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THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DEFINITION OF BEHAVIOURAL MARKETING IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE. AN ATTEMPT AT INTERNATIONAL CONFIRMATION



*...we only know the manifestations of things,
the thing in itself is unknowable...*
[Immanuel Kant]

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The aim of the article is to discuss the definition of behavioural marketing, an attempt to conceptualise and confirm it in the international dimension. Such a goal is an open scientific problem, arising from the lack of a precise definition of the category under study, or, in other words, the definition of behavioural marketing by a diverse set of elements of the definiens.

The Material and Methods Section: The article is based on literature studies of the narrative review and own expert research conducted in 10 countries in a group of professors, specialists in marketing, economics and management (N = 56). The expert method adopted in this study allows for the confirmation of the elements of the definition of behavioural marketing in the sense used in the social sciences.

Results: The results of the study allow us to determine differentiated assessments of the key characteristics appearing in the definitions of behavioural marketing. The results of the study allow us to make differentiated assessments of the main characteristics appearing in the definitions of behavioural marketing.

Conclusions: The research is a recommendation and encouragement to continue international research in a broader, quantitative nature.

KEYWORDS: *behavioural marketing, definition, confirmation, qualitative research, international survey.*

DEFINITION – ESSENCE AND MEANING IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE

A definition constitutes a fundamental concept in the process of scientific cognition, description, and explanation of the world. It is essential for the establishment, and justification of scientific theory. This approach is based on the need for the researcher's objectivity, precision of language and a specific methodology – instruments, tools and procedures for conducting scientific research. The latter has various dimensions – from epistemology and general methodology of science, previously treated as a philosophy of science (Heller, 2009) to specific methodologies appropriate for particular fields and disciplines of science (e.g. Suppe, 1998).

In the process of formulating a scientific theory, definition plays a foundational role (see, e.g., Rosenberg, McIntyre, 2020; Wacker, 1998, pp. 361-385; Goździewski, 2024, pp. 356-374). This stems from its essential role in science. A definition possesses an autotelic value per se, contributing to the precision of formulated theories and paradigms (Popper, 2002). Additionally, it holds an instrumental value. This value is combined with the conceptualization and operationalization of the research process. The autotelic value determines the importance of definitions for identifying the content of a concept, creating the name of things and formulating features describing them, but also for creating the right platform for scientists to communicate (Tomaszczyk, 2017, pp. 383-393). The definition is therefore the starting point in the process of an unbiased, scientific view of the world. It enables the construction of a theoretical framework and the definition of research methods through which it is possible to obtain objective knowledge about the world, its structure and natural systems, social and economic systems.

Conversely, the instrumental function of the definition is related to the need for conceptualisation, unambiguous determination of the content of concepts, assumptions of the theory or research project. Conceptualisation is a sine qua non condition for undertaking scientific research (Ajdukiewicz, 1975, pp. 19-39). In this context, it is worth quoting the words of T. Kotarbiński (2003), contained in a special monograph on the methodology of the sciences: this book is to *help in becoming aware of the meanings of words necessary when talking about reality and getting to know it...* (p. 8). Such a definition of the essence of the definition, expressing the meaning of words necessary to talk about reality and to learn about it, is commonly referred to in contemporary science.

Epistemology emphasises the postulate of precision of definitions – the accuracy and unambiguity (exclusivity and separability) of theories and positions, definitions and elements of definiens, their justifications, models of their verification, or in K. Popper's approach – referring to exact sciences – falsification and in part of confirmation (Popper, 2002), also Sułkowski, 2005). The lack of precision may constitute, among other factors, an expression of *conceptual and terminological anarchy*, as S. Ossowski writes (2001, p. 113). This is an important thesis, and it also applies to a large extent to management sciences. It is known that the terminology in this discipline of science

still *resembles a jungle of concepts and categories* (Sudoł, 2014, pp. 11-36). An exemplification of the problem of the precision of definitions can be provided by the definition of a *paradigm*. T. Kuhn (2001) defines this category 21 times differently (M. Masterman, 1970, (in:) Heller, 2009, p. 77).

The classic form of the definition of the world of science is due to Aristotle (Fetzer, 1991, p. 3). A classical definition captures the essence and characteristics of a thing, which corresponds to a certain meaning on the principle of *per genus et differentia specifica* (Kotarbiński, 2003, p. 6). A definition combines the defined element (*definiendum*) with defining elements (*definiens*), and the latter are abstracted from the set of all possible designation of the name through genus and species difference. The mutual relations of these elements determine the relations of the sign. In addition to classical definitions, there are non-classical definitions. These include enumerative, ostensive and contextual definitions. It is important to divide into real definitions, on the one hand, and nominal definitions, on the other. This is the classification proposed by C.G. Hempel, and its significance has stood the test of time (Fetzer, 1991, p. 4). J. Cargile (1991, p. 21) refers to this division when he writes: *Defining is either giving the meaning of words or other linguistic things, which is called nominal definition or clarifying a given meaning, which is a proposition or property or relation, by showing it to be a compound of other propositions or properties or relations, which is called real definition*. The former, real definitions, refer to the characteristics of things, and the second, nominal definitions are related to the naming of new words, categories, situations. What is important from the point of view of the purpose of the article is that nominal definitions can be an expression of conventions between the participants of the communication process. This is what the methodology of the research presented in the article refers to.

An important issue is related to the determination of the features and determinants of the *correct definition*, the right set of elements of the *definiens* and their mutual relations to the *definiendum*. R. Sorensen (1991, pp. 70-71) shows these features in the context of research methodology, the method of analysis and specific positions of the philosophy of science, as well as filling gaps in knowledge and creating theories. With reference to the literature, from the point of view of the philosophy of science, the desiderata of definitions

recognizes the precision of the elements of the definiens, their coherence and testability, as fundamental. These desiderata correspond to the basic conditions of the correctness of definitions – the adequacy of the elements of the definiens to the set of referents of the defined concept, the proper area of reception of the definiens (broad definition versus narrow definition). Such characteristics allow us to avoid mistakes in creating definitions of categories, such as *idem per idem*, *ignotum per ignotum* and *circulus in definiendo* (Ajdukiewicz, 1975, p. 65-80).

In the conclusion of the considerations on the essence of the definition, it is worth referring to S. Elgin (2022, p. 3019), who writes: *But in metaphysics alone definition plays not only this external role—as something that characterizes theories or accounts under consideration—but also an internal role: as an object worthy of investigation itself*. Such an *object worthy of investigation itself* is a construction of the definition of behavioural marketing and an attempt at international confirmation of the elements of definiens.

BEHAVIOURAL PERSPECTIVE IN MARKETING – PREMISES AND RESULTS OF A NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW

The premises for the development of behaviourism in marketing are related to behavioural economics. Economic theory has incorporated behavioural elements into its studies and research under the influence of the achievements and results of research in behavioural psychology, especially the experimental research of D. Kahneman and A. Tversky (2001) on human behaviour. Their research allowed for the identification of other than economic (financial) market determinants of consumer behaviour. Among these factors, psychological factors have been shown to play an important role. Research integrating psychology and economics has challenged the existing models of classical economics, including the fundamental assumption about the rationality of economic subjects: the enterprise and the consumer. The models of classical and neoclassical economics were based on the *homo economicus* model – the assumption of the rationality of the consumer's purchasing decisions and the function of the goal – the maximization of economic values by

the enterprise. The assumption of rationality of market agents was associated with the creation of models of market development and equilibrium (V. Pareto, K.J. Arrow and G. Debreu), based on formalised premises of market choices with a high degree of abstraction and formulated assumptions (e.g. Blaug, 2000; Samuelson, Marks, 2014).

Models of consumer behaviour are premised on rational decision-making. Let us mention here the classic models of consumer decision-making: F.M. Nicosi (1966), J.F. Engel (1968), J.A. Howard and J.N. Shet (1969), the EBC model or the information model of B. Mullen and C. Johnson (1990). It is true that these models tried to describe and explain the complex mechanism of the consumer's market decisions through numerous economic, but also social, sociological and, to some extent, psychological conditions (e.g. (Kieźel, ed., 2004; Maison, 2004; Bartosik-Purgat, 2017; Mazurek-Łopacińska, 2021). However, models based on the assumption of rationality of consumer behaviour on the market turned out to be insufficient. The research of D. Kahneman and A. Tversky questioned the *myth of rationality* and revealed the significant importance of other, non-economic premises of consumer behaviour. However, these models turned out to be insufficient. The research of D. Kahneman and A. Tversky questioned the *myth of rationality* and revealed the significant importance of other, non-economic premises of consumer behaviour. Kahneman and Tversky's Perspective Theory, referred to behaviourism and contemporary behavioural psychology (e.g. Skinner, 2022; Bąbel, Ostaszewski, 2008) and showed the limitations of the homo economicus model. Their research has significantly contributed to highlighting the importance of emotions in consumer behaviour and market decision-making. The experiments of D. Kahneman and A. Tversky gave rise to research on the role of behavioural factors in the behaviour of market agents and the use of the work of psychologists in economic analyses. They also allowed for the integration of disciplines and the development of interdisciplinary research: economic psychology (e.g. Tyszka, 2004; Zaleśkiewicz, 2022), behavioural economics (Akerlof, Shiller, 2015; Solek, 2010), psychological economics (e.g. Becker, 1967; Wärneryd, 2004) and Behavioural Finance (Thaler, 1980; Tyszka, 2004). They have also become a premise for the behavioural perspective in management sciences (e.g. Polowczyk, 2012; Zalega 2015); Czerwinka, 2016) and marketing sciences (e.g. Mruk, Sznajder, eds., 2008; Walters, 2015;

Mruk, Pilarczyk, 2018, pp. 115-127; Bruhn, et. al. 2023; Fedushenko, 2023, Savytska, 2023, pp. 225-245; Wiktor, 2023, pp.3-13. Their common feature, in synthetic terms, is the desire to explain the mechanism of market subjects' behaviour based on factors other than just economic ones.

A narrative review of the literature (Dixin-Woods et al., 2006, pp. 27-44) allows us to conclude that the concept of behavioural marketing does not have strictly defined formal boundaries, does not have unambiguously defined elements of definiens. This applies both to the approach and discussion in science and in the sphere of business practice. Behavioural marketing is defined in a diverse way, and the proposed terms do not always meet the ontological and epistemological requirements discussed above for the definition and determination of the correctness of the philosophy of science. It is significant that behavioural marketing is not directly defined by Ph. Kotler, K.L. Keller, A. Chernew (2025), but indirectly refers to behaviourism in the analysis of market segmentation, decision-making process, customer relations, addressees of marketing communication, values for consumers, in the analysis of consumer behaviour and elements of psychology (structure of needs, motivation, emotions, perception). They emphasize that *consumer reactions are not always cognitive and rational. Many of them are emotional reactions, triggered by various kinds of feelings...* (p. 85).

The definitions found in the literature are a conglomerate of various elements of definitions characterizing the behavioural perspective of the company's impact on the consumer. On the one hand, the definitions reveal a general view that expresses the philosophy and paradigm of modern marketing, which is the pursuit of customer needs. On the other hand, the elements of the definitions emphasise the set of marketing-mix composition tools, their specificity in the offline and online environment, and their reference to selected elements of consumer behaviour models.

Based on the analysis, different approaches and scope of behavioural marketing can be identified. This allows us to distinguish several different, yet not fully separable approaches to the essence of behavioural marketing. They focus on the following areas:

- mechanisms and determinants of consumer behaviour, premises for choice, formation of attitudes and preferences towards the brand,

- anticipation of reactions to marketing activities of enterprises, consumer experience: Wertenbroch, et.al. 2020, pp. 429–439; Dowling, et. al. 2020, p. 449–477; Becker, Jaakkola, 2020, pp. 630–648; Kankam-Kwarteng, et. al. 2022, pp. 410–423,
- business environment: online and offline: Cui, et.al. 2018; Wang, et.al., 2021; Dobosz, et al. 2006, pp. 45–59; Hagen, et al. 2020, pp. 361–370; Sanak-Kosmowska, 2021,
 - foundations of marketing strategies – mission, company personality, organizational culture, diversity of approach: Dowling, et.al. 2020, pp. 449–477; Kankam-Kwarteng, et.al. 2022, pp. 410–423; Bruhn, et.al., 2023, pp. 1055–1088; Dobni, et.al.. 2001, pp. 400–408; Yoseph, et al. 2019, pp. 43–61; Mandung, et al. 2024, pp. 01–10; Maignan, Ferel, 2004, pp. 3–19,
 - CSR and values, corporate identity and personality, soft skills of staff and emotional intelligence, sustainable development: Alfadul, AlKubaisy, 2024, pp. 13–26; Maignan, Ferrell, 2004, pp. 3–19; Naderian, Baharun, 2015, pp. 249–255,
 - detailed strategies: ways to stimulate the market, relationship marketing: Wang, et.al. 2021; Zeithaml, et.al. 1996, pp. 31–46; Algesheimer, et.al. 2010, pp. 756–769,
 - digital marketing tools, personalization of the offer: Walters, 2015; Cui, et.al. 2018; Savvytska, 2023, pp. 225–245; Définition du marketing, 2025; Meyer, et al. 2010, pp. 301–315; Varnali, 2021, pp. 93–114; Eftimov, 2024,
 - emotional characteristics of marketing-mix instruments (product, market channels, price, marketing communication, advertising, sales promotion: Meyer, et al. 2010, p. 301–315; Zeithaml, et.al. 1996, pp. 31–46; Al-Asdoudi, 2023, pp. 575–619; Varnali, 2021, pp. 93–114; Gallopel-Morvan, et. al. 2024, pp. 117002,
 - a separate area of research in relation to economic sciences and a way of expressing the essence of behavioural marketing is neuromarketing and a reference to neuroscience: Mruk, Sznajder, 2008; Masrhouni, Bahoussa, 2023; Ohme, 2017. At the same time, it is an important attempt at interdisciplinary research on human behaviour in the market situation, including behavioural marketing.

Diverse content and characteristics of the elements of behavioural marketing definitions create a premise for undertaking research. The aim was to identify the opinions of marketing professors in different countries regarding the features and attributes of behavioural marketing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research aimed at formulating a social assessment, a specific confirmation of the concept of behavioural marketing. Confirmation, a term in the general methodology of research proposed by K. Popper (2002), has its strict, formal meaning and operationalisation procedure (Babbie, Rubin, 2011, pp. 170-172). It refers to empirically verifiable knowledge. In this article, confirmation is considered to examine and evaluate the set of elements that make up the definition of behavioural marketing, a set created as a result of a narrative review of the literature. As a result of the analytical work, 20 elements from the potential list of category designations were proposed. A list of these definiens elements is provided in Table 1. These elements were subjected to social evaluation by professors of marketing, including economics and management in 12 countries, 5 people in each country. The Likert scale (1-5) was used for confirmation. The invitation was sent to 5 professors in 12 countries. The distribution of countries was as follows: Croatia – 7, Czech Republic – 8, Estonia – 1, Germany – 1, Japan – 9, Lithuania – 5, Poland – 6, Serbia – 1, Slovakia – 6, Ukraine – 6, Ukraine – diaspora in Austria – 2, United States – 5. 57 respondents represented the following scientific specialisation: Marketing 83.9%, Management 16.1%, Economics 14.3%, and other 7.1% (more options could be selected). Women accounted for 45.6% of respondents, men – 54.4% (no response – 0.0%).

The selection of the sample: countries and respondents was deliberate. It resulted from the pilot, exploratory nature of the research and organizational capabilities. The sample was selected using our own scientific contacts in the international environment. The research was carried out in March 2025 based on an online survey. Such an approach refers to the methodology of qualitative research (Konecki, 2000; Frankfort Nachmias, Nachmias, 2001; Czupryński, et. al. 2024, pp.156-176). It allows to ensure

methodological correctness, to maintain the principles of methodological rigour (Czakon, 2014, pp. 51-63) and, with some caution, to obtain objectivized data.

RESEARCH RESULTS – PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

Synthetic test results are presented in Table 1. On this basis, the following conclusions can be formulated:

1. The opinions of the professors surveyed confirm the diverse significance of the proposed key elements of behavioural marketing. With regard to the entire set of 20 variable answers, 26.9% of respondents gave *strongly agree* (level 5), agree, rather yes (level 4), strongly disagree, definitely not – 5.2% (level 1), and disagree, rather not – 11.9% (level 2). Level 3 (neither agree nor disagree, neutral) reached 21.5%. This indicator is relatively high and may represent an error of central tendency. This is an important remark in the context of the fact that the respondents were marketing professors (83.6%).
2. According to 57 professors from 12 countries of the world, the acceptance of the set of key elements of the definitions is relatively high. The sum of the indications (the sum of levels 4 and 5) for 20 variables is 61.2%. At the same time, the predominance of level 4 (34.3%) over level 5 (26.9%) is noteworthy. This may confirm the acceptance of various proposals for definitions contained in the literature, a narrative review of which is presented in the introductory part of the article.
3. A detailed analysis of attitudes towards the elements of the definiens shows a significant differentiation in this cross-section. Taking into account the indications of level 5 (strongly agree), three elements are of fundamental importance for expressing the essence of behavioural marketing: (1) *subject of influence: the customer* – 78.6%, (8) *emotional model of consumer behaviour* – 50%, and (10) *personalisation of the offer* – 48.2%. On the other hand, the sum of levels 4 and 5 forms the following set of *most important* definiens: (1) *subject of influence: customer* 92.9%, (8) *emotional model of consumer behaviour* – 89.3%,

and (13) *dominance of emotional arguments in marketing communication* – 80.3%. The following elements of the definitions were also highly accepted: (19) *relationship marketing* – 76.8%, (11) *emotional characteristics of the marketing-mix* – 71.4%, (9) *cognitive and emotional empathy of staff towards customers* – 70.3%, (10) *personalization of the offer* – 69.6%, and (14) *emotional style of advertising creation* – 69.6%. A total of 10 key elements of the list of designations received a favourable (at the level of over 60%) *recommendation* from professors of the international community as a result of confirmation.

4. At the other extreme, there were opinions from levels 1 and 2. The attitudes *strongly disagree and disagree, rather not* were expressed towards 5 elements: (3) *organisational culture of the company* – 22.2%, (16) *commercial climate at the point of sale* – 30.4%, (4) *CSR* – 33.9%, (16) *merchandising strategy and forms* – 33.9%, and (18) *neurodiversity* – 39.1%.

Presenting the results of an international survey and attempts to confirm the definition of behavioural marketing in a synthetic way, it can be stated that the 20 key elements that are the main components of the definition in the literature have their important, although partly differentiated, meaning. The visible consumer perspective in defining behavioural marketing is fully understandable. However, the examined concept and its definition cannot be limited to the emotional determinants of consumer behaviour. The 20 key elements, evaluated and conformed by 57 experts in 12 different countries, also show the acceptance of many other elements important for the explanation and accurate definition of behavioural marketing. Marketing is a whole whose mission is directed at the market, at the behaviour of the consumer and at all the participants in the exchange relationship.

Marketing is a key function in the management of any organisation, expressing its *philosophy* of existence, functioning, development through the creation of value and usefulness for the environment. The concept of the *con-company* proposed by A. Noga (2009), an enterprise whose main area of activity is the care for the achievement of its goals by satisfying the needs of the consumer, is apt. The excessive supply of goods in virtually every sector

of the market makes this obligation of the company even more significant. It is strengthened by changing the model of behaviour of the modern consumer.

Table 1. *Key features of behavioural marketing included in the definitions in the opinion of respondents*

Key features of behavioural marketing included in the definitions	Do you agree with such features of behavioural marketing? 1- strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, rather not 3 -neither agree or disagree 4 - agree, rather yes, 5- strongly agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Subject of influence: customer	3,6	-	3,6	14,3	64,3
2. Subject of influence: stakeholders	3,6	12,5	33,9	21,4	28,6
3. Organizational culture of the company	7,4	14,8	38,9	22,2	16,7
4. CSR	10,5	24,6	29,8	26,3	8,8
5. Company personality	5,5	14,5	23,6	40,0	16,4
6. Soft skills of sales staff	7,1	14,3	30,4	28,6	19,6
7. Emotional intelligence of staff	10,7	10,7	25,0	39,3	14,3
8. Emotional model of consumer behaviour	-	5,4	5,4	39,3	50,0
9. Cognitive and emotional empathy of staff towards customers	1,9	9,3	18,5	40,7	29,6
10. Personalization of the offer	5,4	7,1	17,9	21,4	48,2
11. Emotional characteristics of the marketing-mix	1,8	1,8	25,0	46,4	25,0
12. Brand personification	7,1	7,1	19,6	41,1	25,0
13. Domination of emotional arguments in marketing communication	1,8	1,8	16,1	58,9	21,4
14. Emotional style of advertising creation	1,8	5,4	23,2	46,4	23,2

Source: own research

The homo economicus model is no longer appropriate. In the conditions of digital transformation, its place is taken by the *Homo Cyber Economicus* model (Gregor & Kaczorowska, 2018, pp. 57-79) or the *com-sumer* model

(combining communication and consumer) (Wiktor, 2013, pp. 250-251). Of particular importance in these models is the emotional intelligence of the consumer – so vital to behavioural marketing (Goleman, 1996). In the digital world, the consumer is not only an element of the target market, but also becomes an active market actor who both *consumes* and creates information. Therefore, they are susceptible to many conditions shaping their online and offline behaviour – both emotional and rational in various proportions and contexts. This is the essence of the behavioural turn in marketing.

The research project addresses some of the broad range of determinants that shape consumer behaviour and companies' market strategies. They should be seen in a coherent context of the company's marketing and development strategy. The concept of marketing a company is an expression of rationality of decisions and striving for effective allocation of resources. In its implementation, the behavioural approach to the market and the consumer is of particular importance. Therefore, the principle: *think rationally, act emotionally* may be accurate. Such a perspective allows us to define behavioural marketing as a concept of market activities of an enterprise, aimed at shaping favourable market behaviour of consumers and other stakeholders, using a wide set of elements that can appropriately shape the emotional sphere of their behaviour and decisions. This definition brings together many elements of a strategic and operational nature in both business environments: offline and online. It seems that the proposed definition allows us to look at and design the marketing activities of the company in a rational and comprehensive way, and not fragmentarily through one or more elements distinguished in the definitions. In a way that Olga Tokarczuk, the Polish Nobel Prize winner, describes as *agnosia*, which is a highly synthetic way of looking at the world around us, the ability to *approach problems synthetically by seeking order and order both in the narratives themselves and in the details, small parts of the whole* (Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 28). Without formulating a definitive answer as to whether such a definition meets the criteria for defining concepts and the conditions of correctness formulated by the philosophy of science, it is a proposal and an invitation to further discussion and research on the multidimensional and interdisciplinary category of behavioural marketing.

RESUME

The article attempts to confirm the definition of behavioural marketing internationally. This is an open scientific problem. It is presented from the perspective of the philosophy of science. It includes 4 parts, which concern, respectively: 1) the essence of the definition and the method of defining concepts in science, 2) the premises of the behavioural perspective in marketing, 3) the methodology of research and 4) the presentation and discussion of the results. The research was exploratory. They were carried out in March 2025 in a group of 56 professors in marketing, management and economics in 12 countries. The results of the survey confirm the content and key elements of the definitions contained in the definitions of behavioural marketing. In addition to values per se, values for science are an encouragement for continuity and an invitation to further, in-depth research in an international environment.

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