

**WILLIAM R. DAVIDSON: A LIFE IN RETAILING MANAGEMENT,
HIS CAREER AT MANAGEMENT HORIZONS (MH),
A DIVISION OF PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS LLP**

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ABSTRACT

This paper is the second of two biographical sketches which examine the life and career of William R. (Bill) Davidson. His outstanding contributions to retailing and marketing education during the latter half of this century have been divided chronologically between The Ohio State University and Management Horizons, a consulting firm founded as an independent company in 1968 which merged with Price Waterhouse LLP in 1985, and became part of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP in 1998. This paper focuses on the latter period.

INTRODUCTION

Previously, in the first part of this two part biographical paper, Jones (1999) outlined the life of William R. Davidson from his earlier days until his first career as a teacher-consultant at the Ohio State University. This second paper resumes the life history of Davidson at the time he embarked on a second career path as a consultant-teacher with Management Horizons (MH).

His second career, as a retail and business consultant, is not independent of the first. They are, in fact, complementary. The two career paths reflect Davidson's total dedication to marketing education. His contributions to the retailing and marketing literature did not stop when he switched from academic life to the world of private business.

If we were to evaluate Davidson's numerous contributions to retailing and marketing from his point of view, he would say that The History of Management Horizons (Davidson 1996) is one of his most important works. More precisely, I came to regard it as one of my most important career activities because its content includes much of the history of retailing (for the period covered) as well as that of MH (Davidson 1998a).

However, accepting this important work without including all of his additional contributions he has given to the field of retailing and marketing would be a grave injustice, as we will show in the following pages.

In writing the Management Horizons history book, Davidson demonstrated an appreciation of marketing history, a topic which, unfortunately, is not part of contemporary mainstream marketing. As Jones (1999) demonstrated in the first part of this biography, Davidson's interest in history was no coincidence, given that some of his teachers at The Ohio State University (OSU), were at that time the leading scholars and contributors to the history of marketing and marketing thought.

DAVIDSON AND THE CREATION OF MH

To more fully understand Davidson's accomplishments and contributions to the marketing discipline, a review of the circumstances surrounding the decision to leave academia to start his own business consulting firm is important.

The most remarkable factor regarding his decision to quit the academic world in 1972 was that he had already been offered the Dean's position at two other prestigious business schools. Furthermore, he had even been considered to become the new dean of business at OSU! How could an established full professor with a national reputation destined for further laurels and accomplishments in the academic world of marketing decide to abandon his highly successful but predictable academic lifestyle?

Additionally, let us not forget that the Beckman and Davidson Principles of Marketing was one of the most influential marketing textbooks of the century. For example, the 1957 sixth edition sold more than one quarter of a million copies and was adopted by over 140 colleges and universities (The Ohio State University Monthly, 1958). Also, his retailing management textbook (Davidson and Brown 1960), was the first to present retailing more from an analytical and a managerial perspective than previous textbooks. It was also the most widely used collegiate retailing textbooks, already in its third edition in 1966 (Davidson and Doody 1966). It is no wonder that it has been called the bible of the field (Bacha 1992).

A career move into the private sector entails financial risk and job insecurity, factors which are anathema to the secured world of a tenured marketing professor. No doubt he felt that the benefits to be gained were well worth the risks. He had already proven himself as an academic. As Davidson (1998b) explained, he simply could not see himself at the age of fifty continuing doing what he had been doing for the previous twenty-five years. Giving similar lectures year after year was a predictable scenario and did not appeal to him, nor did the thought of being a dean. As a dean, he did not have a burning desire to assume the role of a college fund raiser for the remainder of his professional life.

His interest in retailing and in consulting began long before MH was established. Therefore, the creation of Management Horizons, Inc. in 1968 by Davidson (and others, notably Alton Doody) cannot be interpreted as the start of Davidson's second career as a business consultant in the distributive trades.

Just as an historical event led him to an academic career path (i.e., the advent of the Second WW), his second career as a full time retail business consultant is also marked by a series of historical and/or fortuitous events. These need to be explored in greater detail because they paved the way to his further contributions to the marketing discipline as a business consultant. It will also shed light on his 1972 decision to resign as a tenured professor from the Faculty of Marketing at OSU.

The MH challenge which came knocking at his door and the thought of doing something exciting and different was irresistible. His views of a middle-aged academic caught in a routine and predictable job situation are similar to those of Shapiro (1979). Both held the philosophy that a marketing professor should have more than one career.

Davidson never left marketing education completely, even if he did leave the university classroom. He continued throughout his second career to teach and be an educator to business executives in a manner similar to what he had done as a marketing professor with students.

Davidson (1998b) pointed out that there are, however, at least two major differences between teaching university students and teaching business. First, the business audience can be much more demanding, requiring up-to-date information and knowledge, and secondly, the stakes are much higher. After all, business people are paying you to be educated, and, unlike students, they do not care about course credits or grades. As Davidson (1998b) said, you are giving them professional advice on how to run their business and if you are wrong, the results can be catastrophic not only to them, but to you and your consulting firm as well.

THE THREE GURUS OF RETAILING

According to Davidson (1998b), there is one significant reason as to why he changed his career path. During one of the annual Tri-State Teachers of Marketing meetings, Davidson and Alton F. Doody met Bert C. McCammon, Jr., who was then a marketing professor at Indiana University, and a leading thinker in the channels and distributive trades. All three had published widely in the area and already had solid academic reputations. Subsequent to this meeting, it was not long before Davidson and his two partners had acquired several consulting projects which, considered all together, reflected much promise for a new business because there was then no other consulting service that specialized in retailing (Davidson 1996, p. 3).

In particular, the 1968 projects with the National Cash Register Company and the Associated Merchandising Corporation (to be discussed below) were the ones that convinced our three gurus of retailing to establish a formal business organization. The very successful undertaking of these initial projects quickly established our three gurus as the leading thinkers in the field of retailing.

These three gurus of modern retailing/wholesaling management quickly recognized the existence of a clear market opportunity in the distributive trades that had yet to be filled. The manner by which they responded to this market demand, at least initially, was in a capacity as marketing educators. They developed educational programs which they delivered to the retailing community outlining their vision of the radical changes which were taking place in distribution at that time. In essence, they simply educated members of the industry, not unlike the way they disseminated marketing knowledge to their university students.

Achieving success so quickly is unusual for a newly formed professional service organization. This early success may have been explained partly by MH's founding mission statement which stated "to improve the market and financial performance of retail clients and to advance the frontier of knowledge in the distribution industries" (Davidson 1996, p. 1). Apart from the mission statement itself and the market opportunity which existed, there were other reasons why MH was so successful early on and these convinced Davidson to leave the academic world.

The initial success of MH was due in part to the ability of the co-founders to work well together, a quality deemed essential especially for a newly formed organization. Davidson and Doody had an established professional working relationship, given that Doody was Davidson's co-author for the third edition of Retailing Management published in 1966. Doody continued to be a co-author for the 4th edition, even after MH was established (Davidson and Doody 1975). Both were colleagues at OSU. Their working relationship was such that Doody became MH's first President in 1968, and Davidson became its first chairman in 1968 until 1990, and has been Chairman Emeritus ever since. Of course, the consulting projects themselves, especially the early ones, helped strengthened the trio's working relationship.

MH had an abundance of intellectual property and the principals were marketing and retailing thought leaders at that time. All three shared similar views about the lack of marketing focus and strategic thinking which permeated the retailing and wholesaling world at the time. Additionally, all three also had exceptional public speaking abilities (excellent motivational speakers), and all shared a passion for marketing education.

Moreover, all three had an academic interest in the distribution and retail channels areas which even by today's standard is quite remarkable. It was fortuitous to find three leading distribution scholars, living close by and able to work well together. MH came into being at the right time (the late sixties), and at the right place (Midwest/Ohio), with the right people. The creation of MH also occurred at a unique time period when collegiate marketing education was undergoing a radical change (Davidson 1963 uses the term renaissance) brought on by the Ford and Carnegie Foundation reports that advocated a more managerial/analytical way to teach marketing.

The old saying that says history repeats itself is inappropriate here because the environmental circumstances which led to the establishment and success of MH would be rather difficult or even impossible to replicate. Under Davidson's leadership, MH became one of the world's largest retail consulting firms. In fact, the success of MH, headquarters located in Columbus, Ohio, has resulted in the city being labeled the Silicon Valley for retail consulting (Bacha 1989).

THE NCR PROJECT, MHDS, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

It was not long before this dynamic trio put their marketing and retailing visionary talents to work. A 1968 consulting project with the National Cash Register Company (NCR) was a major turning point in Davidson's career paths. This project was instrumental in cementing the professional relationship which led to the formation of MH. It was the "*largest and the most exciting of all initial projects*" (Davidson 1996, p. 4) undertaken by the then young MH team.

NCR based in Dayton, Ohio had developed a new line of cash registers. This product line incorporated new point of sales data technology which transformed the cash register into a modern age storage and retrieval information system. As a result:

The MH assignment was to retrain the some 1000 NCR cash register salesmen to function in a new world in which point-of-sales registers were information technology equipment rather than cash control devices...MH had the responsibility for developing and staffing a two week educational program. The program was to acquaint the sales organization with retail marketing and financial strategy and with the then potential place of point-of-sales data capture in the implementation of such strategies (Davidson 1996, p. 25).

Actually, Davidson (1993, 1998b) stated that several thousand people had to be retrained. The retraining job was carried out by the three retailing gurus, among others, all under the supervision of Byron Carter who was then a Vice President of NCR. It was not long before Byron Carter recognized the market potential of MH and in 1969, he became an equal shareholder, along with the other three principals.

There is no doubt that this massive retraining project contributed much to what Davidson and his MH eventually became – a leading management consultant and market research firm for domestic and global retailers and consumer goods manufacturers with offices all over the world. More precisely, according to Davidson (1996), the nature of MH's business included:

- Research (consumer behavior, profitability studies, structure of distribution)
- Strategic planning (developing and implementing such plans)
- Management education (briefing conferences, seminars, etc.)
- Management information systems (Management Horizons Data Systems, Inc.)

Over the years, MH has had a list of very impressive clients ranging from General Motors, Sears, Eaton's of Canada, Federated Department Stores, The Gap, Bloomingdale's, E. I. DuPont, and many more.

MHDS (Management Horizons Data Systems), which he helped create in 1969, became a subsidiary of MH and provided distributive organizations with on line information systems. More specifically, MHDS had a state of the art data processing facilities in Columbus that would serve wholesale distribution firms with an integrated series of basic distribution application systems—order processing, invoicing, receivables, general accounting, payables, perpetual inventory, and scientific inventory replenishment—supplemented by optional systems for payroll, remote order-entry, retailer/customer services, and other specialized systems (Davidson 1996, p. 26).

Due to program development costs, MH sold the business unit in 1973 to First National City Bank of New York (later renamed Citicorp). It continued to be highly successful and then became "the second largest high speed commercial-user telecommunications network in North America" (Davidson 1996, p. 26). With the creation of MHDS, Davidson demonstrated how well he understood the changing nature of retailing and the strategic importance of information technologies for the distributive trades.

DAVIDSON AND EXECUTIVE BRIEFING PROGRAMS

From the late 60s and all through the 70s, the vast majority of organizations in the distributive industries were unfamiliar with marketing planning and strategic research in general. Access to external competitive information and market assessment of consumer markets and suppliers was either non-existent or very elementary, even among those firms having research departments.

The need for executive development programs was great. At the time MH was formed (and even shortly thereafter), Davidson and the other two retailing gurus served as the main instructors in such programs. The participants were part of numerous retail and wholesale trade groups, such as the wholesale hardware industry, the wholesale drug industry, and the home furniture industry, among others.

These briefing programs were offered not only in the US but elsewhere as well. As a result of their "radical" views of the emerging retailing revolution, Davidson and his two other partners gave numerous seminars lasting one or two days in most major European cities. For example, the three retailing gurus participated in a series of European Executive Seminars from 1968 to 1970, sponsored in part by NCR and Modern Merchandising Methods clubs (Davidson 1996, p. 52). These meetings allowed our trio to meet many of the world's top retailing executives, including Carrefour of France and Wertkauf of Germany. As Davidson (1996, page 52) stated, the "*United States was far ahead of Europe in the development of new-era retailing.*" As a result of the European experience, it was not long before MH provided resources to serve clients in the UK, Japan, Australia, South America, and Canada.

One trade group in particular which helped establish Davidson as a specialist in department store retailing and bring MH to the forefront of retail knowledge was AMC (Associated Merchandising Corporation). This prestigious industry group became an important MH client. AMC is a cooperative firm (i.e., a resident buying office) whose members comprised the most famous independent department store owners in the United States and Canada. Other industry trade groups also benefited from their business philosophy and marketing wisdom, such as the below mentioned:

- NARDA (National Association of Retail Dealers)
- NAW (National Association of Wholesalers)
- NWHHA (National Wholesale Hardware Association)
- NAFM (National Association of Furniture Manufacturers)
- NWDA (National Wholesale Drug Association)
- NBMDA (National Building Materials Distributors Association)
- NAWGA (National American Wholesale Grocers Association)
- NWDA (National Druggists' Association)
- NAED (National Association of Electrical Distributors)
- NAFM (National Association of Furniture Manufacturers)
- NHFA (National Home Furnishings Association)

This rather long list of trade associations is included here for a purpose. It is meant to show that Davidson and his colleagues at MH had intimate contacts with numerous and very influential business people in the distributive trades, not only in the United States and Canada, but all over the world.

As a result of these contacts, Davidson and his colleagues were able to obtain hands-on knowledge of how these retail businesses operated, how savvy the executives were with marketing concepts, and what opportunities and problems existed. Davidson's understanding of the retailing world was such that the traditional retailers (i.e., department stores and others), would soon be facing stiff competition from the growing threats of specialty stores. Moreover, traditional retailers were also being subjected to other market forces such as the rise of discounting and self service in nonfood retailing, the growing importance of visual merchandising, the need for better store layout designs and floor space management, the growth of chain store development, more suburban shopping, and so forth (see Davidson 1975, 1996; Davidson and Rodgers 1981). It became quickly apparent that if members within each distributive trade group did not change their ways of doing business and adapt to the new retail market realities of the 70s by becoming more strategic and marketing oriented, many would simply not survive.

It was no accident that Hardlines Wholesaling magazine named both Davidson and Alton Doody as "Wholesaler of the Year" award winners in 1969. It was the very first time that the NWA (which published Hardlines Wholesaling magazine) named a non wholesaler as recipient of the award. The following quote summarizes well the impact their teaching had on members of this industry.

While not wholesalers, they have contributed greatly to the increase of knowledge, the realization of full market potential, and in providing the tools and techniques for achieving success for the entire hardware-hardlines wholesaling business (The Ohio State University Monthly 1969, p. 14).

No wonder these three retailing management gurus of their time as well as the many other visionaries who joined them later on acquired much respect and credibility in the very early formative years of MH.

DAVIDSON AND MH'S MANAGEMENT MODELS

Strategy planning and marketing concepts such as segmentation and customer orientation were simply not ideas which were applied by retail and wholesale organizations back in the late 60s and early 70s. Today's undergraduate business students take for granted the existence of such concepts. Yet most Ph.D. programs in business only began to discuss marketing strategy or strategic planning in the mid to the late 70s. So it is understandable that business executives managing large retail and other distributive organizations in the 70s were not well acquainted with strategic thinking and marketing philosophy.

It was during the NCR educational seminars discussed earlier, that Davidson and his colleagues realized there was a need to present marketing ideas in a format suitable for business executives. As a result, Davidson and his partners created numerous management models, some of which were established prior to the formation of MH.

These descriptive models helped clients understand the strategic importance of external environmental analysis for retail and wholesale planning. These models helped our three retailing gurus convey the essence of strategic thinking, financial performance based on return on investment and not on sales, and taught clients what a market orientation meant for firms in the distributive industries. They also illustrated the strategic use of gathering and using secondary data in order to assess trends in consumer and supplier markets, as well as analyzing competitive forces.

Following is a list of the models made public by Davidson. The page number corresponds to their location in the Davidson (1996) MH history book:

- 1) MH Geometry of Environmental Opportunity Model, p. 11
- 2) MH Model of the Institutional Life Cycle in Retailing, p. 12
- 3) MH Total Profitability Model, p. 14
- 4) MH Model of the Strategic Planning Process, p. 21
- 5) MH Model of Strategic Retail Market Positioning, p. 22

- 6) MH Model of the Concept of Core and Fringe Customers, p. 23
- 7) MH Model of Diffused Versus Strategically Coordinated Retail Marketing Mix, p. 17

A thorough discussion of any of these models is beyond the scope of this paper. All of these MH management models are copyrighted. In spite of their proprietary nature, they, nevertheless, have found their way into the public domain due mainly to the retailing management textbooks written by Davidson and his co-authors, especially in the 4th, 5th, and 6th editions (Davidson and Doody 1975; Davidson, Sweeney, and Stampfl 1984, 1988). Many of these models are well known to many teachers of retailing. Moreover, additional information is also available in Davidson (1996). Finally, models or adaptations of them have been used and cited by authors of other retailing and marketing textbooks.

It is, however, important to discuss ideas about some of the models for they have influenced so many large retail and wholesale organizations worldwide since their inception in the late 60s and beyond. In addition, a sample of the models represents some of Davidson's major contributions to retailing thought and theory. However, not all MH models were created or developed by Davidson. In fact, any attempt to attribute which model came from which individual would be rather difficult because of their proprietary nature. Notwithstanding this difficulty, Davidson admitted that:

McCammon had a heavy responsibility for the early development of initial forms of many important schematic models used early on in MH practices. Many of these models...have been used continuously with refinements or modifications (Davidson 1996, p.4).

The Geometry of Management or Environmental Opportunity model is a conceptual model for "planning comprehensive 'baseline studies' (part of MH's Retail Intelligence System program) dealing with the outlook for changes in the retail environment and the significance for strategic planning," (Davidson 1994, p. 2). Similar to other MH models, it is research-dependent.

The Model of the Concept of Core and Fringe Customers, is another management tool used by Davidson and his principals at MH. The notion of core customers can easily be extended to core and fringe suppliers, to core and fringe competitors, to core and fringe stores, to core and fringe merchandise or floors, or even warehouses.

A model which is particularly dear to Davidson's own set of contributions to the retailing domain is the MH Model of the Institutional Life Cycle in Retailing. Davidson was probably the first to apply the well known product life cycle model to retailing (Davidson, 1970; 1996; Davidson, Bates, and Bass 1976; Davidson and Smallwood 1980). Similar to its product counterpart, it is a theory which purports to explain and describe in four stages the evolutionary process retail institutions go through. The theory has found its way in all retailing textbooks and in most principles of marketing textbooks as well.

The Total Profitability Model taught business executives to look at market performance more from a return on investment perspective than on sales gains or gross margins which, at the time, was the standard practice in retailing. This model is an extension of the well known DuPont financial model. It simply asserts that distributive organizations need to set financial performance objectives while at the same time be market-oriented. This model is also used in MH's Retail Yearbook, a service of the Retail Intelligence System program, which analyses the financial performance of all publicly owned retailing firms in the US and Canada.

Financial performance was an integral part of our retailing guru's initial MH mission statement and has transcended the business philosophy at MH ever since. The retailing book by Davidson in the 4th, 5th and 6th edition thoroughly discusses this model, and is the subject matter of some of the cases which appear in the various editions of the textbook.

It should come as no surprise that the Davidson retailing book was the only book in the field which provided extensive coverage of financial performance methods. Contemporary marketing students rarely, if ever, receive sufficient training in financial analysis relevant to market planning and marketing strategy formulation. The Davidson legacy is that students should have as much prowess in analyzing markets and customers as in assessing their contributions to the bottom line.

Davidson's retailing textbook was also the first to take a managerial approach, with special attention given to formal planning methods and strategic research, ideas well captured by the models discussed previously. The 1984 and the 1988 editions of the retailing book have at least nine cases which have been copyrighted by MH, and many of them requiring financial analysis and knowledge of some of the models listed previously.

Davidson's retailing textbook, especially with the 4th edition and subsequent ones, was a contribution to marketing and retailing thought as it contained many ideas, case material, and research findings from the consulting work done by Davidson and his colleagues at MH. Those contributions made retailing and wholesaling all the more realistic and dynamic. There is no doubt that his book elevated the professional status of retailing and fostered a recognition of the growing importance of the distributive trades as major sectors of the economy worthy of research and study.

In summary, Davidson's contributions to retailing and marketing have been through the dissemination of management models, methods and retail practices used by a private firm, notably MH, for the benefit of all students of marketing.

DAVIDSON AND RETAIL INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

Davidson and his partners shared their views with members of various trade groups who participated in the briefing programs their views about the distribution revolution which was taking place at the time (McCammon, Doody, and Davidson 1969). There were tremendous changes occurring in the retailing and wholesaling environments which confronted these executives and, as Davidson (1996) explained, they lacked the knowledge and the market research information required for them to make informed decisions.

The "Retail Intelligence System" (RIS) program came into being in the early 1970s as a result of Davidson's and his colleagues' involvement with executive briefing programs. Specifically,

Nearly all of the executives participating in each of those programs had very limited knowledge of marketing strategy. They had spent most of their (usually long) careers preoccupied with intra-firm and intra-industry matters and, like their competitors and suppliers, were continuously focused on short term goals related to "beating last year" (Davidson 1996, p. 38)

Davidson (1998b) added that some retail participants, notably those part of AMC, were prime citizens of their communities, the top leaders, very powerful, and the biggest philanthropists. The stores were their world, the bigger the store the better, and telling them what they should be doing was not very easy, and it proved to be quite a challenge.

As a result of the executive briefings, many industry groups quickly realized their need for industry studies. In 1974, MH launched the RIS, as a syndicated service of research and educational program activities that have made MH a world leader in the distributive trade consulting industry. The syndicated nature of the RIS program was offered to clients in a way which was similar to the educational briefings. These were also "jointly sponsored activities, financed by and conducted under the sponsorship of a cooperative buying group, a trade association, or a loose coalition of firms brought together for the event" (Davidson 1996, p. 10).

As Chairman of MH, Davidson was instrumental in establishing RIS (Davidson, McCammon, and Kollat 1974). However, the architect behind this client service was Dr. David Kollat, then Executive Vice President of MH, who had also been a faculty member at OSU at the same time Davidson was still associated with the University.

As a result of Kollat's interest in consumer behavior, MH, initially, was involved in consumer research activities such as focus groups, surveys, and so forth. But as the market for consumer research services expanded, MH found in the late 70s, that it was more efficient to outsource such research activities and to concentrate more on their interpretation and use for strategic planning purposes.

Unlike other services offered by MH, RIS distributes to clients (Davidson prefers to call them investors) a tangible product consisting, among other benefits, of various industry retailing reports. Such industry studies, also called baseline studies, are still referred to as such today, and provide clients with a comprehensive profile and analysis of a specific industry sector. These studies present and analyze statistical trends, provide discussion and perspective on key issues, and forecast the outlook. Major topics covered include industry size, growth and projected growth, performance characteristics, merchandise mix and performance, customer profiles, shopping behavior and trends (Davidson 1996, p. 10).

An annual fee gives RIS clients a complete retail information package which includes, among other benefits (Davidson 1996, p. 39):

- Retail Preview (what is likely to happen in the short term)
- Attendance at the Spring and Fall Strategic Outlook Conferences
- Intelligence Update (research reports)
- Retail Yearbook (atlas of financial performance of all US and Canadian publicly held retailing firm analyzed via the MH Strategic Profit Model)

The number of paid members has varied from year to year (it now stands around 300), but was sufficient in size to sustain a large market research budget which enabled Davidson and MH to offer research reports, hold conferences and keep members abreast of all important developments of their respective distributive trade industry. RIS proved to be "a major competitive advantage for MH, providing a large opportunity for semi-annual personal contact in regional conferences." (Davidson 1996, p. 40)

McCammon once said that marketing was a "throw-away discipline" (Davidson 1998b). In the spirit of trying to preserve marketing knowledge, Davidson has been instrumental in assuring that the RIS publications do not get discarded. Since its inception in 1974, the RIS program has accumulated a wealth of proprietary material. Thanks to Davidson's efforts, MH and Price Waterhouse LLP in 1994 donated the RIS documents to the University of Oklahoma's School of Business to ensure that future researchers have access to them. All RIS research reports and other writings of the program are now part of the Henry W. Bass Collection in Business History and the University has since named the gift collection as the "Management Horizons Retail Intelligence System Archives." However, it should be noted that no RIS publications are made available in these archives until such time that RIS program investors have had the material for six months (Davidson 1996, p. 6).

The documents have or are now being catalogued, and any graduate student or faculty member interested in the history of retailing can have access to these archives. Eventually, libraries will have them available via computer index services.

The number and type of Davidson's RIS Retail Focus Reports distributed to clients are too numerous to be discussed here. The scope and content of some of these reports are impressive. Some would even qualify as a Master's thesis or perhaps as initial work toward such research ends. They range from an analysis of warehouse clubs (Hyde and Davidson 1984a; Davidson 1986), analysis of department stores (Hyde and Davidson 1984b; Davidson, Hyde and Sweeney 1985), advertising (Putnam, Koenigsberg, and Davidson 1985), to strategic issues in retailing and marketing (Rossiter and Davidson 1985; Davidson et al 1984, 1987).

DAVIDSON AND NONSTORE RETAILING

Until very recently, most large department stores had a catalogue (or nonstore) division. As a department store specialist, Davidson also had an interest in this mode of retail selling. The set of RIS reports on nonstore retailing merit further discussion. The topic is also very timely given the importance now being given to electronic commerce. As early as 1967, Davidson wrote about electronic shopping and how modern technology was going to make shopping an easier task (Doody and Davidson 1967). That article became the best selling HBR reprint of all times, with his retail life cycle one being the second best (Davidson 1993).

His interest in nonstore retailing never subsided and he has continued writing about the topic (Davidson and Rodgers 1979; Davidson and Rossiter 1984; Davidson et al 1986; Davidson 1992, 1997b). His 1984 RIS report (with Rossiter) presents an innovative way to define nonstore retailing using the MH Consumer Electronic Marketing Matrix Model.

Much could be discussed here about this alternative form to store retailing due to the topic's current interest in the media and with academics. This world expert in retailing soberly reminds us that he had predicted over thirty years ago (with Doody) that home shopping by interactive means would be commonplace in the 70s. When recently asked about how consumers will shop,

At the start (of the millennium), my answer is 'not much different than the year before,' which in turn, is not much different from now. As a retailing stakeholder for 20 or 30 years or more, my opinion is that the magnitude of changes is exaggerated by most of those who write or tell about them. My own experience is that retailing changes move very slowly if they are dependent upon getting a response that requires a change in consumers' habitual ways of going about ordinary every day activities (Davidson 1997b, p. 1).

Tedlow (1996) and Hollander (Keep and Hollander 1992), among others, have expressed reservations about the so called imminent and impending electronic revolution in retailing, and as Davidson stated, history serves as a good teacher and barometer of things to come.

DAVIDSON AND LITIGATION EXPERIENCE

The legal aspects of marketing interested Davidson, even before he came to OSU. For sure, Theodore Beckman, his mentor, played a role in Davidson's interest in litigation activities because Beckman himself was actively involved in expert witness testimonies (Jones 1993). In fact, Beckman once stated:

Obviously no marketing student's education could possibly be complete without a fairly comprehensive of the legal framework in which marketing functions must be performed and an understanding of how and it is structured and implemented, with reasons therefor (Beckman 1963, p. 13).

Therefore, it is not surprising that MH developed an expertise in litigation cases with Davidson supervising or directly participating in numerous litigation cases either prior to the establishment of MH, during his tenure at MH, and even now as an independent marketing consultant.

Under his leadership, MH offered a set of client legal services dealing with financial and marketing due diligence and litigation support. MH was involved in the famous W.T. Grant case where due diligence work was done on behalf of many bankers who wanted to know if the once leading variety store chain would be viable in the foreseeable future. An MH team recommended that the current financial situation of Grant was not encouraging, which prompted the bankers to call in their loans. Grant became the largest retail firm to go bankrupt (in 1976).

Davidson's (1996) comments about the Grant case enriched what Hartley (1981) had already written about the company. Such additional information adds to our body of historical knowledge about major marketing organizations which once dominated the American retailing world.

Litigation support service, as discussed by Davidson (1996, p. 49), "tended to be restricted to important marketing matters as related to public policy or as to interpretation of the rights of a party" (p. 49). One such case involved the acquisition of Rich's, the major department store in Atlanta by Federated Department Stores. The Federal Trade Commission objected alleging that it would reduce competition. But a court document presented to the FTC by Davidson (the paper was unavailable), resulted "in a basic change in FTC policy on the subject broadening the scope of relevant competition" (Davidson 1996, page 50).

As a result of his intervention, the acquisition was allowed to proceed. The FTC had been using a definition of competition which was based on intratype competition, while intertype competition would have been better because Rich's was indeed competing not just with other department stores, but with all "forms of retail store and non-store retailers that sell the same type of merchandise as is sold in conventional departments stores" (page 50). It is not clear if Davidson was the first in the marketing literature to use the concepts of intertype and intratype competition. But we do know that the terms are discussed in his 1970 article (Davidson 1970).

As we can see, such accomplishments are not as easily discernible as articles published in refereed journals or textbooks, but they are, nevertheless, bone fide marketing contributions. His Retailing Management textbooks as well as the Marketing principles ones (with Beckman) are filled with countless legal cases pertinent to the marketing domain and timely for each edition. The significance of these cases has helped students understand how jurisprudence has shaped and molded marketing practices over the years.

DAVIDSON AND PRACTICAL RETAILING KNOWLEDGE

A derived benefit to the retailing discipline, one which we have already alluded to with reference to Davidson's involvement with numerous trade associations, is his sharing of practical retailing knowledge which comes from the real world of distribution. Let us not forget that marketing knowledge is not only created by academics but by practitioners as well. In fact, Monieson (1981) stated that practitioners are producing useful marketing knowledge at a rate faster than can be absorbed or dealt with by academics.

An important benefit of keeping abreast of what retail and wholesale practitioners are doing is to be able to meet the leading current thinkers in the field, as well as the movers and the shakers working in a very dynamic sector of our economy. According to Davidson (1998b), new retail ideas, new distributive practices, and retailing thought are often on the agenda at many of these professional trade meetings. Current retail and business trends and issues are discussed from which marketing professors may acquire timely marketing information and insights. Davidson (1998b) pointed out that many business leaders in the distributive trades would be more than happy to share their papers and data with academics.

Surprisingly, very few marketing professors ever attend any of the conferences and meetings sponsored by these industry trade groups, or those of the MH's RIS program, even when offered to come for free, according to Davidson (1998b).

The tradition of knowing and understanding what business is doing has been a hallmark of the Davidson marketing philosophy, even before he founded MH. His Ph.D. dissertation required him to interview department store executives (Davidson 1951), a research tradition that has served him well and has been part of his marketing ideology throughout both of his careers. After all, when one has a penchant for channels and the distributive trades, especially in retailing, it is imperative to have a hands-on view of the retail and wholesale world, in order to better understand it.

Business and industry contacts were greatly expanded with the merger of MH with Price Waterhouse in 1985. The body of thought of practical retailing knowledge was further enhanced as a result of the merger. With the merger, senior MH executives became PriceWaterhouse Partners. Two of them, Cyrus C. Wilson and Daniel J. Sweeney, both Ph.D. students of Davidson at OSU, eventually succeeded Davidson, respectively becoming the second and third Chairman of MH. Since becoming Chairman Emeritus in 1990, Davidson has remained active in the business, even after the merger of Price Waterhouse with Coopers Lybrand in 1998 which was renamed PricewaterhouseCoopers. One benefit of this recent merger has been to expand the opportunity for a global Retail Intelligence System and to broaden the scope of retailing and distribution channel activities on a worldwide scale.

DAVIDSON AND MARKETING EDUCATION

It is no coincidence that Davidson and those interested in distribution channels seem to have an intellectual curiosity of knowing more about the workings of the marketplace. We believe it has something to do with the type of marketing education they received by the generation of marketing professors who trained them. For Davidson, Professor Theodore Beckman at OSU was, without a doubt, his mentor.

Beckman's specific interest in the channels area was wholesaling. Functional analysis was the paradigm he used throughout his study of the wholesaling sector of the economy. As a result of the Beckman legacy, Davidson never forgot the epistemological roots which formed and shaped his understanding of the marketing process. So, perhaps knowledge of the functional approach to the study of marketing is a necessary paradigm for those interested in studying and doing research in the distributive trades (but not necessarily a sufficient one in today's dynamic and complex channel structures).

One of his articles on channels of distribution stands out as an important thought piece in the field (Davidson 1961). In that article, Davidson presents numerous channels definitions. It is our contention that his discussion has influenced, directly or indirectly, how channels have been defined in channel textbooks and elsewhere. The material may have contributed to the channel refinement definition by distinguishing between a transactional channel (i.e., title change) from that of a logistical (i.e., physical) one, a distinction deemed very relevant to supply chain management.

In a more recent article, Davidson (1997a) presents a philosophy of marketing education that reflects more his past era when professors taught, at least to undergraduates, that marketing was more of a macro-social process than merely a narrow micro-managerial one. The latter approach, as any current textbook will attest, now justifies marketing's very existence as a managerial discipline.

Almost thirty-five years earlier, Davidson (1964) had expressed similar reservations about the pedagogical emphasis given to the marketing concept as being an exaggerated consumer-oriented view of marketing. The marketing process, according to Davidson, is more a formative than adaptive force in society than is generally acknowledged. Specifically, a "strong case can be made for the point that marketing is more of a formative and less of an adaptive aspect of our culture," (p. 5), and that marketing as a social process is a subject "of much broader scope than the compilation of functions or activities commonly identified as marketing responsibilities in individual companies." (p. 8)

The social impact of marketing activity has been and continues to be underestimated. He then asks the all-important but seldom addressed question in marketing pedagogy:

Would a student who is an undergraduate marketing major be served better or less well by a first foundation course of a macro or social nature? (Davidson 1997a, p. 38)

Moreover, what about those students who are not marketing or even business majors? In effect, Davidson is asking us to reevaluate and even to reconsider if the marketing discipline would not be better served if the introductory marketing course was more of the macro type rather than the current approach emphasizing almost exclusively micro/managerial issues (Davidson 1998b).

The many textbooks and articles are testament to Davidson's contributions to marketing education. Many of his articles attempted to say something new, unique, or different. His textbooks also show a divergence from others in the field. Too many current textbooks, especially the principles ones, seem to be clones of one another, with no one textbook in a particular area standing out and contributing unique marketing ideas. Unlike the approach used by Davidson, current textbook writers seem to rely more on what others are saying and they also use more material from academic journals (Jewell et al 1997). Perhaps this is due to textbooks not being recognized as important contributors to marketing thought or as valued to a professor's academic career as was the academic philosophy which existed before (Davidson 1998b).

Finally, two important but seldom-asked questions, as presented by Bartels, are relevant here (Bartels and MacNab 1973): Is marketing theory being practiced? And is marketing practice being theorized? With respect to Davidson, this paper has answered both questions in the affirmative because not only did he practice retailing theory with the consulting work done with clients, but he also theorized retailing practice via the MH models and the dissemination of these models in his textbooks and other writings.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, throughout both of his careers, Davidson never stopped being a teacher and a learner of marketing. Various trade associations and cooperative buying groups enthusiastically accepted the marketing and retailing wisdom and strategic thinking preached by Davidson and his associates over the course of MH's existence. Such a success story has to be considered a major accomplishment, especially among marketing professors. We will never know what would have happened to the retail and wholesale distributive trades if there had not been a MH.

Davidson has left a legacy not only in his teaching and writings, but also in his continued enrichment of the marketing discipline. Even though he has officially retired from MH since 1990, he has, nevertheless, continued to give back to the marketing community and to retailing aficionados.

As we saw earlier, we owe him much for having MH donate the complete set of RIS publications to the Bass Collection in Business History at the University of Oklahoma. This is where Dr. Bert McCammon had joined as the Director of Distribution Research Center, after he had resigned from MH due to poor health. In March 1999, the collection was officially given the name of "The Management Horizons Retail Intelligence System Archives" and is believed to be the only accessible set available anywhere.

Furthermore, at his official retirement, his associates and family established at his old OSU alma mater, the creation of The William R. Davidson Doctoral Fellowship in Marketing. The doctoral fellowship award will ensure future contributions to the retailing and marketing disciplines by promising young scholars.

Furthermore, the annual William R. Davidson Award for Best Paper in the Journal of Retailing is an award sponsored by Management Horizons, a division of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP. Davidson has also been an active member of the Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services ' editorial review board, and of the American Marketing Association Foundation. Let us hope that more marketing scholars take the same career path taken by Davidson because the marketing discipline will be all that much richer in thought and theory.

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