

Author manuscript

To cite this paper:

Mason, K., Kjellberg, H., & Hagberg, J. (2015). Exploring the performativity of marketing: theories, practices and devices. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 31(1-2), 1-15.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.982932>

Exploring the Performativity of Marketing: Theories, Practices and Devices

Katy Mason
Lancaster University Management School, UK
k.j.mason@lancaster.ac.uk

Hans Kjellberg,
Stockholm School of Economics, Sweden,
hans.kjellberg@hhs.se

Johan Hagberg,
University of Gothenburg, Sweden
johan.hagberg@handels.gu.se

Acknowledgements:

Our thanks to all those who presented at and commented on papers in the Performativity of Marketing Theory Track at the Macromarketing Conference, York University, Toronto 2013, the conference Chairs, Detlev Zwick and Sammy Bonsu, York University and to Prof. Luis Araujo and Prof. Martin Spring, Lancaster University, for reading and commenting on earlier versions of this editorial.

Funding Acknowledgements

This Special Issue is an output from research programmes supported by the Advanced Institute of Management, ESRC and EPSRC [RES-331-27-0049], and The Swedish Research Council Council [Grant number 2012-5736].

Exploring the Performativity of Marketing: Theories, Practices and Devices

1. Introduction: the performativity of marketing

The academic discipline of marketing has been understood and, some may argue, has been designed to be performative. That is, the theories and models developed in marketing are typically intended to bring about effects, rather than simply to describe. Since its inception in the early 1900s,¹ the discipline has concerned itself with developing theories and tools that can be picked up and put to work by marketing practitioners. Examples of such theories and tools include models of market segmentation, marketing communication, consumer behaviour, branding, and marketing strategy frameworks, which can be found in most marketing textbooks. Its purportedly close link to practical business problems may have contributed to make marketing a popular subject, equipping students to make practical, valuable judgments about markets and marketing activities. However, over the past twenty years, the academic discipline of marketing has become increasingly concerned about a 'practice-theory' gap and the diminishing practical value and relevance of its theories, practices and devices.

Calls for marketing scholars to turn their critical analysis onto themselves, their scholarly activities and the types and presentations of theory they produce, abound (Maclaran, Miller, Parsons, & Surman, 2009; Tadajewski, 2010). Such calls have questioned both the purpose of theorizing and the relationship between theory and practice in marketing. Brownlie, Hewer, and Ferguson (2007) observe that accounts of the gap between marketing theory and practice typically employ the rhetoric of 'distance' between cultures: between the worlds of 'scholarship' and 'practice'. By taking an interest in the performativity of marketing – how marketing theories not only describe reality but contribute to bring that reality about – this Special Issue presents one way of rethinking the relationship between theory and practice. It directs our attention to the concrete ways in which marketing ideas travel between actors (from marketing practitioners to marketing scholars and vice versa) and how such ideas become increasingly abstracted or concretized in that process (Czarniawska & Sevón, 1996; Latour 1986). Brownlie et al. (2007) further point out that we have a very limited understanding of how 'relevance' might be accomplished and performed (also see, Maclaran et al., 2009). Here, a performative stance encourages us to empirically investigate how marketing theories are made to matter in specific situations. Studying the performativity of marketing offers a response to calls for marketing researchers to reflect on their roles during and after research encounters (Wallendorf & Brucks, 1993) by advancing reflexive resources beyond researcher introspection.

¹ For work on the history of the marketing, see Bartels (1988), Jones and Monieson (1990), Shaw and Jones (2005).

This Special Issue, 'Exploring the Performativity of Marketing: Theories, Practices and Devices', tries to address these concerns by asking: *how is marketing theory performative?* The individual contributions look at how marketing theories are used in practice and what this means for our understanding of the practicing-theorising landscape of marketing. The issue comprises ten empirical studies that inquire into how, why and to what effect marketing theories are used and 'performed' in marketing practice. We begin this editorial by considering what performativity is and how this concept is used in the marketing literature. We then consider three themes concerning the performativity of marketing that emerge from the articles. Finally, we summarize the implications of these themes and sketch a few research areas for further developing our understanding of the performativity of marketing.

What is performativity?

The term 'performativity' can be traced to Austin's (1962) concept of 'performative utterances', speech acts that instead of simply describing an existing reality, perform that reality. A well-known example is the statement 'I now pronounce you husband and wife', which, if uttered in the right context, will produce 'husband and wife'. Austin called this an illocutionary effect. However, Austin did not only consider speech acts as such, but also the contexts or situations within which they were performed. To elaborate on this, Austin turned to the American Pragmatists, and particularly the work of Dewey (1933) concerning what it means to know something and the role of language, action, interaction and transaction in generating knowing. The practices of knowing (speaking, acting, interacting) are what helps actors inquire into 'perplexed and trying situations' and reveal new productive possibilities (Dewey, 1938). Austin drew on these ideas to argue that performativity also produced perlocutionary effects, which can only occur under the right or 'felicitous conditions'.

Butler (2010) provides a useful example of such perlocutionary effects:

A politician may claim that 'a new day has arrived' but that new day only has a chance of arriving if people take up the utterance and endeavour to make that happen. The utterance alone does not bring about the day, and yet it can set into motion a set of actions that can, under certain felicitous circumstances, bring the day around (p. 147-148).

Notably, the felicitous conditions here are generated by the response from the audience. The success of a perlocutionary performative is thus dependent on external conditions 'that does not immediately or necessarily yield to the efficacy of sovereign authority' (Butler, 2010, p. 151). With respect to markets, this notion of a sovereign authority is particularly important. Many market phenomena (pricing patterns, for example) exercise performative agency but are not 'uttered' by single subjects. Rather they rely on networks of social relations, institutionalized practices and technological instruments (cf. Austin, 1962; Butler, 2010). In considering performativity in market and marketing

settings, the idea of perlocutionary effects thus seems particularly pertinent. Such effects require a sequence of events to be generated that produces the necessary felicitous conditions.

A central facet of performative approaches, then, is the attention paid to how activities, practices, doings and sayings, in a particular site, have effects. The notion of performativity has, since Austin, been used in different fields of study and in slightly different ways (see e.g. Bateson, 1972; Bourdieu 1982; Derrida 1991; Goffman, 1974; Latour 1986; Lyotard 1984; and more recently Cochoy, Giraudeau, & McFall 2010). With respect to markets and marketing, two contemporary research streams on performativity stand out.

The first stream derives from Butler's (1990) work on gender not as a fixed category but as performed. This has triggered a significant amount of research in many fields including critical management studies and critical marketing (Maclaran et al., 2009; Spicer, Alvesson, & Kärreman, 2009; Tadajewski, 2010). Particularly important for studying the performativity of marketing is the recognition of variation in 'performative intent' between different knowledge production and dissemination efforts (Fournier & Grey, 2000; see also Law, 2004). As discussed below, marketing theories and models are often intended to have (positive) consequences for some actor; they are not simply describing an external reality. This is important because the intent an actor has when picking up a marketing theory or model is likely to affect how that model is used and consequently the effects and outcomes it brings about.

The second research stream has developed in economic sociology, where Callon (1998) popularized the concept of performativity, claiming that 'economics, in the broad sense of the term, performs, shapes and formats the economy, rather than observing how it functions' (p. 2). Callon takes economics to include theories, ideas, people, skills, techniques, etc. Among the disciplines that received specific attention, besides economics, were accounting (Miller, 1998), finance (e.g. MacKenzie, Muniesa, & Siu, 2007) and marketing (Cochoy, 1998; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006; Mason & Spring, 2011). Although the notion of performativity is not new to marketing, few empirical studies have so far addressed how marketing theories are used and 'performed' in marketing practice (but see Part II of the edited volume by Zwick & Cayla (2011) for some notable exceptions).

The need for a deeper understanding of the practical use of marketing theories takes its cue from a long-standing, yet relatively under-researched critique of the mainstream marketing literature. This includes the concerns noted above about the gap between marketing theory and practice (Hunt, 2002; Jaworski, 2011; Lilien, Rangaswamy, van Bruggen, & Wierenga, 2002), as well as discussions about the responsibility of marketing theories for the way in which contemporary consumer society works (Shankar, Whittaker, & Fitchett, 2006). This Special Issue represents a concerted effort to unpack marketing performativity and generate insights in line with these calls for

studies of relevance and reflexivity in marketing scholarship, as well as for critical thinking about the production and use of marketing knowledge (Brownlie et al., 2007; Maclaran et al., 2009; MacLean, MacIntosh, & Grant, 2002; Tadajewski, 2010). Importantly, the ten articles serve to reduce somewhat the observed lack of empirical studies of how theories and abstract models are put to work in marketing (cf. Morgan, 2001). Against this background we are very happy to introduce this Special Issue exploring the character and dynamics of performativity in marketing.

2. Themes in the study of performativity of marketing

We have identified three broad themes across the articles in this Special Issue. The first theme concerns how the study of marketing performativity can contribute to the wider performativity programme. More specifically: how are performative arguments affected by the fact that the theories/models under study are intended to be used and expected to make a difference? The second theme concerns the contribution of a performative approach to the marketing discipline, and specifically relates to the theory-practice gap discussed above. The third theme has a more positive character, outlining a range of performative effects of marketing that the individual contributions identify.

2.1 The particularity of performative claims about marketing

Most marketing theories and models examined in the articles differ from the ones that have served as the bases of strong performative claims, like the Black and Scholes formula for option pricing (MacKenzie, 2003) and the model of perfect competition in Economics (Garcia-Parpet, 2007). Rather than claiming to successfully explain empirical data, marketing models are often prescriptive in character; they are intended to be used, and when used (correctly) they are suggested to have real (positive) consequences. As noted by Nilsson and Helgesson (this issue), this changes the basis for making performative claims and also reduces the revelatory effects of such claims. In their study of the 'indigenous epistemology' of market research, they show that usability and expected effects are promoted as central not only for determining the quality of market research, but also for governing its production. This suggests that marketing practitioners are highly pragmatic in their use of theories and models. The descriptive accuracy of the models, which is often the starting point in performative arguments, does not come across as very important. Instead, the use of models serves other purposes, like temporarily stabilizing issues so that actors can move on with their projects (Jacobi, Freund, & Araujo, this issue). Indeed, the contribution by Venter, Wright, & Dibb (this issue) shows how a descriptively more nuanced segmentation model was outperformed by a decidedly coarser model to which reality was added through its use as a template for reorganizing a sales organization.

So, what does it mean to say that marketing theories and models are performative? The individual contributions provide several observations on this point. First, marketing theories and models are shown to be constitutive of marketing organizations and

markets; they produce effects simply by being used (see Venter et al; Jacobi et al; Lucarelli & Hallin, all this issue). In its weakest form, this observation resembles MacKenzie's (2007) notion of generic performativity. As a consequence of adopting a prescriptive marketing model, marketing organizations engage in specific actions prescribed by that model. While this is hardly surprising, such consequences are not necessarily attributed to the use of specific marketing theories or models (see, e.g. Spencer, 2005). The articles in this issue, however, provide several convincing accounts of this link.

Second, some contributions go beyond the constitutive effect to suggest that the use of marketing theories and models also causes specific effects. Cluley and Brown (this issue) suggest that digital marketing causes the appearance of target subjects by employing pervasive marketing devices that effectively frame calculative space. As a result, self-grounded subjectivities emerge; 'You are what you click' (Cluley & Brown, this issue, p. page). Rather than the pervasiveness of marketing devices, Cochoy (this issue) emphasizes the felicitous conditions required for specific effects to materialize. He suggests that few of those that saw the billboard campaign he analyses – those knowledgeable about billboard advertising – could appreciate its self-referential quality. This highlights that the perlocutionary effects of marketing models and theories are multiple, and that misfires are frequent and often expected. But Cochoy also shows how the billboard-advertising agency sought to create felicitous conditions, by preparing the audience to receive the advertising message. This implies that the performativity of marketing hinges not only on the ability to generate more accurate understandings of the world through the inclusion of marketing theories in situated practices, but also on the ability to generate (to some extent at least) felicitous conditions, enabling the marketing theories and models to work their 'magic'. This brings us close to Butler's (2010) discussion on perlocution and Callon's (2010) discussion of the actions and objects that realise performance, which we elaborate on below.

Third, some of the articles suggest that even when felicitous conditions prove difficult to achieve, the use of marketing theories and tools may nonetheless have effects. While some of these effects may be discussed as 'misfires', such a phrasing would in many cases unduly stress one particular effect as being correct or sought after (see e.g. Lucarelli & Hallin, this issue). Instead, we suggest that marketing performativity is 'generative' (cf. Butler, 1993; see also Barrett, 2010; Landes, 1998; Wagner, Bratteteig, & Stuedahl, 2010). This is in line with Butler's (2010) claim that MacKenzie's approach to performativity has tended to focus almost exclusively on the illocutionary aspect of performativity – where the model performs reality. We see generative performativity as akin to notions of performance (e.g. Callon, 2007; Cochoy, this issue; Onyas & Ryan, this issue) and perlocutionary performativity (e.g. Austin, 1962; Butler, 2010; Finch, Horan, & Reid, this issue). Marketing theories are not only practically used, but they partially and indefinitely mediate the constitution of identifiable marketing and market phenomena. Generative performativity recognises that theory must be used to generate

effects, but that this use triggers other actions, creating ripples that are generative and consequential (Lucarelli & Hallin, this issue; Onyas & Ryan; this issue). A generative form of performativity does not imply that theory 'pushes' marketing practice in certain directions, but that it contributes to constitute various phenomena by being brought to bear in practical situations. The practice into which it is integrated is concurrently adjusted along with the theory, the enrolled agents, and other aspects of the situation (setting, equipment, other theories, tools, techniques). This generative facet of performativity stresses access to undetermined possibilities, such as when the use of a framework or model in market research generates a new understanding of what is or what could be. Generative performativity does not imply that effects are necessarily unidirectional, powerful and unambiguous. For example, marketing influences subjects to engage in different but specific types of market actions (Roscoe, this issue; Solér, Baeza, & Svård, this issue), contributes to transform and multiply objects of exchange (Finch et al., this issue), and trigger multiple actions including ones that contribute to bring about the reality it suggests (Onyas & Ryan, this issue).

As indicated above, the 'expectation' or 'promise' of effects is important in marketing performativity. The use of marketing models is often coupled with a more or less explicit expectation of improved competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, or profitability. These are effects that the models *should* produce. But the articles suggest that in order for the models to do so, much more is required than their adoption by a marketing organization. This is not to say that adoption lacks importance. To borrow Morgan's (2001) words, 'models help us to learn things mainly by being used' (p. 366). In this sense, we see models being put to work in a process of inquiry to uncover new productive possibilities. As Jacobi et al. (this issue) show, actors use the structure and rules of the model to unfold narratives that explain or describe a particular 'troubled and perplexing situation', which allows them to move forward. But to produce the promised effect, the felicitous conditions must obtain and non-felicitous events avoided. This raises important questions as to *how* models and theories might be put to work to create the necessary felicitous conditions that trigger the promised or expected effect. Consequently, there may well be a limit to the performativity of marketing. The extent to which models and theories are capable of creating such conditions in and of themselves is not entirely clear. To understand how models create felicitous conditions it is necessary to go beyond the models and examine who they are used by, who connects with them, how ideas are translated and represented or reassemble for other audiences and importantly how related actions change the conditions of the model's performance. Marketing models are often quite naïve in terms of how they conceive of their own use, typically ignoring the political and contested nature of marketing practice that features so prominently in the papers presented in this SI.

What matters to marketing performativity? Is it that theories and models are used to create accurate descriptions of how the world works or that they are used as political tools to enrol, engage and mobilise others in a collective effort? Conditions may conspire

in favour or against either of these cases. Lucarelli and Hallin (this issue) show that practices can be performed and re-situated by enrolling others that unfold different but related narratives, while Cochoy (this issue) shows the gathering together of actors, objects and expectations to create felicitous conditions enabling a model to have effect. There is a useful distinction between the articulation of a device in the form of a promise for action or outcome – this advertisement will keep its promise (Cochoy, this issue); or this segmentation model will help you target specific customer groups (Venter et al., this issue); this financial model will make you a better investor (Roscoe, this issue)– and the practical, material actions that make that promise possible. For Roscoe (this issue), this means investors need to be connected with software, training courses, discussion groups on online communities of practice, blogs from market experts and investment analysis and trade press and media stories that support the beliefs and values of the lay investors. All of these objects and actions help the investors get the occasional (though limited) returns they are promised.

2.2 Implications of performativity for marketing theory: the theory-practice gap

The discussion above touches upon a familiar source of intra-disciplinary debate in marketing: the recurrent concern about the theory-practice gap (Brownlie et al., 2007; Grundvåg Ottesen & Grønhaug 2004; Hunt, 2002; Jaworski, 2011; Lilien et al., 2002; November, 2004; Reibstein, Day, & Wind, 2009; Wensley, 2002; Wierenga, 2002). In what ways can the performative stance contribute to shed new light on how marketing theories and models are used and how they become useful? The articles allow us to make three observations.

First, several of the articles suggest that theory and theorizing is part of, rather than separate from, marketing practice (see Jacobi et al., this issue; Lucarelli & Hallin, this issue; Nilsson & Helgesson, this issue; Roscoe, this issue). This serves to emphasize that the theory-practice dichotomy is in itself highly problematic; marketing theories do not spread from the ivory tower of academic marketing according to some diffusion logic where theories remain the same as they travel through the world. Instead, theories are actively translated by actors who make a difference to them by adjusting them to their own purposes (Latour, 1986). Market[ing] theorising – theory development and adaption - is better understood as part of the everyday practices of reflexive researching-practitioners. As noted above, such practitioners are pragmatic in their use of theory and seldom anxious about disciplinary boundaries. It is thus hardly surprising that academic marketing is not the only or even the main source of theories employed for marketing purposes, as illustrated by the digital devices discussed by Cluley and Brown (this issue). Such ‘theorizing in the wild’ (cf. Callon & Rabearisoa, 2003) does not proceed according to an idealized image of Science as a detached and disinterested supplier of objectively certified knowledge (Anderson, 1983). Marketing and markets are practical and revisable matters that cannot be fully determined by marketing scholars attempting to stand outside of them. Embracing a performative stance helps us

appreciate the rather problematic position that marketing occupies as a science.² On the one hand, the discipline is explicitly concerned with practical relevance; it is supposed to make a difference, typically by serving selling organizations. On the other hand, it also seeks to be a Science. As such, mainstream marketing has adopted a philosophical stance that embraces a correspondence theory of truth, coupled with values like disinterestedness, non-partiality, objectivity, etc. (e.g. Hunt, 1990). We believe that this is a particularly unfortunate combination, which largely explains the recurrent concerns expressed about a growing theory-practice gap in marketing. In short, the dominant epistemology and methodology in academic marketing discourages the development of useful theory.

Second, the performative stance emphasizes the adaptation of theory to practical circumstances. Several articles provide empirical illustrations of this (e.g. Nilsson & Helgesson, this issue; Venter et al., this issue). This suggests that the answer to the question about which theories end up being used does not primarily depend on the theories being accurate. Instead, two other interrelated characteristics come to the fore. First, theories are used because they are considered useful by an organization, e.g. for reasons of legitimacy (Venter et al., this issue), for promoting action (Jacobi et al., this issue), for co-ordinating interaction with others (Finch et al., this issue; Onyas & Ryan, this issue), etc. Second, and related, theories are used because conditions conducive to their use have been created thus making them fit the situation. Since all theories and models are expected to change as they spread (Latour, 1986), observation of a highly successful model (i.e. a model used by many) may well be taken to signify a widening gap between theory and practice (due to continued translations). In the extreme case, the only common trait left could be the name of the model (see Venter et al., this issue). Whether this would testify to the tight or loose link between theory and practice is a matter of perspective.

Third, a performative stance encourages marketing scholars to treat the link between theory and practice as a practical, empirical matter, rather than a topic for discussions in principle. The observed, pragmatic use of marketing theories and models calls for a corresponding approach when theorizing about the role of academic marketing. As such marketing scholars would benefit from becoming more sensitive to how their theories spread, are used, disputed, and transformed in practical situations. By conceptualizing marketing theory as performative our attention shifts away from the theory-practice divide towards how ‘...”practices equipped by science” work to perform the whole economic game (both theoretical and empirical)’ (Cochoy, 1998, p. 195). Such a stance is likely to encourage the generation of novel ideas about the kinds of markets we want to create and the interventions necessary to bring them about. This could drive marketing scholarship into new and interesting areas of study. While marketing theories certainly

² We are aware of the wide variety of research directions and approaches that exist within the marketing discipline (Shaw & Jones, 2005). We do not wish to suggest that our characterization here applies to all of these. Proponents of those that do fit the bill are likely to recognize themselves, however.

have made a difference already (see Cochoy, 1998), the study of marketing performativity can improve our understanding of how the collective actions that make markets come about; how theories are circulated, picked up, altered and represented to enrol and mobilize others; and how such actions become co-ordinated, connected or associated in ways that perform market systems. These issues provide a link to the final theme that emerges from the articles in this Special Issue, namely in which areas they identify performative effects of marketing.

2.3 What do marketing theories and models perform and how?

There are three broad areas where performative effects of marketing are particularly evident in the articles. First, marketing theories and models have agential effects. One such mechanism is the use of normative marketing models, which influences organizing processes (what is done) and thus helps constitute organizations of particular kinds. This is evident in the study by Venter et al. (this issue) where a segmentation process initiated in a national sales organization is shown to affect that organization. Such effects are not necessarily limited to the internal workings of an organization; use of marketing models can also structure inter-organizational processes and thus serve to stabilize or upset the boundaries between organizations (see Finch et al., this issue; Nilsson & Helgesson, this issue; Onyas & Ryan, this issue). For instance, Finch et al (this issue) show how business-to-business marketing efforts contribute to put in place an infrastructure/market system for waste management that turns leftovers into goods and allows demand for waste management services to be calculated. It should be emphasized that the use of marketing theories may serve not only to change existing organizations, but that it also can help bring about particular organizational forms, like the Savings and Credit Cooperatives discussed by Onyas and Ryan (this issue). As expected, the use of marketing theories and tools also contributes to perform particular economic subjects known as customers, consumers, users, etc. Here, the effects range from marketing ideas influencing 'the stage' on which such subjects act, to such ideas constituting the basis for direct attempts to equip subjects for particular actions. In their study of fashion branding, Solér et al. (this issue) exemplify the staging strategy by showing how fashion branding efforts contribute to create co-ordinates that limit what consumers can and cannot take into account in their fashion consumption. In contrast, Roscoe's study of lay-investors (this issue) illustrates the equipment strategy by showing how marketers of investment services and tools help constitute particular types of investors by providing them with particular market-scoping abilities. In a third contribution in this area, Cluley and Brown (this issue) combine these strategies, suggesting that digital marketing tools help marketers construct specific, but highly circumscribed subject positions that are subsequently realized by consumers clicks.

Second, the use of marketing theories and models helps perform particular versions of markets. This has been a recurrent theme in constructivist market studies (Araujo 2007; Finch & Geiger, 2010; Harrison & Kjellberg, 2010; Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2006; Reverdy, 2010) and is also evident in several of the contributions to this Special Issue. In Roscoe's

article (this issue), the specific lay-investors brought into existence through persons' use of particular models and tools for financial market analysis, become a feature of the financial markets that among other things serves to disprove the efficient market hypothesis (which in turn makes them a concern in research on financial markets). In a slightly different vein, Soler et al. (this issue) show how theoretically informed fashion branding practices help constitute a fashion market in which one specific dimension of the goods, their sustainability, becomes muted. Sustainability is communicated as a corporate issue and not as a relevant quality for assessing fashion goods. Instead, other issues such as style and quality of fabrics are foregrounded and the market performed accordingly. In Onyas and Ryan's study (this issue), the entrepreneurial formulation of a brand vision for a new type of coffee is seen to trigger efforts to realize upstream and downstream markets that fit with this vision. Finally, Cluley and Brown's (this issue) consumer 'dividuals' use the recommendations for products and services provided by digital marketing devices to enact specific market versions. In these markets, convenience and speed is ordered as more pressing than, for instance, the need for privacy and anonymity.

Third, and related to the above, we see how marketing theories perform valuations of market knowledge, helping actors make judgements about what to take into account and what not. This includes the performance of particular market versions, which is influenced by how actors collectively order what is important or a priority. In this way, collectively enacted values contribute to shape what the market becomes. We suggest that marketing theories and models contribute to perform such orderings, as exemplified by the backgrounding and foregrounding of particular values highlighted in Solér et al.'s (this issue) study of the fashion market. This is also present in the study by Cluley and Brown (this issue) where the availability and use of digital traces of consumer activity implies a de facto evaluation of data. By asserting the value of certain kinds of knowledge, marketing models may also contribute to put such knowledge to work in informing judgments or efforts to develop novel products or services. This is nicely illustrated in Nilsson's and Helgesson's (this issue) epistemography of market research, which suggests that good market research is defined by its ability to serve as decision support for clients, and that this quality is incorporated in normative models of market research. The use of marketing theory as a valuing tool that shapes the type of knowledge being generated is in turn seen to shape the market being performed. The market effects of marketing research tools is further expanded by Jacobi et al. (this issue) who describe the development of an advertising brief for a new product. In this process, marketing theories are used to place the product in a market space and predict how it is likely to disturb relations inside and outside that space. But in the process of this 'working out', some knowledge is more valuable and supports the marketing team in making their choices about how to act and what to do in their specific situation. By using marketing theories to support the valuing of market knowledge and to work out what market knowledge is useful and how, we see the connections between the economic and social values that generate and perform particular versions of markets.

3. Well then, what now?

Taken together, the articles in this Special Issue offer many useful insights and telling illustrations of the performativity of marketing. They show how marketing theories are used pragmatically to 'move things forward', to make judgements about what to do next; to guide what information is valuable and why; to stabilize realities so that actors can generate at least partially shared understandings, coordinate their activities and take action to materialise imagined markets. As such, they constitute important steps towards understanding how marketing theorists and practitioners 'work to perform the whole economic game' (Cochoy, 1998, p. 195). They start to unearth how marketing theories are shaped by market actors (academics and practitioners alike) who pick up theoretical tools and put them to work, and how such theories may come to influence market and marketing processes. But the contributions also serve to remind us of how shallow our knowledge is of these processes. Thus, they also prompt us to sketch the contours of a research agenda concerning the performativity of marketing. In particular, there are three themes that we believe warrant further study.

First, if we see marketing theories as being picked up and put to work as tools of inquiry or structuring devices that help actors make judgements about their next innovative steps, we need a more detailed understanding of how, why and where such tools are put to work. Jacobi et al. (this issue) call for more research into the 'biograph[ies] of tools and methods used in marketing practices' (p. page), suggesting we still know little about how such 'tools and methods come to life and what purpose they serve in practice' (p. page). From this perspective, marketing scholars should concern themselves less with the ability of marketing theories to accurately represent the world, and focus more on their ability to perform valuable work (see for instance Lucarelli & Hallin, this issue). In this respect, it would be worthwhile to study more systematically which marketing theories are picked up and put to work, for what reasons (being simple, elegant, promising, versatile, etc.) and under what conditions? Further research could pay attention to how specific marketing practices, theories and tools become valuable, with particular attention paid to the valuing process.

Second, several contributions to this Special Issue note that marketing devices, as discourses, epistemic and technical objects, are all the more performative when gathered together and collectively performed (see Cluley & Brown, this issue; Finch et al., this issue; Roscoe, this issue for examples). As Cochoy (this issue) asserts: 'the uttering and receiving of the commercial message are all the more performative when they are performed collectively... failing to perform the message with some target is the means to succeed with others.' (p. page). This link to collective performance is an important one, yet we know little about how different types of devices, expertise and logics are or 'become' assembled by multiple actors to both imagine new market configurations (Storbacka & Nenonen, 2011) and generate the 'felicitous conditions' that

make such imagined markets become real (Callon, 2010). Here, Cluley and Brown (this issue) note that marketing technologies are not necessarily imposed on consumers, and Venter et al. (this issue) add that this applies to organizations as well. Instead, consumers and organizations alike recruit theories in their enactment of particular situations – so creating unimagined markets through performance. In this sense, understanding market systems and unpacking the notion of collective actions seems valuable to our theorising about the performance of marketing. As we noted above, the presence of multiplicity in markets, or, as Butler (2010) put it, the lack of a sovereign authority, makes the performative orchestration of joint actions a particularly interesting topic for further study. Related topics such as the role of misfires and the unfolding of performance struggles also deserve further attention.

Third, if we assume that marketing theory in its various forms – models, concepts, methods, tools – is indeed performative and is designed to be performed in practice, we put ourselves in a different position than would be the case if we accepted the premise of a radical separation between marketing theory and practice. We suggest that this position allows us to ask more interesting questions concerning how, where and when to intervene in markets to bring about innovation and change. However, we also reflexively acknowledge that we are unlikely to be able to predict with much detail what the possible outcomes of such interventions will be. In this sense, we are mindful of a need to develop our understanding of the social life of marketing methodologies, or the production, use and value of such knowledge in the market system. As Nilsson and Helgesson (this issue) assert, the study of the performativity of market research ‘opens up a line of inquiry into notions of how tradable and actionable knowledge are reflected in production and exchanges practices, and in the shaping of the market’ (p. page). The performative position also generates questions about the types of markets we actually want and the forms of marketing theory we need to develop to help us get there. As Soler et al. (this issue) show us so convincingly with the ‘sustainably mute’ brands of the fashion market, if such knowledge is not valued, is unable to speak or be heard, it is also unable to bring about change. Thus, future research on the performativity of marketing might also explore how social values can become foregrounded in the production, representation, materialization and circulation of market knowledge.

As stated in the introduction above, marketing has in many ways been designed to be performative and been concerned with developing theories and tools that can be picked up and put to work by marketing practitioners. This stands in sharp contrast with growing concerns about a ‘theory-practice’ gap and about diminishing practical value and relevance of the theories, practices and devices that marketing produces. We have suggested that an important source of this paradoxical state of affairs is to be found in the epistemological standards that have come to dominate the production of knowledge in mainstream marketing science. By inquiring into the performativity of marketing theories, this special issue turns the production and dissemination of marketing theories and tools into a practical matter open for empirical examination, rather than a matter

for philosophy of science. The articles that follow all testify to the merits of such a stance, and also raise a number of detailed and explicit suggestions for further exploring the performativity of marketing, beyond those we have touched upon in this editorial. As a closing remark, we are convinced that the continued exploration of marketing performativity will prove to be highly productive for a marketing discipline seeking to regain relevance and social significance.

4. References

- Anderson, P. (1983). Marketing, Scientific Progress, and Scientific Method. *Journal of Marketing*, 47(4), 18-31. doi: 10.2307/1251395
- Araujo, L. (2007). Markets, market-making and marketing. *Marketing Theory*, 7(3), 221-226. doi: 10.1177/1470593107080342
- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Barrett, E. (2011). *Kristeva reframed: Interpreting key thinkers for the arts*. London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.
- Bartels, R. (1988). *The History of Marketing Thought* (3rd ed.). Ohio, USA: Publishing Horizons.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind: Collected essays in anthropology, psychiatry, evolution and epistemology*. New York: Ballantine.
- Bourdieu, P. (1982). *Ce que parler veut dire: l'économie des échanges linguistiques*. Paris: Fayard.
- Brownlie, D., Hewer, P., & Ferguson, P. (2007). Theory into practice: meditations on cultures of accountability and interdisciplinarity in marketing research. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23, 395-409. doi:10.1362/026725707X212739
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: on the discursive limits of "sex"*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2010) Performative Agency. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 147-161. doi: 10.1080/17530350.2010.494117
- Callon, M. (Ed.). (1998). *The laws of the markets*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Callon, M. (2007). What does it mean to say that economics is performative? In D. Mackenzie, F. Muniesa & L. Siu (Eds.), *Do economists make markets?: On the performativity of economics* (pp. 311-357). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

- Callon, M. (2010). Performativity, misfires and politics. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 163-169. doi: 10.1080/17530350.2010.494119
- Callon, M., & Rabeharisoa, V. (2003). Research "in the wild" and the shaping of new social identities. *Technology in Society*, 25(2), 193-204. doi: 10.1016/S0160-791X(03)00021-6
- Cochoy, F. (1998). Another discipline for the market economy: Marketing as a performative knowledge and know-how for capitalism. In M. Callon (Ed.), *The laws of the markets* (pp. 194-221). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cochoy, F., Giraudeau, M., & McFall, L. (2010). Performativity, economics and politics: an overview. *Journal of Cultural Economy*, 3(2), 139-146. doi: 10.1080/17530350.2010.494116
- Czarniawska, B., & Sevón, G. (Eds.). (1996). *Translating organizational change*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Derrida, J. (1991). Signature event context. In P. Kamuf (Ed.), *A Derrida reader: Between the blinds* (pp. 82-111). New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Dewey, J. 1933. Analysis of Reflective Thinking. In L. Hickman, & T. M. Alexander (Eds.), *The Essential Dewey: Ethics, Logic, Psychology, Vol. 2* (pp. 137-144). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Logic: The theory of inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Finch, J., & Geiger, S. (2010). Positioning and relating: Market boundaries and the slippery identity of the marketing object. *Marketing Theory*, 10(3), 237-251. doi: 10.1177/1470593110373188
- Fournier, V., & Grey, C. (2000). At the critical moment: Conditions and prospects for critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 53(1), 7-32. doi: 10.1177/0018726700531002
- Garcia-Parpet, M.-F. (2007). The social construction of a perfect market: The strawberry auction at Fontaines-en-Solange. In D. Mackenzie, F. Muniesa & L. Siu (Eds.), *Do economists make markets?: On the performativity of economics* (pp. 20-53). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1974) *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Grundvåg Ottesen, G., and Grønhaug, K. (2004). Barriers to practical use of academic marketing knowledge. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 22(5), 520-530. doi: 10.1108/02634500410551905
- Harrison, D., & Kjellberg, H. (2010). Segmenting a market in the making: Industrial market segmentation as construction. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 39(5), 784-792. doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2009.05.016

- Hunt, S. D. (1976). The nature and scope of marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 40(3), 17-28. doi: 10.2307/1249990
- Hunt, S. D. (1990). Truth in marketing theory and research. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(3), 1-15. doi: 10.2307/1251812
- Hunt, S. D. (2002). Marketing as a profession: On closing stakeholder gaps. *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(3), 305-312. doi: 10.1108/03090560210417138
- Jaworski, B. (2011). On managerial relevance. *Journal of Marketing*, 75(4), 211-224. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.75.4.211
- Jones, D. B., & Monieson, D. D. (1990). Early development of the philosophy of marketing thought. *Journal of Marketing*, 54(1), 102-113. doi: 10.2307/1252176
- Kjellberg, H., & Helgesson, C.F. (2006). Multiple versions of markets: Multiplicity and performativity in market practice. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 35(7), 839-855. doi: 10.1016/j.indmarman.2006.05.011
- Landes, J. B. (Ed.). (1998). *Feminism, the public and the private*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Latour, B. (1986). The powers of association. In J. Law (Ed.), *Power, action and belief* (pp. 264-280). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Law, J. (2004, June) *Matter-ing: Or how might STS contribute?* Paper presented at the workshop Does STS mean business? Saïd Business School, Oxford University.
- Lilien, G. L., Rangaswamy, A., van Bruggen, G. H., & Wierenga, B. (2002). Bridging the marketing theory–practice gap with marketing engineering. *Journal of Business Research*, 55(2), 111-121. doi: 10.1016/S0148-2963(00)00146-6
- Lyotard, J.-F. (1984). *The postmodern condition: A report on knowledge*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- MacKenzie, D. (2003). An Equation and its Worlds: Bricolage, Exemplars, Disunity and Performativity in Financial Economics. *Social Studies of Science*, 33, 831-868. doi: 10.2307/3182986
- MacKenzie, D. (2007) Is Economics Performative? Option theory and the Construction of Derivates Markets. In D. Mackenzie, F. Muniesa & L. Siu (Eds.). *Do economists make markets?: On the performativity of economics* (pp. 54-86). Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- MacKenzie, D., Muniesa, F., & Siu, L. (Eds.). (2007). *Do Economists Make Markets?: On the Performativity of Economics*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Maclaran, P., Miller, C., Parsons, E., & Surman, E. (2009). Praxis or performance: does critical marketing have a gender blind-spot? *Journal of Marketing Management*, 25(7-8), 713-728. doi: 10.1362/026725709X471587

- MacLean, D., MacIntosh, R., & Grant, S. (2002). Mode 2 Management Research. *British Journal of Management*, 13, 189-207. doi:10.1111/1467-8551.00237
- Mason, K., & Spring, M. (2011). The sites and practices of business models. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 40(6), 1032-1041. doi:10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.06.032
- Miller, P. (1998). The margins of accounting, in M. Callon (Ed.). *The laws of the markets* (pp. 174-193). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Morgan, M. S. (2001). Models, stories and the economic world. *Journal of Economic Methodology*, 8, 361-384. doi: 10.1080/13501780110078972
- November, P. (2004). Seven reasons why marketing practitioners should ignore marketing academic research. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 12(2), 39-50. doi: 10.1016/S1441-3582(04)70096-8
- Reibstein, D., Day, G., & Wind, J. (2009). Is marketing academia losing its way? *Journal of Marketing*, 73(4), 1-3. doi: 10.1509/jmkg.73.4.i
- Reverdy, T. (2010). The unexpected effects of gas market liberalization: Inherited devices and new practices. In L. Araujo, J. Finch & H. Kjellberg (Eds.), *Reconnecting marketing to markets* (pp. 158-180). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shankar, A., Whittaker, J., & Fitchett, J. (2006). Heaven knows I'm miserable now. *Marketing Theory*, 6(4), 485-505. doi: 10.1177/1470593106069933
- Shaw, E. H., & Jones, D. G. B. (2005). A history of schools of marketing thought. *Marketing Theory*, 5(3), 239-281. doi: 10.1177/1470593105054898
- Spencer, R. (2005) *Strategic Management of Customer Relationships. A Network Perspective on Key Account Management* (PhD Thesis No.115). Department of Business Studies, Uppsala University.
- Spicer, A., Alvesson, M., & Kärreman, D. (2009). Critical performativity: The unfinished business of critical management studies. *Human Relations*, 62(4), 537-560. doi: 10.1177/0018726708101984
- Storbacka, K., & Nenonen, S. (2011). Markets as configurations. *European Journal of Marketing*, 45 (1/2), 241-58. doi: 10.1108/030905611111095685
- Tadajewski, M. (2010). Critical marketing studies: logical empiricism, 'critical performativity' and marketing practice, *Marketing Theory*, 10(2), 210-222. doi: 10.1177/1470593110366671
- Wagner, I., Bratteteig, T., & Stuedahl, D. (2010). *Exploring digital design: Multi-disciplinary design practices*. London: Springer.
- Wallendorf, M., & Brucks, M. (1993). Introspection in consumer research: Implementation and implications. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(3), 339-359. doi: 10.2307/2489352

Wensley, R. (2002). A bridge over troubled water? *European Journal of Marketing*, 36(3), 391-400. doi: 10.1108/03090560210417192

Wierenga, B. (2002). On academic marketing knowledge and marketing knowledge that marketing managers use for decision-making. *Marketing Theory*, 2(4), 355-362. doi: 10.1177/147059310200200405

Zwick, D., & Cayla, J. (Eds.). (2011). *Inside marketing: Practices, Ideologies, Devices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.