

Legacy of Mid-20th Century Marketing Scholars

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Now that the discussion has been extended to cover the mid-20th century, I ask: Why not list key people's findings (or principles, laws, discoveries or procedures)? These findings could then be judged on criteria such as importance, quality of evidence, effect on practice, and lasting value. An expert panel of academicians and practitioners could rate each finding without knowing the source.

To test the importance of each finding, one could provide Group 1 with a description of the finding and Group 2 with something irrelevant (for example, instructions on how to care for rose bushes). Then give all subjects important problems to solve. When I did similar studies, I found that some popular "findings" in marketing have been based on poor evidence and have had detrimental effects on decision-making (e.g., experience curve, PIMS, and some of Porter's advice). I believe this would also apply to the mid-century or late-century advice on marketing planning; those using such advice would develop poorer plans . . . and they would also do worse in caring for roses.

Studies of historical contributions would help us honor those who have made useful and important findings. More importantly, it would make important findings more accessible to educators and practitioners.

The study should start with a comprehensive list of contributors. Some of my favorite academicians were not mentioned, perhaps, because they did not die soon enough to make the list (e.g., Bob Ferber, Seymour Sudman, and Julian Simon). But to make this all happen, we need a leader . . . so I nominate Stan Shapiro. Following that, we could look for volunteers to act as advocates for historical figures.