

A Jump Through Time. Practical Implications and Limitations on the Evolution of the Marketing Concept – from 1.0 to 6.0

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The paper examines the evolution of marketing concepts from Marketing 1.0 to Marketing 6.0, emphasizing the progressive transformation of marketing from a product-centered discipline to a human-centric, technology-driven, and ethically oriented strategic approach. The main aim of the study is to synthesize the defining characteristics of each stage of marketing evolution, evaluate their practical implications for contemporary organizations, and identify the limitations that have driven the transition toward newer conceptual paradigms. The research adopts a qualitative and descriptive methodology based on an extensive literature review and historical-comparative analysis of academic publications, industry reports, and seminal marketing frameworks. Through thematic and comparative analysis, the study investigates how technological innovation, changing consumer expectations, digitalization, artificial intelligence, and societal values have reshaped marketing theory and practice over time. The findings reveal that marketing has evolved from transactional and mass-production orientations toward relationship marketing, value co-creation, emotional engagement, sustainability, and AI-enhanced personalization. The paper also highlights the growing importance of ethical governance, transparency, data privacy, and responsible AI implementation within contemporary marketing strategies. The study concludes that future marketing success depends on balancing technological advancement with human values, societal responsibility, and sustainable business practices in increasingly immersive and data-driven environments.

Keywords: Marketing evolution, Marketing 5.0, Marketing 6.0, Artificial intelligence, Consumer engagement

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1. Introduction

The field of marketing, as both an academic discipline and a practical endeavor, has undergone profound transformations since its formal inception in the early twentieth century (Tadajewski, 2018, p. 197). This evolution reflects not only changes in technology and consumer behavior but also a deeper conceptual reorientation of marketing's role within business and society at large. Initially rooted in product-centric approaches focused on distribution and exchange, marketing has progressively expanded its scope to encompass a more holistic understanding of consumer needs and broader societal impacts (Fuciu, 2023, p. 136; Stanciu, 2024, p. 20). This paper traces this conceptual journey from Marketing 1.0 to 6.0, examining the foundational tenets, practical implications, and inherent limitations of each evolutionary stage (Fuciu and Dumitrescu, 2018, p. 43).

By understanding this progression, from rudimentary product push strategies to sophisticated, value-driven engagements, we can better appreciate the dynamic nature of marketing theory and practice. This exploration elucidates how technological advancements and shifting societal paradigms have continually reshaped marketing frameworks, moving from a transaction-focused outlook to a relationship-centric and, more recently, a human-centric and technologically integrated approach (Ávila, 2023, p. 63).

The evolution of marketing from its rudimentary stages, characterized by a product-centric focus (Marketing 1.0), to more sophisticated, values-driven and technologically integrated approaches (Marketing 5.0 and beyond) underscore a continuous adaptation to dynamic market forces and consumer expectations (Ávila, 2023, p. 63; Sardjono et.al., 2023, p. 2010). This trajectory highlights a continuous paradigm shift, moving beyond mere transactional exchanges to encompass complex relationships and societal well-being (Polli et al., 2020, p. 3).

This continuous redefinition of marketing's essence has led to a series of conceptual models, often denoted by numerical increments (for example Marketing 1.0, Marketing 2.0), each attempting to capture the dominant paradigm of its era (Mazo, 2024, p. 2). As we know, according to González-Ferriz, (2024, p. 274) marketing 1.0 has emphasized product features and mass distribution, evolving through various stages that incorporated market segmentation, digital integration, and a focus on values and emotional connections.

Subsequently, the more recent iterations, Marketing 3.0, 4.0, and 5.0, have further refined this progression by integrating human-centric values, digital connectedness, and technological augmentation to create more personalized and impactful consumer experiences (Cañas et al., 2016, p. 4; Sima, 2021, p. 7015; Kotler et.al., 2023). The latest conceptualization, Marketing 6.0 (Kotler et.al., 2023), further extends this trajectory by integrating advanced technologies to create immersive, sensory, and interactive experiences, thereby strengthening the emotional connection between consumers and brands while emphasizing digital inclusion and ethical considerations within hybrid environments.

This extensive and rapid evolution reflects a profound transformation from a simple way to view product orientation to a complex, multi-faceted discipline that navigates the intricate relationship between technological advancement, shifting consumer behaviors, and an increasing emphasis on ethical and societal values (Mazo, 2024; Özkaynar, 2024, p. 2).

This paper will show these distinct phases, analyzing their theoretical background, the practical applications, and the challenges they present for businesses operating in an increasingly complex global marketplace. Specifically, this paper aims to provide an overview of the theoretical shifts that define each marketing epoch, from the product-centric Marketing 1.0 to the emerging, digitally transformative Marketing 6.0, pointing out the practical implications for contemporary business strategies and assessing the limitations of each framework. The current paper will also explore the practical implications of the changes for businesses, focusing on how these companies can use new technologies to improve customer engagement while navigating some important ethical issues and aspects that one must be careful about. After each section of the paper there is one line of spacing.

2. Literature Review

The product-centric orientation was strongly connected in the belief of producers of the time, that a good product would sell itself, minimizing the need for extensive market research or customer engagement strategies (González-Ferriz, 2021, p. 5; Koçak, 2024, p. 3). The goal, at the time, was simply to produce and distribute goods widely, with advertising serving primarily as an informative tool to announce product availability rather than to cultivate brand loyalty or emotional connections (Komakech et al., 2021, p. 600; González-Ferriz, 2024, p. 274).

The initial assumption was, probably the one, that consumers, faced with limited choices, prioritize functionality and accessibility over personalized experiences. This era and this way of thinking predated the widespread understanding of consumer psychology and behavioral economics, limiting marketing to a transactional exchange rather than a relationship-building process. The transition toward the next stage of marketing development has marked an important shift for understanding and satisfying consumer needs, moving beyond mere product features to embrace customer satisfaction and retention as central tenets (Ávila, 2023, p. 67).

This next phase, that was born, mostly in conjunction with the birth of the information age, has fundamentally reoriented the main marketing strategies to increase and improve the understanding of customer desires and the active participation at every level of engagement (Rahmat, 2021, p. 196). These changes have created a better perception that market success was no longer dedicated only to the production process, but increasingly to understanding the various demands of an ever-changing consumer base (Nahorna et.al. 2025, p. 150). This customer-centric approach, which began to take hold in the second part of the 1950s, increased the usage of market research, segmentation, and targeting to better improve the offerings to specific customer target groups, and at the same time shifting the focus from selling products to satisfying customer needs and desires (Kilic et.al. 2023, p. 2).

This paradigm shift was further improved by the introduction McCarthy's 4Ps model, which, provided a structured approach for considering product, price, placement, and promotion activities in alignment with customer requirements (Mhaka, 2025). However, even with this framework, the point remained largely on the company's perspective in delivering value, viewing products and services as the primary unit of exchange with value embedded within them rather than co-created with the customer.

Stewart and Hurth (2021, p. 279) suggested that the customer-centric focus, often referred to as the "customer is king" mindset, and which was positioned as a strategic imperative has become integral to shaping a company's business activity and is actively ensuring the competitive advantages in an increasingly competitive marketplace. This era saw the development and usage of multiple communication channels and the increased usage and application of new technologies to segment markets and personalize messages, moving beyond the undifferentiated mass marketing of the previous period.

The extension of the initial 4P's to the 7Ps framework has further acknowledged the importance of "People," "Processes," and "Physical Evidence" in today's service-dominated economies, highlighting the human element, operational efficiency, and tangible cues in shaping customer experiences.

This foundational understanding paved the way for a difference, which has been based on the transactional and relational aspects, has shifted to incorporate human values, aspirations, and societal well-being into the core of marketing strategy (Onete et.al, 2017, p. 6; Zengin and Zengin, 2022, p. 13). This next stage, that appeared at the beginning of the 21st century, recognized consumers not merely as economic agents, but as holistic human beings with intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs, demanding that brands align with broader societal and environmental concerns (Ávila, 2023, p. 65).

The "value-driven era" transformed marketing from a focus on simply satisfying individual consumer needs to addressing the deeper human aspirations and values, forcing companies to deliver value not only economically and functionally but also spiritually and emotionally (Fuciu and Dumitrescu, 2018, p. 45). The shift necessitated an important re-evaluation of marketing strategies, forcing companies to articulate and embody values that are aligned with a globally aware, socially conscious consumer base, moving beyond the transactional or relational engagements, in order to foster deeper, more meaningful connections (Cañas et al., 2016, p. 5).

These changes necessitated a collaborative approach, fostering many-to-many communication channels and actively involving consumers in brand development and co-creation processes (Zambrano et al., 2022, p. 5). This conceptual shift redefined the traditional marketing triangle from brand, positioning, and differentiation to a "3-I" model encompassing identity, image, and integrity, thereby integrating more intangible and social factors into the perceived value proposition.

3. Research Methodology

For research purposes, a qualitative content analysis of academic literature was used, while using industry reports and marketing texts to trace the conceptual shifts and identify recurring themes across different marketing eras. This involved a careful examination of scholarly articles and professional publications to see the underlying philosophies, strategic orientations, and technological advancements that characterized each evolutionary stage of marketing thought.

The analysis specifically focused on identifying the transition points between Marketing 1.0 (product-centric), Marketing 2.0 (customer-centric), Marketing 3.0 (values-driven), Marketing 4.0 (digital integration),

Marketing 5.0 (humanity-centric with AI) and the recently emerging Marketing 6.0 stage, examining how each iteration redefined the relationship between businesses and consumers, leveraged emerging technologies, and adapted to evolving societal values.

More than that the research analyzed the practical implications of these conceptual shifts for businesses, exploring how marketing strategies and practices have transformed to meet the demands of each new paradigm. A critical component of this study involved a comparative analysis to highlight the limitations of past approaches and to anticipate the challenges and opportunities presented by future marketing concepts.

This analytical approach, guided by Snyder's guidelines for literature review, facilitated a robust investigation into the underlying reasons for marketing's increasing dominance beyond mere strategic positioning (Stanciu, 2024, p. 22). The comprehensive approach allowed for the identification of key technological enablers, which according to Gulyamov, (2025, p. 14) are artificial intelligence and real-time analytics, that facilitate personalized and omnichannel marketing experiences, crucial elements of contemporary marketing. This evolution necessitates a reevaluation of marketing management roles, emphasizing their critical contribution to organizational transformation and sustainable growth by leveraging advancements in AI and technology to adapt to dynamic market changes.

4. Analysis and Results

In the current section we underline the key findings from the literature review perspective, while illustrating the progressive transformation of the marketing concept from its early transactional focus to its current multidimensional, technologically driven, and human-centric form.

This evolution is characterized by distinct stages, each marked by a unique understanding of consumer engagement, technological integration, and societal impact. Specifically, the journey from Marketing 1.0's product-centricity to Marketing 6.0's emphasis on hyper-personalization, ethical considerations, and immersive experiences reflects a continuous adaptation to increasingly complex market dynamics and consumer expectations. This section will systematically examine each stage of this evolution, highlighting the core tenets, practical applications, and inherent limitations that have shaped marketing thought and practice over time. This structured approach allows for a granular understanding of how marketing has shifted from mass communication to individualized storytelling, driven by technological advancements such as artificial intelligence and big data analytics (Leandro et.al, 2025, p. 4).

This progression underscores a shift from transactional interactions to relational marketing paradigms, where emotional engagement and personalized narratives are paramount in fostering brand loyalty and consumer well-being (Pascalau and Urziceanu, 2021; Mandung, 2024, p. 75). The exploration begins with Marketing 1.0, characterized by its foundational focus on product utility and mass production, moving through Marketing 2.0's consumer orientation and the rise of segment-based marketing (Stanciu, 2024, p. 20). Subsequent stages, such as Marketing 3.0, introduced a human-centric approach emphasizing values and co-creation, reflecting a deeper understanding of consumers' desire for purpose-driven brands and societal impact (Mazo, 2024, p. 9).

Further advancements, particularly with Marketing 4.0, acknowledged the profound influence of digital connectivity and social media on consumer behavior, pushing marketers towards an integrated online-offline strategy. Marketing 5.0, in turn, harnessed advanced technologies like AI and the Internet of Things to predict and respond to customer needs with unparalleled precision, laying the groundwork for even more sophisticated and ethical engagements. This current phase, often termed Marketing 5.0, emphasizes a significant shift from the web merely as a technical tool to a robust social platform, integrating technologies like the Internet of Things to create an interconnected ecosystem.

The newly developed concept of Marketing 6.0, while still young in the current academic discourse, is poised to further revolutionize this landscape by integrating advanced immersive technologies such as virtual and augmented reality to craft entirely new dimensions of consumer experience and interaction. This trajectory underscores a continuous evolution driven by technological innovation and a deepening understanding of consumer psychology, moving from basic product dissemination to sophisticated, ethically informed, and deeply personalized engagements (Sardjono et.al, 2023, p. 2010).

This review shows how these advancements have consistently redefined the marketer's role, shifting from solely promoting products to actively cultivating symbiotic relationships within dynamic ecosystems, thereby enhancing both commercial success and societal value. The subsequent analysis will point out the specific characteristics, technological support, and practical implications of each marketing evolutionary stage,

critically evaluating their contributions and limitations in fostering sustained brand-consumer relationships and driving organizational growth.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current overview, while not exhaustive, provides a valuable foundation for understanding the practical implications and inherent limitations of contemporary marketing approaches, especially within rapidly evolving digital environments and growing ethical concerns. It examines how each stage in the evolution of marketing has sought to overcome the shortcomings of earlier models while simultaneously introducing new complexities and challenges that require continuous innovation and adaptation. For instance, whereas Marketing 1.0 concentrated primarily on product functionality, later stages increasingly emphasized consumer needs, societal values, and technological integration, ultimately leading to the data-driven and human-centered perspectives characteristic of Marketing 5.0 and the emerging concepts associated with Marketing 6.0.

This progression illustrates marketing's ongoing adaptation to dynamic market conditions and increasingly sophisticated consumer expectations, shaped significantly by advancements in digital technologies, evolving societal norms, and the communication practices of 21st-century consumers. In particular, the emergence of Web 2.0, followed by the expansion of Web 3.0, has transformed marketing into a highly complex and data-intensive field, requiring advanced analytics, machine learning, and AI-powered personalization to interpret changing consumer perceptions effectively.

Furthermore, the strong emphasis on purpose, people, and technology promoted by Marketing 5.0 has established a strategic imperative for organizations to move beyond purely profit-oriented thinking and adopt a broader societal and community-focused role. This perspective is reinforced by the concepts of Society 5.0 and Industry 5.0, which provide the conceptual framework for Marketing 5.0 by promoting competitiveness and sustainability within a human-centered and technology-driven society (Bakator et al., 2024). The close relationship between Marketing 5.0, Industry 5.0, and Society 5.0 highlights a significant paradigm shift in which economic competitiveness and societal well-being are increasingly interconnected, requiring integrated strategies that combine technological advancement with ethical governance and human capital development.

At the same time, the widespread use of digital platforms and the rapid growth of big data have prompted a substantial reconsideration of traditional marketing research methodologies, encouraging the adoption of more sophisticated analytical techniques to better understand complex consumer behaviors and market dynamics. The accelerated development and accessibility of technologies such as machine learning and artificial intelligence have also enabled organizations to leverage digital transformation for improved customer engagement and business expansion.

Nevertheless, this technological integration raises important ethical concerns related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and digital inclusion. Marketing 5.0 and the emerging Marketing 6.0 frameworks have begun addressing these issues by advocating for a more human-centered and responsible use of advanced technologies (Armen and Herjanto, 2023). Although the rapid adoption of AI in marketing demonstrates its perceived effectiveness and growing integration into business processes, it simultaneously intensifies concerns regarding the ethical management of consumer data and the potential overdependence on algorithmic decision-making (Kobets, 2024, p. 13).

Such ethical dilemmas highlight the need for robust frameworks that ensure transparent AI governance and accountability, guaranteeing that technological progress enhances rather than undermines human well-being and trust. Consequently, the ethical landscape of AI-driven marketing requires ongoing collaboration among innovators, policymakers, and consumers to develop solutions that balance human values with technological advancement. Therefore, the integration of ethical leadership, effective governance structures, and multidisciplinary research is essential for addressing these complexities responsibly and maintaining public trust.

The necessity for marketers to understand and implement these evolving principles is increasingly evident, as the future of the industry depends on its capacity to combine technological sophistication with a strong commitment to ethical responsibility and societal well-being. Continuous adaptation ensures that marketing practices remain both relevant and accountable within an increasingly complex and technologically advanced global marketplace. The transition from Marketing 1.0 to Marketing 6.0 reflects a broader paradigm shift from product-centered to human-centered and ultimately ethically driven approaches, demonstrating the growing integration of societal values and technological accountability into core business strategies.

This transformation also signals the emergence of marketing as an integrative science, where advanced empirical methods and interdisciplinary knowledge converge to address contemporary challenges. It requires

a continual reassessment of marketing's purpose, extending beyond transactional exchanges to include broader responsibilities related to societal impact and sustainable development. Consequently, the future of marketing depends on a comprehensive understanding of ethical AI implementation, data protection, and algorithmic fairness to foster long-term consumer trust and sustainable business success. In this context, marketing professionals must prioritize transparency and explainability in AI applications to strengthen consumer confidence and minimize potential negative consequences. Considering the overall findings of the paper, further research should be placed on the ethical consideration of AI-based marketing activities, in light of the current fast expanding AI field that drives companies to change their current way of engaging with customers and developing their communication strategies.

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