

1.5: Evolution of the Marketing Concept

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to

- Describe the production concept.
- Define the product concept.
- Discuss the selling concept.
- Explain the marketing concept.
- Summarize the societal marketing concept and its features.

The Evolution of Marketing

So now you've gotten the bird's-eye view of marketing as a practice, and you now know what marketing is. However, let's take a trip back through time to look at the evolution of marketing practices and how many of today's marketing strategies came to be. As you can see from Figure 1.9, and to use an old TV commercial tagline, you've come a long way, baby!

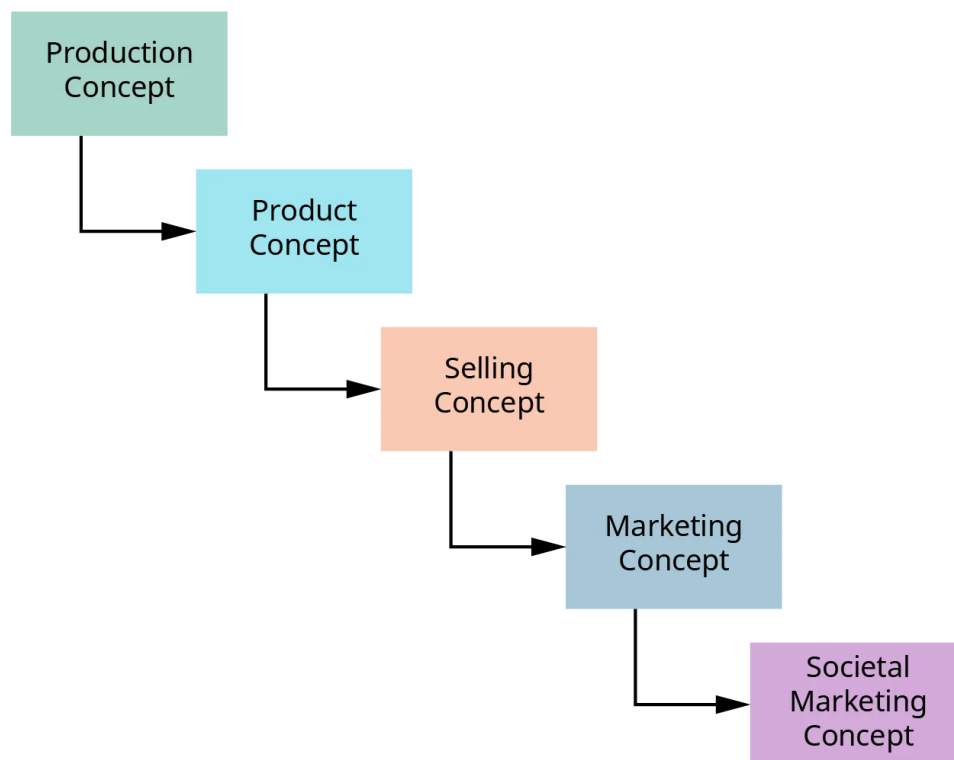


Figure 1.9 Evolution of Marketing (CC BY 4.0; Rice University & OpenStax)

The Production Concept

To understand the production concept, it's important first to understand the history of technology and mass production. Spurred on by using steam power, the Industrial Revolution began in the United States by the middle of the 19th century. Although much of the population was still employed in agriculture, the expansion of commerce and industry drew millions of factory workers into cities and towns. Suddenly, an abundance of manufactured goods was available to households at a rate never experienced before.

The production concept assumed that consumers were mostly interested in product availability and price, not necessarily product features. As a result, companies concentrated on high production, low costs, and mass distribution. In other words, to use the oft-used line from the movie *Field of Dreams*, "If you build it, they will come." People were so hungry for mass-produced goods that companies didn't have to do a lot of sales or marketing. The production concept is thought to have lasted from just after the Civil War (1861–1865) until the 1920s (OpExWorks Solutions, 2022). For example, inventor Samuel Colt's company began mass-

producing revolvers in 1835. The Waltham Watch Company (founded in 1850 in Waltham, MA) was the first to use division of labor to mass-produce watches and clocks.

The Product Concept

From the 1920s until the 1950s, the product concept dominated. With product availability a thing of the past, consumers began to favor products that offered quality, performance, and/or innovative features. As a result, companies concentrated on making superior products and improving them over time. One problem with this type of thinking is that marketers may fall in love with a product (known as “marketing myopia”) and may not realize what the market truly wants or needs. Consider how railroad marketers overlooked the growing competition from airlines, buses, and automobiles. In his book *Marketing Myopia*, author Theodore Levitt writes, “The railroads did not stop growing because the need for passenger and freight transportation declined. That grew. The railroads are in trouble today not because that need was filled by others (cars, trucks, airplanes and even telephones) but because it was not filled by the railroads themselves. They let others take customers away from them because they assumed themselves to be in the railroad business rather than in the transportation business” (Levitt, 2008).

Link to Learning: The Reckoning

When American cars developed a reputation for not being reliable, this opened an opportunity for Toyota and other Japanese exporters in the late 1960s and 1970s. Learn more about this issue from David Halberstam’s 1986 book *The Reckoning*. Read the *New York Times* 1986 review of this book.

The Sales Concept

By the 1950s, mass production had become the norm rather than the exception. Competition had increased over the years, and there was little unfulfilled demand in the marketplace. Marketing evolved from simply producing products that customers wanted to trying to persuade customers to buy through advertising and personal selling. The basic premise of the sales concept was that consumers and businesses needed to be “coaxed” into buying, and companies aimed to sell what they made rather than make what consumers wanted.

The Marketing Concept

The marketing concept was built on the premise that an organization will achieve its goals when it satisfies the needs and wants of the consumer. As a result, firms began to focus on customer needs *before* developing products rather than developing products and then trying to “sell” them to consumers. The marketing concept was also the start of relationship marketing—fostering long-term relationships with customers to ensure repeat sales and achieve stable relationships and reduced costs.

The Societal Marketing Concept

In a nutshell, the societal marketing concept is simple. Companies make good marketing decisions by considering not only consumers’ wants and needs but also the balance between those wants and needs, the company’s capabilities, and society’s long-term interests. The concept emphasizes the social responsibilities that companies bear. This means meeting consumers’ and businesses’ current needs while simultaneously being aware of the environmental impact of marketing decisions on future generations’ ability to meet their needs (iEduNote, 2021).

Knowledge Check

It’s time to check your knowledge of the concepts presented in this section. Refer to the Answer Key at the end of the book for feedback.

1.

The product concept focuses on _____.

- a. the quality of the product a company intends to sell
- b. the operations of manufacturing the product a company intends to sell
- c. the selling strategies a company will use to sell the product
- d. the needs of the customer

2.

Which marketing era or concept is most closely related to sustainability and environmental consciousness?

- a. Production concept
- b. Marketing concept
- c. Societal marketing concept
- d. Sales concept

3.

During which marketing era concept would companies not only produce products but also try to persuade customers through advertising and personal selling to purchase those products?

- a. Production concept
- b. Product concept
- c. Selling concept
- d. Marketing concept

4.

Which of the following accurately represents the evolution of marketing?

- a. Production, product, sales, marketing, societal
- b. Product, sales, production, marketing, societal
- c. Marketing, production, sales, societal, product
- d. Societal, production, sales, marketing, product

5.

During the societal marketing concept, _____.

- a. customers' wants and needs were first identified as essential
- b. trustfulness, honesty, and transparency became the most important
- c. promotional efforts to move inventory were essential
- d. the customer was the focus

This page titled [1.5: Evolution of the Marketing Concept](#) is shared under a [CC BY 4.0](#) license and was authored, remixed, and/or curated by [Elisabeth Dellegrazie](#) via [source content](#) that was edited to the style and standards of the LibreTexts platform.

- [1.4: Evolution of the Marketing Concept](#) by [OpenStax](#) is licensed [CC BY 4.0](#). Original source: <https://openstax.org/details/books/principles-marketing>.