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Revisiting the South African Marketing Index

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The high level of human involvement in marketing ensures that it is, and always will be, a dynamic business function. When the impact of accelerating technological developments is added, the dynamism often turns to volatility. The rapidly changing business environment necessitates regular consideration of the role of marketing in the business environment, both from an internal and external point of view. This study analyses marketing and marketing activities from a consumer perspective. It measures consumer attitudes towards the four P's and converts these scores to an overall 'attitude towards marketing' index. It also compares the results with a similar study conducted in 1990 (the 1990 study). The 1990 study reported a negative marketing index of -16.262. Older consumers in particular voiced their disapproval of marketing practices. Pricing was singled out as the most important bone of contention. The pricing and the pricing practices used by marketers were seen as often unfair and unreasonable. Advertising was also viewed rather sceptically. Retailing was the only marketing mix element to return a positive index. The results of this study show that the SA Marketing Index has declined from -16.262 in 1990 to -34.125 in 1993. The decline in the marketing index is primarily due to the considerable decline in the price index from -8.470 to -24.368, a slight decrease in the product index (from -2.719 to -9.939) and a marginal deterioration in the retailing index. The decline in the price index in particular was so severe that the improvement in the advertising index (from -6.434 to +0.606) had almost no influence on the marketing index. When the impact of demographic variables on attitudes were considered, Afrikaans-speaking consumers and those who are relatively well qualified academically, turned out to be particularly dissatisfied with marketing.

Die hoë mate van menslike betrokkenheid verseker dat bemarking altyd 'n dinamiese ondernemingsfunksie en -proses sal bly. Wanneer die trefkrag van snelveranderende tegnologiese ontwikkelings daarby gevoeg word, kan die andersins dinamiese bemarkingsproses uiters onvoorspelbaar en wisselend raak. Die voortdurende veranderende bedryfsomgewing maak dit dus noodsaaklik dat die rol van bemarking gereeld onder die vergrootglas geplaas word en dat dit sowel van 'n interne as eksterne oogpunt ondersoek word. In hierdie studie word bemarking en bemarkingsbedrywighede vanuit 'n verbruikers-oogpunt geanaliseer. Die houdings van verbruikers ten opsigte van die sogenaamde vier P's (Produk, Prys, Distribusie en Promosie) word gemeet, en omgeskakel in 'n indeks van 'houding ten opsigte van bemarking'. 'n Vergelyking word ook getref met resultate van 'n soortgelyke studie wat in 1990 onderneem is. Die 1990-studie het 'n negatiewe bemarkings-indeks van -16.262 aangetoon. In die laasgenoemde studie was verbruikers in veral die hoër ouderdomsgroepe ontevrede, terwyl pryse uitgesonder is as die grootste bron van ontevredenheid. Pryse en praktyke wat daarmee gepaardgaan, is dikwels as onbillik bestempel, terwyl reklame ook met 'n mate van skeptisisme bejeën is. Kleinhandel (distribusie) was die enigste element van die bemarkingsresep wat 'n positiewe indeks in die 1990-studie getoon het. Die resultate van die 1993-studie toon dat die Suid-Afrikaanse Bemarkingsindeks die afgelope drie jaar skerp afgeneem het van -16.262 in 1990 tot -34.125 in 1993. Die afname in die bemarkingsindeks is hoofsaaklik te wyte aan die aansienlike daling in die prysindeks van -2.719 tot -9.939, asook 'n marginale verswakking in die kleinhandelindeks. Die afname in die prysindeks was so omvangryk dat die verbetering in die advertensie-indeks, van -6.434 tot +0.606, bykans geen uitwerking op die bemarkingsindeks gehad het nie. 'n Analise van die invloed van demografiese veranderlikes op respondente se houdings het aangetoon dat Afrikaanssprekende verbruikers en die wat akademies relatief goed gekwalifiseer is, besonder ontevrede is met bemarking en bemarkingspraktyke.

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Introduction

Both the internal (Webster, 1992; Menon & Varadarajan, 1992; Ruekert & Walker, 1987) and the external (McKenna, 1991; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990) roles of marketing, as well as marketing theory (Van Waterschoot & Van den Bulte, 1992; Silk, 1993) are continuously scrutinized and critically reviewed. These bouts of introspection are necessitated by the dynamic environment in which marketers function. The dynamism is brought about by the involvement of people in general, and consumers and competitors in particular. The roles and involvement of neither are static over time.

Despite the dynamism of the marketing environment, marketing remains the management function responsible for ensuring that every aspect of the business is focused on delivering superior value to customers. In the long term, the business will be defined by its customers and not by its products,

factories or offices (Webster, 1992). The acknowledgement of the centrality of consumer needs and requirements in marketing decision-making is embodied in what is supposed to be the guiding philosophy of the marketing discipline, namely the marketing concept. Despite the marketing fraternity's supposed subscription to this philosophy of consumer orientation, few firms, according to Barksdale & Darden (1971: 36), seem to implement and operationalize it in terms of its daily activities. A cursory glance at the letters columns of popular magazines and newspapers do not contradict this view. Readers complain about poor service, poor product quality and the like with almost monotonous regularity. In addition, most of the empirical studies (Barksdale, Darden & Perreault, 1976; Gaski & Etzel, 1986; Varadarajan & Thirunarayana, 1990; Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992) have confirmed this contention.

A dissenting position is that of Westbrook, Newman & Taylor (1978: 59) who concluded that '... consumers find joy and satisfaction in their buying experiences for durables considerably more than they find difficulty and discontent'. They reach this conclusion despite reporting that only 27% of recent buyers and 13% of prospective buyers did not experience difficulty with previous product purchases. They point out, however, that their study did not measure attitudes in general, but satisfaction with a particular transaction.

From a South African perspective an interesting international comparison is the study reported by Varadarajan & Thirunarayana (1990). They surveyed a sample of 225 households in Bangalore, India, a country they describe as a rapidly industrializing country with a large Third World element. They found that their predominantly urban respondents do not believe that businesses in India view the satisfaction of consumer needs as an overriding objective. Almost all respondents (97%) expressed dissatisfaction with pricing and rising prices, but believed that the free market system was the most desirable economic system for containing price increases. The majority were sceptical towards advertising, particularly in respect of honesty or trustworthy-related issues. Their respondents were generally positively inclined towards product manufacturers, but expressed impatience with the inability of business firms to improve product quality in India. These findings were, in essence, very similar to those reported in South Africa in 1990 and 1992 (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1990; Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992).

Measuring South African consumer sentiment towards marketing

This study attempts to assess to what extent South African business firms are thought of as consumer orientated by measuring consumer attitudes towards marketing practices and marketing firms. It is a follow-up on a similar study conducted during 1990. The initial results were reported in 1990 (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1990) while more sophisticated statistical analyses of the data were published two years later (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992). The overriding conclusion of the first study (referred to as the 1990 study) was that South African consumers' attitude towards marketing is slightly negative and '... ought to be a source of concern to the entire marketing fraternity' (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992: 38). Older consumers in particular voiced their disapproval. Pricing was singled out as the most important bone of contention. The pricing and the pricing practices used by marketers were seen as often unfair and unreasonable. Advertising was also viewed rather sceptically. The only marketing mix element that escaped reasonably unscathed was distribution or retailing. Retailing, defined in the study as the role and quality of service provided by retailers to buyers, was the only marketing mix element to return a positive index.

These findings were consistent with those of a similar study reported in the United States of America (Gaski & Etzel, 1986) which reported a negative index of -14.847 (range +200 to -200) compared to the South African index of -16.262 (range +280 to -280).

This, the second study (referred to as the 1993 study), was conducted towards the end of 1993. It assesses whether South African consumer sentiment has changed during the inter-

vening three year period. Both studies made use of the 'Marketing Index' questionnaire developed by Gaski & Etzel (1986). In building on the initial work of Barksdale *et al.* (1976), Gaski & Etzel developed a measuring instrument to gauge consumer attitudes towards marketing in general as well as the four P's (product, price, promotion, distribution/retailing). To facilitate comparisons, exactly the same questionnaire as in the 1990 study (including the demographical variables) was used.

The Marketing Index questionnaire taps consumer attitudes towards the four P's on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The following formula is used to convert the responses to an attitude score for an individual respondent:

$$\sum_{j=1}^n \left[w_j \sum_{i=1}^m x_{ij} \right]$$

where:

- x_{ij} = scale item response i in category j ;
- w_j = importance weight for marketing mix category j ;
- m = number of items in category (7);
- n = number of categories (4).

The mean score per individual respondent is then converted to an index of general sentiment.

1990 study

The first attempt to measure South African consumer sentiment towards marketing (the 1990 study) found that distribution/retailing was the only marketing mix element towards which consumers were positively inclined. Pricing, advertising and products/product quality all returned negative indices.

Price index

Although suggesting reasons for the negative attitude towards pricing and pricing practices is purely speculative, one possible reason may be the economic conditions prevailing at the time. The late 1980s was characterized by recessionary conditions and an inflation rate of around 16%. These conditions have made South African consumers considerably more price conscious (Terblanche, 1993: 2).

Increased price consciousness is likely to result in consumer complaints that retailers make excessive profits, the buying of cheaper substitutes, and bargain hunting (Terblanche, 1993: 3). The increased awareness of and sensitivity towards pricing is thus likely to make consumers considerably more critical of pricing and pricing practices. This possibly explains why pricing returned the lowest index, namely -8.470.

Advertising index

Advertising is one marketing mix element that receives considerable attention in the media and in academic circles (Haytko & Matulich, 1993). This is possibly due to the high levels of distrust and cynicism associated with it (Pollay & Mittal, 1993: 99).

Following a review of several American studies, Zanot (1981) concluded that the public's attitude towards advertising has become increasingly negative. Varadarajan & Thirunarayana (1990: 13) venture that these negative sentiments are universal. While the attitudes of younger respondents in Pollay & Mittal's (1993) study were largely influenced by positive views that advertising was good for the economy (more information, lower prices), the attitudes of older respondents were shaped by negative perceptions that advertising is false and insults the intelligence of consumers. Pollay & Mittal (1993: 111) ascribe the continuing decline in consumer acceptance of advertising to its proliferation in terms of sheer volume without a compensatory increase in value added.

In South Africa, fears have been expressed that this negative sentiment towards advertising could spill over to pressure from political organizations. According to industry sources, the African National Congress is sceptical about the role and value of advertising in business, and may in future impose some control over the industry (Koenderman, 1994: 83).

If consumer attitudes are the only consideration, they may have a point. In the 1990 study advertising returned the second worst index of the four P's, namely -6.434.

Retailing index

Retailing in this study was broadly defined to include salespeople's service to customers and choice of merchandise. Retailing services is a topic which regularly features in the letters columns of the popular press. A Sunday newspaper columnist recently wrote:

'Om te gaan inkopies doen, het vir baie mense 'n nagmerrie geword. Ons mooi, groot winkels het als wat die hart begeer. Maar koerante se verbruikerskolomme vertel toenemend aaklige verhale van onbeskofte winkelpersoneel, traak-my-nie-agtige diens en 'n houding dat klante maar vir lief moet neem omdat winkels nie verlee is nie. Klagtes oor swak diens het inderdaad so algemeen geword dat dit as die norm eerder as die uitsondering beskou word'.

'Hoe erg is dit werklik'? (Waldner, 1994: 24)

The newspaper attempted to answer the question by visiting four large clothing retailers, posing as buyers. They recommended that two of the four should be avoided if possible, but reported that *if* and *when* shop assistants were found, the service was adequate. They also expressed the view that little is being done to make shopping a pleasant experience.

In similar vein a New Zealand columnist recently reminisced what a pleasurable experience shopping used to be under the headline: 'Shopping and service – how it used to be'. He wrote:

'Whenever I pause in front of the bewildering array of loaves on the supermarket shelves I wistfully think how easy it used to be to buy bread. All shopping was different 40 and 50 years ago. Shopping in the city was a satisfying activity. A visit to Wardells was always a pleasure. Behind a splendid long counter half-a-dozen or more white-aproned assistants greeted customers, often by name, then bustled around to weigh sugar, slice the cheese or turn the handle of the bacon slicer. Shoppers were well looked after. If

milady wanted a pair of gloves she went to the appropriate counter ... sat down on the chair provided and explained her requirements. The assistant then went to the appropriate drawer and brought out a variety for madam to try. By comparison, the modern supermarkets are sterile, unfriendly monuments to Mammon.

The one area in which supermarkets score is their ability to purchase in bulk and keep prices down. But I would still enjoy the older personal service' (Parry, 1994: 23).

A common theme in both instances is the apparent consumer need for personal service and enjoyment. The two journalists seem to think the modern buying experience lacks both. In 1990 South African consumers would not necessarily have agreed with the view as retailing returned the only positive index: +1.361.

Product index

There can be little doubt that quality (or perceived quality) is an important buying consideration for many buyers (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1991: 176–177). In fact, consumers are continuously demanding higher quality, and as a result, quality has become the primary survival strategy in the modern-day business environment (Akers, 1991: 26). Poor quality is costly and hurts the bottom line. Yet, many firms don't get it right (Crosby, 1979; Garvin, 1983), as evidenced by the 1990 study which reported a negative product index of -2.719.

1993 study

The primary objectives of this study were to measure South African consumer sentiment towards marketing, and to compare the results with those of the 1990 study. It was surmised that if long term trends could be identified timeously, measures could be taken to protect or enhance the image of marketing in the eyes of South African consumers. This analysis was refined to focus on individual market segments to ensure that if such efforts are undertaken, resources would be used optimally.

Methodology

Questionnaires were mailed to a random sample of 2 500 license holders of the South African Broadcasting Corporation. Of these, 383 or 15.3% were returned. Table 1 shows that the composition of the respondent groups in the two studies were almost identical, which facilitates and enhances comparisons between the two studies. The only two minor differences are that fewer respondents were in the 65+ age group in this study (the 1990 sample was probably skewed in that respect), and that more people in the present sample are economically inactive. The latter reflects the higher levels of unemployment in 1993 compared to 1990.

Data analysis

The data analysis occurred in three phases. Firstly, to evaluate the internal reliability of the Marketing Index questionnaire, Cronbach alpha coefficients were calculated. Secondly, the discriminant validity of the instrument was assessed by means of a factor analysis procedure. Thirdly, the various indices were calculated using the formula suggested by Gaski

Table 1 Composition of the respondent group

Demographic variables	(n) 1993 study	% 1993 study	% 1990 study
Gender			
Males	251	65.5	63.7
Females	<u>132</u>	<u>43.5</u>	<u>36.3</u>
	383	100.0	100.0
Age			
20-24	9	2.5	2.9
25-34	86	22.5	16.7
35-44	122	31.9	24.1
45-54	102	26.6	19.2
55-64	56	14.6	17.0
65+	<u>8</u>	<u>2.1</u>	<u>20.1</u>
	383	100.0	100.0
Marital status			
Married/live together	307	80.2	77.4
Divorced/widowed	36	9.4	15.7
Never married/other	<u>40</u>	<u>10.4</u>	<u>6.9</u>
	383	100.0	100.0
Level of education			
Lower than matric	74	19.3	16.3
Matric	108	28.2	30.1
Matric plus diploma	114	29.8	30.7
Matric plus degree	<u>87</u>	<u>22.7</u>	<u>22.9</u>
	383	100.0	100.0
Language			
Afrikaans	159	41.5	50.4
English	190	49.6	47.7
Other	0	0.0	1.9
African	<u>34</u>	<u>8.9</u>	<u>0</u>
	383	100.0	100.0
Employment status			
Employer/self employed	81	21.1	21.5
Employee	240	62.7	48.3
Unemployed	6	1.6	0.3
Economically inactive	<u>56</u>	<u>14.6</u>	<u>29.9</u>
	383	100.0	100.0
Area of residence			
Urban	280	73.1	72.7
Rural	<u>103</u>	<u>26.9</u>	<u>27.3</u>
	383	100.0	100.0

Due to rounding not all percentages add to 100.

& Etzel (1986: 73) and used as dependent variables in a series of five regression analyses (the marketing index and the four P's). The following demographic variables served as independent variables: gender, age, marital status, level of education, home language, position in labour market and area of residence (urban *versus* rural).

Internal reliability results

The first phase of the statistical analysis of the data involved

assessment of the internal reliability of the measuring instrument. This was done by calculating Cronbach alpha coefficients using the computer programme SAS (SAS Institute, 1990). Both the final alpha values and the item-to-total correlations of individual items were compared (Table 2) with those of the 1990 study, and with those reported by Gaski & Etzel (1986).

For the sake of brevity Gaski & Etzel (1986: 74) removed the two (of the seven) items with the lowest item-to-total correlations in all four instances (product, price, advertising and retailing) during the purification process of developing the Marketing Index measuring instrument.

Table 2 Comparative reliability measures

	Gaski & Etzel (1986)	The 1990 study (1992)	The 1993 study
Product index	Item-total correlation	Item-total correlation	Item-total correlation
Product 1	0.491	0.735	0.561
Product 2	0.543	0.726	0.597
Product 3	0.570	0.633	0.501
Product 4	0.480	0.723	0.569
Product 5	0.642	0.780	0.599
Product 6	0.639	0.746	0.656
Product 7	0.533	0.701	0.579
<i>Alpha</i>	<i>0.817</i>	<i>0.846</i>	<i>0.832</i>
Price index			
Price 1	0.514	0.549	0.426
Price 2	0.477	0.542	0.396
Price 3	0.500	0.684	0.483
Price 4	0.403	0.593	0.309
Price 5	0.333	0.496	0.327
Price 6	0.646	0.723	0.525
Price 7	0.630	0.699	0.488
<i>Alpha</i>	<i>0.772</i>	<i>0.716</i>	<i>0.703</i>
Advertising index			
Advert 1	0.359	0.549	0.367
Advert 2	0.544	0.687	0.658
Advert 3	0.567	0.697	0.668
Advert 4	0.515	0.730	0.450
Advert 5	0.469	0.690	0.565
Advert 6	0.314	0.592	0.403
Advert 7	0.600	0.731	0.637
<i>Alpha</i>	<i>0.761</i>	<i>0.794</i>	<i>0.801</i>
Retailing index			
Retail 1	0.604	0.723	0.580
Retail 2	0.591	0.691	0.467
Retail 3	0.622	0.769	0.588
Retail 4	0.410	0.446	0.306
Retail 5	0.133	0.308	0.115
Retail 6	0.587	0.729	0.545
Retail 7	0.631	0.733	0.573
<i>Alpha</i>	<i>0.783</i>	<i>0.755</i>	<i>0.742</i>

It is shown in Table 2 that three PRICE items (PRICE2, PRICE4, PRICE5), one advertising item (ADVERT1), and two RETAIL items (RETAIL4 and RETAIL5) returned item-to-total correlations lower than 0.4. This situation may have necessitated their exclusion from further statistical analysis. Three reasons mitigated against this course of action: (1) comparisons with the findings of the 1990 study would have been complicated; (2) only one item had a particularly low item-to-total correlation of less than 0.3 (RETAIL5); and (3) all the alpha coefficients are above 0.7, confirming the reliability of the Marketing Index instrument. For these reasons, and particularly the first, all seven items were retained for subsequent analyses. It is shown in Table 3 that all four P's returned acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficients in this study, comparing favourably with those of the 1990 study and those reported by Gaski & Etzel (1986).

Validity results

All 28 items were subjected to a factor analysis procedure to assess the discriminant validity of the measuring instrument. The computer programme BMDP4M (Frane, Jennrich & Sampson, 1990) was used, specifying maximum likelihood as the method of initial factor extraction and a Direct Quartimin oblique rotation of the original factor matrix (Jennrich & Sampson, 1966).

It is shown in Table 4 that most items loaded on separate factors as expected. The only exceptions are PROD1, PRICE4, PRICE5, ADVERT1 and RETAIL5. Table 4 thus confirms the discriminant validity of the Marketing Index questionnaire.

Empirical results

Indices: marketing index and marketing instruments

It is shown in Table 5 that the SA Marketing Index has declined from -16.262 in 1990 to -34.125 in 1993. The decline in the marketing index is primarily due to the considerable decline in the price index from -8.470 to -24.368, a slight decrease in the product index (from -2.719 to -9.939) and a marginal deterioration in the retailing index. The decline in the price index in particular was so severe that the improvement in the advertising index (from -6.434 to +0.606) had almost no influence on the marketing index.

Influence of demographic variables on the marketing index

To evaluate the influence the demographic variables (gender, age, marital status [MS], level of education [EDUC], home language [LANG], position in labour market [LABOUR] and area of residence) exert on the dependent variables (the marketing index and the four P's) five regression analyses

Table 3 Comparative reliability measures (Alphas)

	Gaski & Etzel (1986)	The 1990 study (1992)	The 1993 study
Product index	0.817	0.846	0.832
Price index	0.772	0.716	0.701
Advert index	0.761	0.794	0.801
Retailing index	0.783	0.755	0.779

Table 4 Rotated factor loadings

	Factor 1 Advert	Factor 2 Product	Factor 3 Retail	Factor 4 Price
PROD1	-0.156	0.370	0.337	0.197
PROD2	-0.165	0.400	0.357	0.187
PROD3	0.046	0.598	0.014	-0.024
PROD4	-0.010	0.705	-0.059	0.011
PROD5	0.031	0.710	0.104	-0.130
PROD6	0.088	0.682	0.201	-0.027
PROD7	-0.046	0.411	0.321	0.168
PRICE1	0.255	0.217	-0.173	0.373
PRICE2	0.252	0.158	-0.190	0.341
PRICE3	-0.118	0.011	0.145	0.590
PRICE4	0.150	-0.069	0.164	0.291
PRICE5	0.030	0.392	-0.160	0.233
PRICE6	-0.100	-0.010	0.093	0.702
PRICE7	-0.031	0.057	0.194	0.590
ADVERT1	0.260	-0.028	0.387	0.139
ADVERT2	0.788	-0.076	0.152	-0.044
ADVERT3	0.720	0.102	0.031	0.076
ADVERT4	0.547	0.029	-0.035	-0.112
ADVERT5	0.521	-0.168	0.333	0.153
ADVERT6	0.460	0.039	-0.142	-0.004
ADVERT7	0.681	0.059	0.037	0.068
RETAIL1	-0.027	0.003	0.614	0.185
RETAIL2	0.290	0.205	0.386	-0.203
RETAIL3	0.013	0.113	0.640	-0.012
RETAIL4	-0.033	0.045	0.400	0.021
RETAIL5	0.248	0.112	-0.186	0.341
RETAIL6	0.299	0.160	0.375	-0.001
RETAIL7	0.011	0.076	0.648	0.123
Eigen values	2.929	2.674	2.579	1.979

Loadings greater than 0.4 were regarded as significant.

Table 5 Indices: marketing and marketing instruments

	Gaski & Etzel (1986)	The 1990 study (1992)	The 1993 study
Product index	N/A	-2.719	-9.939
Price index	N/A	-8.470	-24.368
Advert index	N/A	-6.434	+0.606
Retailing index	N/A	+1.361	-0.423
Overall marketing index	-14.847 ¹	-16.262 ²	-34.125 ²

1. Range +200 to -200

2. Range +280 to -280

were conducted. The PROC GLM procedure available on the computer package SAS (SAS Institute, 1990) was used for this purpose.

It is shown in Table 6 that three demographic variables exert a significant impact on the marketing index, namely the language of respondents, their marital status, and the level of education. In the case of language all three language groups

(Afrikaans, English, African language) differ significantly from each other ($p < 0.01$), with Afrikaans-speaking consumers (LANG1) particularly dissatisfied. Respondents who are classified as 'never married' (MS2) are significantly more positive ($p < 0.05$) about marketing than other marital status groups (see the comments under FUTURE RESEARCH regarding the future use of this demographic variable). The relationship between education and the marketing index is negative. In other words, the better respondents are qualified, the more dissatisfied they are with the marketing fraternity and its activities. This finding concurs with the results of many other satisfaction/dissatisfaction studies. Lounsbury & Hoopes (1985), for instance, found that those with higher levels of education were significantly less satisfied with their vacation/holiday experience than those with lower levels of education.

In the 1990 study age was the only demographic variable which had a significant influence on the marketing index. In that case older people reported a particularly poor attitude towards marketing (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992: 37).

Gaski & Etzel (1986: 76) found that gender exerted an influence on the marketing index in their study. In their case, males were significantly ($p < 0.05$) more dissatisfied (mean attribute score -17.71) than females (-12.36).

Table 6 also reveals, by implication, that gender, age, position in the labour market, and area of residence do not influence consumer attitudes towards marketing.

Influence of demographic variables on the product index

According to Table 7 two demographic variables exert a significant influence on the product index, namely language and education. English-speaking respondents (LANG2) are significantly more negative about products and product quality than their Afrikaans and African language counterparts. As is the case with the marketing index, level of education is negatively related with the product index – the higher the level of education the more negative the attitude.

Table 6 The influence of demographic variables on the marketing index(')

General linear model procedure				
Dependent variable: Marketing Index				
Parameter	Estimate	T for H0: Parameter=0	Pr > T	Std error of estimate
Intercept	-13.266	-0.67	0.5045	19.857
LANG1	-26.828	-4.70	0.0001**	5.709
LANG2	-17.817	-3.18	0.0016**	5.600
MS1	9.965	1.35	0.1772	7.370
MS2	25.053	2.24	0.0254*	11.163
MS3	-27.317	-1.72	0.0868	15.908
MS4	-3.393	-0.28	0.7781	12.034
EDUC	-6.210	-2.26	0.0246**	2.750
R ² = 15.9%				
* = $p < 0.05$				
** = $p < 0.01$				
1. Only the independent variables which exert a significant influence on the dependent variable are shown in this and all subsequent tables.				

Gender, age, position in the labour market, marital status and area of residence do not influence the product index.

The 1990 study reported that females were significantly ($p < 0.05$) more dissatisfied with products and product quality than males, English-speaking more dissatisfied than Afrikaans-speaking respondents ($p < 0.01$), and employees (those who work for others) more dissatisfied than those in other labour market positions (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992: 37).

Influence of demographic variables on the price index

Table 8 shows that Afrikaans, English and African language groups differ significantly ($p < 0.01$) from each other in respect of their attitude towards pricing. Afrikaans-speaking respondents reported particularly negative attitudes towards pricing practices. Gender also influence attitudes towards pricing. Female respondents were significantly ($p < 0.05$) more dissatisfied with pricing than their male counterparts.

By implication, Table 8 shows that age, position in the labour market, marital status, level of education and area of residence do not influence the price index.

Area of residence, position in the labour market and marital status were the demographic variables which exerted an influence on attitudes towards pricing in the 1990 study. Relatively speaking urban consumers ($p < 0.05$), those working for others, that is, employees ($p < 0.05$), and those who are married/live together ($p < 0.05$) reported higher levels of

Table 7 The influence of demographic variables on the product index

General linear models procedure				
Dependent variable: Product Index				
Parameter	Estimate	T for H0: Parameter=0	Pr > T	Std error of estimate
INTERCEPT	-8.888	-1.000	0.3198	8.922
LANG1	-4.809	-1.87	0.0617	2.565
LANG2	-10.8467	-4.31	0.0001**	2.516
EDUC	-2.6015	-2.10	0.0360*	1.236
R ² = 12.2%				
* = $p < 0.05$				
** = $p < 0.01$				

Table 8 The influence of demographic variables on the price index

General Linear Models Procedure				
Dependent variable: Price Index				
Parameter	Estimate	T for H0: Parameter=0	Pr > T	Std error estimate
INTERCEPT	-18.180	-2.82	0.0050	6.437
LANG1	-8.958	-4.84	0.0001**	1.851
LANG2	-5.909	-3.25	0.0012*	1.816
GENDER	2.623	2.00	0.0465*	1.313
R ² = 15.9%				
* = $p < 0.05$				
** = $p < 0.01$				

dissatisfaction with pricing and pricing practices in 1990 (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992: 37).

Influence of demographic variables on the advertising index

Language is the only demographic variable which has a significant ($p < 0.01$) impact on attitudes towards advertising. Afrikaans-speaking respondents were considerably more negative towards advertising than other language groups. The demographic variables which do not influence the attitude towards advertising are gender, age, marital status, level of education, position in labour market and area of residence.

The advertising index in the 1990 study was influenced by age and level of education. In the case of age the relationship was negative – the older respondents were, the lower they rated advertising. In the case of level of education the relationship was positive, implying that better qualified respondents are more satisfied with advertising and advertising practices than those less well qualified academically (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992: 38).

Influence of demographic variables on the retailing index

Three demographic variables influence attitudes towards retailing. Afrikaans-speaking respondents are significantly ($p < 0.01$) more negative than other language groups, while those who have never been married before (MS2) were more positive than other groups ($p < 0.05$). As was the case in respect of the marketing index and the advertising index, the impact of level of education on the retailing index is negative. In other words, the better qualified respondents are significantly ($p < 0.01$) more dissatisfied with retailing than those not so well qualified academically.

The demographic variables which do not influence attitudes towards retailing practices are gender, age, position in the labour market and area of residence. In the 1990 study no demographic variable had a significant impact on the retailing index (Boshoff & Du Plessis, 1992: 38).

Summary and conclusions

The South African Marketing Index as well as three of the four individual indices have decreased considerably in the period 1990 to 1993. The attitude towards pricing in particular, is a source of concern. When individual market

Table 10 Influence of demographic variables on the retailing index

General Linear Models Procedure				
Dependent variable: Retail Index				
Parameter	Estimate	T for H0:		Std error of estimate
		Parameter=0	Pr > T	
INTERCEPT	7.788	1.16	0.2462	6.70485603
LANG1	-6.534	-3.39	0.0008**	1.92792907
LANG2	-1.762	-0.93	0.3520	1.89103157
MS1	2.780	1.12	0.2647	2.48875069
MS2	7.883	2.09	0.0372*	3.76934476
MS3	-8.978	-1.67	0.0955	5.37163122
MS4	1.029	0.25	0.8003	4.06341479
EDUC	-3.570	-3.84	0.0001**	0.92887094
R ² = 11.756				
* = $p < 0.05$				
** = $p < 0.01$				

segments are analysed, two market segments have voiced considerable dissatisfaction with marketing, namely Afrikaans-speakers and those who are relatively well qualified in academic terms. If marketing is to improve its image, Afrikaners and well-qualified consumers are obvious target markets. Other potential target markets include females, in respect of pricing, and English consumers in respect of pricing and products.

Almost every marketing textbook refers to the influence the marketing environment can exert on marketing. In considering reasons for the decline in the SA Marketing Index two environmental factors were considered. The first, changing economic circumstances, do not fully explain the change. During the three year period under consideration (1990–1993) the growth rate improved from -0.5 to +1.1, the inflation rate declined from 14.3% to 9.7%, and the prime rate dropped from 21.0% to 16.2%. Obviously the 'good economic news' had not had a significant impact on consumer confidence. This assertion is confirmed by the SA Chamber of Business' *Business Confidence Index* which actually declined from 100.0 in 1990 to 97.5 in 1993, despite the improvement in economic indicators. It appears as if South African consumers have become so conditioned by negative economic developments that not even almost three years of improving circumstances could lift the national mood.

The second, and, we believe, the most important factor was however, political developments in the country. The prevailing political climate in 1993 (rolling mass action, political violence) contributed to feelings of insecurity and anxiety among large sections of population, which could not be negated by favourable developments on the economic front. Political developments made it very difficult for marketers, in the words of Kotler (1991), to '... develop and maintain successful transactions and relationships with its target customers'.

Table 9 Influence of demographic variables on the advertising index

General linear models procedure				
Dependent variable: Advertising Index				
Parameter	Estimate	T for H0:		Std error of estimate
		Parameter=0	Pr > T	
INTERCEPT	6.013	1.02	0.3083	5.893
LANG1	-6526	-3.85	0.0001*	1.695
LANG2	0.700	0.42	0.6738	1.662
R ² = 7.9%				
* = $p < 0.05$				
** = $p < 0.0$				

Managerial implications

The dramatic decline in the South African Marketing Index (three times worse than in 1990) is cold comfort to the marketing fraternity. Consumer attitudes towards pricing and pricing procedures in particular, demand urgent attention. Some marketers may be tempted to blame the situation on prevailing unfavourable economic conditions such as stubborn inflation, low growth and high unemployment. Others may argue that the negative sentiments expressed by Afrikaans-speakers are indicative of what they may perceive as negative political developments in the country. Similarly it may be argued that well qualified consumers have unrealistic expectations as is often suggested in the consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction literature (Lounsbury & Hoopes, 1985).

Whilst there may be some merit in the argument that marketers must accept the blame for circumstances beyond their control, using it as an excuse should be avoided. Marketing is the most visible business function and interacting with the market to the advantage of the firm is its core business.

It is clear that the days of marketers simply going about their day-to-day business without consideration of the future of the profession are over. The time has arrived for the formulation of a coherent campaign to change public attitudes towards marketing. This should consist of clear strategic goals, properly defined target markets and well-considered marketing strategies. In other words, the time for marketing marketing has arrived.

It can be expected that the morality of an economic system which produces both the super rich and the terribly poor will continue to be questioned. What role marketing is playing to ensure the maximum good for the largest number of people will have to be emphasized.

The proposed marketing campaign to positively influence consumer attitudes should have at least three secondary objectives:

- To regularly research the South African consumer market to ensure that all decision-making is based on sound market knowledge.
- To educate consumers about the role and importance of marketing and marketing activities in a free market economic system.
- To exercise strict self regulation to minimize the occurrence of events that could harm the image of marketing, to expose harmful practices and to even consider providing compensation to those who suffered as a result.

As pricing makes the most significant contribution to the negative marketing index it should obviously be singled out for special attention. Future price adjustments need to be well considered and justified.

Those invoked in and concerned about the future of advertising may be pleased by its improved performance (the advertising index improved from -6.434 to +0.606) in the eyes of consumers. Advertising will, however, remain under pressure for some time and must play a significant role in future efforts to enhance the public image of marketing.

Future of marketing

The future of marketing, and particularly advertising, is likely to be heavily influenced by expected technological developments. Concepts such as 'information superhighway', 'inter-

active media' and 'global information' will soon have a major impact on how marketing is conducted. Marketers who do not adapt in time will not survive. Those in the know have already predicted that these revolutionary changes will bring an end to advertising as it is known today (Mandow, 1994: 20). The advertising of the future, will be through interactive television and will take the form of 'infomercial' style advertising. A consumer wanting to buy a car will switch on the television and gain entry to a database, specify his preferences (price, model, engine size) and will then be given a range of options. The prospective buyer then click into each to get an infomercial and consider the pros and cons of each before buying. Other examples are advertising that the consumer can stop to ask questions, or participating in commercials. An example of the latter is 'seeing' yourself on-screen with different hairstyles or after proposed cosmetic surgery. It is predicted that interactive television may be in use by 1997 and electronic home shopping by 2010. These and other technological developments offer interesting marketing opportunities and challenges, but obviously, new skills will be required.

New technology will give marketers the opportunity to provide consumers with more information, but it will have to be targeted carefully (Mandow, 1994: 20).

Future research

As suggested by Gaski & Etzel (1986: 72), a number of advantages will stem from measuring consumer sentiment towards marketing, including sensitizing marketers to the importance of consumer perceptions, and enhancing the image of the profession in the public eye. The true value of such a study, however, is enhanced if repeated regularly. In this way trends can be identified which will ensure that corrective action (if required) is focused on the most needed areas.

It is anticipated that this project will be repeated at regular intervals to yield these advantages. Particularly pleasing is the involvement of an albeit small number of Blacks in this study. Hopefully a larger sample size will yield more responses from this important market segment in the future. Besides expanding the sample size, a future study will have to consider altering the number and nature of the market segments (demographic variables) included. The marital status of respondents (and possibly also their position in the labour market), for instance, is unlikely to provide marketers with useable information and should be excluded in future studies. The fact that demographical variables used in this study only account for about 10%–15% of the variation in the individual indices suggests that more effective predictors ought to be considered.

In this and the 1990 study all the original questionnaire items were retained for all statistical analyses. In future, consideration will have to be given to excluding items which do not pass the internal reliability and discriminant validity tests (e.g. items such as PRICE5 in Tables 2 and 4 respectively). Excluding such items will yield more reliable results, but will unfortunately make direct comparisons with both the 1990 and the 1993 studies impossible.

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