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Marketing-as-practice: A framework and research agenda for value-creating marketing activity

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Abstract

This paper draws on practice theory and a review of practice theoretical studies in marketing, management, consumer, and markets research to advance our knowledge of marketing as a value-creating activity within firms. Building on previous research, the paper contributes to the literature by advancing a *Marketing-as-Practice* (MAP) framework based on three key concepts: marketing practices, marketing practitioners, and marketing praxis. The structures and interrelationships between these key concepts are also outlined. The framework can be used to study value-creating marketing activities within firms as well as between firms and their stakeholders which is in line with the American Marketing Association's definition of marketing. This paper also contributes by presenting a MAP research agenda to guide future research on value-creating marketing activity.

Keywords

Marketing activity, marketing practices, marketing practitioners, marketing praxis, practice theory, value creation

Introduction

In 2004, the American Marketing Association (AMA) introduced a new definition of marketing, according to which the concept refers to "…the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers,

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clients, partners, and society at large."[1] The fact that *value-creating activity* is highlighted in the AMA's definition is hardly surprising, since academic research has a long tradition of studying how firms create value for customers and other stakeholders (Coviello et al., 2002; Ruekert et al., 1985). In particular, the vast literature on the strategic orientations taken toward markets (see, e.g., Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Slater and Narver, 1995), customers (Arnold et al., 2011), and interactions (Ramani and Kumar, 2008) has depicted the nature of marketing activities and their value-creating implications. Adjacent to this body of literature, research on marketing organization (see overviews by Kozlenkova et al., 2014; Moorman and Day, 2016) has provided the field with insight into the resources and capabilities that companies draw on to conduct value-creating marketing activities. In their review of this body of research, Moorman and Day (2016: 15–16) summarized prior studies in the following way: "An array of mechanisms [resources and capabilities] have been examined in the literature, all of which point to marketing actions that add value to the firm, including customer-connecting activities." This approach reflects an enduring interest in marketing research to study how well the firm succeeds to capture value for itself through its activities in the form of financial returns (Brandenburger and Stuart, 1996) as well as to create customer value in the form of utility or benefit relative to sacrifices (Zeithaml et al., 2020).[2]

This dominant strand of research in key marketing journals has provided us with a robust understanding of how and when different marketing approaches and functions facilitate value creation and capture. However, this research has focused on firm-level resources and capabilities rather than on value-creating activities per se. While some researchers have studied day-to-day value-creating marketing activity at the micro-level (see, e.g., Lien, 1997; Prus, 1989), their work remains an exception and has not extensively influenced the marketing discipline. The lack of attention to how everyday value-creating marketing activities are conducted in firms echoes a long-standing discussion within strategy research about the limits of focusing on resources when attempting to understand firm activity and performance. As Johnson et al. (2003: 7) point out "…much research from the resource-based view marginalizes the activities, managerial or otherwise, that go on in organizations. The questions of how valuable resources are built and how they generate superior returns are left undisturbed…" (see also Bromiley and Rau (2014) and Whittington (2006) for similar arguments).

Following this train of thought, understanding how everyday marketing activities are conducted in firms to create value is crucial for two reasons. First, companies conduct marketing in unique ways, which may explain their respective competitive advantages (see, e.g., Frösén et al., 2016; Gebhardt et al., 2006). Accordingly, the value creation logics of firms might not be captured by aggregate-level constructs, such as resources, capabilities, or orientations, and therefore analyzing firm-specific activities can shed light on how, for example, value propositions are built in practice (Skålén et al., 2015a). Second, as the AMA definition of marketing points out, value-creating activities extend beyond the firm to the customers, clients, partners, and society, reminding us of the importance of analyzing value-creating activities that interlink the firm and its environment (Gummerus, 2013). To date, marketing has extensively focused on the conceptualizations and categorizations of the customer value in the form of utility or benefit relative to the sacrifices (see Zeithaml et al., 2020 for a recent review), a perspective that also we adopt. Although this body of research offers significant insights into how firm offerings and their characteristics are evaluated by customers, it is disjointed from firm everyday activities.

How can we then understand a firm's value-creating marketing activities? Morgan et al. (2019) argue that we can understand everyday marketing activities within firms by drawing on practice theory (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2019), which has become increasingly important perspective across business disciplines for studying everyday activities (Nicolini, 2011). Practice

theory suggests that all types of activities may be understood in terms of practices, which are organized activities that people do on a regular basis (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996). While we follow Morgan et al's (2019) suggestion to draw on practice theory, we also note that practice theory has largely neglected value, while marketing works suggest value to be an outcome of marketing practices (Arnould, 2014). Therefore, the general understanding of practices within practice theory needs to be cross-fertilized with the marketing discipline's emphasis on value. Thus, instead of focusing on how our field tends to conceptualize and categorize value, we should investigate "how value is routinely created" (Arnould, 2014: 132) by marketing activities. Adopting practice theory in this way provides us with a set of concepts for analyzing and understanding (1) value-creating marketing activity within firms, (2) how and why marketers perform these activities and how they are shaped by them, and (3) how different types of value-creating marketing activities are linked within firms, as well as between the firm and its environment (Nicolini, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2019; Shove et al., 2012).

While practice theory is not foreign to marketing research, it has mainly been used to study consumers' activities (see, e.g., Epp et al., 2014; Schau et al., 2009) rather than marketers' activities within firms. The few studies that have adopted a practice theory lens to study marketing activity within firms have mainly focused on identifying the different activities that marketers carry out (see, e.g., Dibb et al., 2014; Venter et al., 2015). Hence, there is a paucity of research analyzing how and why value-creating marketing activities are conducted and how they are connected with other actors and the broader society at large. Thus, the application of practice theory to the study of value-creating marketing activity has yet to fulfill its potential.

To address this issue, our aim in this paper is to advance our understanding of value-creating marketing activity in firms by articulating a *Marketing-as-Practice* (MAP) framework and research agenda grounded in practice theory (similar to what has been done within strategy research and other business research disciplines). Based on our review of prior practice theoretical research, we contribute to the literature by outlining a MAP framework that consists of three key concepts— *marketing practices*, *marketing practitioners*, and *marketing praxis*—and describe the structures and interrelationships between them, as well as their relationship to value creation. The framework makes practice theory accessible to the members of the marketing research community, who can use it to generate thick descriptions of value-creating marketing activity. As shown by Dolbec et al. (2021), enabling theories such as practice theory, when properly introduced to and integrated with marketing, can advance research within the discipline by "bringing new conceptual insights to bear on a topic that has been discussed in prior literature" (p. 446)—value-creating marketing activity in our case. Such integration may also develop the enabling theory and (marketing) practice. Our framework also serves as a starting point for studying how marketing activities enable firms to create value for and with customers, clients, partners, and society at large along the lines of the AMA's definition of marketing. The framework thus heeds the calls to develop a theory of how marketing is actually done by practitioners (Kumar, 2015; Moorman et al., 2019). The MAP research agenda that we outline is structured around our framework. We maintain that the agenda will help to guide future research on value-creating marketing activity within firms and the study of how firms' marketing activities create value for and with stakeholders.

We articulate the MAP framework and research agenda in five steps. First, we explain practice theory in general. Second, we discuss practice theoretical research in the disciplines of management, markets-as-practice, and consumer research to glean potential insights transferrable to marketing. Third, we review the practice theoretical research in the field of marketing to chart the extant research. Fourth, building on the previous steps, we outline our MAP framework. Finally, we present the research agenda for future MAP research, as well as our conclusions and limitations.

What is practice theory?

Practice theory is a family of theories with a common focus on practices that facilitate our understanding of activity (Nicolini, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996; Shove et al., 2012). To distinguish practice theory from other theories of action, Reckwitz (2002) differentiated between three fundamental theoretical positions in the social sciences. The first position is based on the notion of "homo economicus," and it assumes that activity is a function of decisions made by informed rational actors. The second position is based on the notion of "homo sociologicus" and holds that humans act in accordance with broad societally shared norms and values. Cultural theory, to which practice theory belongs, is the third and most recent position from which activity is understood. Cultural theories commonly assume that human activities are steered by the situated structures of knowledge constructed by a group of individuals. These structures both enable and constrain the activities and sensemaking processes of individuals belonging to the group. Reckwitz (2002) further suggests that different types of cultural theories treat and situate these locally constructed and shared structures of knowledge differently; as memory traces in the mind of individuals, as symbols embedded in texts, as intersubjective understandings ingrained in human interaction, or, as in the case of practice theory, as practices embedded in human activities.

Reckwitz (2002: 249) defines a practice as "a routinized type of behavior," whereas Schatzki (2019: 27, 1996: 89) views practices as "organized actions." Synthesizing these two views, practices can thus be defined as *organized activities routinely carried out by a group of people,* such as marketers in a firm. Practices are the things people commonly do, but they are not carried out exactly the same way every time. Practices can therefore be understood as shared templates (indicating how activities are, can, and should be carried out) that provide guidelines for activities as well as the performance of activities that such templates prescribe (Schatzki, 1996, 2019).

To further help us articulate our MAP framework and research agenda, we turn to a review of practice theory studies within management, markets-as-practice, and consumer research. Thereafter, we outline how practice theory has been used in prior marketing research and how value, which practice theory is silent on, has been addressed in this research.

Practice theory in management, markets-as-practice, and consumer research

Practice theory has been extensively used to study activity in several business disciplines (Nicolini, 2011), and here we isolate three research fields that are adjacent to marketing. First, we focus on strategy-as-practice (hereafter SAP), which is a vibrant research stream in management (Golsorkhi et al., 2015) that according to Morgan et al. (2019) can provide the basis for articulating a practice theory research agenda for strategic marketing. Second, markets-as-practice research has drawn on practice theory to understand the socio-technical construction of markets and how marketers shape markets through their activities (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a). Finally, we turn to the field of consumer research, specifically consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005), which has long mobilized practice theory in its exploration of a broad range of market-related activities. We will draw upon these three fields to build our MAP framework and research agenda below.

In his field-defining article, Whittington (2006) argued that SAP treats strategy as an activity people do, in contrast to traditional strategy research, which considers it to be something that organizations have. In the introductory chapter of the *Cambridge Handbook of Strategy-as-Practice*, Golsorkhi et al. (2015: 1) suggest the following:

> Strategy as practice can be regarded as an alternative to the mainstream strategy research via its attempt to shift attention away from a "mere" focus on the effects of strategies on performance alone to a more comprehensive, in-depth analysis of what actually takes place in strategy formulation, planning and implementation and other activities that deal with the thinking and doing of strategy.

By putting these ideas into action, SAP researchers have advanced both the theory and practice of strategy. For example, SAP researchers have studied different strategy practices, such as strategy meetings, workshops, and committees (see Vaara and Whittington, 2012 for an overview), investigated the role these practices have in strategy work, and outlined under what circumstances different practices generate performance (Golsorkhi et al., 2015). Furthermore, researchers have explored how strategy professionals' job characteristics change as the business environment becomes increasingly turbulent (Whittington et al., 2017) and which practices impede or promote participation in strategy work (Mantere and Vaara, 2008). In addition, SAP researchers have examined how strategy tools, such as PowerPoint (Kaplan, 2011) and strategy concepts (Jalonen et al., 2018), influence strategy making.

The research on markets-as-practice (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007a) views markets as constantly becoming rather than merely existing. This field owes much to the work of Callon (1998), who has suggested that markets—rather than simply being a given—are socio-technical constructions involving the practices of various types of expertise and calculative agencies, including marketing expertise and agencies. According to Araujo (2007: 221), researchers should therefore "learn to speak of 'markets' and 'marketing practices' in the plural rather than attempt to squash a series of heterogeneous practices under a single label."

Within markets-as-practice research, practice theory has been used to outline how practices shape markets (Araujo and Kjellberg, 2009; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006) and to explore the interactive and iterative process of market shaping (Harrison and Kjellberg, 2016). For example, Pantzar and Ruckenstein (2015: 106) focus on the heterogeneity of "emergent practices in which people engage to construct and perhaps also problematize markets." Practice theory has also been used to study stability and changes in markets. An exemplary study is that by Hawa et al. (2020), who showed that, through practicing, a market actor might maintain and change the market through purposive intent (i.e., replicating accepted practices) or incremental alteration of its perspective (i.e., changing actions over time through the development of new norms, habits, and meanings). Similarly, Dolbec et al. (in press) show how market evolution implies expansion of practices.

In consumer research, the use of practice theory has been expanding ever since Warde (2005) formulated a research agenda for examining consumption activities from a practice theoretical perspective. This article paved the way for theorizing consumption by seeing consumers as practitioners engaged in mundane everyday activities of consumption and studying the central role—the "affordance"—that the material environment, made up of objects, tools, devices, and other apparatus, has in these activities (Halkier et al., 2011; Magaudda, 2011). Consumer culture theorists in particular have increasingly used practice theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) to understand how, for example, domestic activities are transformed into rituals and habits (Arsel and Bean, 2013), recreational activities are performed to legitimate consumers' sense of belonging to a community of practice (Thomas et al., 2013), and external shocks influence practices (Phipps and Ozanne, 2017). Simultaneously, practice theory has been brought to bear on the situational and contextually bound nature of consumption (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011), locating patterns of domestic activities of consumption within broader systems of provision (Rinkinen et al., 2019).

Going beyond the mapping of different micro-practices enacted by consumers, consumer research has woven together practices by considering their uses and effects. From this perspective, the

study by Schau et al. (2009) has been particularly influential due to its capacity to reveal how key practices are integrated to cocreate value in brand communities. Holt (1995) used a similar approach in categorizing consumption into the activities of accounting, assimilating, evaluating, and appreciating. Practice theory has also been used to study change toward sustainable consumption practices (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014), and how members soothe tensions within brand communities through the frame alignment of practices (Thomas et al., 2013). Thus, a practice-based approach has illuminated how connections between marketplace cultures that revolve around broad interests—whether they be brands, aesthetics, or other shared passions—are held together as complex yet recognizable entities.

To conclude, research on consumption, markets, and strategy has been shaped by the publication of three pioneering articles—Warde (2005) on consumption, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007a) on markets, and Whittington (2006) on strategy—that have established frameworks accompanied by research agendas for practice theoretical research in these disciplines. These articles have in turn inspired a plethora of research that has examined relevant activities using practice theory, and which has contributed to institutionalizing the study of practices as legitimate research fields within management, consumer, and markets research. Following from this, other disciplines are also seeing attempts to create such foundational articles aiming to institutionalize the study of practices, such as Entrepreneurship-as-Practice (EaP) in the field of entrepreneurship (Champenois et al., 2020).

Review of existing practice theory research in marketing

This section provides a review of the scarce prior research that has used practice theory to study marketing activity in firms. In total, we identified 13 relevant articles, which are summarized in Table 1. The Appendix to this paper describes how the literature review was performed.

Most of the articles in our review are devoted to identifying practices that marketing practitioners enact (with which we mean embrace and commit to) to carry out or perform marketing activities, and in doing so, they present lists of such practices (Browne et al., 2014; Cayla and Penaloza, 2012; Chávez, 2012; Dibb et al., 2014; Gebhart et al., 2019; Gross and Laamanen, 2018; Kowalkowski et al., 2012; Skålén et al., 2015a, 2015b). However, only two of the studies (Ots and Nyilasy, 2017; Venter et al., 2015) focus exclusively on the marketing department, where an important part of a firm's marketing activity takes place. Toward this aim, Venter et al. (2015) describe how marketing practitioners conduct market segmentation through the practices of legitimizing, embodying, contextualizing, and maintaining market segmentation.

Several studies have focused on identifying practices performed by marketers to create value (Gebhardt et al., 2019; Gross and Laamanen, 2018; Kowalkowski et al., 2012; Skålén 2015a, 2015b). For example, Skålén et al. (2015a) list practices that help compose value propositions that marketers and other actors draw on to cocreate value. This focus on how practices create value is in line with the AMA's definition of marketing in terms of firms creating value for their stakeholders and society at large through marketing activity.

Some of the reviewed studies have also described the elements that make up practices in general and value-creating practices in particular. The ethnographic study of integrated marketing communication (IMC) practices by Ots and Nyilasy (2017) shows how IMC practices are constituted by routines, material set ups, rules and procedures, cultural templates, and teleoaffective structures (i.e., structures pertaining to emotionally charged goals). Similarly, Kowalkowski et al. (2012; see also Skålén et al., 2015b) show that "cocreative practices" are made up of procedures (i.e., rules), understandings (i.e., know-how), and engagements (i.e., emotionally charged goals) that marketing practitioners draw on to create value by forming value propositions.

Table 1. Summary of the reviewed practice-theory-informed marketing articles.

Author(s) year	Context	Findings
Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007b)	Retailing: Marketing managers	Studies the change from full-service to self-service in retailing; identifies exchange, normalizing and representational practices to understand the studied change; and discusses how these three practices mutually shape one another
Cayla and Penaloza (2012)	Advertising agencies and brand managers	Uses practice theory to show how the organizational identity of the brand managers studied is built up by practices; illuminates how practices impede learning and adaptation; identifies several practices, such as market research exercises, client-agency meetings, training sessions, and seminars
Chávez (2012)	Advertising agencies and practitioners	Studies Hispanic advertising agencies and analyzes practices with which they isolate Latinos from other consumers to create a distinctive market. The study also shows how the identified practices can limit access to capital
Kowalkowski et al. (2012)	Retailing: Marketing managers, other employees, and consumers	Finds that forming a value proposition by marketers, consumers, and other employees is underpinned by three elements of practices: (1) procedures, (2) understandings, and (3) engagements. It also finds that forming a value proposition is characterized by four types of activities: (1) applying, (2) assessing, (3) adapting, and (4) adopting
Dibb et al. (2014)	Multiple: Marketing practitioners and educators	Finds that academics and practitioners agree that essential marketing practices are about: (1) stakeholder and relationship marketing, (2) customer analysis, (3) marketing mix, (4) management/marketing planning, and (5) the centrality of customers. The paper clarifies the scope of marketing practice
Browne et al. (2014)	Retailing: Middle marketing managers	Studies how middle marketing managers adapt to top managers through three practices: (1) sensing, (2) challenging, and (3) transmitting
Skålén et al. (2015a)	Multiple: Marketers, other employees, and customers	Identifies three aggregates of practices and 10 practices used by marketers and other stakeholders to conduct service innovation by creating value propositions: (1) provision practices (i.e., operating practices, problem-finding practices, and problem-solving practices), (2) representational practices (i.e., naming and labeling practices, modeling practices, and interaction practices), and (3) management and organizational practices (i.e., organizing practices, staffing and team building practices, networking practices, and knowledge-sharing practices)

Table 1. (continued)

Author(s) year	Context	Findings
Skålén et al. (2015b)	Car industry: Marketing managers and consumers	Identifies three aggregates and eight practices that marketing managers and consumers enact to co-create value: (1) interacting practices (e.g., questioning and answering, dialoguing, and translating), (2) identity practices (e.g., mirroring, praising, and branding), and (3) organizing practices (e.g., managing and governing); finds that the co-creation of value succeeds when the enactment of practices aligns, and that value co-creation fails when the enactment of practices misaligns. Marketers and consumers use realignment strategies to address the failure of value co-creation
Venter et al. (2015)	Multinational firm: Marketing managers	Finds that marketers conduct market segmentation through four sets of actions or practices: (1) legitimizing, (2) embodying, (3) contextualizing, and (4) maintaining market segmentation; also finds that marketing theories and models are not followed strictly by marketing practitioners
Drumwright and Kamal (2016)	Advertising agencies and practitioners	Studies advertising practitioners in Middle East and North African countries to uncover macro-, meso-, and micro-level phenomena that influence advertising practitioner's habitus in terms of ethics
Ots and Nyilasy (2017)	Retailing: Marketing managers	Finds that integrated marketing communication (IMC) as a practice is constituted by routines, material set-ups, procedures, cultural templates, and teleoaffective structures; IMC is conceptualized as a set of value-creating integrative practices that aligns diverse behaviors and forms of knowledge
Grossman and Laamanen (2018)	IT firm: Marketing managers and other employees	Identifies 13 shared knowledge constructs (see Table 5), which connect the things, actions, and value-creating activities characteristic of marketing work and provide "a better understanding as to how the practitioners' professional knowledge, the 'knowing how to do', transpires in practice" (p. 118)
Gebhardt et al. (2019)	Multiple: Market intelligence directors and other employees	Identifies five value-creating market intelligence dissemination practices: (1) distribution, (2) resource centralization, (3) consultative selling, (4) empathic learning, and (5) experiential learning (practices 1–3 contribute to reinforcing existing market schemas in firms, and practices 4–5 contribute to updating and changing market schemas in firms); suggests that intelligence directors need expertise on organizational learning and the ability to draft shared meaning structures

Few studies go beyond the identification of practices or their elements to offer broader insights into the interrelationships or constitutions of marketing activity in firms. The study by Gebhardt et al. (2019: 89) is an exception, as they identify five market intelligence dissemination practices that create value by being able to "either update and reinforce organization members' existing schemas (mental models) of the market or create new, shared schemas of the market." Gebhardt et al. suggest that these shared schemas coordinate a firm's marketing and value-creating activities by serving as mental models for approaching the market. Furthermore, Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007b), based on a study of a food retailer, have argued that marketing activity is a function of exchange as well as normalizing and representational practices.

Some researchers have shed light on the complexities of marketing activity. For instance, Cayla and Penaloza (2012) illuminate how practices, together with symbols, impede learning and adaptation activities in firms. They also show how consumers' and managers' understandings of the valuable elements of the organizational assemblage often contradict one another, which complicates marketing activity. Skålén et al. (2015b) in turn show how marketers and consumers enact different elements of practices—that is, procedures, understandings, and engagements—to understand the success of value cocreation between marketers and consumers, as well as its failure in terms of value codestruction (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011, 2021). According to Skålén et al. (2015b), the cocreation of value succeeds/fails when the enactment of elements of practices aligns/misaligns (i.e., when marketers and consumers enact the elements in a similar/different way). They also show that marketing practitioners and consumers use realignment strategies to transform a value cocreation failure or value codestruction into a success (Skålén et al., 2015b).

In sum, prior practice theoretical research on marketing in firms has largely focused on identifying practices in general and the practices that create value in particular. A few studies have also explained how practices coordinate value-creating marketing activity in firms and discussed the circumstances under which such activity succeeds and fails, as well as how marketing activity is coordinated between firms and their stakeholders (i.e., customers, clients, partners, and society at large, as emphasized in the AMA's definition of marketing). However, we have not found an article that presents a framework or defines a research agenda for practice theory research in marketing that corresponds to those on consumption, markets, and strategy (see previous section). This may partly explain the paucity of articles using this approach to study marketing activity within our discipline. To remedy this issue and to fulfill our aim, the following sections draw on our review to outline a MAP framework and a research agenda to guide future MAP research.

Marketing-as-practice framework

In this section, we construct the MAP framework based on two key insights. First, our review of prior practice theoretical research suggests that marketing stands out as a business discipline that focuses on activities within firms that create value for stakeholders. Second, prior research (Reckwitz, 2002; Skålén and Hackley, 2011; Whittington, 2006) has suggested that frameworks based on practice theory can be grounded in the three concepts of practices, practitioners, and praxis.

Value-creating marketing practices

Conceptualizing practices as organized activities routinely carried out by a group of people implies that practices denote both templates for activities and the realized activities themselves (see second section and Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2019). While this dual role of practices is theoretically accurate, it is also confusing. To reduce such confusion, we follow Reckwitz (2002; see also Skålén

and Hackley, 2011 and Whittington, 2006) in making an analytical distinction between practices and praxis: we understand practices as templates for activity and praxis as realized activity. Both are interdependent parts of activity, since practices enable and constrain (but do not determinate) praxis while praxis stabilizes and changes practices.

Our review (see Table 1) shows that a key focus of prior practice theoretical research in marketing is on the identification of marketing practices, which are defined by their ability to create value (Gebhardt et al., 2019; Gross and Laamanen, 2018; Kowalkowski et al., 2012; Skålén 2015a, 2015b). This notion is also supported by consumer researchers Schau et al. (2009) in their key paper on value creation in brand communities. Therefore, we define *marketing practices* as *templates of organized activities that marketing practitioners routinely enact to carry out concrete marketing praxis that creates value for and with customers, clients, partners, and society at large*. This definition is in line with the AMA's definition of marketing thanks to its key components: activities, value, customers, and other stakeholders. However, it also goes beyond the AMA's definition by emphasizing that value is created by firms not only for but also *with* stakeholders.

The fact that marketing practices are templates implies that they are not only organized activities, but also sensemaking frameworks drawn on to make the world and value creation intelligible (Nicolini, 2011; Shove et al., 2012; Schatzki, 1996, 2019). Based on shared marketing practices, marketers make common interpretations of the very nature of marketing—what marketing is and what it is not—which are codified, with the help of academic research, into common definitions of marketing, such as that advanced by the AMA. In particular, shared practices provide marketers with a common frame of reference regarding which value-creating activities count as marketing and which do not. For example, Gebhart et al. (2019) show how marketers enact the practices of empathic and experiential learning to change organization members mental models of the market that are crucial for value creation.

Marketing practices also have a common anatomy of elements that link them together (Nicolini, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2019; Shove et al., 2012). Schau et al. (2009: 31) draw on the work of Schatzki (1996, 2019) to suggest that practices that create value consist of three elements:

> (1) *procedures*—explicit rules, principles, precepts, and instructions called "discursive knowledge"; (2) *understandings*—knowledge of what to say and do, skills and projects, or know-how; and (3) *engagements*—ends and purposes that are emotionally charged insofar as people are committed to them.

Several practice theory studies in marketing have adopted this definition and used it to analyze the circumstances under which marketing activities create value or fail to do so (Kowalkowski et al., 2012; Ots and Nyilasy, 2017; Skålén et al., 2015b). In addition, a significant part of SAP research has been devoted to the study the elements of understandings, especially the roles of social skills, and engagements in strategizing (Vaara and Whittington, 2012).

Although the definitions of practices advanced by Schau et al. (2009) and Schatzki (1996) do not account for materials, such as tools and technologies, as an element of marketing practices, we follow practice theory scholars who argue that materials are a key element of practices (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011; Reckwitz 2002; Shove et al., 2012). This key role of materials is also prevalent in SAP, markets-as-practice, and consumer research that draws on practice theory. For instance, Warde (2005; see also Halkier et al., 2011; Magaudda, 2011) discusses the role of "affordances or objects" in consumers' enactment of practices and suggests that specific equipment is a part of practices. Furthermore, studies of markets show how market practices require the support of material objects that guide and co-construct everyday activities (Pantzar and Ruckenstein, 2015), suggesting that markets are outcomes of processes in which marketable devices both shape and are shaped by

market practices. While the role of materials has not been a key theme in prior practice theory research on marketing, Ots and Nyilasy (2017) have discussed how "material set ups" of marketing practices direct value-creating activity. Therefore, we conceptualize marketing practices as consisting of four elements: (1) *materials*, (2) *procedures*, (3) *understandings*, and (4) *engagements*. These are all elements that facilitate marketing practitioners' value creation for and with stakeholders.

In addition to zooming in on the elements of individual practices, we also need to zoom out and focus on the interrelationship between practices. This is because activity commonly results not only from one practice, but from bundles of practices (Schatzki, 2019; Shove et al., 2012). Bundles of practices are practices linked together that commonly coordinate with one another. For instance, Skålén et al. (2015a) identified three bundles of practices that marketers and other organization members enact to integrate resources into value propositions: (1) provision practices, (2) representational practices, and (3) management and organizational practices. They argue that such bundles reveal how firms enable value creation for and with customers and other stakeholders, much in a similar manner as Schau et al. (2009) shed light on brand community members' collective value creation. Thus, we argue that marketing practices commonly work together in bundles to create value.

Marketing practitioners who create value

Practices are always enacted by individuals to carry out activities (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2019; Shove et al., 2012). We use the term *marketing practitioners* to refer to *the individuals who enact marketing practices to carry out value-creating marketing praxis*. It is by enacting marketing practices on a regular basis that individuals become marketing practitioners. Hence, marketing practices shape marketing practitioners, which is a stance supported by SAP, markets-as-practice, and consumer research that draws on practice theory. SAP research has studied strategy practitioners as those who do the actual work of making, shaping, and executing strategy; by doing so, they are believed to become "strategists" (Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Mantere and Vaara, 2008). In particular, the roles and identities of strategy practitioners have been studied (Golsorkhi et al., 2015), and it has been suggested that their identities can be understood as the nexus of the practices they master (see also Reckwitz, 2002). Similarly, markets-as-practice studies (Hawa et al., 2020) detail the way certain actors adopt isomorphic practices, pattern their roles and positions in the market by foregrounding a shared identity, and frame the market according to this perspective. Furthermore, consumer research uses concepts such as "brand community" (Schau et al., 2009) and "marketplace cultures" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) to denote groups of people who share a particular form of activity and common practices that define their identities and demarcate members from non-members. The practice theoretical studies in the field of marketing have also focused on marketing practitioners (Cayla and Penaloza, 2012; Chávez, 2012; Gebhardt et al., 2019; Gross and Laamanen, 2018; Kowalkowski et al., 2012), but they have not specified how value-creating practices shape marketing practitioners, as we suggest they do.

Value-creating marketing praxis

Praxis refers to the activity that individuals carry out as a result of enacting practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Golsorkhi et al., 2015; Whittington, 2006). Following from this, we define *marketing praxis* as *the realized value-creating activities that result from marketing practitioners' enactment and carrying out of marketing practices*. Marketing practices do not determine praxis; rather, individuals

may enact practices and carry out praxis in such a way that the praxis diverges from or even goes against practices. This position is backed by market-as-practice studies (see, e.g., Hawa et al., 2020), which insist on the intentionality of actors who can purposively replicate practices or incrementally alter them. Thus, it is important to underscore that marketing practices serve as templates or guidelines for praxis and that marketing practitioners, through their marketing praxis, may collectively contribute to changing our common understanding of marketing (as defined by the AMA, for example).

It is generally more convenient and socially acceptable to act in line with practices, which implies that marketing praxis usually stabilizes marketing practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 1996, 2019; Shove et al., 2012). Accordingly, prior practice theoretical research in marketing has shown that practices prefigure marketing praxis (see, e.g., Gebhart et al., 2019; Kowalkowski et al., 2012; Ots and Nyilasy, 2017). Similarly, practice theoretical work in strategy and consumer research has studied how practices are linked to praxis. For example, SAP scholars have shown how strategic practices, such as SWOT analysis, guide strategy formation praxis (Golsorkhi et al., 2015).

The enactment of marketing practices and the resulting praxis may vary with time and space, and such variances may lead to changes in these practices (Schatzki 2019; Shove et al., 2012). In extreme cases, marketing practitioners may act contrary to a marketing practice because they wish to promote a competing practice, which may result in radical changes in marketing practices. In addition, the extent to which marketing praxis aligns or misaligns with the needs of customers, clients, partners, and the society at large may also inform the stabilization and change of marketing practices, as suggested by Skålén et al. (2015b). The authors specifically suggest that the alignment of praxis between firms and external stakeholders is associated with value cocreation, while the misalignment of praxis is associated with failure in value cocreation or even with value codestruction (see also Echeverri and Skålén, 2011, 2021). For example, Skålén et al. (2015b) showed how agreement/disagreement on branding among marketers and brand community members result in value cocreation/failure in value cocreation. Based on this, we argue that the alignment of praxis between firms and external stakeholders is likely to contribute to the stabilization of marketing practices, thanks to the value created for and with external stakeholders. At the same time, misalignment is likely to contribute to changes in marketing practices, because marketing practitioners within firms will strive to carry out marketing praxis in a way that better matches the needs of stakeholders, which can eventually improve marketing practices. The work by Skålén et al. (2015b) also suggests that marketing practitioners adapt directly—and not via changes in marketing practices—to the marketing praxis in which they are engaged. For example, in concrete situations, when the marketing praxis misaligns with the needs of customers, marketing practitioners are likely to adapt how they carry out marketing practices.

Constructing the marketing-as-practice framework

To date, marketing has lacked a framework for studying everyday marketing activities in firms. The MAP framework (summarized in Figure 1) addresses this gap by *conceptualizing marketing activity through the intertwining concepts of value-creating marketing practices, practitioners,* and *praxis.* Marketing practices are templates of value-creating activities. The individuals who enact marketing practices to carry out marketing praxis are shaped by these practices and become marketing practitioners. Marketing praxis denotes the realized value-creating marketing activity for and with customers, clients, partners, and society at large. Furthermore, marketing praxis adjusts how marketing practitioners carry out marketing practices while marketing praxis is enabled and constrained by the templates inherent to marketing practices. When marketing praxis and the needs
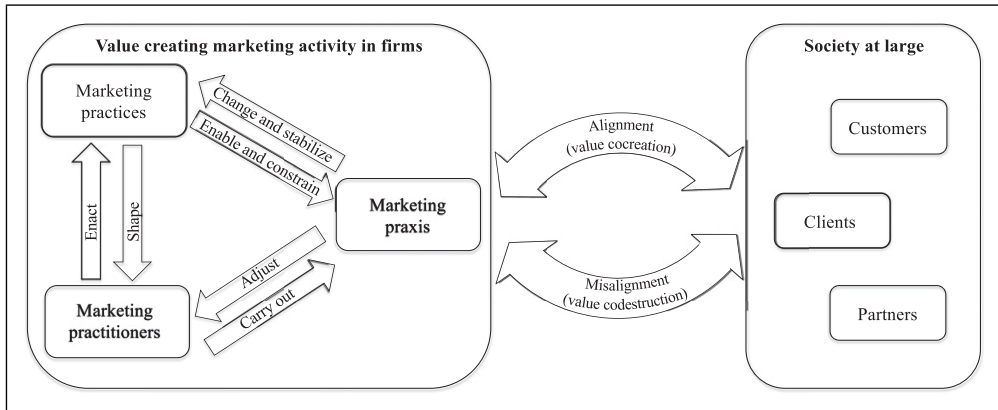
Figure 1. Marketing-as-practice framework.

of external stakeholders align, value is cocreated, which is likely to contribute to the stabilization of marketing practices. By contrast, when marketing praxis and the needs of external stakeholders misalign, value is codestroyed for at least some party/parties, and this is likely to contribute to a change in marketing practices. The MAP framework thus enables us to understand and study how day-to-day value-creating marketing is conducted by marketing practitioners, as called for by Kumar (2015) and Moorman et al. (2019), as well as how value-creating marketing activity changes.

A marketing-as-practice research agenda

This section outlines a MAP research agenda to guide future research focusing on value-creating marketing activity in firms. On the basis of our MAP framework (see Figure 1), we suggest that further research is needed in four areas: (1) value-creating marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis; (2) the relationship between these constructs; (3) the relationship between value-creating marketing activity within firms and their stakeholders; and (4) research on value-creating marketing activity that extends beyond the firm. We further show that our MAP framework can be used to explore a variety of contemporary marketing issues. Consequently, we present (see Table 2) potential future general research questions and iterations of the general research questions adapted to contemporary marketing issues in relation to the four areas of further research we identified.

First, we know from prior research that a core part of marketing activity takes place within firms (see, e.g., Kozlenkova et al., 2014; Moorman and Day, 2016), making them an important site for understanding value-creating marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis, as well as a fruitful point of departure for articulating a MAP framework, as we have done here. Hence, more research is needed on marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis as individual constructs.

In highly competitive environments, where marketing departments are under increasing pressure to perform (Kumar, 2018), a focus on value creation by marketing practitioners, with the help of marketing practices and praxis, is fundamental. By honing in on individual marketing practices, insights can be generated regarding the elements that constitute practices (i.e., procedures, understandings, engagements, and materials), which will help to improve our understanding of why activities are—or indeed are not—carried out. Another pivotal area for research is how marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis are becoming more sustainable (Chandy et al., 2021) in response

Table 2. Marketing-as-practice research agenda.

Focus of investigation	General research questions	Iterations of the research questions adapted to contemporary marketing issues
Value-creating marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis	What value-creating practices do marketing practitioners enact to conduct marketing praxis? Are any of these practices more common, or do some of them have more influence on marketing praxis than others? Are there similarities and differences in value-creating marketing practices across firms and industries? What are the reasons for the similarities and differences? How are value-creating marketing practices bundled into larger aggregates? How can we understand the relationship between bundles of marketing practices and individual practices?	What marketing practices underpin work on societal challenges, such as climate change, and how are these practices bundled? Which practices or elements of practices may undermine the realization of praxis in, for example, sustainability? How do marketing practitioners use technologies and other material elements of practices (such as big data) to conduct marketing praxis? How do marketing practitioners vary praxis with context, and what is required of them under different conditions? How are technologies (the material element of practices) and competences (the understanding element of practices) linked in and across firms?
Relationships between value-creating marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis	What is the relationship between value-creating marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis in firms? How does this relationship develop over time? How do marketing practitioners change marketing practices through the marketing praxis they carry out? How does the innovation of new marketing practices take place? What facilitates and impedes marketing practitioners' changes in marketing practices? How does marketing praxis change marketing practitioners? How, when, and why do marketing practitioners carry out marketing praxis in contradiction with marketing practices? How does a marketing practitioner's enactment of marketing practices inform (a) their formation of identity, (b) their sensemaking, and (c) how they plan, carry out, and interpret marketing praxis? How do marketing practitioners make sense of the competing demands of different types of marketing practices?	How do marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis change an organizations' marketing strategy and engagement with sustainability and technology? How do different types of marketing practices and praxis influence marketing practitioners? Do marketing practitioners working with, for example, sustainability or technology form different identities compared to other marketing practitioners? How do marketing practitioners make sense of marketing strategy, sustainability, and relevant technology? How do marketing practitioners cope with eventual conflicts between the various practices related to marketing strategy, sustainability, and technology?

Table 2. (continued)

Focus of investigation	General research questions	Iterations of the research questions adapted to contemporary marketing issues
Relationship between value-creating marketing activity within firms and their stakeholders	What is the relationship between value-creating marketing activity in firms and the society at large (including customers, clients, and partners)? How are intra- and extra-firm marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis linked? What are the antecedents to the alignment and misalignment of value-creating marketing activity between firms and their stakeholders? Under which conditions are alignment and misalignment likely to occur? How do marketing practitioners address this misalignment? What realignment strategies do they use? How do value-creating marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis enable the alignment and misalignment of value-creating marketing activity between firms and their stakeholders? Can the elements of marketing practices (i.e., procedures, understandings, engagements, and materials) explain such alignment and misalignment?	How is a firm's marketing strategy and its position on sustainability aligned or misaligned with external stakeholders, such as digital platforms that have their own rules and agendas? How do firms and their external stakeholders realign misaligned positions due to, for example, other actors' market shaping? When does (or does not) misalignment between actors inhibit value cocreation? How does the need for agility due to market changes, such as changing consumer behavior, influence marketing practices at different levels of the firm and within the marketing department? How does a firm's market shaping efforts affect the marketing practices and practitioners of other firms and marketing intermediaries?
Value-creating marketing activity beyond the firm	Is it fruitful to study value-creating marketing activity beyond the firm by focusing on marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis? Do marketing practices consist of procedures, understandings, engagements, and materials across different contexts? How are marketing practices bundled in contexts beyond the firm? How are marketing practices linked across contexts? How can linkages between multiple types of actors (e.g., firms, customers, brand communities, public organizations, etc.) explain changes in marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis? How does alignment and misalignment between multiple types of actors contribute to our understanding of value cocreation and codestruction in the economy?	How do marketing practices vary in contexts beyond the firm, such as influencer communities or digital platforms? How do the elements of value-creating marketing activities vary across contexts, such as subsistence marketplaces with little formalized marketing activity? How do different types of actors in a particular market change marketing strategies, sustainability activities, and the usage of technology?

to big societal challenges, such as climate change or a prolonged pandemic, as seen during the past few years.

Second, although the general relationships between the three key constructs of marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis (illustrated by arrows in Figure 1) are based on prior research, there is little research on how they interact simultaneously or develop together, particularly through elongated periods of time. One interesting theme for future research is the determination of which elements of practices that potentially hinder or complicate marketing praxis. Furthermore, we know little about how marketing practices shape the identity and sensemaking of marketing practitioners (see Gebhart et al., 2019, for an exception). Also, the change of marketing practices by marketing praxis remains an under-researched theme, with a few exceptions that still do not detail how and why these changes take place (see, e.g., Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007b; Kowalkowski et al., 2012; Skålén et al., 2015a). Another related topic worth exploring is how marketing practices, practitioners, and praxis interact to induce change, including innovation, sustainable development, or shifts in strategy (Morgan et al., 2019).

Third, our framework further highlights the relationship between value-creating marketing activity within firms and the society at large, and how this relationship can result in both value cocreation and codestruction. The relationship between the firm and its stakeholders that we propose (i.e., that alignment/misalignment between firms and its stakeholders can generate value cocreation/codestruction) has only been explored in a few prior studies (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011, 2021; Skålén et al., 2015b). Considering the evolving relationship between the alignment and misalignment of marketing practices and firm stakeholders, we need further research on this topic and how it changes marketing practices within firms, as well as the marketing praxis marketing practitioners carry out.

A contemporary challenge for marketers stems from the new ways in which customers shop, which are often accompanied by an explosion of customer touchpoints and fast-changing competitive and technological dynamics that have led to an increased emphasis on agile marketing (Kalaignanam et al., 2021). This trend calls for investigations of how marketing practices facilitate or hinder agility, as well as an understanding of how marketing practitioners make sense of events, issues, and actions that are surprising or confusing for them.

A further issue of contemporary relevance is that firms increasingly view markets as malleable and plastic systems that can be influenced. In the approach detailed by Nenonen et al. (2020), we see how the company is taking the initiative to shape the market by pushing other actors to change marketing practices. At the same time, while extant research has allowed us to develop a better understanding of the processes, tools, and positive outcomes of market shaping for those firms doing the shaping, little is known about the effects of market shaping on other firms' current marketing practices and marketing practitioners.

Fourth, value-creating marketing activity is also conducted in contexts other than firms, such as in brand communities (Schau et al., 2009) and at marketing and cultural intermediaries (Diaz Ruiz and Kjellberg, 2020), as well as by actors loosely linked to the firm, such as micro-influencers. Moreover, studies on "marketing work" (Moeran, 2009; Svensson, 2007), an area that is adjacent to that of marketing practices, suggest that our focus on firms is limited. A key endeavor of future research would then be to investigate whether our framework may guide studies of marketing activity beyond the firm and how this could expend our definition of marketing.

A hot contemporary marketing topic is the growing role of digital platforms and other techno-cultural actors. For example, Kozinets (2022) illustrates how the marketing praxis of firms and the needs of digital platforms misalign. Consequently, value is codestroyed, which is likely to contribute to a change in marketing practices, especially the community management practices of the

firm, and to adjustments of marketers' competencies. Hence, the increasing role of digital platforms offers interesting opportunities for further MAP research in contexts other than firms. Such a shift in focus would further illuminate the relationship between firms and their stakeholders' marketing activity. Table 2 presents our MAP research agenda.

Conclusion

In the opening of this paper, we argued that marketing scholars have attended to value-creating marketing activity in firms on an aggregate level and by focusing on resources and capabilities rather than on everyday marketing activities per se. We set out to outline a MAP framework (see Figure 1) and research agenda (see Table 2) based on practice theory that may be used to study value-creating marketing activity in firms and how these activities create value for firm stakeholders and the society at large. The MAP framework and the research agenda presented above are the key contributions of our paper. We invite future research to further contribute to the literature by extending the MAP framework outlined here and answering the questions raised in our research agenda.

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Notes

1. https://www.marketingstudyguide.com/amas-definition-marketing/
2. As value is a complex concept, we use here this simple definition of customer value, and refer the reader to Zeithaml et al. (2020) for a more in-depth discussion.

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Appendix

Procedures for the review of practice theory research in marketing journals

Our review of practice-theory-informed works in marketing with a focus on firms can be described as an integrative review (Snyder, 2019). This fits well with our aim of providing an overview of this body of research from which a synthesizing framework and research agenda can be created.

Our review focused on the most established marketing journals. We started the review process by inspecting the top 100 journals of the Web of Science business list as of January 2019 to identify journals that contained the word "marketing" in their title. This resulted in a set of 21 journals. The following journals were included in our review: *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of International Marketing*, *Marketing Science*, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, *International Marketing Review*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Marketing Theory*, *Journal of Services Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Management*, *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *Psychology and Marketing*, *Journal of Social Marketing*, *Journal of Macromarketing*, *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, *European Journal of Marketing*, and *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*. Later on, *Consumption Markets & Culture* was added to this list, following the suggestion of a reviewer, since it is a major outlet for practice theoretical work in marketing.

We then searched for articles published between 1999 and 2020 in these journals using the search term "Practice theor*" (* to include articles that contained practice "-theory", "-theories", "-theoretical", etc.) in "all text". This resulted in a corpus of 123 articles. The year 1999 was chosen as the starting date for the review, since the broader use of practice theory in management, markets-as-practice, and consumer research began in the early 2000s (see, e.g., Johnsson et al., 2003; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2006; Warde, 2005). Thus, the chosen time window was likely to capture key works in marketing that are informed by practice theory. In addition, some of the most cited practice theoretical works drawn on in marketing research were published just before or after 1999, such as the works by Schatzki (1996) and Reckwitz (2002). To make sure that the chosen timeline did not exclude relevant papers, the reference lists of the 123 articles were screened and additional relevant works were added to the list.

With the aim of establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria for the final selection of papers, we read the abstracts, keywords, and references of the 18 articles published in the leading journal in the field, the *Journal of Marketing*. After the first round, we decided to include empirical, methodological, and conceptual papers that have contributed to improving the understanding of marketing activity in firms by drawing on practice theory. Papers that did not focus on firms, that did not use

practice theory, that used practice theory merely on a linguistic level (i.e., mentioning practice theory without using it in the analysis and discussion), or that served as introductions to special issues were excluded. By applying these criteria, the original set of 18 *Journal of Marketing* articles was reduced to three.

We divided the rest of the articles (105 articles) published in the remaining 21 marketing journals between us, applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and read the abstracts, keywords, and reference list. This reduced the list to 46 relevant articles. All these articles were read in detail by at least one of the authors. During this process, we also included 17 additional articles to our review that were not captured by our initial search but that were identified by reading the 105 articles and through other means. These articles were then added to the corpus, read, and reviewed in detail.

This procedure resulted in a final corpus of 13 articles that used practice theory to study marketing activity in firms. The contents of these key articles are described Table 1 and discussed in the fourth section of the article. The procedure also resulted in the identification of a parallel list of 42 articles that had been published in marketing journals but that did not focus on using practice theory to study marketing activity in firms. The bulk of these studies focused on consumption practices.

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