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Systemic and service dominant socio-economic development: Legal, judicial and market capacity building in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Greater understanding of marketing systems and sub-systems is imperative if living standards and the quality of life are to improve in developing economies. As part of a World Bank project to aid in legal capacity building and socio-economic development, the authors are administering a field study in Bangladesh to assess that country's legal system, and other key elements of its marketing system. Site visits and depth interviews were conducted with numerous stakeholders of the legal system. Drawing on those observations and interviews, and literature from macromarketing systems analysis, marketing service encounters, and service-dominant logic (SDL) the authors propose a model for explication of the judicial system, with broader implications for the marketing system. In doing so it is hoped that insights can be gleaned to help judicial authorities and public policy makers involved in reform efforts in Bangladesh and other developing economies. Such perspective will enable interested change-agents to better examine the entire system and to create a more transparent and efficient legal process that will improve service provision, marketing system efficacy, and justice, and ultimately will enhance economic and societal well-being.

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1. Introduction

Service-dominant Logic (SDL) is a growing force in the marketing academy. Initiated by Vargo and Lusch (2004), SDL is a seminal change in perspective; a reconsideration of marketing and its processes. The marketing discipline increasingly was/is viewed as too narrowly focused; it had slipped into what can be characterized as a micro dominated field of study. As an alternative to this paradigm of micro focused exchange, Vargo and Lusch argued that the discipline needed to reorient itself; perhaps to be driven both theoretically and operationally by the greater marketing system (cf. Shultz, 2007) and the service logic that operates within that system.

The emergence of SDL has sparked a great deal of discussion regarding how and where marketing must evolve to optimize its contributions (e.g., Lusch and Vargo, 2006a; Vargo and Lusch, 2006). A key ingredient in this suggested paradigm shift is to recognize the broader context and influence of marketing. Over the past five years, Lusch and Vargo (2006b) and Vargo and Lusch (2008) have inspired a reshaping of the discipline around the SDL

conceptual framework, to better serve the consumer and to redefine the ways in which marketing both views and evaluates itself. A number of marketing scholars have contributed to this discourse through their publication of both theoretical and applied papers.

While the SDL movement has spurred a reassessment within the marketing discipline, one must remember that marketing is not alone in its ongoing examination of boundaries and orientations. Indeed, there has been growing recognition in a variety of disciplines (e.g., economics, environmental science, political science and law, sociology, and social psychology) of the inherent complexities and linkages to other systems that influence inputs, processes, interactions, and outcomes in a plethora of human endeavors. In particular, there has been recognition of the impact of many of these disciplines on the well-being of individuals and the broader societies around the globe in which they live. The Quality of Life (QOL) area of study, for example, has developed through the fusion of a number of academic fields (see Sirgy, 2001 for a review of QOL evolution). QOL research has attempted to integrate a variety of theoretical perspectives to study the myriad systems that impact the well-being of individuals, and the greater local, national, and global societies of which they are a part. Macromarketing research – essentially the scholarly examination of interactions among markets, marketing and society – has been similarly focused on new and eclectic perspectives (e.g., Shultz

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et al., 2009), including those evinced by QOL scholars (e.g., Sirgy et al., 2007), and scholars committed to the study of SDL (e.g., Lusch, 2006).

Layton (2008b) has suggested that Macromarketing and SDL share common ground; moreover, that an extension of marketing would be “significantly enriched by the study of systems and environments that become part of the wider discipline” (p. 226). Layton clearly envisages contributions from SDL as core to marketing and macromarketing. Vargo and Lusch (2008), sharing a complementary perspective, contend SDL can be the foundation for organizations as they evolve into complex service providers that are based on the demands of the marketplace. We believe this evolution could take on a broader systems perspective, recognizing, as do Vargo and Lusch (2008, p. 7), that “all social and economic actors are resource integrators.” Thus, it would stand to reason that a deconstruction or analysis of any particular marketing system (and its component organizations) might provide opportunities to assess the extent to which elements of the system (again, organizations and/or institutions that comprise it) serve its stakeholders; and, by extension, whether the entire marketing system serves or tends to serve its stakeholders. Subsumed in this supposition is recognition of the dynamic nature of marketing systems, and the important interactions that are present within them, as they serve – or fail to serve – stakeholders, and ultimately the impact on the QOL of individuals within or affected by the system. Furthermore, it stands to reason that an especially troubled or dysfunctional marketing system might most benefit from systemic SDL analysis and application, an issue to which we turn below.

A preponderance of the world’s citizens unfortunately live in what can best be described as dysfunctional marketing systems, replete with a variety of sub-systems offering non-existent or poor service, which falls short in the creation of economic and social value to deliver an acceptable quality of life of the society and its members. In this paper the authors share some findings from a longitudinal study of a distressed marketing system, Bangladesh. The intention is to provide fresh perspectives via integrative interpretations and applications of both Marketing Systems Analysis and Service-Dominant Logic (SDL). We furthermore intend to take (at least) “one step beyond a service-dominant logic” (Layton, 2008b, p. 219) by examining a key institutional element of a marketing system: the judiciary and citizens’ perceptions of its service value. In so doing, we strive to construct an analytical service model of the judiciary that can be used in aiding policy changes that will ultimately improve societal well-being and QOL in Bangladesh and other developing and/or transitioning economies.

2. Bangladesh as marketing system

Bangladesh, officially the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, is a particularly compelling study of a marketing system. Similarly to other marketing systems in the form of transitioning/developing economies, Bangladesh’s geography, weather patterns, culture, governance, marketing practices, educational institutions, and history interact to shape the marketing dynamics and consumer and societal welfare (e.g., Layton, 2008a; Pecotich and Shultz, 2006; Shultz and Pecotich, 1997). Bangladesh moreover is representative in many ways of several countries that evince marketing systems so profoundly distressed that various combinations and interactions of poverty, natural disasters, corruption, shortages, citizen disenfranchisement, social unrest, and even war reduce them to dangerous environments in which people struggle mightily, simply to survive from day to day (e.g., Shultz et al., 2005). A closer look at this multi-faceted system follows.

Bangladesh is surrounded by India to the west, north and north-east, Myanmar/Burma to the southeast, and the Bay of Bengal to



Illustration 1. Bangladesh map. Source: World Factbook (2008).

the south, as seen below; it is home to about 160 million people trying to make sense of socio-economic transition to a more market-oriented economy, in a physically challenging environment, and in which opportunities can be scarce and the rules-for-success can be opaque (World Bank, 2008a; World Factbook, 2008; cf. Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, 2008) (see Illustration 1).

Bangladesh historically ranks near the bottom of many socio-economic indicators and measures for quality of life (e.g., World Bank, 2008a). In 2007–2008 it was ranked 140th of 177 countries on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2007, p. 231), just behind Congo and ahead of Swaziland.¹ Iceland incidentally was ranked first, Sierra Leone was ranked last. Such indicators, while helpful to inform us where Bangladesh “is”, are not necessarily helpful in telling us how Bangladesh arrived at this ranking or more importantly how to change conditions to enhance human development. Clearly, a more systemic analysis to understand underlying forces and factors is needed if we are to gain insights regarding which particular factors and institutions can be addressed to affect positive change (e.g., Arndt, 1981; Layton, 2007, 2008a,b; Shultz et al., 2005).

While the HDI ranking raises concerns, the Bangladesh government’s efforts at various reforms implemented in the last decade have produced some positive human development and economic indicators. Particularly noteworthy are gains in women’s status, reductions in infant mortality, increases in life expectancy, reforms to financial institutions and the judiciary, GDP growth (rates have hovered around 6% the last few years), increases in entrepreneurship and SMEs, FDI and export growth, and increases in per capita income (e.g., Bangladesh Government, 2008; World Bank, 2008a).

Based on the authors’ longitudinal field research in Bangladesh and other recovering economies in Asia, Europe and Africa, two factors seem especially salient to affecting progress: (1) a systemic

¹ Given the profile of the participants attending the Forum, it may be interesting to note that Norway ranked 2nd, Australia 3rd, Ireland 5th, the US 12th, New Zealand 19th, Germany 22nd, and Argentina 38th.

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