

EXPANDED ABSTRACT

An approach to consequences of market orientation in the Basque Social Economy fostering public service

That marketing is a social process and not only as a series of entrepreneurial activities (Cervera, 1999) is something beyond dispute. In this regard, Kotler and Levy (1969) advocated the expansion of marketing beyond what was considered to be traditional because all organizations develop one product or another which is then offered to consumers via a certain type of technique with a view to ensuring its acceptance. This gave rise to the debate over the limits of the said application (Kotler, 1972; Hunt, 1976; Trustum, 1989) proposing conceptual models with this application and supporting the application of new fields (Shapiro, 1973).

Even when for some authors rejected the extension of marketing limits warning of the risks involved in applying it to areas different from those subject to market laws (Carman, 1973; Bartels, 1974; Luck, 1974; Foxall, 1989; Howe, 1990), some other authors pointed out that if the intention was to solve new marketing problems originating from public and private policies (Alderson and Cox; 1948) "a framework which provides a better perspective than that found in the literature" would be necessary, that is, they were in favour of broadening the scope of the application of marketing and proceeded with its adaptation in order to understand and analyse the problems present in all types of situations (Vázquez, 2004).

The search following the Marketing Theory for a suitable framework regarding the question raised, led to the acceptance of a new exchange model (Munuera, 1992). Initially proposed by Alderson (1965) with subsequent additions, it identified exchange as the central element of marketing. In this regard, Kotler (1972) and Bagozzi (1975 and 1979) endorse the application of marketing wherever there exists an exchange and whatever its nature.

However, subsequent reviews criticised exchange as a paradigm of the Marketing Theory based on the unclear definition of exchange itself. Other criticisms were aimed at the risk of overextending what are considered to be exchanges as the subject of a marketing study, given that "not all exchanges are marketing exchanges" (Arndt, 1978) since it is recognised that there exists a non-economic field of social activity where personal interest or usefulness must not be regarded as its goals.

The whole progressive process regarding the extension of the scope of marketing entailed the move from the field of business to that of non-profit organizations, to later consider exchanges that do not imply any monetary consideration and, finally, to cease constraining its application in the customer, consumer and users' markets, and give it a leading role in the substantiation of any type of exchange which might satisfy any of the multiple goals set by various individuals and organisations or entities (Vázquez, 2004).

Bagozzi's proposal (1975) that marketing covers the activities related with exchange and the phenomena that give rise to it together with its repercussions has been widely accepted in the absence of a formal structure regarding the Theory of Exchange. As Hunt (1976) points out, the scope and extent of marketing is unquestionable, expanding, as it is, towards a growing number of phenomena and applications in a social process or, as Leonard (1980) pointed out, a process which is the result of the necessary adaptation to changes in society. So it was that in the late 1990s, after the period from 1980 to 1990, when marketing was applied from a product-centred perspective, the Public Administration centred on the citizens, converting them into the focal point of all activities and concentrating on their wishes, developing services designed to answer their needs and studying their degree of satisfaction (Bouzas-Lorenzo, 2010).

Considering all above the aim of this paper is to analyse the public service orientation of the state interventions, focusing in the lowest unit of the Social Economy. To achieve this objective, this research has focused on a basic unit of the Basque Country's public action for the development of the Social Economy. This is the institutional body which is concerned with the development of the Basque Social Economy, which it provides with public services.

As far as methodology is concerned, first of all, the measuring instruments of the various concepts/dimensions, existing scales previously validated by other authors have been adopted, adapting, where applicable, items of the field of study. The public service orientation has been measured on the basis of the scales created and validated by Cervera (1999a) and Cervera et al (1999b) who use 5 point Likert scales in which items in reverse are included to avoid errors of bias in the responses or lack of consent, or acquiescence bias or bias towards assent. However, the surveys, apart from those items that make up the aforementioned scales, have incorporated the items which, for reasons of improvement in reliability, were left out of the suggested public service orientation model together with one item or another that were considered to be of interest.

Apart from this, a qualitative study was carried out with a view to bestowing a higher value on the quantitative data, because qualitative information provides a justification for the aforementioned data (Fernández, 1999). Therefore, a total of 9 semi-structured interviews were conducted to a specific group of nine key informants. Thus, using the two samples as a whole and bearing in mind the need to consider the dimensions of performance/achievement/consequences (Jaworski and Kohli, 1996) and the

analysis carried out by Cervera (1998) separately, the number of dimensions conceptualised within the consequences was verified by means of a principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation

When it comes to the main findings, it can be seen from the analysis of the consequences of the public service orientation of the Directorate for Social Economy that all the dimensions regarded as a consequence were valued very positively except for the participation of the public with a poor valuation, since, although the public participates, it does so through the representative organisations. Furthermore, satisfaction is closely related with the duration of the provision of the service, which, in turn, is the characteristic or attribute of the service that generates the most controversy and raises the question of the need for a different way of providing services. The other two characteristics or attributes of the services are closely related with the important role of the organisation's technical staff. Therefore, although we are not able to establish a relationship with causality, we can affirm that the basic unit of public action for the development of the Social Economy, which has a high level of public service orientation, achieves a good performance as far as satisfaction, staff, service and participation are concerned.

Apart from this, taking into account that market orientation can vary between different levels of the same organisation and that most, if not all, of the studies carried out regarding public service orientation have centred on the institutional sphere or hierarchy level of strategic decisions, this work has concentrated on the analysis of public service orientation in a basic unit of public action within a Government, that is, at a hierarchical level of the tactical and operational area of public action. Thus, the main aim of the work was to analyse public service orientation in the field of the public sector of the basic unit of public action regarding the development of the Basque Social Economy. Therefore, it is in the area of the basic units of public action where the contributions of this study are centred.

Finally, it must be pointed out that this research should not be considered a casual research, and that no casual relation is confirmed in this study.

KEYWORDS: Market orientation, public marketing, public management, basic units of public action.