

# Introduction: Studying Marketing

I wouldn't necessarily say that marketing has always fascinated me, and it's quite possible that I will get bored with it eventually and move on to some other field of human endeavour—it wouldn't be the first time. But for the past twenty years or more I have been involved in marketing one way or another.

I have sold stuff, run businesses, been a consultant, been a hands-on marketer for various companies, and latterly I have been teaching the stuff. Marketing is still fascinating, because essentially it's about people, and it brings in so many aspects of people's lives because it's about how we meet our needs.

When I first started to teach marketing I was painfully aware of how little I knew about the theoretical aspects of the subject. As an undergraduate doing a business degree, I found that my marketing lecturers were so laid back that they were somnolent and we, as the students, had absolutely no idea what marketing was or what it could do for us. Luckily, the gentlemen in question did not hold our lack of knowledge against us at exam time and we all passed without too much difficulty, although I have to say my profound ignorance of marketing turned round and bit me once I actually went out and got a job. I knew virtually nothing.

As an academic, with some years experience in the job and with a suitable string of publications, I still have twinges about how much I don't know about the subject. At conferences everyone seems to know so much more than I do, and to have actually read all the papers, and to understand long words better than I do. Maybe that's a feature of conferences, of course, but I think it's also a general problem with knowledge—the more you know, the more you realize how much more there is to learn. Luckily, learning is like eating peanuts—easy to start, but difficult to stop.

So it is with this book. This is not a textbook as such, it will not provide you with everything you need to pass a course in

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marketing. There are plenty of those around. In fact, there are several of mine out there which I would really like you to buy. What this book is intended to do is give you some of my favourite ideas (mine and other people's) on the study of the phenomenon of marketing, and to point out some of the pitfalls of believing everything you read. It is also intended to be the first peanut in the knowledge-nibbling process.

If this were a textbook, I would now be wishing you good luck with your studies. Since it isn't, I would like to express the hope that you enjoy the book: see it as a bit of light relief. The drawback of formal education is that it takes all the fun out of learning—luckily, my two marketing lecturers ensured that I had no formal learning of marketing, so like a road sweeper I have picked it up as I went along, and consequently I learned it for fun. I recommend you to do the same.