, and voluntarism are “meta-scientific, transcendental, speculations,” or ontological doctrines/faiths that have nothing to do with the analytical and interpretative practices of the social sciences (Ringer, 1994; Töttö, 2004).

In summary, the confusion between research paradigms is likely to originate from molding the epistemological and ontological matters (e.g., Kavanagh, 1994), that is, the ontological and epistemological issues are not kept separate in research paradigm-related considerations (noticeable in, e.g., Schwandt, 1998). When reality and observations/knowledge of reality are mixed constantly together, peculiar viewpoints may occur, even in the solemn scientific research literature. For example, extreme subjective idealism (which is often connected to the interpretive/constructivist research paradigm) sees the human mind as ontologically primary and assumes that the material world and the socio-cultural world do not exist without people or researchers constructing it. Or, concrete and abstract things do not exist apart from the

individual's experience and knowledge of those things; reality is an extension of the observer's/interpreter's subjective ego (cf. Ahonen, 1996). Similarly, eliminative, reductionist materialism/physicalism (often connected to the positivist research paradigm) contends that, ontologically, human action is ultimately based on material things (physics and biology), i.e. on neurophysiological processes and can be also ultimately reduced back to them without losing any information/knowledge/understanding (cf. some physicists' idea of megalomaniac "theory of everything," see Niiniluoto, 2002).

The mixing of metaphysical/ontological disputes about human nature and the nature of reality with epistemological issues –that are primarily relevant in the research paradigm discussion– causes confusion and unnecessary confrontations among researchers. Similarly, endless metaphysical encounters are regularly present, e.g., between religion and evolutionary biology, between body and soul, and between nature and nurture. In the spirit of proper enlightenment, the scientific discourse on the research paradigms (since causalities, explanations, interpretations, and understandings predominantly belong to the epistemology) could simply abandon or narrow the metaphysical speculations and associated dogmas related to human nature, free will, and determinism. They are, at least in the light of intellectual history and current human knowledge, largely unresolvable, endless disputes that do not advance research paradigmatic understanding in any meaningful direction.

If one still desires to discuss the ontological/fundamental nature of reality, the most sensible and plausible way is probably to sweep away reductionist (both eliminative materialism and eliminative idealism) and strictly dualistic views (nature/matter vs. culture/mind) and build on the somewhat plausible idea of emergent materialism. According to our present-day knowledge, that is probably the most conceivable starting point in ontological questions. Emergent materialism adopts a scientific view of reality under which human beings are products of long historical development, belong to the order of primates, and still (very

slowly) develop as a result of biological and cultural evolution. Despite being an animal among other animals, human beings are different and unique in the sense that they are capable of linguistic, symbolic, abstract thinking that enables the creation of art, science, and cultural institutions. Self-conscious, rational minds also empower human beings to be conscious of the moral/ethical responsibilities for their actions (Niiniluoto, 2015).

Karl Popper's (1972) three-world/level ontology offers a reasonably convenient principle for pondering the "Spinozist" emergent materialist ontology in marketing (and hence, social sciences as the whole). In this view, level one includes material, physical objects, events, and processes (atoms, energy fields, stones, trees, stars, galaxies, and electrochemical processes that comprise "nature"). Level two embraces the subjective human mind, including both (2a) the biological/evolutionary-psychological, mainly unconscious or subconscious "nature-linked" mind (instincts, drives, and emotions), and (2b) the learned/socially-developed self-conscious memory (rational thinking, self-reflecting, internalized norms). The human mind consists of individual states and incidences of perception that originate from both the unconscious and conscious levels (thoughts, experiences, feelings, pains, perceptions, images, memories, etc.). Level three consists of all those (shared/collective) things are created and formed as a result of human action and social interaction. In a broad sense, level three contains all the socio-cultural aspects around us (societies, cultural norms and habits, artifacts, languages, concepts, money, religions, science, social institutions, utility articles, and artworks that comprise "culture").

Popper (1972) did not want to prioritize any worlds/levels as such or keep them strictly separated but represented emergent materialism in which world/level one forms, in a historical sense, the necessary level of reality from which world/level two (human mind), and world/level three (society and culture) have evolved as a result of biological and cultural evolution. According to emergent materialism, levels two and three cannot exist without level

one. However, level two, although having feedback loops to the lower level, cannot be sufficiently reduced back to level one (subjective self-consciousness does not reduce itself to neurophysiological concepts). And level three cannot be cut back to world/level one or world/level two. The upper levels have developed their own unique, “emergent” features that cannot be made understandable by conceptualizations of the lower-level worlds. Therefore, society and culture exist, not only in an individual’s subjective mind, but they have external, shared intersubjective elements (e.g., the concepts of “social fact,” “collective consciousness,” and “social construction”, see Giddens, 1972; Hacking, 2000). Thus, the saying: “From nature via human mind to culture, but not back” (Panula, 1997, 17).

According to three-level ontological thinking, humans are multi-dimensional, material, conscious, living, thinking, feeling, partly free-willed, partly deterministic beings that regularly interact with nature, material things, and other people. The human being is a cultural animal, the nature of which would remain excessively narrow if the perspectives are limited to reductionist materialism, eliminative idealism, physics, psychology, sociology, existentialism, postmodernism, relativism, humanism, or any other “ism” or “ology” (see Niiniluoto, 2015). The thoughts above briefly presented the idea of emergent materialism as a moderate, non-reductionist approach that leans on contemporary scientific views of reality and human nature. And, despite realism as an adopted ontological starting point, a strategy that offers high degrees of freedom when it comes to theoretical perspectives, levels and units of analysis, and combinations thereof. This ontological posture does not assume limits to the options for epistemological research paradigms (let alone the various research methodologies). Instead, it allows the epistemological/theoretical relationism/perspectivism according to which “what is” is different from “what can be known about it.”

Standard classification of research paradigms in marketing and social sciences: some problematic issues

A variety of (epistemological) research paradigms and classifications are present in the literature. Standard categorization divides those paradigms into three broad classes: “positivist paradigm,” “interpretivist/constructivist paradigm,” and “critical paradigm” (e.g., Murray and Ozanne, 1991; Maclaran et al., 2009). However, due to long-lasting disputes, misapprehensions, and vague, simplified, or even strangling connections between ontological, epistemological (and onwards methodological) levels and the constant reproduction of these misconceptions in seminars and publications, we suggest slight improvements to the current paradigm classification. The prevailing classification is not entirely flawed but still contains so many sloppy assumptions, simplified definitions, and a heavy ideological/polemic burden of the past that sketching a new one might be in order.

Vagueness and almost hopeless confusion are reflected in the “loaded” and simplified treatment of paradigmatic labels. For example, “positivism” is still a very misunderstood, simplified, and internally fragmented paradigmatic stamp. As commonly known, there is not just one positivism, but different conceptions with various amounts of empiricist and realist content (such as Comte’s classical positivism, Vienna Circle’s logical positivism/neopositivism/logical empiricism, and Popper’s falsificationism). Even scientific/critical realism is sometimes included under the positivism heading (see Töttö, 2000). According to Niiniluoto (1980), based on various positivist views, it is possible to produce 64 philosophical research combinations with positivist contents. “Positivist paradigm,” in its contemporary ambiguity, is, therefore, more likely to add confusion than clarification to the field of research paradigms.

If the term “positivism” is vague, the same applies to “interpretive/constructivist.” It is challenging to state what these terms eventually mean (see, e.g., Schwandt, 1998; Hacking, 2000). Schwandt’s (1998) presentation of numerous interpretive/constructive approaches reflects the prevalent obscurity in the field. In marketing, on the other hand, the primary difference between positivist and interpretive research paradigms is often simplistically reduced to a division between quantitative and qualitative research. This also does not hold up under closer examination. It is typical for the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm to emphasize the dualistic ontological ethos. It tends to divide reality into two strictly separate worlds: nature (in which causal relationships and laws are prevalent) and culture (in which no causal relationships and laws prevail). Wilhelm Dilthey (1883, see Töttö, 2004) postures that the main task of the natural sciences is to arrive at law-based causal explanations. In contrast, the core task of the human sciences is to achieve a meaning-based, interpretive understanding of human life. These divisional views still hold a fairly strong position in discussion about the social scientific paradigms.

However, restricting the interpretation and meaning-giving to the interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm is deceptive. It is a simplified misapprehension to think that in “positivist/realist” studies, knowledge is just a superficial, direct impression of the reality/sense data in the researcher’s mind and consciousness. All types of research inevitably include interpretivist/constructivist features. That is, in high-quality social science studies, a serene coexistence of causal-type reasoning and interpretivist/constructivist (hermeneutic, meaning-analytic) flair usually prevails. Therefore, the label “meaning-analytic/semiotic approach to texts” would probably better describe the many studies belonging to the current “interpretive/constructivist” paradigm (cf. also Töttö, 2004).

The third member of the standard research paradigm classification is “the critical paradigm”. It commonly connects closely with the “interpretive paradigm” and disconnects from the

“positivist paradigm.” It is also semantically ambiguous, although there is no great danger of severe misunderstandings. However, scientific research, representing the “positivist paradigm,” is always inherently critical because critical thinking is the general virtue of all scientific research, no matter what the represented paradigm. Scientific methods and theoretical constructs are examples of critical thinking, mostly striving for such intellectual ends: clarity, precision, accuracy, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic. (cf. Lynch, 2003).

However, the term “critical paradigm,” used in the general social science research paradigm classification, does not refer to criticalness as a mere cognitive-logical endeavor. Instead, it refers to a group of research practices using a set of moral values, attitudes, and orientations as (normative/prescriptive) starting points/analytical orientations of a scientific study (e.g., Galtung, 1977). Maybe the term “value-critical” or “moral-critical” would be a correct heading for the studies belonging to the “critical paradigm”. So, it would belong to the theoretic-empirical, meaning-analytic/semiotic-oriented studies that examine the hidden dimensions of ideological power in various ‘empirical’ texts/expressions and/or conceptual approaches. These kind of “value-critical” studies are essential (and already fairly common) research orientations in the field of marketing and social sciences.

Research paradigmatic schema: a preliminary sketch

Without sinking into an elaborate discussion of the numerous research paradigms and linked philosophies, sub-philosophies, and their variants (see, e.g., Hunt, 2003; Niiniluoto, 1980), we want to employ a parsimonious yet sufficiently encompassing division of research paradigms that applies to the research on social phenomena (including marketing). As a starting point, we assumed a non-reductionist, non-divided Popper’s moderate ontological realism/emergent materialism, under which reality and human beings form a multileveled,

interconnected, complex, and (in a qualitative sense) rich and multifaceted whole. Features of nature, individual subjective consciousness, as well as collective inter-subjective consciousness, are considered to be non-reductively interrelated. To clarify the classification of research paradigms in marketing as a scientific inquiry, the labels linked to the prevailing standard classification of “positivist,” “interpretivist,” and “critical paradigm” will need to be abandoned, redefined, and communicated differently than the current classification.

According to Max Weber, a proper scientific statement in the social sciences consists of two adequacies: adequacy on the level of meaning, and the causal adequacy. Weber’s view is that understanding (or “Verstehen”/meaning interpretation) and causal explanation/causal-type reasoning are correlative and intertwined rather than opposite principles in the social and historical sciences. Intuitions/interpretations of meaning can be transformed into valid knowledge only if incorporated into theoretical structures that aim at causal-type reasoning (see Coser, 1977). Wilhelm Dilthey’s (Dilthey, 1883, see also Makkreel & Rodi, 1989) classical distinction between natural sciences (arriving at causal explanation) and human sciences (arriving at meaning-based understanding) are in a way combined in Weber’s view, which includes both meaning-based understanding (meaning analysis/semiotic analysis of text/expression) and causal-type reasoning (analysis of event reality). On the other hand, Dilthey’s idea of lingual- and symbol-based understanding is essential in meaning-analytic/semiotic studies that focus on analyzing the world primarily through texts (expressions, pictures, symbols, signs, etc.) and aiming to identify and interpret their meanings and cultural categorizations.

Following the line of argument above, the basic research paradigms/orientations in this paper are divided into three broad categories:

1. Theoretical-empirical studies focused on real-life events, primarily in a causal-type reasoning sense (what happens, happened, how, why), and secondarily in a text/language interpretation/semiotic sense (what is/was said/spoken, how is/was said/spoken, how much is/was said/spoken).
2. Theoretical-empirical studies focused on real-life events primarily in a text/language interpretation/semiotic sense (what is/was said/spoken, how is/was said/spoken, how much is/was said/spoken).
3. Theoretical studies on the concepts/constructs/discourses/literature of logical/philosophical and meaning-analytic (semiotic) sense.

Furthermore, by adding the positive/descriptive–normative/prescriptive dimension¹ and loosely combining interrelated and complementary ideas from Galtung (1977; 1981), Arndt (1985), Buchdahl (1983), Hirschman (1985), Panula (2000), and Töttö (2004), we ended up with a division according to what type of marketing (and other social sciences) is associated with each of the six accompanying research paradigms/orientations A–F (see Figure 1).

¹ In our outline of basic research orientations/paradigms in marketing and social sciences, (cf. Galtung, 1977) values have been brought—in addition to data and theory sentences—into the discussion (see also Arndt, 1985). Adding value sentences to the research orientation context seems to be reasonable since the pure value neutrality in marketing/business science—as with any other social science—is more or less a utopic ideal. To ignore values entirely can result in what C. Wright Mills (1959) terms “abstracted empiricism,” i.e., concentrating just on listing the trivial facts, common-sense, self-explanatory familiarities of marketing as a result of, e.g., overemphasizing the fine details of statistical techniques. This does not have to mean, however, that value-neutral facts have no role in marketing, or that marketing science should be dominated by some ideology or dogma. In his classical essay “Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy,” Weber (see Shils & Finch, 1949) sought to give value-free facts their role without refuting that social science is inspired by value-relevant interests, e.g., values can themselves be studied, or a researcher’s or financier’s values may influence the research topic choice, but the research process itself should nevertheless be kept as objective as possible.

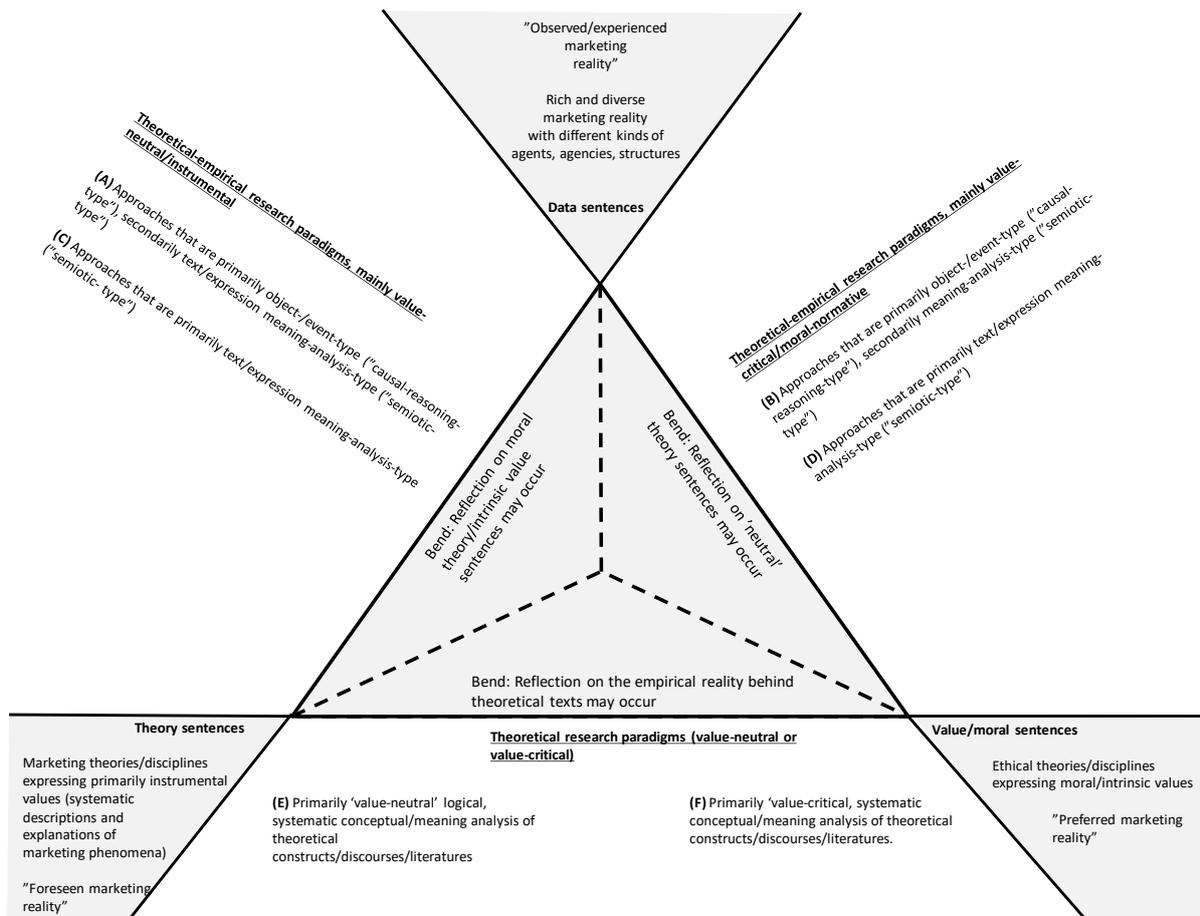


Figure 1 Classification of research paradigms/orientations in marketing (cf. Galtung, 1977)

The six research paradigms in the data-theory-value triangle (Galtung, 1977) include the following:

(A) Positive-oriented ('value-neutral') theoretical-empirical studies on social phenomena are primarily based on a causal-type of reasoning and secondarily, on semiotic meaning analysis (i.e., interpretive/constructivist/hermeneutic flair).

(B) Moral-normatively-oriented ('value-critical'), theoretical-empirical studies on social phenomena are based primarily on causal-type reasoning and secondarily, on semiotic meaning analysis (i.e., interpretive/constructivist/hermeneutic flair).

(C) Positive-oriented ('value-neutral') theoretic-empirical semiotic

(interpretivist/constructivist/hermeneutic) studies on social phenomena based primarily on the analysis of texts/expressions of the studied phenomena.

(D) Moral-normatively-oriented ('value-critical'), theoretic-empirical semiotic

(interpretivist/constructivist/hermeneutic) studies on social phenomena based primarily on the analysis of texts/expressions of the studied phenomena.

(E) Purely theoretical studies concentrated on the positive-oriented (value-neutral) logical, systematic conceptual/meaning analysis of theoretical constructs/discourses/literature.

(F) Purely theoretical studies concentrated on the moral-normatively-oriented (value-critical), systematic conceptual analysis of theoretical constructs/discourses/literature.

The six research orientations/paradigms are briefly described below.

(A) Theoretic-empirical, positive/"value-neutral," causal-semiotic-oriented studies

In research orientation (A), data sentences are compared with theory sentences, and the latter adjusted to the former (Galtung, 1977). Data sentences contain information aiming to define the empirical (observed) world. Theory sentences (hypotheses, propositions, frameworks, or assumptions forming the underlying theory) aim to explain, understand, and to some extent, predict the foreseen world. In this scientific orientation, what comes first chronologically is of secondary importance. It could be a data sentence, which is subsequently explained by the theory sentence (induction/empiricism), or a theory sentence, which then foresees the content of the data sentence (deduction/rationalism). Practically, both modes of reasoning co-exist in different variations in scientific research processes (the abductive mode of reasoning). Of primary significance is the correspondence between reality and theory, or the degree of

confirmation, and not whether the method proceeds inductively or deductively. In this orientation, data sentences are more durable than theory sentences; reality is stronger than theory². The conclusion for the theory sentences is expressed in terms of true or false (Galtung, 1977), truthlikeness (verisimilitude), or falselikeness (incertitude) (Niiniluoto, 2002). Studies representing this orientation incorporate interpretations of meaning to theoretical structures focused on causal reasoning and causal-types of descriptions/outlines (cf. Coser, 1977).

Research orientation (A) is a “value-neutral-oriented” approach that excludes moral-normative considerations. However, in real life, the procedures for reaching value-objectivity in scientific research are often not straightforward and simple. Therefore, some “value-critical” aspects become mixed with this neutrally toned orientation. As shown by the dotted line in Figure 1, this research orientation may trend toward value sentences.

There is no clear cut, compelling connection between research orientation (A) and the research method types. Research orientation (A) may contain studies with theoretical/conceptual + quantitative, theoretical/conceptual + qualitative, and theoretical /conceptual + qualitative & quantitative (“mixed”) methods. This is based on the assumption that the type of applied research methodology is a matter of research purpose, research questions and their interrogative form, and not the philosophical or paradigmatic stance per se.

² It should be noted that in practice, theory sentences that are considered highly valid a priori are not necessarily directly given up or rejected if they do not receive support from the data. Instead, one may look for low validity/reliability in the data sentences/look for new data producing correspondence in a justifiably way that in a sense may resemble value-criticist studies (that employ, e.g., generally accepted, highly institutionalized, a priori fairness principles as a starting point in research, see Galtung, 1977).

(B) Theoretic-empirical, normative/value-critical, causal-semiotic-oriented studies

In this research paradigm, data sentences are evaluated against value sentences or ethical principles/theories (see Galtung, 1977). Unlike research paradigm (A), value/moral theoretical sentences are considered more robust than data sentences. This orientation puts aside the “pure intellectual curiosity” that is the prime mover of orientation (A) and instead favors “critical awareness” or value-laden premises, which at some point are based on a comparison of data with values.

In this paradigm, something observed (or projected from the observed) is rejected or considered unacceptable. Conversely, something unobserved is deemed to be preferred and desired. In other words, in this orientation, values (“preferred”) are seen as superior to “neutral” theories (“foreseen”) in directing scientific activity. And because value sentences are stronger than data sentences, reality should be changed; some unethical existing structures of reality (some prevailing unethical marketing practices) must become emancipated.

Examples in the field of research would be a critical study about real-life consumption and linked marketing practices in which the consumers’ and marketers’ actions and thoughts provide the data sentences, and the researcher analyzes and interprets the data. So, in light of a priori preferences (e.g., ethical principles, fair marketing codes, and consumer protection laws), the researcher assesses the validity of the data and derives conclusions in the form of normative statements/recommendations advancing the ethical good in the studied reality.

Research orientation (B) is a ‘value-critical’ approach emphasizing the importance of moral-normative considerations. However, in real life, scientific research is seldom entirely (from top to bottom and from left to right) moral-critical. Therefore, it is likely that some “value-neutral” aspects become parts of the value-critical orientation. Thus, as shown by the dotted

line in Figure 1, this research orientation may trend toward value-neutral theory sentences.

Otherwise, the assumptions linked to orientation (B) about intertwined nature between causal adequacy and adequacy of meaning, as well as availability of various empirical methods are similar to those of orientation (A).

(C) Theoretic-empirical, positive/"value-neutral" studies focused on real-life conditions primarily in the empirical meaning-analytic/semiotic sense

In research orientation (C), data sentences are matched with theory sentences, but in an meaning-analytic manner. Reality, or the world, is described primarily through texts (pictures, symbols, expressions, etc.), and some features of reality ('deep structures') may be primarily revealed by empirical meaning/semiotic analysis of ways of speaking or expression. Language, in its broadest form, is assumed to reflect the culture's general way of structuring and understanding reality. For example, consumers' speech and stories about their consumption habits or experiences are organized culturally and offer various frames of meaning. Memories, pictures, dreams, fantasies, and myths stored in memory and consciousness are assumed to have complex effects on the significant parts of human motivations and actions (e.g., Holbrook, 1986; Panula, 2000).

In the meaning-analytic/semiotic approach, theory and data sentences are considered almost equal. The interchangeability between theory and data sentences increases the flexibility of the orientation (see Galtung, 1977). Semiotic orientation maintains its focus on language and does not (directly) meddle empirically with event reality behind texts/language. Not at least in the sense of empiricist/realistic analyses aiming to reach correspondence in terms of truthlikeness, but more like consensus and/or coherence between lingual expressions.

According to Holbrook (1986), this approach builds primarily on the researcher's personal

introspection and subjective judgment and finds its primary supporting evidence in the body of the text itself rather than in any sort of empirical verification.

Although it is primarily value-neutral and emphasizes positive intellectual curiosity as a starting point, research orientation (C) may adopt value-critical tones and trend toward a value-critical orientation. This is indicated with the dotted line in Figure 1. As the language, meanings, and cultural starting points/positions of the actors/narrators are emphasized in this highly flexible orientation, the linked research questions and methods represent primarily the theoretical/conceptual + qualitative type (concentrating on studying subjects' linguistic meaning. What does/did individual or group "S" mean by signs, acts, practices, events, phenomena, or other objects? How does/did individual or group S experience perceive or understand "K"?, cf. Töttö, 2004).

(D) Theoretical-empirical, normative/value-critical studies focused on real-life conditions primarily through empirical meaning-analytic/semiotic sense

In orientation (D), value sentences are matched with data sentences in a meaning-analytic sense. The general idea is similar to orientation (C); this orientation also emphasizes empirical meaning analysis/semiotic analysis of the world through texts (pictures, symbols, expressions etc.). Instead of "value-neutral" theories, this orientation employs "value-normative"/moral theories/premises as starting points. The observed texts/expressions relative to the world will be reflected in the preferred world through a meaning analysis/semiotic analysis of language to expose ideological deep structures and meanings that guide human perception. In addition, value-theory and data sentences are considered almost equal; the interchangeability between value-theory and data sentences offers plasticity to the analysis. In cases of inadequacy/incoherence, the preferred (value sentences) can be

adjusted to the foreseen (data sentences), or the other way around (see Galtung, 1977).

Although research orientation (D) is primarily value-critical, emphasizing the desired moralities as starting points of its studies, it may also trend toward a value-neutral orientation (shown by the dotted line in Figure 1). In a methodological sense, orientation (D) leans primarily to the theoretical/conceptual + qualitative type.

(E) Positive/"value-neutral" theoretical studies and (F) and normative/"value-critical" theoretical studies

The third group of research paradigms/orientations consists of studies in which the role of theories, concepts, and theoretical discourses is exclusive. Theoretical studies, as the name expresses, keep the analyses within the theoretical language and existing literature and do not directly intervene empirically in observed reality; theoretical studies may, however, indirectly trend toward empirical reality, as indicated by the dotted line in Figure 1. Theoretical studies consist of positive/"value-neutral" (E) and normative/"value-critical" (F) orientations.

Positive-oriented theoretical studies (E) refer to logical/philosophical, systematic analyses and reviews of theoretical constructs and discourses/literatures. The conceptual or theoretical analysis aims to systematically describe and clarify concepts or theoretical perspectives to produce knowledge regarding their amounts, manifestations, dimensions, levels, patterns, and forms of change. Although "value-neutral" theoretical studies typically concentrate on theoretical sentences, some relation to the value sentences may occur in the sense of adjusting/developing the theories/concepts in an ethically more preferred direction (Galtung, 1977). In value-critical theoretical studies (F), the starting point lies in moral/ethical theories or viewpoints. The primary focus is the meaning-analysis/semiotic analysis of the rhetoric and style of conceptualization of theoretical approaches and discourses (cf. Fischer & Bristor,

1994; Panula, 2000). Studying, illuminating, and deconstructing the ideological nature of metaphors and expressions used in theoretical discourses are the central focus of “value-critical” theoretical studies (E).

Conclusion

In this paper, we sought to produce a general, concrete/down-to-earth classification of marketing/social-scientific research paradigms/orientations. Admittedly, our classification is nothing more than a preliminary, simplified, narrow sketch – a mere work-in-progress with many inadequacies and possibly faulty reasoning. On the other hand, all science is preliminary most of the time. The focus of this paper is to argue for the necessity of unraveling the ambiguous, speculative, simplifying, and agonizing conceptual connections between ontological, epistemological, and methodological levels in marketing and social sciences.

So, although undoubtedly having many potentially useful features, research paradigm classifications also include numerous unclear, opaque philosophical assumptions and diverse conceptual meanings on the one hand, and so many simplifications on the other hand that they easily turn into stuffy “prison-houses of language” (cf. Jameson, 1972) restricting open-minded, pluralistic thinking among researchers if taken too seriously. We are aware that one more classification system on the top of others does not necessarily generate many benefits. We have nevertheless tried to shake those mindsets including simplifying connections between ontology, epistemology, and methodology as well as avoid using current customary paradigm labels and ambiguous “isms”. Our approach seeks to base the research orientation/paradigm classification on concrete/illustrative labels that reflect both research “in action” and research “in principio.” This refers to both the generally applied practices and to

the commonly acknowledged principles of striving for knowledge in marketing and social sciences.

Technically, various research methodologies seem to be relatively “paradigm-independent” tools that can be utilized flexibly in many research contexts and for diverse purposes.

Achieving the goals of scientific knowledge can mean applying numerous means (methodologies, theoretical research orientations) in a flexible manner. It is senseless to lock oneself into a single paradigm and restrict one’s research potential. Instead, eclectic thinking, i.e. multi-paradigmatic, complementary, epistemological relationism/perspectivism and sociological imagination (Mills, 1959) are desirable aspirations. Starting points for all scientific endeavors should fairly elastically aim to construct and solve new and interesting research questions/problems, not at producing and reproducing inflexible, sealed limits between various research paradigms. As Nietzsche emphasized, “We can better understand by allowing more eyes to see, more perspectives and voices to speak.” (Spencer, 2016, 34). We believe that, by consistently transgressing the senseless paradigmatic borders, Henriikki has given us an example.

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