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Ignore the marketing concept at your peril

About the last thing marketing practitioners need is another academic pontificating that the marketing concept is dead (almost) ("The 'marketing concept' RIP," Karl Moore's FourThought column, July 17/24, p. 8).

It's true that in a few instances product innovations such as the Sony Walkman succeed where consumer research would indicate failure. This isn't news. Sometimes consumers have to experience the solution to recognize that it has value for them. That's what makes such product innovations visionary and extremely rare.

But this does not refute or nullify the marketing concept. In general, the marketing concept as put forward by Peter Drucker asserts the universal truth that "to satisfy the customer is the mission and purpose of every business." Businesses that can't satisfy consumer values will fail. The marketing concept holds that the imperative of management is to get their organizations intensely focused on understanding and delivering consumer value. The case of Sony Walkman demonstrates the timeless validity of the marketing concept. It doesn't refute it. The Walkman delivered an experience consumers valued and created billions of dollars of wealth.

The marketing concept says nothing about appropriate and inappropriate methodologies for discovering and delivering value to consumers.

Professor Moore's article really has more to do with the inherent dangers of consumer research and almost nothing to do with the obsolescence of the marketing concept.

The marketing concept needs to be discovered by marketing practitioners of the 21st century, not abandoned as a relic of the past.

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