

Contemporary Marketing Management: Under a Brazilian executive perspective

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Abstract

Brazil has the seventh largest economy in the world, representing a lot in terms of generation of products and services for the domestic and world market alike. Given this economic context, the functions of marketing have become noticeable in their varied functional and strategic dimensions, which encourage the search for new approaches to it, as far as competition is concerned. Based on this supposition, the current article aims at proposing a novel theory concerning Contemporary Marketing Management, an empirical approach built on narratives of specialists. The present study adopted the qualitative approach as well as interpretation of narratives, collected in 16 semi-structured interviews with marketing executives working in large companies countrywide. In the data analysis, elements of Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis were utilised. The work was concluded with the identification of six constructs and their causal relations, which was coined as Marketing Contemporary Network. The examination of this network provides the management with an important contribution in the form of perceptual consensus map, which is useful when it comes to the adoption and allocation of the companies' resources in search of higher levels of maturity, best practices in marketing and competitiveness in this functional dimension, namely Contemporary Marketing.

Keywords: Marketing Strategy; Contemporary Management; Marketing Dynamics; Executives; Grounded Theory.

1 Introduction

The current business context presents important challenges to the management of marketing in the organisations – environmental instability and development of Information Technology (IT) have powered the complexity of the market relations (Kuazaqui, 2018; Kumar, 2015). Therefore, the challenges connected to marketing management translates into a subject deserving considerable attention, for they are dynamic and continuously updated (Abratt & Sacks, 1988), especially after the advent of the internet (Herbig & Hale, 1997) and the spreading of digital solutions (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, & Freundt, 2014). The organisations have a technological arsenal at hand, which permits them to interact directly with the clients by allowing them to collect information about the market behaviour so that they can adjust the offerings (Maklan, Peppard, & Klaus, 2015). The competitive dynamics allow the products to be more and more personalised. Today's consumers, on their turn, are better informed and are well aware of the power that not so long ago they ignored (McShane & Sabadoz, 2015).

Therefore, Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström, and Freundt (2014) highlighted that the traditional marketing practices are not moving fast enough to cope with decisions and the traditional means of mass communication are becoming less and less effective when it comes to delivering their messages to the consumers, i.e. the common practices have not yielded desired results. Thus, given its transitoriness, the marketing challenges encompass various dimensions seemingly relevant and worthy of attention but not yet explored.

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These challenges must be explored and brought to light in order to provide comprehension of a better Contemporary Marketing Management (CMM) in a competitive ambience. Within a Brazilian context, the investigation of such dimensions is also latent, for the behaviour of the Brazilian consumer changes according to the various historical moments of the country's evolution (Costa & Vieira, 2008).

However, the present study seeks to expand the understanding of the practices adopted in marketing practices, by approaching the absence of an exploratory and quantitative analysis of the CMM in the competitive Brazilian environment, the gap addressed in the present study. Being so, this study aims at proposing a novel theory for the CMM in the light of the view of marketing executives playing in leading companies in the Brazilian market, taking into account the teachings of Lusch, Udell, and Laczniak (1976) that suggests that the forecast made by well acknowledged executives may provide insights which will be useful in strategic management.

2 Theoretical References

2.1 Contemporary Marketing Management

The role to be played by a scientist, including a marketing researcher, goes through the description of an emerging phenomena and then establish if they are strong enough to create tendencies which are free from bias and do not emerge from ideology or any other vested interest (Galle, 2013). The comprehension of the formation of a tendency requires an update and recent view of a phenomenon. Contemporaneity can, therefore, be described as a singular relationship with time itself, seeking time's observation as being free exercise, so that it can be better understood. Hence, a contemporary individual is the one who belongs in his own time and is also in a constant process of detachment, without being stuck in the past or prone to lose himself in the future (Aganbem, 2009).

As far as the marketing field is concerned, Easton (1995) suggests that marketing researchers should, before making their recommendations, seek to understand how the real systems of marketing function; they must also bear the knowledge of how and why decisions are made. Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan (2016) call to our attention the fact that marketing consists in dealing with an activity under constant changes and; in order to comprehend it, one must fully understand the evolution of the market in the last few years.

Amongst the studies addressing the subject of contemporaneity in marketing, Contemporary Marketing Practices (CMP) is to be highly regarded (Coviello, Brodie, & Munro, 1997). The first CMP approach emerged from the perception that marketing literature had changed from Transactional Marketing, which includes the so-called marketing 4Ps— Price, Place, Product and Promotion, up to the inclusion of other types of marketing, referred to as Relationship Marketing.

In this direction, a model of classification identifies four types of marketing, they are: (i) transactional marketing: economic exchanges, (ii) Databank marketing: economic and information changes, (iii) interactive marketing: interpersonal relationship between buyer and seller, (iv) network marketing: relationships amongst companies (Coviello, Brodie, & Munro, 1997), later on, a fifth type was associated, namely (v) digital marketing: a dialogue between buyer and seller, which generates information (Coviello, Milley, & Marcolin, 2001). CMP is present in marketing literature worldwide (see Brodie et al. (2008) for further details), and fairly recently in Brazil (see Hoeckesfeld (2018)).

Well beyond CMP, other marketing approaches have been utilised recently in the field of business. The first of them is the Intention and Network Approach (INA) (Möller & Rajala, 2007), whose objective is to shed light on and explain the functioning of the business marketing under the perspective of the buyer-seller interactive relationship, as well as aspects such as the networks these relations establish. Another approach to be considered is the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2016), whose focus is on attaining better understanding of marketing as a process of co-creation of value amongst the various players. Although marketing professionals have been making an effort to provide concise propositions for value, the real value to be generated by the client is personal, it depends on his own motivation and capability to create it.

Even in the face of the various contemporary marketing approaches, Pels, Möller and Saren (2009) concluded that scientific research in the area is not monolithic, which means that each one of the approaches is useful for a specific objective, domain and activity, and none of them is end in itself, for there are various ways in which the companies relate with each other and structure themselves in an attempt to meet the demands of their markets.

2.2 Market Orientation

Most of the development of studies referred to as Market Orientation (MO) were brought to light in the 1990s with theoretical contributions by Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Kohli, Jaworski and Kumar (1993) and Narver and Slater (1990). This subject rose again more recently encompassing new works and inclusion of novel theories (Jaworski & Kohli, 2017; Ozkaya, Droge, Hult, Calantone, & Ozkaya, 2015) in the models previously proposed by the authors (opt cit).

Emphasis on MO is a company strategic positioning aiming at acquiring and using information retrieved from the market (competitive intelligence) by focusing on the creation of value as perceived by the client as a stakeholder (Green, Toms, & Clark, 2015; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Thus, MO can be understood as being a permanent strategic stream of attention to the needs of the market and allocation of internal resources, and vice versa, in order to provide the company with better performances than the average figures attained by the sector (Abbade, Zanini, & Souza, 2012).

According to Joseph and Francis (2015), MO can be studied in the light of the following perspectives: decision making, marketing intelligence (MI), behaviour based upon the organizational culture, marketing strategy and consumer orientation. The model proposed by Kohli and Jaworski, July 1990, predicted the observation of generation and the spreading of intelligence aiming at the generation of a positive market response. However, Narver and Slater October 1990's proposal is composed of three components aiming at providing longevity and long-term results: consumer orientation, for the competitor and also inter-functional coordination – synergy between resources and people.

The most recent models propose the inclusion of new constructs, based upon the dynamics of the markets, globalisation, and advances in technological platforms. Therefore, more recent models included other constructs in their structures, in order to establish better theoretical integrity with the measurements found in the field of empirical phenomena. As an example, it is well worth mentioning those which are either specific or certain sectors (ex: eco-design), as well as others such as internal environment management, cooperation with the consumer, investment return and performance (Green et al., 2015), orientation for learning and absorbing capacities (Abbade et al., 2012), organizational culture, and performance (Joseph & Francis, 2015) as well as competitive advantages, satisfaction, loyalty and performance (Senra, 2015). It was observed that in most of the models studied, high performance is a key factor.

2.3 High Performance

In competitive markets, the organisations seek for means of accessing the results obtained by adopting their strategies (deliberate or emerging) within companies in a network, corporate or business level. The managers may develop and compare formative constructs, performance proxies in the face of financial, market, managerial, international business, productive capacity, technological aspects, and socio economic indicators (Capon, Farley, & Hoenig, 1990), in order to assess and compare the organisational effectiveness of the companies. The choice for these indicators is usually left to the board of directors.

The company performance may be measured by using internal data and/or those attained by certified publications by the open Market – which can be considered complex, for absence of information or lack of managerial interest (Brito, Brito, & Hashiba, 2014; Combs, Crook, & Shook, 2005; Miller, Washburn, & Glick, 2013). Amongst the pioneers in the measurement of performance, Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986) argue that a company's performance is to be measured mainly by financial indicators, for they reflect the success in achieving economic objectives, and also by Market indicators, for they measure technological efficiency.

Financial performance can be measured by means of different indicators, such as growth in profits, return on stock, consumer price indexes, return on assets, return on liquid assets, and return on investments (Boyd, 1991). When assessing the market performance (seen as operational by Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986)) measurements such as market sharing, launching of new products, product quality, commercial efficacy, added production value, besides other measurements of technological efficacy must be considered (Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986). The inclusion of the aforementioned indicators provide the board with better tools for interpretation of a company's performance (Baird, Jia Hu, & Reeve, 2011; Venkatraman & Ramanujam, 1986).

Other authors add to the company's performance actions that may cause, correlate, mediate or moderate its financial performance, such as corporative entrepreneurship (Zahra, 1993), reputation (Roberts & Dowling, 2002), absorptive capacity (Kostopoulos, Papalexandris, Papachroni, & Ioannou, 2011), sustainability (Ameer & Othman, 2012) and social corporative responsibility (Flammer, 2015).

Other authors highlight the fact that the market performance is also influenced, in analogy with the financial, by the management of total quality (Samson & Terziovski, 1999), organisational culture (Baird et al., 2011), integration of the supply chain (Liu, Ke, Kee Wei, & Hua, 2013), supply chain agility (Gligor, Esmark, & Holcomb, 2015) and IT (Devaraj, Krajewski, & Wei, 2007; Saeed, Grover, & Hwang, 2005).

Therefore, in competitive markets, the companies, preferably at the will of their directors, seek to outdo the sector's average performance by developing competitive advantages to sustain their permanence in the market (Brito & Brito, 2012).

3 Methodological Pathway

The present study was supported by means of an exploratory research by adopting a methodological pathway within a qualitative approach, following a method of semi-structured interviews which were analysed in accordance with elements of the methods Grounded Theory and Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). Exploratory-Research-Type was the model adopted in the research, considering the novelty of such theory, also its contemporary aspect. However, the qualitative approach revealed itself as the most suitable one, given the observation of symbolic forms and communicative character of the experience of the marketing executives interviewed, which made the comprehension of the phenomena studied possible (Godoi & Balsini, 2004). The methodological pathway applied comprised three phases: (i) planning, (ii) data collection, and (iii) development of the theory. Each phase hereby described is composed of a series of activities whose objective is to create the perception of the CMM.

In the planning phase, a series of semi-structured interview routes were conceived by taking into account the early studies of the current research, as well as its theoretical reference. This study meets Rowley, by employing semi-structured interviews, since the CMM theory proposed emerges from the comprehension of experiences, opinions, attitudes, values and processes currently experienced by marketing executives. As in the Grounded Theory (Birks & Mills, 2015), semi-structured interviews were devised with a view to identify inductively the hypothesis pointed out by marketing executives as being fundamental in the CMM, as proposed, if a high performance in a Brazilian competitive market environment is to be attained.

In this sense, the semi-structured interview responded was endowed with questions meant to unveil the marketing executives' perceptions of six themes connected to CMM - Challenges, Best Practices, Unsuccessful Experiences, Resulting Learning, Future and Critical Success Factors. These themes represent food for thought to the interviewees, so that they can reflect on the various aspects of CMM and then reveal their experiences in the field of marketing.

With a view elaborating on each one of the themes addressed, the definitions are: (i) Challenges - identification and explication of the main adversities currently encountered by marketing executives, bearing in mind the fact that the marketing challenges are dynamic and continuously modified (Abratt & Sacks, 1988), (ii) Best Practices - consist in the description of the best marketing practices adopted by the companies so that they could survive in a competitive market, as stated by the marketing executives, i.e. the improvements necessary to reach the highest standards of excellence in products, services or processes without ignoring the fact that the best marketing practices must focus essentially on meeting the needs of the clients (Bhutta & Huq, 1999; Sigauw & Enz, 1999), (iii) Unsuccessful Experiences - executives' accounts of occasional marketing practices adopted by them in the recent years, the ones that were not effective or had results well below expectation (Johnston & Mehra, 2002), (iv) Resulting Learning - exposure of the lessons learned from mistakes and successes in the course of their activities, in the search of a description of organisational learning, which consists in the development of new knowledge or insights that can potentially influence the behaviour of a company's collaborator (Fiol & Lyles, 1985; Slater & Narver, 1995), (v) Future - a presentation of the executive's view on the features of marketing and its practices in the organisation in a long and mid-term basis, corroborating Lusch, Udell, and Laczniak (1976) understanding, there are not cut and dried predictions for the future, however forecasts made by well-informed executives may provide insights into management strategies for the next decade and (vi) Critical Success Factors (CSF), which corresponds to the smallest number of key-areas considered fundamental, whose results, if satisfactory will guarantee a successful competitive performance to the organisation, thus deserving the management's continuous and meticulous attention (Rockart, 1979). This theme in special was divided into two parts in the interview, in the first part the marketing executives talked about what they felt the critical factors in a marketing management were, and then they rated them from the most to the least relevant.

Alongside the elaboration of the route, the interviewees were identified by means of a process that started with five lists containing names of marketing executives holding managing director's positions: (i) The Ten Professionals of Marketing of 2016 (Sacchitiello, Murad, Rocha, & Levin, 2016) and (ii) The Ten Professionals of Marketing of 2017 (Murad, Pacete, Rocha, Damasceno, & Levin, 2017), (iii) M-List reveals 20 outstanding executives in Marketing (Voxnews, 2016), (iv) LinkedIn publicises the list of marketing professionals who are the most active on the web (G1, 2014) and, (v) Fundação Dom Cabral former students database Chief Marketing Officer (not a publicised document). Based upon these five lists, 74 marketing executives were contacted and invited for the interview via LinkedIn, e-mail and/or WhatsApp. Sixteen of them accepted the invitation and joined the study, which gathered marketing executives having long experiences in large Brazilian Companies playing in different sectors of the economy, such as food companies, telecommunications, banks, beverages, retailers as well as in the education sector.

In the next step of the exercise, the questions of the interview were submitted to three executives. After the inclusion of the suggestions presented in the pre-test phase, the route was validated and was deemed ready to be used in the study. In the data collection phase, the remaining 13 participants were interviewed by means of web video conferencing (Zoom - www.zoom.us). The interviews were recorded and authorised and the respondents remained anonymous. The exercise took place between October 2017 and February 2018. The number of interviews done was enough and suitable for the purpose of the current study, 6 to 12 interviews were considered enough and suitable as far as empirical adequacy was considered, for they met the recommendations suggested for the achievement of diversity in the information retrieved (Paavilainen & Åstedt-Kurki, 1997; Partis, 2003; Gibbs, 2009). The content of the interviews was transcribed to text editor e-files and was used as the basis for the primary data of the study.

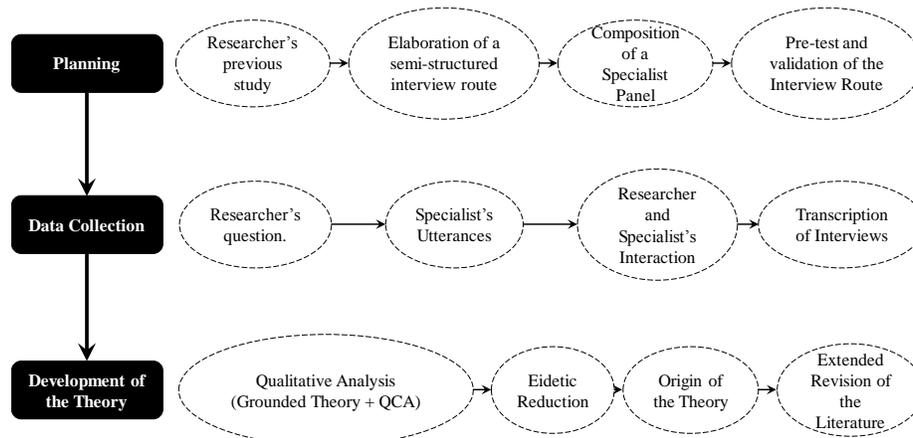
The theory development phase started with the analysis of the data collected and the software NVivo Pro 11 was used. Such data were analysed by means of Grounded Theory and QCA methods. The analytical processing of the Grounded Theory used the codification strategy: It sorts and organises the content of the interviews, observations and other forms of data, as appropriate in units of meaning identified to generate codes. These codes are initially grouped together in categories and then re-evaluated according to their inter-relations, which can be gradually included in other categories of higher or subjacent order resulting in an emerging theory (Birks & Mills, 2015).

In its turn, the QCA is defined as a method for subjective interpretation of the text data content by means of systematic classification processes of codifications and of identification of themes and standards (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) it aims at systematically describing the meaning of the materials according to the researcher's specification, based upon the research questions (Schreier, 2012). Although both Grounded Theory and QCA follow the processes of codification, QCA is not meant to identify relationships amongst categories or even to be used in elaborations of theories; it is restricted to the extraction of categories from the data (Cho & Lee, 2014). Therefore, QCA was used in the current study alongside the Grounded Theory in the codification of the body of the transcriptions of the interviews via an inductive approach going through open codifications phases, data codification, revision of codes and development of categories (Cho & Lee, 2014).

In the face of the identification of the categories, the Grounded Theory was continued, through the development of the integration of the categories and their properties, which resulted in the establishment of a theory. These procedures were carried out in the light of Eidetic Reduction, which consists in the process of retrieving essences from the conscience and/or the researchers' experiences through intuition and thought (Sanders, 1982). Eidetic reduction is characterised by the search of a phenomenon as being a unique thing, free from personal and cultural bias, allowing the achievement of its essence, i.e. which makes an object of its real self (Coltro, 2000).

After the theory was proposed, an extended revision of the literature was carried out aiming at strengthening the adherence of the theory to the existing knowledge. Figure 1 synthesises the route detailed in the present work by exhibiting the three phases hereby described alongside their respective activities that made up the method utilised herein.

Figure 1. Methodological Path Adopted



Source: Elaborated by the authors

The quantitative methodological root presented herein had its validity ascertained by means of application of three criteria, as describes as follows. The first criterion adopted was the construct validity one, which is defined by the extent to which a study investigates the object declared, i.e. the extent to which a procedure leads to a precise comprehension of the reality (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). In order to do so, the eight actions described by Castro and Rezende (2018) were adopted: (a) multiple sources of evidence – panel of academic specialists and professionals in the first phase of the research and also interviews with top executives for the second part of the research; (b) triangulation of evidence- analysis of data in accordance with the model under development and theory as well. (c) revision of transcript and sketches – done by the authors themselves; (d) revision of manuscripts – done by the authors; (e) description of the first contact with the interviewees – a presentation of the way the interviewees were selected and approached; (f) a description of the time structure of the collection of the data; (g) clear criteria in the selection of the respondents – presentation of lists from which the respondents were selected; (h) collection strategy – explicit description of how the collection instruments were developed.

The second criteria applied was Internal Validity, whose premise is the establishment of the causal relations between the constructs or variables (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016). In order to do that, the current study made use of (a) a theoretical study deriving from the literature containing seminal and current works; (b) various investigators in the theoretical and empiric research; (c) a clear set of categories for the analysis of the data and (d) a description of how the data were analysed (Castro & Rezende, 2018).

Therefore, the third criteria adopted was External Validity, which verifies whether there can be an extrapolation of the content of the interviews taking into consideration the theory adopted (Eisenhardt et al., 2016). To this end, the following actions were adopted in the study: (a) clear criteria in the selection of the interviewees; (b) use of multiple cases – executives in different positions holding a high rank capacity in different large companies established in Brazil; (c) use of incorporated cases, i.e. different executives working for the same company were interviewed; (d) description of the executives' contexts; (e) comparison of the research results to the theory; and (f) replication strategy, i.e. the research may be replicated by any researcher interested, if based upon what was described herein (Castro & Rezende, 2018).

4 Results

The transcription of the interviews resulted in a database that was used as the structure for a quantitative analysis. An open codification of the data was done in an isolated way for each one of the six themes approached - Challenges, Best Practices, Unsuccessful Experiences, Resulting Learning, Future and CSF, which resulted in 189 codes. In the sequence, axial codification was performed, in which the 189 codes were analysed, combined and sorted, resulting in a set of 33 codes. Then, all the 33 codes were set apart from their respective themes and were duly examined, being subjected to a second reduction, in accordance with analysis procedures, combination and fusion, which resulted in the identification of six constructs, as represented by the following categories: (i) Client Management, (ii) Personnel Management, (iii) Business Management, (iv) Market Management, (v) Innovation Culture and (vi) Digital Transformation.

Hence, when analysed in a holistic platform, the current study had six themes as an input, namely Concept-Type-Categories – Challenges, Better Practices, Unsuccessful Experiences, Resulting Learning, Future and CSF. In the other end of the study, six Process-Type-Categories were obtained as an output. They were – Client Management, Personnel Management, Business Management, Market Management, Innovation Culture and Digital Transformation. The aforementioned categories may be understood as being of the Process-Type-Category, for they represent, in their very essence, the strategic conductors of the CMM. Figure 2 represents the formation of the Process-Type-Categories, emerging from the Concept-Type-Categories.

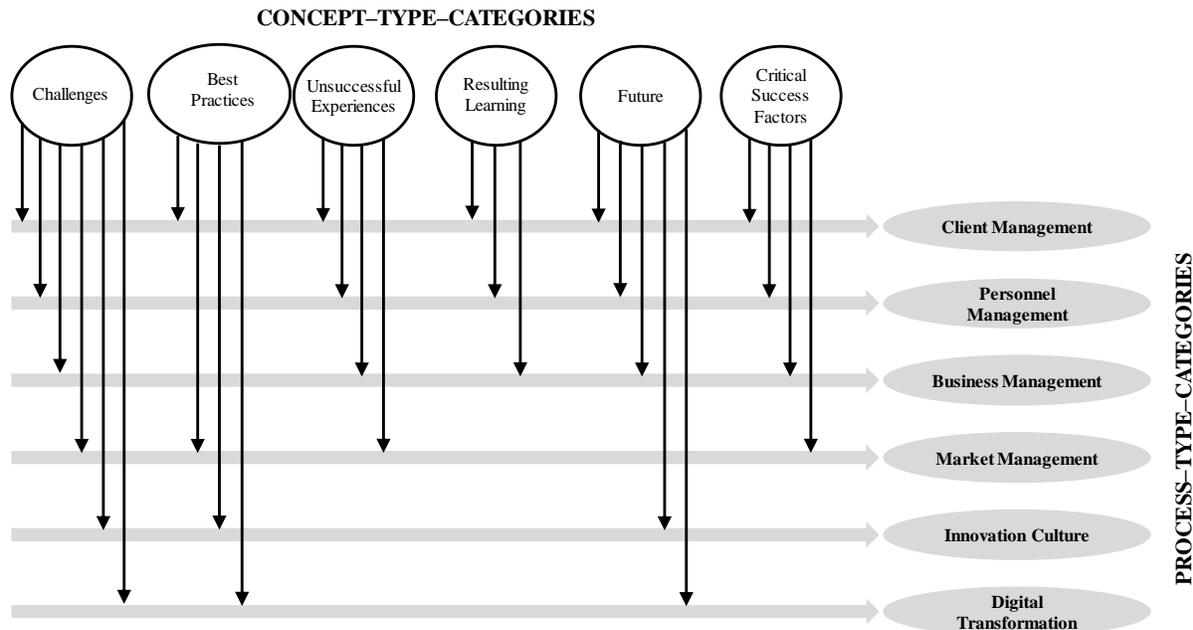


Figure 2. Formation of the Process-Type-Categories

Source: Elaborated by the authors

In Figure 2, the Concept-Type-Categories are presented, from left to right, in the order that they were presented to the marketing executives during the semi-structured interviews. The Process-Type-Categories were presented vertically, from top to bottom, in order of importance, considering the frequency of citation amongst the interviewees. The arrows departing from the Concept-Type-Categories represent the flow of the codes that were identified and concatenated towards the buses of the respective Process-Type-Categories. As follows, the six categories described as Process-Type-Categories are described and discussed in detail.

The category Client Management was acknowledged as being the most important item in the present study, for it goes through all the categories of the Process-Type. The challenges concerning the clients concentrate on the follow up to the evolution of their behaviour, aiming at identifying the tendencies of the market. One of the ways of dealing with this Management type is by means of Customer Relationship Management - CRM. The best practices are related to experiences that give rise to a more personalised and humanistic relationship/assistance to the client, thus promoting the customisation of the relationship, which led the authors to adopt the term client instead of consumer. Aiming at avoiding possible conflicts with clients, the companies seek for solutions that meet the clients’ needs, in an attempt to establish experiences and consequently long-term relationships.

However, it is well worth observing that the clients, as well as the companies, should comply with legal and social norms, within a system of relationship that suggests a rupture with the motto “the client is always right”. In this sense, marketing communication within the CRM logic functions as a Key Performance Indicator (KPI), enhancing the quality of the relationship and reducing possible conflicts. Specialists highlighted the importance of listening to the clients, in an attempt to understand the client’s expectations and needs in order to devise a proposition of value in marketing coherent actions, based upon an outside-in logic, as a Critical Factor for Success. It is also pertinent to mention that the company may propose actions with an inside out emphasis in the market development marketing, aiming at achieving improvements on products and services so that new clients are attracted. The report by Specialist 09, as follows, corroborates the former considerations.

It is noticeable in his statement about Best Practice, an emphasis on the downsizing policy, which results in the inversion of the power pseudo-pyramid, showing the importance of direct communication between the upper ranks and the clients, which may result in an expressive reduction of communication noises amidst the management levels.

“Nowadays, any client may phone our president and he will answer the call. (...) there is something called an inverted pyramid, the client usually stays at the basis of the pyramid, doesn't he? ... and the president up there. We invert the pyramid and put the client in touch with the president, with the executive panel, directors, and so things really move further, with the focus on the client.” (Specialist 09)

Marketing executives pointed out that Personnel Management is the main transformation agent in the organisations; the challenge identified in this category concentrates on the integration of the staff on the generation of results. In order to achieve, they related that it is necessary to build a reliability culture, in which the staff can speak openly in favour of a more collaborative organisational atmosphere.

A resource that can be adopted to this end is the adoption of a training scheme putting an emphasis on the growth mindset (as opposed to fixed mindset) in an effort to achieve cultural alteration. The proposal is that a wider presence of the growth mindset amongst the staff may translate into an atmosphere which is more favourable to collaboration, innovation and more agile solutions to organisational issues, moving towards a critical success factor, which is to have a staff with an entrepreneur mind and aware of the tendencies of the market. The statement of Specialist 07, an extract of his response about CSF, put in evidence, empirically in his readings, the statements aforementioned, mirroring the meaning of the growth mindset.

“Well prepared people, tough people willing to make a difference, people who feel recognised and are free to work and bring novelty (...). I've got to have young people in the team, I've got to have experienced people, I've got to have distinct and complementary daily experiences, because there is no way everybody can understand it all nowadays, people ought to be skilful in digital technology, CRM relationship media, Client Assistance (...). But they must be able to do teamwork; this person has to work in an integrated way.” (Specialist 07)

The category Business Management was appointed as an important process, as far as brand management is considered, indicating a challenge that permeates the inside processes of creation of identity all the way up to the client's perception of a brand's image. Specialists pointed out that the changes must be accompanied by a plan of results and risk management, where it is possible to move forward with caution - which does not mean stagnation of the company, rather, prudence when allocating investments. When managing changes, they propose that the risks should be assessed, and if a mistake is made (fatal errors must be avoided) they suggest incorporating change of habits, structures and process into the culture of the organisations. This category is devised to point out preventive attitudes, a look ahead into the future of a company and therefore it can be considered a critical factor of success, sustained by governance models, improvements on processes and sustainability. The utterance given by Specialist 09 when responding to the question about Unsuccessful Experience corroborates statements previously made.

“I think that we wanted to introduce too rapid a transformation and did not use the right tools to keep pace with that speed. So, it fell behind, and plodded about after the results for a year. This unsteady motion occurred because we needed to have had a culture, processes, and a behaviour shock” (Specialist 09)

Specialists pointed out that the category Market Management, for it encompasses an external perspective of the organisation, presents significant importance to the current study. Competition was considered a strong challenge, as far as the opportunities for new players in the sector is concerned, usually the newcomers are more active and unpredictable, bringing innovative solutions – they could be start-ups, or even those which can cause serious problems of shirking of Market Shares and income. A successful practice in the company is the development of competitive intelligence actions, especially benchmarking and the development of a business intelligence structure to monitor trends and actions practised by the competition. According to marketing executives, one of the crucial mistakes in marketing is to prevent the participation of the lower rank staff in strategic decision makings, their participation must not be restricted to trivial decisions. The most common consequences of the aforementioned negligence are the loss of clients, as well as market and income. Market Management is evidenced in the speech of Specialist 08 when talking about Best Practices, he highlights the practices of business intelligence and benchmarking.

“There is a sector of business intelligence that does market analysis, sees tendencies, forecasts the future and benchmarking. This area also monitors the competition 24/7, they are in charge of planning and monitoring. This area, employing over 50 people at present, does not belong to the marketing department, but we can refer to them for assistance whenever necessary.” (Specialist 08)

The Innovation Culture category, according to specialists, encompasses challenges such as management and proposals of innovations in the portfolio of the products of a company and innovations in the proposals of value to customers. They ascertain quality, communication, attractiveness and differentiation of a company in the market. The best practices pointed out in this category indicate that if a company wants to sustain itself and grow in a competitive market, it has to innovate. For the future agenda, they also suggest that if a company wants to stay in the market, it should boost a permanent innovation culture, by means of competitive management and by the creation and management of new products and services. The changes pointed out propose the adoption of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and agile methods, as observed in the Specialist 12’s speech, in his statement about Future.

“The important thing to do is to have an agile and adaptable structure, to exploit the internal capacity and competence of the team so that we can experiment with it. Create, rule out and move forwards. If I were a future teller I would say that the best thing to do is to allow the team to be flexible and adaptable enough, so that they can follow the move.” (Specialist 12)

Finally, the category Digital Transformation detached itself as a challenge as far as innovation strategy is concerned, with a focus on the changes of processes, resulting in a large amount of data that can be tackled only through high technology solutions, which allow data mining and higher integration of information. Thus, allowing the development of a new mental frame that assures higher agility and viability of the processes. Digital Transformation was considered one of the best market practices utilised at present, given the fact that the new generation of clients is highly connected by digital means.

In the future, Digital Transformation will be a permanent agenda for changes, having as inductors digital marketing, big data, Internet of Things (IoT), Industry 4.0, Omni channel and virtual reality. Therefore, the specialists suggest that the organisations should invest in digital strategies in order to catch up with the permanent evolution of the sector. The statement made by Specialist 04 in regard to Theme Challenges, as follows, presents arguments that contribute to the aforementioned statements.

“At present we have a clear picture of the offline and online. We value the online because we know how much it influences the consumer in terms of mobile connectivity. We have boosted the investment in this area and have also developed a series of approach tools, so that we can integrate into it, especially because it is an area that provides an important input: the just in time consumer’s opinion. Listening, in this area is an important differential, it provides an understanding of the customer’s reaction in regard to a number of actions we perform, we can use it to make corrective actions or even take advantage of the situation and use it as an opportunity. With regard to the points of sale, nowadays we are going through a remarkable revolution, which is bringing the digital to the point of sale, providing the consumer with interaction of the services.” (Specialist 04).

Therefore, as to elaborate on Grounded Theory, what was sought was the development of an integration of the categories, their properties and all the data collected, which resulted in the rise of a theory conceived by means of Eidetic Reduction, allowing the identification of the essence of the CMM phenomenon. Such Eidetic reduction made clear that the six categories found (Client Management, Personnel Management, Business Management, Innovation Culture and Digital Transformation) are not simply isolated theoretical factors, they present a contemporary meaning and form an amalgam that can be called Contemporary Marketing Network, which was synthesized and represented in the current study by means of the following fundamental declaration of the theory:

Agility and ability to map and respond to Market demands, aiming at proving innovative solutions to clients and develop more and more tailored solutions, are the sort of Marketing Contemporary Management adopted in companies presenting high performance; they seek to respond to marketing demands by employing a suitable and highly skilled team immersed in an innovation culture endowed with agile decision-making processes and digital solutions that integrate the physical and virtual ambiances.

5 Expanded Literature Review

Given the contemporaneity expressed in the objective of the current study, as well as the exploratory nature of the methods hereby utilised. An expansion of the literature previously considered, aiming at providing an in-depth approach to the theory, is advisable.

The essence of the utterances given by the specialists with regard to the category Clients meets the SDL (Vargo & Lusch, 2017), whose theory concentrates itself on intangible resources; such as abilities, information and knowledge, direction of the interactivity, connectivity and relationship. The user of the service is regarded to as being a co-producer of values, for there is not such a thing as exact value for a product until the moment it is used. Therefore, SDL places the activities built on knowledge and specialised ability in the centre of the exchange process, whose theoretical basis may be comprehended by means of its five axioms: (i) service is the fundamental basis of exchange; (ii) value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary; (iii) all social and economic actors are resource integrators; (iv) value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary and (v) value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements.

Therefore, bearing in mind that the creation of value on the part of the client is his personal interpretation of what was proposed and implemented by the company. Hence, an individual's experience may as well lead to the perception of value which could be higher or lower than what was in fact received (Storbacka, Frow, Nenonen, & Payne, 2012). This occurs because there is integration of resources emerging from multiple sources, which becomes a representation of how different actors are prone to participate positively in the creation of values, including the beneficiary. The concept of Satisfaction and Consumer Loyalty joined the theory presented, the former is defined as being an overall assessment of the sentiment of the individual towards a product or service, whereas the latter represents his pre-disposition to repeat the purchase behaviour (Espejel, Fandos, & Flavián, 2008), which can be assessed by means of CRM (Elkhansa, Ahmed, & Ahmed, 2016).

When stating that the challenge verified in Personnel Management concentrates itself on the integration of the staff towards the generation of results, the theory of the mindset becomes vital, for it rescues the theories from the field of psychology, concerning the individual's understanding of attributes such as intelligence and personality. Mindset may be understood as being fixed or growth mindset, in which the former regards those individuals who skip challenges and are less resilient when faced up with small obstacles in a daily basis, the latter refers to those who seek challenging opportunities and are in constant learning. (Dweck, 2012). Therefore, the growth mindset must be the focus of managers, working under the perspective that every single person can learn, perform and teach an activity, a knowledge, and therefore, detach himself in a creative way in his career, promoting personal and professional engagement in his actions (Bower & Konwerski, 2017).

Business Management must rely on the company's strategic positioning, it must be endowed with internal business modelling with a view to co-create values for the clients and remaining stakeholders alike (Green et al., 2015). Business Management is a critical success factor, chiefly because it encourages the managers to appoint preventive actions to be used in a near future, with collaborative governance actions. The acknowledgement of the business proves necessary so that it can be expressed in a coherent way in all the communications of its brand to the client, this way the company can improve a perennial and positive image of itself (Keller, 2012).

In the face of new demands, in particular the ones made by clients and competitors as well as macro-environmental variables, the category Market Management have led the organisations to develop a culture of searching for information, aiming at anticipating possible threats and opportunities, also to subsidise strategies and aid when it comes to making decisions (Vidigal, 2015). Amongst the Market management actions employed by the companies, benchmarking is uppermost, according to specialists. It represents a continuous process of assessment of products, services and practices offered by the toughest competitors, or companies renowned as the leading ones in the segment (Prescott, 1999; Shetty, 1993). Another action presented was the IM, it is made up of a set of systems that combine collection and storage of data, also management of knowledge, with the use of analytical tools that present information to analysts and decision makers (Negash, 2014). Some authors have noticed that the adoption of IM by a company results in a positive and significant impact when it comes to sharing knowledge, organisational innovation and high competitive advantage (Eidizadeh, Salehzadeh, & Chitsaz Esfahani, 2017; Elbashir, Collier, & Davern, 2008).

Innovation culture is defined as a multi-dimensional context that encompasses the intention of being an innovator, the infra-structure supporting the innovation, an operational level behaviour necessary to influence the market and value orientation, and also the environment subject to the implementation of innovation (Bruno-Faria & Fonseca, 2014; Dobni, 2008).

In this environment, Martins and Martins (2002) demonstrate that organisational innovation is affected by the strategy, by the proposal of the company, by the reliability relationship, by the behaviour that encourages innovation, work atmosphere, orientation to client and support to the manager. Apart from that, the management capabilities, development and transactions provide a clearer definition of the dynamics and innovation adopted by a company (Alves, Barbieux, Reichert, Tello-Gamarra, & Zawislak, 2017). Steele and Murray (2004) add that agility and the ability to respond to market demands emerge from the intellectual capital of its staff. Creative and enthusiastic people value the companies that encourage the exercise of creativity and the proposal of new ideas; they also play their part as innovation agents in orienting operant resources towards the creation of value, aiming at implementing and executing competitive advantages in the companies (Verma & Jayasimha, 2014).

The category Digital Transformation was approached by specialists as being a new reality and promise for the future of the companies that strive for success in competitive markets. It must be applied by small and new companies, especially the start-ups, old and large companies alike (Sebastian et al., 2017). "The adoption and rapid evolution of technology has changed the way industries become productive and it shapes every sector of society" (Bower & Konwerski, 2017, p. 89). Amongst the different ways of defining this category, Westerman, Calm ejane, Bonnet, Ferraris and McAfee (2011) understand that this category consists in the use of technology to greatly improve the performance and the spectrum of a company. Therefore, migrating to the digital era demands that the managers of the business update their strategic mentality (mindset), rather than their information technology structure (Rogers, 2017). Hence, the digital technologies have been redefining a lot of the basic principles of the strategy, it also changes the rules by which the companies must operate in the market, if they want to succeed. Matt, Hess and Benlian (2015) added that the implementation of the TD strategy must tackle four dimensions: use of technologies, change in value creation, structural changes and financial aspects.

6 Conclusion

The present investigation made the proposal of a theory about contemporary aspects of marketing management possible, it occurs by means of qualitative research that investigated the perception of specialists, executives playing in the Brazilian market. The content of the interviews was thoroughly analysed and synthesized in six Process-Type-Categories (Client Management, Personnel Management, Business Management, Market Management, Innovation Culture and Digital Transformation) which functions as the structure of the core of the theory revealed.

The theory emerging from this study, contributes towards an understanding of the fact that the marketing executives in Brazil have been developing their management strategies aiming at establishing a better and closer relationship with the client, thus, seeking clarity in their behaviours, bearing in mind that a continuous improvement on the management of the relationship with the market is necessary. It was possible to verify that, in order to achieve the advances proposed for the relation with the clients, the marketing executives must be eager to surround themselves with a staff that has an acute growth mindset, so that they can plan, and execute innovations in an attempt to meet the demands presented by the market and also achieve a high performance.

Still, as innovation goes, the present study allows the recognition of the fact that the executives have been metamorphosing; they have changed their perceptions of the actors playing competitors. They seemed worried about the possibility of being overwhelmed by the innovative solutions offered by unknown start-ups, which start being the subject of preoccupation, for they have become a new threat to the current idea of value. Such scenario reinforces the seriousness in which the attitudes towards the development of an innovation culture, which is based upon the digital transformation, are seen by the specialists.

There has been a conspicuous advance in the use of Grounded Theory when dealing with challenges and better practices of CMM. The use of the Grounded theory, together with QCA methods and Eidetic Reduction have made for clearer recognition of the Process-Type-Categories and their intersections, contributing to the formulation of the theory proposed in this article possible. It is also worth pointing out that the participation of the marketing executives in the present study was voluntary, therefore, one limitation of this study is the fact that the panel of marketing executives heard in the exercise did not count on professionals playing in all the sectors of the Brazilian economy. Moreover, what might prevent a generalisation of the current study is the fact that all the marketing specialists responding to the interview play in the Brazilian market. Therefore, as a proposal for future investigation, what is recommended is a worldwide and sectorial quantitative study by expanding the number of companies researched, in accordance with the findings observed in the present research.

Moreover, taking in consideration the fact that the content of the interviews was used as stepping stone to the exploitation of the CMM, a continuation of the current study allowing a generalisation of the results herein achieved is highly recommended. To sum up, the theory proposed in the study is expected to be useful in the improvement of further elaboration and conduct of marketing management strategies to be carried out by other marketing executives in different sectors of the economy.

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