

No longer relevant for  
contemporary  
approaches  
marketing essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The marketing mix is among the most widely accepted marketing concepts in the world of business (McCarthy 1960; Bartels 1983; Shapiro 1985).

However, over the years the marketing mix has come under intense scrutiny from both academics of the marketing discipline and practitioners alike. This feeling was captured by Constantinides when he stated:

” Few topics of the commercial theory have so intensively inspired as well as divided the marketing academia as the 4Ps Marketing Mix framework”  
(Constantinides, 2006: p. 407)

This essay aims to critically assess the relevance of the marketing mix for the current marketing approaches. To accomplish this, an overview of the marketing mix is given. This is followed by an exploration of some of the contemporary approaches to marketing which will lead to a consideration of the arguments in support of the marketing mix and the criticisms against it. Finally, in the light of the arguments and criticisms the relevance of the marketing mix for contemporary approaches to marketing will be appraised.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE MARKETING MIX**

The marketing mix can be defined as the controllable and tactical marketing tools that the firm combines to achieve the desired response in its target market. It comprises all the measures the firm can employ to stimulate the demand for its goods and/or services (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). The ultimate goal of any firm is to create a product or service that will be perceived as unique in the eyes of prospective consumers so that they will

prefer it to other competing brands. In creating this unique selling proposition (USP), the marketers can blend four basic ingredients in a number of different ways to obtain different results. These four ingredients are usually referred to as the 4Ps and comprise- product, price, place (distribution) and promotion (Baker, 2007).

Costantinides (2006) and Gronroos (1994) trace the origin of the marketing mix to the 1960s when Neil Borden identified twelve controllable marketing components that would yield profit if properly managed. Borden considered the marketing mix to be a concise, realistic and vivid expression of the admixture of the marketing ingredients, techniques and processes chosen by a marketing manager to create a marketing plan (Banting and Ross, 1973; Waterschoot and Van den Bulte, 1992). It was later reduced to four factors by Jerome McCarthy (McCarthy, 1964 cited in Constantinides, 2006) and this simplified version became the most widely accepted definition of the marketing mix (Judd, 2002). The “ 4Ps” marketing mix commanded utmost respect in the minds of both marketing scholars and practitioners for decades that in the words of Gronroos (1994) and Kent (1986) it was considered heresy to challenge its position as the basic foundation of all marketing thinking. This belief strongly reinforces the dominance of the marketing mix during this period and suggests that there was a need for a theory that could be applied for the solution of most marketing management issues.

According to Harker and Egan (2006) certain economic conditions contributed to the perceived superiority of the marketing mix paradigm.

Harker and Egan (2006) opine that a key feature of the United States  
<https://assignbuster.com/no-longer-relevant-for-contemporary-approaches-marketing-essay/>

domestic market after the Second World War was homogeneity of products which resulted in increased demand for standardised consumer products and the rise of the USA as the dominant marketing culture. The demand, notwithstanding, there was need to ensure that consumption matched output (Packard, 1957 cited in Harker and Egan, 2006). Thus, a formal and reliable marketing approach was required to provide this fit (O'Malley and Patterson, 1998). The popularity and dominance of the marketing mix paradigm was further enhanced by its simplicity and ease of communication (Waterschoot and Van den Bulte 1992; Constantinides, 2006; Harker and Egan, 2006).

From the above submission, it can be argued that the marketing mix paradigm was borne out of necessity- a necessity for a simple, realistic and reliable framework that could be applied for the solution of general and specific marketing problems that arose in that era. Considering the under-developed marketing structure and knowledge gap that existed at that time, the formulation of the 4Ps marketing mix paradigm could not have come at a better time. Thus, it goes without saying that the relevance of its application to the transactional marketing approach- the primary approach to marketing in the 20th century- is indubitable.

However, due to the shortcomings of the transactional approach to marketing, there was the need for a paradigm shift from a product-oriented approach to one that focused on the customer. Thus, the academia and marketing practitioners began to question the efficacy of the marketing mix framework as the answer to all marketing problems. The 4Ps were considered too narrow to adequately address the many aspects of marketing

<https://assignbuster.com/no-longer-relevant-for-contemporary-approaches-marketing-essay/>

management and laid excessive emphasis on the product and processes with little or no thought for the customer. The increased sophistication of customers and the dynamic nature of the business environment meant that organisations had to adapt regularly to the changes that occur in the environment or risk losing market share with the consequence of possible liquidation. This situation led to the emergence of several modern marketing approaches that shifted attention from the product to the customer thereby ushering in the era of market orientation.

Some of the contemporary approaches to marketing that emerged as a response to the continuous evolution of the business environment include Relationship marketing, Interaction marketing and Network marketing (Constantinides, 2006; Coviello et al, 1997; Gronroos, 1997). These modern approaches demanded a re-thinking of the marketing process in order to achieve effective and efficient implementation. Based on this need for a re-definition of the marketing process, it was inevitable that the marketing mix paradigm would come up for debate with regards to the relevance of its application to the aforementioned marketing approaches.

Relationship marketing involves the development and maintenance of mutually satisfying exchange relations with customers and other parties at a profit, so that the objectives of all the parties are realised (Gronroos, 1994; Baker, 2007, Coviello et al, 1997). The implication of this viewpoint is that every organisation must cooperate with other parties within its business environment and beyond in order to achieve its ultimate aim. The 21st century market is replete with opportunities and challenges that were relatively unknown in the 20th century. To harness the opportunities and

<https://assignbuster.com/no-longer-relevant-for-contemporary-approaches-marketing-essay/>

overcome the challenges effectively and efficiently entails building up a long-term relationship with the customers and all other stakeholders that directly or indirectly influence an organisation's operations. This situation suggests that certain changes would have to occur in the organisation's overall business processes, especially the marketing processes, to ensure a seamless implementation of relationship marketing.

Gronroos (1994), Gummesson (1994, 1997) and Goldsmith (1999) argue that firms practising a transactional marketing approach stand to benefit most from a traditional marketing mix approach because of the absence of personal interactions with their customers and emphasis on mass markets. However, the marketing mix tends to be restrictive for a relation-oriented firm. The most significant customer interactions from a marketing success perspective are outside the scope of the marketing mix and marketing specialists. The customer decides whether to maintain business relations with a firm based on the effect of his/her contacts with the people, technology, and operations and other non-marketing functions. This position is supported by Ailawadi et al (2001) who doubt the impact of promotion and advertising as marketing tools for customer retention. This proposition suggests that the customer's interactions with any firm transcends the marketing functions and includes all indirect transactions with the non-marketing functions within the firm. Relationship marketing advocates the inclusion of all the functional units in any organisation towards creating value for the customer. The effective and efficient implementation of this customer-oriented approach requires that certain critical changes occur within the organisation. These requisite changes will cut across the whole

organisation, but will focus more on the marketing functions because of the direct and frequent interactions with the customers. The change in the marketing functions will lead to a complete shift or modifications in the methods tools adopted by the organisation in creating value for the customer. This, invariably, would necessitate a review of the organisation's marketing mix. Such reviews have surfaced in Kotler's redefinition of the 4Ps to the 4Cs namely, customer solution, customer cost, convenience and communication (Kotler et al., 1999 cited in Kruger et al., 2003 and Ashcroft and Hoey 1999). This redefinition suggests a shift from the era of product-orientation to customer-orientation which is the essence of relationship marketing. However, it also suggests that the marketing mix is still relevant but there is need for some modification to suit the dynamic marketing environment. Judd (2002) proposes an expansion of the 4Ps marketing mix by including the employees of any organisation as the fifth " P". This viewpoint is supported by the fact that the employees are an integral part of any organisation. They are the point of contact between the organisation and its customers. However, like Kotler's 4Cs, this proposed expansion of the 4Ps to 5Ps also points to the relevance of the marketing mix, but with some modification to suit appropriate markets. This argument is supported by Gronroos (1994) when he opines that relationships do not operate in isolation. Relationships function in combination with the other marketing tools already in operation within a given organisation in order to successfully create value for both the customer and the organisation. The application of the traditional marketing mix elements of product, price, promotion and place would be necessary at some point in the interactions between the customer and the organisation. This standpoint implies that, notwithstanding

<https://assignbuster.com/no-longer-relevant-for-contemporary-approaches-marketing-essay/>

the criticisms of the traditional marketing mix paradigm, its elements still contribute in one way or the other in the effective implementation of the relationship marketing approach.

Criticism of the marketing mix has also arisen in the area of social marketing. Murphy et al., (1978) argue that the implementation of certain marketing strategies is unethical especially in the area of packaging, promotion, price and distribution channels. This argument tends to suggest that the marketing mix is responsible for the unethical practices that may occur during implementation. However, responsibility for the implementation of the marketing mix is within the purview of the marketing and non-marketing functional units within the organisation. They are responsible for any unethical practices that may occur in the course of implementing the marketing strategies and not the marketing mix.

Also, the marketing mix has been applied by social marketing in the public health sector. Montoya et al, (2005), Pirani and Reizes (2005) and Grier and Bryant (2005) agree that the application of the marketing mix is essential in the role of social marketing in public health. The elements are combined in different ways to bring about the desired change in the target market.

Attempts have been made to incorporate the marketing mix theory into other non-marketing sectors. Lees-Marshment (2001) suggests that political parties have adopted a “ marketing-orientation” with significant electoral success. Lloyd (2003) suggests the application of the marketing mix to the political arena by recommending the development of a political marketing mix that comprises five components namely, services offering,



representation, accommodation, investment and outcome. The implication of the aforementioned suggestions is that the marketing mix can contribute enormously to the smooth operation of political parties in particular, and the government in general.

## **CONCLUSION**

Though the marketing mix has been criticised as being too narrow and product-oriented, it is still relevant in contemporary marketing approaches. As has been discussed above, there is need for some modifications in the mix portfolio. Redefinition of the marketing mix does not reduce its relevance; it only serves to shift its focus to the modern trends in the market place. Also, the relevance of the marketing mix is reinforced by its application to non-marketing sectors such as politics and the public health sector. This shift suggests that with the right modifications, the marketing mix can be applied in any area of human endeavour.