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The Attitudes of Polish Society and Company Representatives to Marketing

Abstract

The paper presents the selected results of research conducted by the Marketing Department of Cracow University of Economics which aimed to gain knowledge of the attitudes of Polish businesses and Polish society to marketing and corporate marketing activities. The measurement of the perception of marketing by company executives and society was carried out mainly on the basis of 10 different statements representing both common and scientific views on marketing. The undertaken research confirms that the image of marketing in society and among company executives is both complex and diversified. The obtained results constitute a basis for identifying distinct segments in each investigated population. The findings and conclusions are based on the results of two national surveys conducted in Poland in 2008 on (1) a sample of 1,128 companies operating on the Polish market and (2) the representative sample of 1,021 Poles at the age from 18 to 75.

Keywords

Attitudes of Polish companies to marketing, attitudes of Polish society to marketing, empirical research

1. Introduction

The objective of the project, whose selected results are presented in this paper, was to identify the ways in which marketing is perceived by Polish society and company representatives. The research study was conducted by the Marketing Department of Cracow University of Economics in 2008.

Research was based on Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) on a representative sample of 1,021 Poles at the age from 18 to 75. The sample was selected on the basis of layer and randomized samples as well as gender- and age-related quotas.

The analysis of companies was conducted by means of an internet survey on a sample of 1,128 companies operating on the Polish market. The respondents included the employees

of marketing departments in the investigated companies or people in charge of corporate marketing activities. In the event of the lack of such personnel, the respondents included board members, owners or top executives.

In both surveys the perception of marketing was assessed on the basis of 10 statements – positive and negative ones – which reflected several fundamental dimensions of marketing as a practical activity and as a science. The statements referred to the following areas: the impact of marketing activities on consumers, the indispensable character of marketing activities in business practice, the extent to which marketing is identified with advertising, promotion, direct impact techniques increasing sales and manipulative activities, the perception of marketing as a career path, the extent to which marketing is established as a science and the respondents' self-evaluation of their knowledge of marketing. Apart from identifying the image of marketing at a general level, each investigated population was divided into homogenous groups¹, characterised by similar attitudes to marketing. This segmentation is a basis for assessing the extent of diversity represented by the views held by the particular investigated populations.

2. The views held by society and company representatives on the essence of marketing

Most Poles (86.1%) have a positive attitude to marketing; on average, only 1 out of 8 respondents (12.4%) declares a negative attitude. At the same time, society demonstrates the lack of an in-depth understanding of marketing. Nearly half of the respondents (47.5%) admit they do not understand what "marketing is all about", and two thirds (65.2%) identify marketing with advertising and promotion.

Marketing is generally viewed in a positive way as something indispensable to business (90.2% express such a view), as a tool for supporting sales (94.4% identify marketing with different techniques for increasing the volume of sales), which also broadens consumers' choice of products (75.5% of positive responses). Marketing is also viewed in a positive way at different levels. Nearly three fourths of respondents (73.9%) regard marketing to be an interesting career path. Nearly two thirds believe that marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations (63.1%) and, simultaneously, in its practical dimension, it is viewed as a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs (60.9%).

¹ The segmentation of society and company representatives into homogenous groups is based on a commonly applied statistical technique used in the cluster analysis – k-means method. In both situations the number of qualified cases is different than the initial number of observations as a result of the exclusion of answers: "it is hard to tell", leading to the accidental removal of the missing data.

On the other hand, the representatives of Polish society perceive some negative aspects of marketing activities. As many as 75.4% of the respondents agree with the statement that marketing is an art of manipulating customers. Half of the respondents (50.7%) believe that marketing unnecessarily increases product prices.

Table 1. Views of society representatives on marketing (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not	It is hard to tell
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	17.3	47.9	6.2	22.3	5.8	0.5
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	31.8	43.6	7.0	13.3	4.0	0.3
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	50.6	39.6	2.7	4.7	1.5	0.9
Marketing is a promising area in terms of career development	26.7	47.2	9.9	10.8	4.0	1.4
Marketing is something that unnecessarily raises product prices	15.3	35.4	13.5	26.2	7.5	2.2
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	51.7	42.7	1.4	2.7	1.0	0.5
Marketing activities result in a wider range of alternatives for customers	22.2	53.3	8.5	11.7	3.2	1.1
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	17.8	43.1	10.8	20.5	6.8	1.1
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	17.1	46.0	10.3	20.0	4.5	2.1
It is not really clear what marketing is all about	11.9	35.7	12.1	26.3	13.6	0.5

Source: authors' own research, n = 1 021.

-The variable which differentiates the respondents' views to the highest extent is their attitude to marketing. The respondents who declare a positive attitude to marketing are more inclined to agree with the statement that marketing is not only indispensable to business operations, but it is also beneficial for customers, offering a wider range of options based on customer needs. This positive attitude also translates into the perception of marketing as a promising area in terms of career development as well as an area based on solid scientific foundations.

Mise en forme : Puces et numéros

The obtained results suggest that negative attitudes may be related to the lack of knowledge – the number of respondents who do not understand marketing is higher in this group by 4 percentage points than the average value in the entire sample. Those respondents who declare a negative view on marketing are more inclined to believe that marketing activities are manipulative in character and that marketing has a negative impact resulting in the unnecessary increase in prices.

Table 2. The percentage of society representatives who give approval to marketing activities (“absolutely yes” and “probably yes”) in the particular groups of respondents

Views on marketing	Total	Positive attitude to marketing	Negative attitude to marketing	Statistical significance ²
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	65.2	65.3	66.4	-
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	75.4	72.8	89.6	+
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	90.2	92.2	77.6	+
Marketing is a promising area in terms of career development	74.0	78.8	44.8	++
Marketing is something that unnecessarily raises product prices	50.6	47.2	73.1	+
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company’s volume of sales	94.4	95.0	91.0	-
Marketing activities result in a wider range of alternatives for customers	75.5	80.7	44.8	++
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	60.9	64.8	35.1	++
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	63.2	67.0	40.3	++
It is not really clear what marketing is all about	47.5	46.8	51.5	+

Source: authors’ own research, n = 1 021.

The majority of company representatives (89.6%) have a positive attitude to marketing, with only 1 out of 16 respondents (6.2%) expressing a negative view. Generally, marketing activities are regarded to be significant. Only 4.4% of the respondents do not agree with the statement that marketing is indispensable to business activities, while this statement

² Statistical dependencies between the analysed variables are determined on the basis of Pearson’s Chi-square and Cramer’s V. The particular symbols having statistical significance indicate: „++” strong correlation between variables (Pearson’s Chi-square $p < 0.05$, and Cramer’s V > 0.2); „+” weak correlation between variables (Pearson’s Chi-square $p < 0.05$, and Cramer’s V < 0.2); „-” no correlation between variables (Pearson’s Chi-square $p > 0.05$).

is approved by 92.4% of the respondents. However, the tool-based approach prevails which identifies marketing with different techniques of increasing sales (91.3% of positive responses and 2.7% of negative ones).

Most of the respondents hold positive views on marketing. More than two thirds of the respondents (68.6%) believe that marketing offers interesting career opportunities, while 63.1% of them regard marketing to be an area based on solid scientific foundations. Most respondents are also convinced that the practical applications of marketing are positive. Marketing is viewed as offering a wider range of products by 63.7% of company representatives, while 59.2% of them also agree that marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs.

Certain internal contradictions occur between the declared understanding of marketing and identifying it with negative activities and effects. On the one hand, it is obvious in the light of the character of the investigated population that a small percentage of respondents do not know what “marketing is all about” (4.1% of the responses). On the other hand, a considerably high percentage of respondents believe that marketing is something that unnecessarily raises the level of prices (12.4%) and that it may be identified with advertising and promotion (38.2%). An equally high percentage of respondents believe that marketing is an art of manipulating customers (51.5%).

Table 3. Views of company representatives on marketing (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not	It is hard to tell
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion (n = 1 085)	8.8	29.3	20.5	16.8	23.7	0.9
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers (n = 1 077)	15.4	36.1	17.7	15.9	13.6	1.2
Marketing is indispensable to business operations (n = 1 097)	64.3	28.1	3.1	0.8	3.6	0.2
Marketing is a promising area in terms of career development (n = 1 079)	29.6	39.0	18.5	6.7	2.6	3.6
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices (n = 1 079)	3.6	8.8	20.3	32.5	32.0	2.8
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company’s volume of sales (n = 1 102)	47.5	43.8	5.7	1.8	0.9	0.2
Marketing activities result in a wider range	24.1	39.6	18.7	12.4	4.3	0.9

of alternatives for customers (n = 1 081)						
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs (n = 1 090)	28.0	31.2	18.6	13.1	8.1	1.0
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations (n = 1 087)	23.6	39.5	20.2	9.5	4.0	3.1
It is not clear what marketing is all about (n = 1 068)	1.3	2.8	11.2	21.4	57.9	5.3

source: authors' own research

Similarly to the case of Polish society, the general attitude to marketing is the variable which, to the highest degree, differentiates the views held by company managers, owners and employees. Those who have a positive attitude to marketing are more inclined to perceive the positive effects of marketing for customers and the need for the application of marketing activities in business practice. Also, this group is dominated by those who regard marketing to be a well-established area based on solid scientific foundations as well as an interesting career opportunity.

The respondents representing companies, to a larger extent than the general public, view marketing activities as harmful for consumers. A considerably higher percentage of the respondents expressing negative views on marketing believe that marketing unnecessarily raises price levels (44.1 percentage points above average levels in the sample). Marketing is more frequently viewed as an art of manipulating customers, and its role is reduced to advertising and promotional activities. Those who have a negative attitude to marketing also admit they do not have good understanding of marketing activities.

Table 4. Percentage of company representatives who give a positive answer ("absolutely yes" and "probably yes") to the questions related to marketing in the particular groups of respondents

Views on marketing	Total	Positive attitude to marketing	Negative attitude to marketing	Statistical significance
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion (n = 1 085)	38.2	35.7	61.7	+
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers (n = 1 077)	51.5	48.4	76.6	+
Marketing is indispensable to business operations (n = 1 097)	92.3	93.9	63.0	++
Marketing is a promising area in terms of career development (n = 1 079)	68.6	72.5	31.9	++

Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices (n = 1 079)	12.4	8.9	56.5	++
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales (n = 1 102)	91.4	91.8	87.0	-
Marketing activities result in a wider range of alternatives for customers (n = 1 081)	63.7	66.9	26.1	++
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs (n = 1 090)	59.2	62.9	26.1	++
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations (n = 1 087)	63.1	65.9	42.2	+
It is not clear what marketing is all about (n = 1 068)	4.1	2.2	28.3	++

Source: authors' own research.

The comparison of views on marketing in the particular respondent groups indicates that the investigated populations differ in their perception of marketing. Generally, the representatives of the general public as well as company staff identify marketing with different techniques of increasing sales and with something that is indispensable to business operations. The percentage of responses ("absolutely yes" and "probably yes") and the negative responses ("absolutely not" and "probably not") was at a comparable level; the responses were similar, and the differences amounted to several percentage points. In both cases the number of positive responses amounted to more than 90%, while the differences were below 3 percentage points.

Considerable consistency of views in the respondent groups concerns the identification of marketing with a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs and an area of activity based on solid scientific foundations. Nearly 2/3 of responses were positive (the difference amounted to 1.7 and 0.1 percentage points, respectively) with a greater number of contrary views held by the representatives of the general public.

The majority of respondents representing the general public and companies believe that marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development and that it results in a wider range of options for customers. Surprisingly, a very high percentage of respondents agree with this statement (approx. 75% of the general public and 65% of business practitioners), with the majority of positive views held by the general public (the difference was at the level of 5.4 and 11.8 percentage points). It clearly indicates that the representatives of Polish society do not have such critical views on marketing as is commonly believed, and that in some areas these views are more favourable than the ones held by company representatives.

The situation is totally different in the case of the two least popular statements: "marketing unnecessarily raises product prices", and "it is not clear what marketing is all about". Although in the views held by both the general public and company representatives the positive responses placed those statements at the bottom of ranking lists, the differences in the number of the same responses in the particular groups were considerable, amounting to 38.2 and 43.4 percentage points, respectively. Therefore, the majority of the general public gave positive responses, while the overwhelming majority of company representatives held the opposite views.

Also, there are considerable differences between company representatives and the general public with regard to the statements that marketing is an art of manipulating customers and that marketing is exclusively focused on advertising and promotion. In this case, the majority of positive responses were given by the general public (the difference amounted to 23.9 and 27 percentage points, respectively). Surprisingly, apart from such considerable differences, more than half of company representatives identify marketing with an art of manipulating customers with only one third of them holding the opposite view.

Table 5. Percentage of respondents who give answers ("absolutely yes" and "probably yes") and negative answers ("absolutely not" and "probably not") to the questions on marketing in the investigated populations

Views on marketing	Society		Company representatives	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	65.2	28.1	38.2	40.5
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	75.4	17.3	51.5	29.5
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	90.2	6.2	92.3	4.4
Marketing is an interesting area of terms of career development	74.0	14.8	68.6	9.3
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	50.6	33.7	12.4	64.5
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	94.4	3.7	91.4	2.7
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	75.5	14.9	63.7	16.7
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	60.9	27.3	59.2	21.2
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	63.2	24.5	63.1	13.5
It is not clear what marketing is all about	47.5	39.9	4.1	79.3

Source: authors' own research; the respective figures for the particular statements are presented in the above Tables.

3. The segmentation of the general public according to their views on the essence of marketing

In order to have a clear picture of the views of Polish society on the essence of marketing, the investigated Poles are divided into uniform groups. As a result of the analytical procedure, 3 groups are identified (marked A₁, A₂, A₃). Table 6 presents average responses in the particular groups, ranging from 1 (absolutely yes) to 5 (absolutely not), including neutral option 3 (neither yes nor no). The further part of the analysis presents the group profile which includes the respondents' social and demographic characteristics and their attitude to marketing.

Table 6. Characteristics of respondent groups representing the general public

Views on marketing	Population	A ₁	A ₂	A ₃
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	2.5	1.9	2.3	3.3
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	2.2	1.8	1.8	2.8
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	1.6	1.6	2.0	1.5
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	2.2	1.9	2.9	2.0
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	2.8	2.3	2.2	3.7
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	1.6	1.5	1.7	1.6
Marketing activities result in a wider range of alternatives for customers	2.2	1.9	2.9	2.0
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	2.5	1.9	3.8	2.4
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	2.5	2.4	3.1	2.1
It is not clear what marketing is all about	3.0	2.2	2.8	3.9

Source: authors' own research, n = 938.

Group A₁ – "Confused": This group is marked by a very high percentage (78.3%) of the respondents who admit that they do not understand marketing and who declare they do not know what it is all about. However, it does not translate into a negative attitude to marketing. It leads to some internal contradictions in the views held by this group – the majority of respondents agree with the subsequent statements, probably not being able to state a rational position.

Within this group 91.8% of the respondents have a positive attitude to marketing, which they regard to be indispensable to business operations (94%), an interesting career development opportunity (85.4%) and an area based on solid scientific foundations (67.6%). A great many respondents are in favour of reducing marketing to different techniques of increasing sales (98.1%), identifying it with advertising and promotion (87.1%). This group regards marketing to be an art of manipulating customers (87.9%) and an activity which leads to the unnecessary increase in prices (68.1%). Simultaneously, the majority of the respondents in this group agree with the statement that marketing is beneficial for customers (88.7%), that it offers more options for customers (89.3%) and that its philosophy is based on customer needs (88.5%).

The “Confused” account for 38.8% of the investigated population. This group is mainly composed of females (63%), people with limited professional background (68% of respondents have vocational training or secondary education with only 20% of them holding university degrees), and inhabitants of small towns (41% of them live in rural areas, and 10% in cities above 200,000 inhabitants).

Table 7. Views held by the general public – group A₁ (“the confused”) (percentage-wise).

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	27.8	59.3	5.5	6.3	1.1
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	42.6	45.3	5.2	5.8	1.1
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	52.5	41.5	3.3	1.7	1.1
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	33.5	51.9	10.4	3.0	1.1
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	18.1	50.0	14.6	15.1	2.2
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company’s volume of sales	57.1	40.9	1.1	0.6	0.3
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	31.3	58.0	5.8	3.6	1.4
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	28.3	60.2	7.1	4.1	0.3
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	15.1	52.5	9.9	20.1	2.5
It is not clear what marketing is all about	17.6	60.7	10.2	9.9	1.7

Source: authors’ own research, n = 364.

Group A₂ – "Skeptics": Unlike the other two groups, this one has the most critical attitude to marketing, although most of the respondents (65.5%) declare a positive attitude. The group includes most of the representatives of the entire population (64.6%) who have a negative attitude to marketing.

The skepticism manifests itself in the fact that most respondents believe that marketing is not focused on customer needs (74.6%), they blame marketing for higher prices (73.7%), and only 48.7% of the respondents believe that marketing offers a wider range of options for customers. Also, as compared with the other groups, fewer respondents regard marketing to be indispensable to business operations (81.9%) or an interesting career opportunity (50.4%).

Most of the "Skeptics", similarly to the entire investigated population, identify marketing with advertising and promotion (73.7%), different techniques of increasing sales (92.7%) and an art of manipulating customers (87.9%). A relatively large number of respondents do not consider marketing to be an area based on solid scientific foundations (46.1%). Nearly half of the respondents (45.3%) admit that they do not understand the concept of marketing.

The "Skeptics" account for 24.7% of the investigated population. The group includes people whose social and demographic characteristics correspond to the entire population of Poles.

Table 8. Views held by the general public - group A₂ ("Skeptics") (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	16.4	57.3	5.6	18.1	2.6
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	41.0	47.0	3.9	6.0	2.2
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	32.3	49.6	3.9	10.3	3.9
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	10.3	40.1	11.6	27.2	10.8
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	26.3	47.4	11.2	12.9	2.2
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	46.6	46.1	1.7	4.7	0.9
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	4.3	44.4	15.5	28.0	7.8
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	0.4	14.2	10.8	56.0	18.5

Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	6.5	32.8	14.7	34.9	11.2
It is not clear what marketing is all about	14.7	30.6	18.1	28.9	7.8

Źródło: Badania własne, n = 232.

Group A₃ – "Supporters": They are convinced that marketing activities are beneficial both for companies and customers. Most of the respondents, to a larger extent than in the other groups, (94.2%) declare a positive attitude to marketing which, they believe, is indispensable to business operations (94.7%), being an interesting career opportunity (80.1%). Similarly to the other groups, marketing is associated with different techniques of increasing sales (92.7%). At the same time, 89.8% of the respondents believe that marketing is beneficial for consumers. The statement that marketing considers all customer needs is approved by 66.4%, while 82.5% of the respondents believe that marketing offers more options to consumers.

This attitude is demonstrated by the highest percentage of the respondents who declare good understanding of marketing (as many as 73.7% of the respondents do not agree with the statement that "it is not clear what marketing is all about"). Most of the respondents do not identify marketing with advertising and promotion (57%), and they do not blame marketing for higher product prices (68.4%). Simultaneously, the overwhelming majority of the respondents regard marketing to be an area of knowledge based on solid scientific foundations (79.5%).

The "Supporters" account for 36.5% of the investigated population. The respondents are young people (51% are below the age of 40), better educated (42% of them have university degrees), and many of them are inhabitants of larger towns (29% of them live in cities with a population above 100,000). This group includes 54% of university students and 46% of entrepreneurs.

Table 9. Views on marketing held by the general public - group A₃ ("Supporters") (percentage-wise).

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	6.7	28.4	7.9	43.6	13.5
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	12.3	40.4	12.0	26.6	8.8
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	62.9	31.9	1.8	2.9	0.6
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career	32.2	48.0	9.1	8.2	2.6

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Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	2.6	13.5	15.5	50.9	17.5
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	50.6	42.1	1.5	3.8	2.1
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	26.6	55.9	8.2	7.6	1.8
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	19.6	46.8	15.5	14.6	3.5
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	27.8	51.8	8.2	10.2	2.1
It is not clear what marketing is all about	1.5	14.0	10.8	42.7	31.0

Source: authors' own research, n = 342.

4. The segmentation of company representatives according to their views on marketing

The views on marketing held by company representatives are quite diversified. The application of the analytical procedures leads to identifying 4 groups representing similar views. In the further parts of this paper, these groups are referred to as B₁, B₂, B₃ and B₄. Table 10 presents average responses of the particular groups ranging from 1 (absolutely yes) to 5 (absolutely not) including neutral option 3 (neither yes nor no). The further analysis presents group profiles based on the respondents' characteristics and their views on marketing.

Table 10. The characteristics of the particular respondent groups – company representatives

Views on marketing	Population	B ₁	B ₂	B ₃	B ₄
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	3.2	4.2	2.2	4.2	2.2
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	2.8	4.0	2.3	2.9	1.8
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	1.5	1.2	1.3	1.8	1.9
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	2.1	1.7	1.9	2.4	2.8
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	3.8	4.5	3.9	3.9	2.7
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company' volume of sales	1.7	1.8	1.5	1.7	1.7
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	2.3	1.8	2.0	2.9	3.3
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	2.4	1.4	2.0	3.1	3.9
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	2.3	1.7	2.1	2.6	3.2

It is not clear what marketing is all about	4.4	4.8	4.4	4.5	3.7
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Source: authors' own research, n = 874.

Group B₁ – "Believers": The respondents are characterised by their belief in the positive effects of marketing and the rejection of negative views on marketing. Only 0.4% of the respondents do not understand what marketing is all about.

Almost all the respondents (99.2%) declare a positive attitude to marketing (72.3% - absolutely yes, 26.9% - probably yes), being convinced that it is beneficial for customers (93%). Marketing is viewed as an area focused on customer needs (94.2%), offering more options for customers (85.6%), and indispensable to business operations (96.9%). The majority of respondents regard marketing to be an interesting career opportunity (86.4%) and an area based on solid scientific foundations (90.3%).

This group strongly rejects the statement that marketing is an art of manipulating customers (70%) and that it may be identified with advertising and promotion (77.4%). The respondents are aware of the fact that marketing represents different techniques of increasing sales (85.2%), but they do not agree that it unnecessarily raises product prices (92.6%).

The "Believers" account for 29.4% of the investigated population. Many of them represent "marketing" departments (44%), holding economics degrees (44%). This segment includes the representatives of medium-sized and large companies (20%) as well as the companies which render more advanced marketing services (29% of the respondents represent dedicated marketing units, and 14% of them have sales units which also carry out marketing activities).

Table 11. Views on marketing held by companies - group B₁ ("Believers") (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	1.2	4.3	17.1	24.9	52.5
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	0.8	10.5	18.7	26.9	43.2
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	82.9	14.0	0.8	0.0	2.3
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	49.4	37.0	12.5	0.8	0.4
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	0.4	0.0	7.0	30.4	62.3
Marketing represents different techniques of	42.8	42.4	8.6	4.3	2.0

increasing the company's volume of sales					
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	42.8	42.8	10.9	3.1	0.4
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	63.0	31.1	5.5	0.0	0.4
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	43.6	46.7	8.6	1.2	0.0
It is not clear what marketing is all about	0.4	0.0	2.7	16.7	80.2

Source: authors' own research, n = 257.

Grupa B₂ – "Selective": This group has a narrow, tool-based approach to marketing, which sometimes leads to apparently contradictory opinions. Marketing is regarded to be indispensable to business operations (97.9%), but simultaneously identified with the techniques of increasing sales (85.2%). The respondents identify marketing with advertising and promotion (68.8%) and an art of manipulating customers (67.7%), but at the same time they regard it to be beneficial for customers (82.2%). The respondents in this group also view marketing as a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs (74.5%) and the activity which offers a wider range of options for customers (80.5%).

Generally, "The Selective" declare a positive attitude to marketing (93.9%). The majority of the respondents regard marketing to be an interesting area in terms of career development (82.6%) as well as an area based on solid scientific foundations (72.3%).

This group accounts for 32.3% of the investigated population. The respondents represent marketing departments (25%) and sales (20%), with only 28% of them holding economics degrees.

Table 12. Views on marketing held by group B₂ ("Selective") (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	13.8	55.0	26.6	4.3	0.4
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	18.8	48.9	20.2	9.9	2.1
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	72.7	25.2	0.7	0.0	1.4
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	35.8	46.8	13.8	2.8	0.7
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	1.4	6.4	23.4	42.2	26.6
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	51.1	45.4	2.8	0.7	0.0

Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	30.9	49.7	14.2	4.3	1.1
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	29.4	45.0	18.4	6.7	0.4
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	24.5	47.9	21.6	4.6	1.4
It is not clear what marketing is all about	0.7	2.5	12.4	24.8	59.6

Source: authors' own research, n = 282.

Group B₃ – "Moderate": This group represents a balance between the positive and negative assessments of the effects of marketing on customers, and a higher percentage of respondents, as compared with the other groups, who choose more neutral answers. Comparable numbers of respondents regard marketing to be something that offers more options for customers (37.6% in favour, 30.9% against) and a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs (29.7% in favour, 37% against). Comparable figures concern the statement that marketing is an art of manipulating customers (45.5% in favour, 31.5% against).

Apart from the balanced assessment of the impact of marketing, the respondents declare a positive attitude to marketing (90.9%) and believe it is beneficial for customers (65.5%). Marketing is associated with techniques of increasing sales (89.1%), but very few respondents reduce the role of marketing to advertising and promotion (0.6%). It is regarded to be indispensable to business operations (89.1%), an interesting career opportunity (58.8%) and an area based on solid scientific foundations (50.3%).

The "Moderate" account for 18.9% of the investigated population. The group includes fewer people professionally engaged in marketing or sales (31% - marketing departments, 8% - sales) with a large number of respondents with economics degrees (38%).

Table 13. Views on marketing held by group B₃ ("Moderate") (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	0.0	0.6	20.6	35.2	43.6
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	7.9	37.6	23.0	24.2	7.3
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	45.5	43.6	2.4	1.2	7.3
Marketing is an interesting area in terms of career development	18.8	40.0	25.5	10.3	5.5
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	0.6	6.1	24.2	37.6	31.5

Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	44.2	44.9	9.1	0.0	1.8
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	7.3	30.3	31.5	25.5	5.5
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	4.2	25.5	33.3	29.1	7.9
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	10.3	40.0	32.1	15.2	2.4
It is not clear what marketing is all about	0.0	1.2	12.7	21.2	64.9

Source: authors' own research, n = 165.

Group B₄ – "Critics": This group is characterised by the least positive views on marketing activities with many respondents questioning their positive impact on customers. Most respondents do not agree with the statement that marketing is focused on customer needs (65.3%), identifying it with an art of manipulating customers (88.8%). A number of respondents believe that marketing activities do not result in a wider range of options for customers (44.1%), putting the blame on marketing for higher product prices (43.5%). The majority of respondents reduce the role of marketing to advertising and promotion (69.4%), questioning the solid scientific foundations of this area of activity (40.6%).

Nevertheless, marketing is viewed as indispensable to business operations (80%) and a factor which increases the volume of sales (88.2%). A group of respondents, however, regard marketing to be beneficial for customers (38.5%) as well as an interesting career opportunity (39.4%). One out of seven respondents (14.7%) admits that he/she does not understand the role of marketing.

The "Critics" account for 19.5% of the population of company representatives. Most of the respondents are not engaged in marketing and sales activities (10% and 17%, respectively), and only few of them have economics degrees (16%). Most of the respondents are company owners (71%), especially representing smaller companies (67%).

Table 14. Views on marketing held by group B₄ ("Critics") (percentage-wise)

Views on marketing	Absolutely yes	Probably yes	Neither yes nor no	Probably not	Absolutely not
Marketing is really the same thing as advertising and promotion	20.0	49.4	18.8	9.4	2.4
Marketing is an art of manipulating customers	35.3	53.5	8.8	1.8	0.6
Marketing is indispensable to business operations	44.1	35.9	11.8	2.9	5.3

Marketing is an interesting area in terms career development	8.2	31.2	34.7	20.6	5.3
Marketing unnecessarily raises product prices	14.7	28.8	34.1	17.7	4.7
Marketing represents different techniques of increasing the company's volume of sales	44.1	44.1	7.7	3.5	0.6
Marketing activities result in a wider range of options for customers	3.5	26.5	25.9	28.8	15.3
Marketing is a corporate philosophy focused on customer needs	0.0	8.8	25.9	30.0	35.3
Marketing is an area based on solid scientific foundations	7.1	23.5	28.8	25.3	15.3
It is not clear what marketing is all about	4.7	10.0	26.5	25.9	32.9

Source: authors' own research, n = 170.

5. Concluding remarks

Obviously, the initial identification of the image of marketing as an area of corporate activities does not give a full picture of the situation, but it provides a number of interesting insights into the subject in question. Following two decades after Poland's entry into a free market economy marketing, as viewed by marketers and company managers, is undoubtedly a component of business activities focused on increasing the volume of sales. The perceived image is usually consistent with the definition of the essence of marketing, identifying it with the concern with customers and their needs. However, the understanding of marketing is frequently reduced to the most visible activities and tools – advertising and sales promotions.

At the same time, half of the representatives of Polish society admit they have no good understanding of the concept of marketing, identifying it with the most visible indications of marketing activities aimed to increase sales – advertising and sales promotions. Many of the surveyed opinions seem to be based on personal feelings and convictions rather than on the knowledge of the subject. Therefore, a great many Poles identify marketing with an art of manipulating customers.

The segmentation of the two groups demonstrates the profiles and quantitative proportions of the relatively uniform respondent sub-groups. The research study indicates that marketing has been enrooted in the social awareness and business practice over the two decades of a free market economy. The group of the “Confused” still accounts for nearly 40% of the general public, but it may hardly be expected to be reduced to zero. More importantly, the number of the representatives of the general public in Poland who have a positive view on marketing considerably exceeds (by 11.3 percentage points) the number of those who hold skeptical or negative views.

On the other hand, the image of marketing among company representatives is less optimistic. It is true that skeptical views account for less than 20%, but the percentage of "Selective" opinions is still high. Such views reduce or identify the role of marketing to advertising or sales promotions. Considering the fact that this group includes nearly 1/3 of the investigated company representatives, it should be concluded that disseminating marketing knowledge among managerial staff remains to be an educational challenge.